

THE T21 PROJECT: A EUROPEAN INITIATIVE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

Awareness raising for the inclusion of the citizen with Trisomy 21 has been increasing slowly thanks to a series of measures and actions taken at national and European level. The European Parliament adopted a declaration on children with Down syndrome in 2012, encouraging the Commission, the Council and the Member States to contribute to their social inclusion through awareness-raising campaigns. The EU also promotes its inclusion in society through the European disability strategy, but much more can and must be done. The work in this area is still mainly carried out by non-profit organizations and social entities with very few resources. Thus, the project T21 aims to make a positive difference in the area of support for children such as Down syndrome.

Keywords: Basic digital skills, Digital inclusion, ICT, Social inclusion, Special educational needs

RESUMO

A sensibilização para a inclusão do cidadão com Trissomia 21 tem vindo a aumentar lentamente graças a uma série de medidas e ações adotadas a nível nacional e europeu. O Parlamento Europeu adotou uma declaração sobre as crianças com síndrome de Down em 2012, encorajando a Comissão, o Conselho e os Estados-membros a contribuírem para a sua inclusão social através de campanhas de sensibilização. A UE promove também a sua inclusão na sociedade através da estratégia europeia de incapacidade, mas pode e tem de ser feito muito mais. O trabalho nesta área é ainda, principalmente, realizado por organizações sem fins lucrativos e entidades sociais com muito poucos recursos. Deste modo, o projeto T21 visa fazer uma diferença positiva na área de apoio a crianças como síndrome de Down.

Palavras-chave: Competências digitais básicas, Inclusão social, Inclusão digital, Necessidades educativas especiais, TIC

1 INTRODUCTION

Thus, the T21Community project is a European initiative and funded by a key action 2 of the Erasmus+ program. As a strategic and synergistic action this project synergies and networks with other European institutions aims to promote and facilitate the social inclusion and employability of young European citizens with Down syndrome through learning focused on aspects such as tourism and digital skills. This project also aims to promote, safeguard and promote European cultural heritage (through the promotion of tourism and artistic activities), as well as re-qualification in terms of cultural, audiovisual and digital diversity in cross-sectoral areas. In addition to this identified need, there is also great concern about the needs of participants, organizations and stakeholders about Down syndrome. With regard to the participants, this project is not only concerned with their social integration, but also with the inclusion of these citizens in the labor market or with other employability activities.

The T21 project has two main target groups that are involved in all phases of development, implementation and evaluation of this project. These are young people between 13 and 30 years of age with Down syndrome who face psychological, social or physical challenges and who need alternative ways to be included in educational and technological contexts related to new skills for employability. And, teachers and practitioners involved in developing creative and innovative educational responses for young people that are not easily included in traditional educational settings.

In short, this project will provide results that will contribute to raising and raising awareness of the needs of citizens with Down syndrome and their social inclusion, developing specific learning environments capable of integrating a number of marginalized young people and at risk of not getting specialized training. The intended impact is to develop non-formal programs and activities through a maximizing and effective methodology to correspond to inclusive and creative learning and training. Young participants are expected to benefit from the opportunity to develop a degree of

autonomy over their own learning process and to contribute to the development of new approaches and perceptions. This project has the potential to contribute to greater intervention by nonprofits that can reuse educational content in different educational contexts. These innovative methodologies, including information and communication technologies as well as audiovisuals, can be solutions to help young people with Down syndrome and their families, in order to guarantee the right to education, especially when they are unable to access education through conventional means. Finally, the T21 project community wants to explore the different ways of implementing this type of initiatives in Europe, addressing this issue and learning with alternative formative solutions for this target group in out-of-school settings. Knowing that inclusion and different educational disadvantages are recognized as a complex issue. This project needs to be carried out transnationally to ensure a diversity of inclusive solutions, maximize the opportunity to relate results in different cultural contexts, and provide breadth and feedback to other stakeholders.

2 THE TVT21 PROJECT

The Project aims at promoting and facilitating the social inclusion and the employability of European Down Syndrome youth citizens through Tourism and e-skills. The project also aims to foster, safeguard and promote European Cultural Heritage (via the promotion of Touristic activities), as well as requalification in terms of cultural, audio-visual and e-Skills diversity in cross-sectorial areas. These innovative methodologies, including information and communication technologies as well audio-visual could be solutions to help Down Syndrome young people and their families to guarantee the right to education, mainly when they cannot access education through mainstream avenues. In particular, TV T21 COMmunity wants to explore the different ways national services in Europe tackle this issue and to learn from the solutions they are providing for education of this target group in other environments outside regular schools. Focal points are providing opportunities to help achieve accreditation and progress to further education and employment.

There are three clear objectives that will work towards achieving this aim:

- Sharing of good practices, since recommendations are now emerging to encourage education systems to maximise social inclusion, developments in the use of technology to create active learning environments that support innovative pedagogies, collaboration and effective practice for disadvantaged learners (EC, 2015). As the TV 21 COMmunity project intends to focus on a specific target group of marginalised and 'at-risk' young people and as there is limited research in the area of non formal learning (specially in e-skills) for this group, there will be great value in sharing what can work and why it works across a range of themes and disciplines.
- Identifying key components that constitute a successful and engaging educational experience for learners and instructional roles within an online and blended learning environment. To date we know that digital inclusion and effective educational programmes require more than access to computers and online platforms alone (iNacol, 2014). Also, addressing learner variance and supporting individual needs is seen as a key factor for success when working with marginalised or at-risk learners in alternative educational settings. However, as the capacity of online learning to provide personalised and flexible learning opportunities with relevant content is proven, this target group has a huge necessity of face to face activities with personal interaction. The challenge for the partnership is to identify the unique set of design principles and component parts required to contribute an effective solution for educational disadvantages. This would allow organisations working with Down Syndrom groups, direct access to evidence based guidelines in best practice when developing inclusive educational responses for their target group.
- Exploring areas for the application of key components in the development of innovative approaches. As we learn more about how we learn, and as technology continues to develop, the ability to merge technology and education into co-dependent solutions that support the messy, dynamic nature of the interaction between cognitive process, content development and collaborative instruction will become increasingly relevant. This relevance not only applies to a wider field of education but also to the ability to develop effective non formal

learning designs specifically for inclusion and accessibility. One area that stands out as a very relevant one for this objective is the special education.

Inclusion and educational disadvantage is recognized as a complex issue. The project needs to be carried out transnationally to ensure a range of inclusion issues, maximize the opportunity to relate the results to different cultural context, provide a wide scope of feedback and evaluation from stakeholders. Besides, the Down Syndrome issue and the addressed needs are common throughout Europe, and throughout generations, for those reasons this project needs to be carried out transnationally and with partners from cross-sectorial partners HEI, Youth non-governmental and non-profit organizations, special needs dedicated schools and enterprises.

2.1 Priorities

The T21COMmunity project aims to promote and contribute to ease the social inclusion and the employability of European Down Syndrome youth citizens through Tourism and e-skills. Further, the project also aims to foster, safeguard and promote European Cultural Heritage (via the promotion of Touristic activities), as well as requalification in terms of cultural, audio-visual and e-Skills diversity in cross-sectorial areas.

Three main priorities have been selected as core guidelines for the project's rationale and future implementation: two specific to the YOUTH sector namely (i) "Promoting entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurship among young people" and (ii) "Promoting high-quality of youth work" while the third objective has a more horizontal / widespread applicability, namely (iii) "Inclusive education, training and youth".

The entire project team strongly believes that by teaching iCT skills (even if basic or intermediate) to citizens with Down Syndrome, together with Tourism related skills and activities (where the iCT skills acquired can be used to practice in real case scenarios) can decisively help social inclusion for these citizens in a mid-long term and to improve social inclusion of other citizens group with inclusion needs in the long term.

Regarding priorities "Promoting entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurship among young people" and "Promoting high-quality youth work" we believe they are highly related one another and with T21COMmunity project since they comprise transnational youth related initiatives that allow groups of young people – in this case specifically Down Syndrome citizens – to put ideas into practice which will lead to their professional and social inclusion or can include them on private and / or social enterprises, tackling challenges and problems identified within their communities.

Both priorities can be accomplished by "inwards" forces present individually on Down Syndrome citizens which having basic e-skills applied and complemented with tourism related tasks can contribute positively for their satisfaction, independence, inclusion and social recognition, as well as "outwards" forces where organizations (private, public and / or social) recognize the value and skills on these citizens and can include them as a valid work-force members towards employability. A final reference regarding the promotion of intercultural dialogue and strengthen knowledge and acceptance of diversity in society, where although this project specifically targets Down Syndrome citizens it will also positively contribute to the inclusion of other citizen groups which inclusion needs.

Complementary, this project approach is also aligned with the horizontal priority "Inclusive education, training and youth" given to actions addressing diversity in (formal and non-formal) education and training, developing social, civic, intercultural competences and media literacy, fighting discrimination and segregation.

Although e-learning represents a very important mean for self-education and training it is important to say that an important percentage of the population does not have sufficient iCT skills for handling technical platforms nor an incorporated behaviour who would enable them to explore and to be able to understand its practical operation.

Further, Down Syndrome citizens require specific (i) methodologies, (ii) tools, (iii) contents and (iv) teachers to develop and increase their skills also in the area of iCT, in order to positively contribute to their employability.

The project complementary team – also comprising elements which directly deal with Down Syndrome citizens as part of their families – strongly believe that a fundamental part of the social inclusion process arises from this population (i) having a minimum tool set of e-skills, (ii) be able to apply these skills to a specific domain – where tourism appears as a study field and (iii) having a minimum skill set which organizations (e.g. tourism related) may identify as potential and that are recognized and required by the current European market.

Down Syndrome citizens besides being able to generate and share their love with their family, friends and even unknown people can be valid, independent citizens with an active role in society if provided with sufficient skills, on-field experience and realistic goals and objectives.

Highly motivated people even with a minimum tool set and skill set, may take steps to evolve and drastically change their life and those who share their daily presence.

2.2 Innovation

This project links and merges different topics that have been the specific focus of several earlier projects. The main complementarity of this project, is to a previous one on the issue of the Down Syndrome Citizens named “*Pintar para lá dos Riscos*” (see <https://www.facebook.com/PintarParaLadosRiscos/>). This was an unfunded project based on the work of volunteers and a non-profit association (APPT21) with the collaboration of ESE-IPS and celebrities. This project involved 25 artists (artist painters, sculptors and a young writer) as well as another 25 young Down syndrome citizens. These young group of people with trisomy 21 were encouraged to express their feelings through art in order to raise awareness on the subject as well to empower the social integration of this population. This project led to various paintings and therefore exhibitions, leading also to an adapted book (adapted to people that have difficulties in following the classic literature narrative).

In a way we might also refer another project that, although having a different target group (adult learners) had similar preoccupations and addressed similar topics. This adult learning project is UPTAKE ICT (an Erasmus+) coordinated by ESE-IPS, which addresses the topics of social inclusion, employment and how to overcome the digital and social gaps. For this project digital learning materials were developed and adult learners are being trained with those contents.

The project proposed in this application (TV T21 Community) intent, to raise similar awareness and to (re)qualify these learners in digital skills in order to empower their employment. So, in terms of innovation we will have mainly five elements:

- Based on the “*Pintar Para lá dos Riscos*” (a non-funded art project) we intent to requalify these youth learners by giving them tools essential for the labour market. So the use of ICT educational materials, that can be transversal to many areas of knowledge (like the tourism), is one of the project innovations;
- An innovative web TV tool as an online learning environment. This tool does not intents to be the goal but instead a means to ease the knowledge transfer;
- The use of a collaborative work (between teachers/researchers/learners’/volunteer professionals) in the process of the stories writing (one of the outputs) is also a different and innovative approach;
- The learning activities with workshops in different areas will also be an innovative element to improve various social skills but also cultural competences;
- The linguistic aspect of the project, namely the development of all content in four European languages (one of them English), can increase the number of persons who can beneficiate from the project.

2.3 The Team

The project comprises a complementary team with members of 3 countries and 5 institutions, (from various sectors, higher education institutions, Down Syndrome non-profit organizations and business). In Portugal, the promoter country, there are four institutions, the coordinator (ESE-IPS)

as a Higher Education Institution with work in formal and non formal teaching/learning, one non-profit organization that works directly with Down Syndrome APPACDM and with vast expertise in audio-visual) and a software house enterprise (VIATECLA) with expertise in technological solutions, specially in ICTs and Audio-visual. In Croatia and Italy, we have two non-profit organizations (AIPD from Italy and CDSA from Croatia) that work with this target group for decades. Therefore, partners were chosen based on their experience in working with this target group and/or with the expertise in previous projects. The partnership was established based on previous projects, for example ESE-IPS has worked with APPACDM and VIATECLA, and CDSA has collaborated in another project with a non-profit organization from ESE-IPS Network (APPT21). The only new partner is AIPD that were found by their successful work with this target group in the SALTO YOUTH platform.

The diversity of the partner institutions demands a strategic cooperation focused in sharing good practices and know-how, allowing dissemination by all countries involved. In what concerns communication and based on previous project experience we will mainly focus on the synchronous communication through face to face meetings (one each 6/7 months), Open Day, Multiplier Event and virtual meetings (videoconferences). Digital tools such as Google Drive will be used to help developing collaborative work documents (e.g. papers, pedagogical guidelines). As for asynchronous communication e-mail will be used. In terms of stakeholders most of the mentioned communication tools and strategies will be used, both for the synchronous communication (since they will be invited to the Multiplier Events and other dissemination events), and the asynchronous communication (by e-mail, newsletters and through project's website).

The transnational meetings (TM) will occur with intervals of 6/7 months among them (with a total of 4 meetings), since we believe in the importance of each partner participation, all TM will occur with all partners (2 members from each institution, and 6 from the coordinator institution). We will also take advantage of the transnational meetings travels to do other events and therefore reduce the costs of the project (e.g. we will do the Multiplier Event and the learning/teaching activities immediately before/after a transnational meeting).

Each TM will occur in different countries of the partnership, except Portugal that will have two meetings, one at the beginning (at the same time as the Open Day) and one in the end (at the same time of the Multiplier Event) to assess, present and discuss all the activities and intellectual outputs developed with the community (academia, stakeholders, policy makers, Down syndrome citizens, parents). The other two TM will occur one in each country in order to see locally what is being done with the target group population (Down Syndrome youth citizens), to share those good practices and to keep the partnership aligned in the development of the project itself (one element that showed to be extremely important in other international projects where we participate).

The goal of these meeting will be:

- to monitor ongoing activities;
- to monitor budget management;
- to ensure overall coordination, the respect of objectives and the timely delivery of all outputs;
- to verify the achievement of progress indicators;
- to identify, prevent and solve possible risks in collaboration with the external evaluator.

The decision making will be held by consensus during online and face to face meetings with majority vote on key issues. An external evaluator will support the operational management team during the project lifetime: the person in charge will participate in two of the face to face meetings and regular meetings online.

Specific tools will be set up and used in order to facilitate communication and collaboration and to increase their level of attention in respect to these themes:

- The online hub will encourage two-way communication: from the project's partners to the stakeholders and vice versa;

- An open mailing list will be developed, so the project partners will regularly write and forward updates on project activities, events, meetings, available materials;
- Web 2.0. tools – Stakeholders will be able to communicate through the social media channels and other web 2.0 tools.

2.4 Expected Results

We expect both tangible (the ones that will be the actual products of the activities) and intangible (the ones that we don't see as a form of a product but are important achievements that cannot be neglected) results.

During the project we expect to share good practices among partners in order to create an actual development of innovation. The innovative elements, already stated in this document will surround the training and production (writing of the book) activities developed and designed for and with Down syndrome young people. By having the input of the many agents' partners (higher education institution, associations and enterprise) and stakeholders with expertise in various fields (like ICTs, business, formal and non formal training and social inclusion), we aim to develop the best methodologies to apply in the training of these citizens. And, with that to positively change their lives, both in academic and skills terms, but also in other competences socially and culturally important to their inclusion in the society and in the labour market.

In terms of outputs developed and produce that will represent tangible results, there will be:

- Meeting reports in each transnational meeting;
- e-Skills educational content, in various formats (e.g. video, text), based on the basic digital competences areas identified by the European Commission in the DIGCOMP;
- Various eBooks with the pedagogical guidelines and methodologies;
- An innovative Web TV platform for the educational content;
- A blended mobility learning activity in Portugal in Down Syndrome citizens from all partnership countries;
- Creative writing eBook on touristic and thematic short stories (romance, adventure, nature, monuments, arts, gastronomy, fun...).

In terms of intangible results some of them are already underlined in the document but in a systematic way, we aim to increase:

- The knowledge on the subject of Down Syndrome teaching and learning (mainly non-formal);
- The increasing ICT skills of this youth citizens;
- The social and cultural competences of the Down syndrome citizens;
- The awareness of this reality in Europe and in the partner countries.

We are therefore confident that these results may last long after the completion of the project, and that can promote an upskilling and the employability of this citizens, by using the best methodologies we can, and that can be applied and replicated in other European countries.

3 METHODOLOGY

The project is designed to ensure meaningful input from all stakeholders, establish what constitutes success at all levels and also to develop meaningful measures to gauge success. Four outputs form the core work plan and each output leads to the next. This creates an overlapping and inter-dependent structure where the results from each stage build towards a final dissemination. Across each output methods are balanced with the use of tools to meet the goals of each output.

During the project, the team will always be in contact, via virtual meetings and face-to-face transnational meetings. The workshops and the multiplier event will also provide for face-to-face

meeting points of the team. All these meeting points (virtual and face-to-face) will be moments of self-assessment and reflection on the questions addressed and possible solutions.

The project will also have a hub (website) for, not only, the team to communicate (private space), but also to provide in an open environment (public space) the information about the project, as well as news about the activities and the project's achievements. This virtual environment will be provided by the team leader's institution (Santarém's ESE-IPS). Besides web information, every face-to-face meeting, as well as the Conferences and the workshops will always have promotion and dissemination documents (e.g. brochures and leaflets) and inquiries will be proposed by the end of each and every activity.

All meetings will also have written reports that will account for the work done and to be done.

Other activities under the Project Management and Implementation Grant request are the planning activities (e.g. transnational meeting preparation, logistic preparation); coordination and communication between partners (e.g. Skype meeting preparation); small scale learning activities (e.g. Workshops; class-room project work); dissemination activities (e.g. conferences; social media strategies; leaflets); finance and budget control.

The rationale of this project and its organization was planned by the team leader in articulation with the partners, having in mind the various countries' realities and effective needs. The project is therefore the result of an objective oriented team work. It will be developed around three main moments. In the first moment, after the project is launched thanks to the Open Day with the volunteer celebrities, the whole team will concentrate in the development of the eskills educational contents (Intellectual Output 1). In this output there will be activities for developing educational contents both in text (and images) but also in video and with the innovative element of gamification. This means that the learner can choose the way he/she wants to learn (based on the different formats of the content) with motivational gamification elements like badges, points and small quiz games.

After this output the partnership will create the pedagogical and methodological guidelines for the usage of the educational contents by trainers, youth workers and other stakeholders (intellectual output 2), this task will have a work oriented methodology where all partners will contribute with their own expertise and will be translated into all partners' languages.

As mentioned the content will be developed in various formats (e.g. text, images, video), for that reason an innovative Web based TV platform will be prepared and refined to include these content (intellectual output 3). This output will also include functional testing and a continuous refinement during the full extent of the project. Being mainly technologic activities, these activities will be done predominantly by our technological partner (Viatecla) as well as the application coordinator (ESE-IPS), since both have large expertise in the development of digital tools.

After the training of the elearning contents we'll have blended mobility of young people as it can be seen in the Learning/Teaching/Training activity (C1). This activity is highly linked with the intellectual outputs 1, 2 and 3 and, besides the online learning activity (using the resources developed and included in the Web TV platform) will have face-to-face workshops in Portugal with 12 Down Syndrome learners and 4 accompanying persons. These workshops will cover various areas of knowledge (e.g. Sports, Cooking, Painting and sculpture, How to behave in an interview, How to create an Europass CV, Understand how to use money, tourism) and will count with the collaboration of volunteers (cf. annex declarations_of_intention.pdf) besides the collaboration of the educators and professionals from the partnership.

During the training with the educational tools and the face-to-face workshops, these learners will be encouraged to develop touristic and thematic short stories (Intellectual output 4). These creative writing stories will be written in collaboration between the partners, the learners and some personalities and professional writers (volunteers).

All these activities will be disseminated and be used to exploit the results among the partners. We expect to have a real impact in the awareness of the issue presented in the project in order to influence the policy makers of the involved countries and, hopefully in other countries experiencing the same or similar social/integration problems.

3.1 Cooperation and Communication

In terms of cooperation and communication this project team has a big advantage due to its experience in other projects, at the scientific and pedagogical levels.

This project counts with strong coordination from IPSantarem in the development, evaluation and dissemination of several financial opportunities, such as Erasmus +, P2020, H2020 and COST. With this vast experience and evidences, the project team guarantees the necessary support for any questions or communication issues that may occur.

In addition, since the project team will be directly involved in the several activities (project management, implementation, outputs, dissemination and sustainability) it is important to establish a transversal participation of each partner, taking into account their expertise and involvement in the designed work plan. This way, establishing several stages of cooperation, such as:

- Communication stages: where the partners will virtually meet (Skype/Google hangouts) in order to check project progress and possible changes;
- Partner collaboration: in order to check they're progress throughout the project and the obtained results within each team.
- Dissemination stages: to secure the promotion and dissemination activities throughout and after the project implementation.

With this, the intranet environment will be customised and all the partners can place questions, share files, make appointments, distribute tasks, create chat rooms and monitor the progress of activities.

Through synchronous and asynchronous communication, like e-mail, skype meetings, and web conferences through google hangouts, the partners have tools for sharing information and progress, maintaining continuous contact throughout the project.

The partners were chosen by their strong skills in the areas included in the project, experience in working with other people and enterprises, curriculum and for the partnerships that the members had/have in a local, regional, national and international scale. Also, it will be valorised the good and pleasant working environment. Any emerging conflict will be solved among partners with the mediation of the project's leader. Additionally, some group dynamics may be established during face-to-face meetings to strengthen group cohesion and collaboration.

4 EXPECTED IMPACT

The proposed project provides an opportunity to contribute to the development of innovative and good practices in the area of non-formal education as an element of a multi disciplinary support structure. Further insight and international co-operation will contribute to the exploration of new educational environments embedding online opportunities (web based TV platform) that can be based in a range of settings and incorporate a range of social and emotional supports to learning and progression plans for vulnerable and at-risk groups of young people.

To date we know that digital inclusion and effective educational programmes require more than access to computer equipment and online platforms alone. Also, addressing learner variance and supporting individual needs is seen as a key factor for success when working with marginalized or at-risk learners in alternative educational settings.

In concrete terms the project will have the following impact on the participants and participating organizations:

- It offers the opportunity to identify inclusive learning materials through an interactive platform in order to establish a "Community of Practise" with the HUB (website) where ideas and innovations can be shared by the people who are currently working with inclusive practices;
- It provides access to collect and process information about the programs already at use and to report about different inclusive online practices in the EU;

- It gathers the information needed to identify innovative and inclusive methodologies for successfully train and integrate the target group in the society, especially in the labour market. This opens the unique possibility to improve the learning (formal and/or non-formal) methodologies in various organizations both nationally and internationally;
- It gives the possibility to design, test, implement and evaluate various thematic workshops with our focus groups and to test the framework in action. These workshops can be used as a part of curriculum in the participant organizations after testing.
- It offers an opportunity to give a more active role to the Down Syndrome citizens both in terms of their learning and in terms of their presence in society (e.g. employment).

Other relevant stakeholders such as special educators and partners, are offered the opportunity to be part of the network and to share experiences, ideas and innovations. This project will allow them to use the educational contents produced and the eBooks as part of their developmental strategy in terms of learning solutions. They will gain open access to use all materials with their focus groups. Through the use of these tools their opportunities to develop and improve practices designed for marginalized students both nationally and internationally will be enhanced. Finally and most importantly, the target group of this project, the vulnerable and at-risk groups of Down Syndrome young people will have a better opportunity to study in new and innovative learning environments which are designed to help them overcome their educational challenges. They are also called to be active participants in the society.

The scientific, societal, technological, policy and economic impacts expected at the local, regional and national scope would consist in the fulfilment of the various workshops and actions that will promote equity and inclusion. The integration of Down Syndrome citizens in society and in the labour market as valued members will have a noticeable impact at all levels. The project will be thus collaborating in the solution of one of the major problems and challenges of social inclusion that Europe is facing.

To enhance, after the several activities execution, we will present to our national and foreign Governments the outcomes and whenever needed, we will contribute to a shift/reform in policies regarding each country involved.

The project addresses the priorities identified in Eurozone (e.g. European Parliament; European Commission) like the European Disability Strategy and the necessity to a more inclusive society. Therefore, this project aims at making a positive difference in the area of Down Syndrome children's support.

The exchange of information and good practices will not be restricted to the project partners. Namely in Portugal, the results reached will be used and implemented locally, regionally, and nationally by the coordinator (ESE/IPS) and APPACDM partners, therefore positive impacts are expected in local, regional and national economy both during the project and after its completion with employability of some of these citizens in the labour market (hopefully others will be employed in other regions and countries of the partners involved). The action of this network will have a long lasting impact because the educational contents will remain available and the partners (mainly the non-profit organizations) will remain working on the social inclusion of these citizens.

We expect National and European impact at various levels:

- Pedagogical impact:
 - accurate information of the inclusive aspects that should be taken into account;
 - proven models for blending formal and non formal learning aspects;
 - ideas for using ICTs in efficient inclusive learning;
 - new creative commons generated by network.
- Scientific Impact:

- systematization and enhancement of knowledge;
- literature review;
- enhancement of competences already developed and creation of new ones;
- increased awareness of the Down Syndrome issue;
- context and characteristics of the target group.
- Societal impact:
 - knowledge and competence in the activation of effective non formal learning solutions in inclusive contexts;
 - social inclusion of the at-risk youth in society and future employment market.
- Policy Impact:
 - Ministries of Education;
 - School regulators;
 - “Knowledge triangle” of the European Research Area: research, innovation and education.

5 ACTIVITIES

5.1 Intellectual Outputs

e-Skills educational content, in various formats (e.g. video, text), based on the basic digital competences areas (Information, Communication, Content creation, Safety and Problem Solving) identified by the European Commission in the DIGCOMP project in various formats and with innovative elements like gamification. For each competence various educational contents will be produced.

Development of the pedagogical and methodological guidelines to train/teach the target group (disadvantaged background learners with Down Syndrome). This guidelines will be wrote into an ebook that will serve as a guide for stakeholders, teachers, trainers and parents to accompany the Down Syndrome learners in their learning process.

Innovative Web based TV platform for training and interaction between Teachers, Stakeholders and the Down Syndrome learners. This output is mainly associated with the technological component of the project. Represented as a software platform it constitutes the technological medium through which educational content is presented to the T21 learners by physical and virtual teachers, and how these interact during e-learning sessions. We envision that this platform shall be refined during its usage.

Creative writing eBook on touristic and thematic short stories. This intellectual output will end in a collaborative creative writing eBook on touristic and thematic short stories (romance, adventure, nature, monuments, arts, gastronomy, fun...) written by the Down Syndrome learners involved in the project (with the help of all partners and professional writers). Some of the volunteers are specialists in writing, linguistic and culture.

This book will be written based on the learners lifestories and experiences during the project (e.g. the educational contents learned, the workshops where they participated, their hobbies and likes, as well as the travels they do during the project or that they have done in previous moments).

5.2 Learning/Teaching/Training Activities

These activities will help these young learners to be more proactive in the pursuit of employment and will give them a wide range of tools to face the labour market. Also, these training activities will be essential to the success of the project, first by giving new knowledge to our target group, second by being an integrative activity, and third promoting the share of good practices allied to an intercultural experience.

These activities will also help every partner to increase their own knowledge on the subject and to import it back to their realities and other projects were they are involved.

This activity is highly linked with the intellectual outputs. For it proper implementation, it will be divided into two phases:

- The initial one, will start with an online learning activity (using the resources, specified educational content for the participants and other developed content which is included in the Web TV platform);
- The second phase, is traced by the face-to-face sessions, where it will be occurring workshops in the several subjects that are described below. This training activity will be held in Portugal for the Down Syndrome learners.

These workshops will cover various areas of knowledge (e.g. Sports, Cooking, Painting and sculpture, how to behave in an interview, how to create an Europass CV, understand how to use electronic payments and how to consult other related tourism contents) and will count with the collaboration of volunteers besides the collaboration of the educators and professionals from the partnership. Some of the volunteers are specialists in writing, linguistic and culture (lectures and researchers from HEI), others in the training of Down syndrome youth (teachers in high school). We count on having more volunteers along the next months on other complementary areas.

6 PRELIMINARY RESULTS

In terms of preliminary results, the project team decided to build a questionnaire that addressed several key points about the T21COMMunity initiative to the student corpus.

In this way, the following questions were carried out:

a) How do you rate your level of involvement in the meeting (20 and 21 November 2017) "#TV T21COMMUNITY # E-skills, inclusion and employability social (intercultural dialogue in tourism)."

b) Would you like to participate in the week of Learning Activities that will take place in the ESE of IPSantarém from 16 to 20 April 2018?

c) Why would you like to participate?

d) What changes do you identify in your competency profile when you participate as a volunteer in these activities?

In relation to the type of questionnaire, the latter considered a mixed methodology by adopting quantitative and qualitative elements. Thus, in terms of results The first issue revealed three samples (15% Satisfactory, 40% Excellent and 45% Very good).

These values reveal the relevance of this project and how, this boosted the involvement of students.

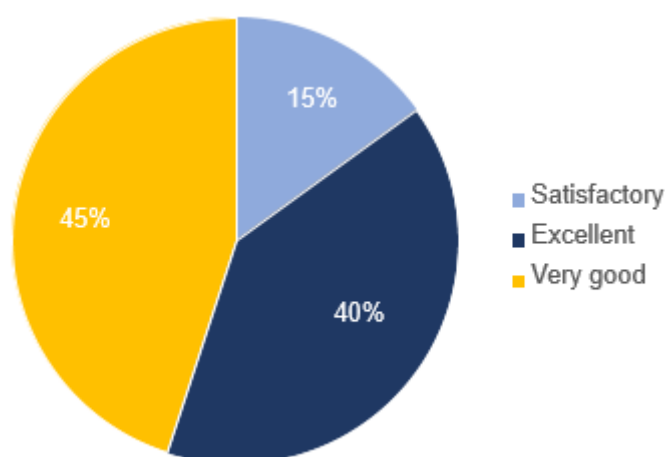


Figura 1. Levels of involvement of students

Concerning the second question, the following results were mainly positive being 95% saying yes and only 5% saying no. These numbers showed us the importance of the training activities and the satisfaction of the students by having a chance of participating as volunteers.

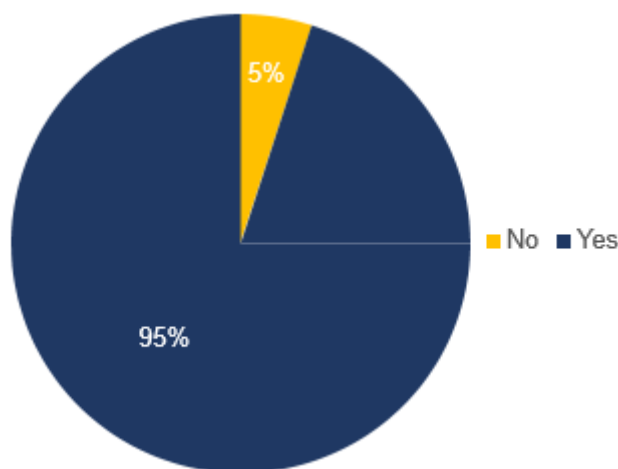


Figura 2. Participation on the training activities

As for the qualitative measures, the results were quite interesting and challenging with some testimonials that showed possible changes in the competency profile for future participants as a volunteer in these activities.

In detail, these were some of the answers

“At the level of the competency profile there will be changes of certainty. This type of projects requires a lot of "stuff" because it gives a lot of work before the days of "Learning Activities" but when the date arrives and we can see that the young people who participate are always with a smile on their face is very gratifying and that changes my profile. Already at the professional level helps me learn to work with various programs and develop skills with them and also in the practice and development of charisma”.

“It enriches our ability to engage with other people, improve our communication and integration with others, and deal with more complicated or non-everyday situations”.

With this, it was possible to understand which profiles are required as “core” for the proper functioning of the learning activities. This last metric was also important to recognized the added value of the participants towards the project initiatives.

7 CONCLUSION

The awareness for the Trisomy 21 citizen’s inclusion has been slowly increasing thanks to a number of measures and actions adopted at both National and European levels. The European Parliament adopted a declaration on children with Down Syndrome in 2012 urging the Commission, the Council and the Member States to contribute to their social inclusion through awareness-raising campaigns. The EU also promotes their inclusion in society through the European Disability Strategy but much more can and has to be done. Non-profit organizations and associations in the civil society with very few resources are still doing work in this area.

The project is designed to ensure meaningful input from all stakeholders, in order to obtain clear accomplishments at all levels and to develop meaningful measures to gauge success. The outputs, learning activities and two Multiplier Events are related to the specific aims of this project, where each output has a related activity and it owns objectives. With this, the core work plan and each output informs the next. Key stakeholders and participants will deliver input on an on-going basis and will include the identification of outcomes and any adaptation required.

This project will provide outcomes and results that will contribute to increase awareness about Down Syndrome citizens and their social inclusion, by developing engaging learning environments for a range of marginalised young people at-risk of educational disadvantage and therefore limited life opportunities. The intended impact is to further develop non-formal programmes and activities in order to maximise the effectiveness of learning and training for inclusion through a creative approach to training design and delivery. It is envisaged that young participants will benefit from the opportunity to develop a degree of autonomy over their own learning process and contribute with the development of new approaches and insights. As the application platform will be created and freely maintained by the Applicant organization, this project has the potential to contribute to further use by other non-profit organizations that can reuse the educational contents later on. Successful dissemination will be facilitated through a range of media and events designed to maximise the sharing of findings and to open a dialogue for future innovation.

8 REFERENCES

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