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European Network for Technology Enhanced Learning in an Inclusive Society

Progress Report

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Executive Summary

The ENTELIS project aims to contribute to reduce the digital divide, especially for persons with disabilities and elderly. During its first 18 months of activity, the project has produced a state of the art report in which most of the research work is reported. The conclusion is that the digital divide exists and that it is the results of many factors interacting in different areas of life. The ENTELIS project addresses the factors of educational nature, in particularly those that relate to digital literacy and the digital competences of persons with disabilities and elderly.

The sustainable network that is envisaged as an outcome of this project will share information and experiences and thus develop capacities to effectively address the digital divide, in Europe and worldwide.

In this report the objectives of the project are outlined, as well as the approach adopted. In a third section the results and outcomes are summarised. Following an overview of the expanding partnership the future plan are presented as well as the expected contribution to European policies.

In the last section instructions are given for those that wish to commit to join the network.

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1. Project Objectives

The *European Network for Technology Enhanced Learning in an Inclusive Society* (ENTELIS) project is a multilateral network project co-funded by the European Commission (EC) under the Lifelong Learning (LLL) programme in 2013. The core issue that the project aims to address is the **digital divide**, in particular where the divide concerns people with disabilities and elderly.

There are a multitude of causes why many persons with disabilities and elderly are totally or partially excluded from the benefits of the digital revolution, even if the digital revolution offers important opportunities for them. There is a need to have a better understanding of the mechanisms that create exclusion and of feasible strategies to reduce the digital divide. Further the gap between specific groups and mainstream society has to be monitored constantly in order to tackle the existing risk that it gets even wider in the future.

This project is particularly interested in factors related to **education** that can explain and address the digital divide. The development of digital skills that allow people to identify the importance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and ICT based Assistive Technology solutions (ICT-AT) and their effective use is considered one of the factors that help to reduce the digital divide. The worlds of formal and non-formal education play an important role, while the understanding of mechanisms related to informal learning are extremely important to consider as well.

The general aims of the project are thus related to contributing to reduce the digital divide, to celebrate learning in ICT and ICT-AT for all and to promote educational innovation. These objectives are fully in line with European policies in the areas of Education, the digital society, the inclusive society and the implementation of the Un Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Being a network project the specific objectives are more related to competence building, awareness raising and policy development, than to the development of operational tools and methodologies in education and learning.

They include:

- To strengthen of the collaboration between actors in formal and non-formal education and those supportive to informal learning;
- To disseminate results and outcomes of projects, studies and conferences, as well as the dissemination of experiences of good practice in education and policy;
- To identify present barriers, emerging and future needs related to the acquisition and reinforcement of digital competences, bridging the world of education, employment and wider social participation;
- To contribute to the development of certification systems of the learned in learning pathways in ICT and ICT-AT;
- To raise interest for LLL in ICT and ICT-AT among all stakeholders, in particular persons with disabilities, elderly and professionals.

-To contribute to European Policies in different policy areas.

A specific but important objective and expected outcome of this project is the transformation of the project consortium into a sustainable self-governed thematic network solidly embedded in existing European umbrella organisations.

2. Project Approach

Although the project focuses on factors related to education to explain and to address the digital divide, the analysis at the basis of its operations refer to a more **holistic and multi factor** model. It includes factors of different nature, such as technological, psychological, economical, educational factors, etc. that are at the origin of barriers to activity and participation of persons with disabilities, as well as with opportunities to enhance participation. These **barriers and opportunities** occur in different areas of life: education, employment, social life, politics. The interaction of these factors happens in a context of continuous transformation due to the progression of time and the impact of human intervention. Both phenomena related to the digital divide that play at individual level or at group level are considered.

The project acknowledges that the digital divide can only be addressed fully and effectively if action to remove or reduce the impact of the barriers and to enhance the opportunities is undertaken in all of these areas. This would require many actions in different areas, difficult to address in a single project. Nevertheless education is an important action area that due to its potential to change can contribute to successfully address factors in all areas. Examples might include the education of policymakers and designers of technology, alongside the education of users and their teachers and educators.

The approach proposed by the project is to **actively engage different stakeholders** with the challenges of the digital divide and to help them reflect on their roles and responsibilities. The project will further enhance collaboration between the different stakeholders, because only through multi-stakeholder action things could be moved forward. That is the reason why three European umbrella organisations have decided to collaborate in this project and to create opportunities for their members to get involved: EASPD is the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, AAATE is the Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology, and EVBB, an European umbrella organisation of Vocational Training Centres. Other partners in the consortium have more specific competences to share which has completed the platform of organisations with different backgrounds able to contribute significantly to the **common learning process**.

The learning process is based on **the involvement of persons with disabilities and elderly, on the exchange of good practice, on the sharing of information**, in the framework of a consolidated network, solidly embedded in existing umbrella organisations, that acts and will act as a platform for learning, action and project development.

In order to grasp the input from different countries and organisations and to disseminate in an increasing number of environments, the network aims to expand and **to grow**. Organisations that want to join ENTELIS now can do so, and join the group of associate partners. At the end of the project the distinction between partners (consortium members) and associate partners will cease to exist and a new governing structure will be in place.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

Started on January 1st, 2014, the project so far (month 18) has obtained the following results:

1. A **State of the Art report** has been produced based on the analysis of a large amount of scientific articles and conference papers (**literature review**), as well as on **interviews with different stakeholders**, namely persons with disabilities and elderly, educators and assistive technology providers. Further recent and relevant **European projects** have been described and experiences of practices and policies have been collected and included in the report, with the support of the associate partners. The report further contains a section with **conclusions and recommendations**. The report is currently under review by the Associate Partners and will be presented publicly in November during the ENTELIS annual seminar.
2. The same information that has been collected is also posted on **the ENTELIS web site** (www.entelis.net). This website further presents details about the project and the partnership, including information on how to become a partner.
3. Also a **conceptual framework** related to ICT and ICT-AT education has been designed, as well as a **glossary** that systematically describes terminology used relevant for the project.
4. At the end of November 2014 the first **international ENTELIS seminar** has been held in Bologna, Italy. The seminar day was preceded by a press conference and a meeting with the local authorities. The seminar itself featured an open call for contributions and a programme with invited key note speakers. In the afternoon interactive discussion sessions completed the programme. The participants demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the event. The day after the seminar a specific training event took place in the AIAS Ausilioteca AT centre, organised by the Person Centred Technology Group of EASPD.
5. Regarding the building of the network the consortium has produced a **roadmap for the development of the network** and an **action plan** for its growth. Different organisations have requested to join the network (see next session for their names).
6. Also the **dissemination and exploitation strategies** have been outlined.

Content wise the consortium has found evidence for the digital divide, although there is definitely a need for more research and data collection, both in the form of large population studies, and in depth studies on specific aspects such as consequences, if policy makers have to be effectively addressed.

The following needs have been identified so far by the consortium:

The need for increasing awareness: the lack of knowledge on products and user strategies and methodologies continues to be a barrier to the effective deployment

of ICT-AT technology. Awareness among PwD of all ages, as well as their families and caregivers will reduce resistance (especially for older people) and increase interest in the acquisition of digital skills.

The need for professional development of teachers and the training of parents and other informal caregivers: Educators, assistants/carers, families and learners often do not realize the true potential of assistive technology solutions, usually because of the lack of training and inadequate digital skills. Studies suggest that lack of family involvement may lead to misuse and disuse of ICT-AT. In formal education, institutions should consider it their basic task to provide training to all concerned in order to get students with disabilities to use the technology effectively and enjoy its benefits. Therefore strategies, curricula and policies for the enhancement of ICT/ICT-AT education should be developed as an integral part of the educational plan as such and not as an additional opportunity.

The need to reduce the gap in the transition from secondary to higher education: Since modern university life requires students to be self-reliant and digitally competent, families and educators need to provide students with opportunities for independent decision-making, and self-advocacy prior to the transition to higher education, and also with opportunities for self-directed ICT-AT skills development, which can be applied in real situations and not only assessed in ICT certified programs with no practical match.

The need to improve access to technology: For different reasons many persons with functional and other limitations that could benefit from the use of technology to have a higher quality of life, actually do not have access. This could be addressed by more proactive policies, economic incentives and more and more timely support in the selection and acquisition of appropriate solutions.

The need for more inclusive design: The design of the technology is known to be important for successful technology education, training and use, especially for older adults and people with cognitive. Studies highlight that the key element in ICT-AT products' design must be simplicity/AT configuration, and also maintenance should embrace simplicity. Designers and engineers should improve accessibility features on current mainstream devices/mainstream technology, to ensure they have accessibility built-in, i.e. are inclusive.

The need to involve all relevant stakeholders: It is important to include all stakeholders (end users, carers, providers, trainers/educators, policy makers) in research and design processes in order to obtain a set of rich perspectives and insights about the people involved in the selection of ICT-AT, as well as in the design of ICT-AT training and education programmes.

Please refer to the State of the art report for more conclusions and literature references.

4. Partnerships

Partnerships are at this stage basically related to the development of a sustainable network and thus focussed on the consolidation of the collaboration between the partners.

The consortium comprises the following organisations:

Name	Address
AIAS Bologna onlus	Via Ferrara 32, 40139 Bologna, Italy
Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe (AAATE)	c/o JKU, Institut Integriert Studieren. Altenbergstrasse 69. A-4040 Linz, Austria
European Association of Service Providers to Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)	Oudergemselaan 63, 1040 Brussels, Belgium
European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB)	Valentin-Senger-Straße 5, 60389 Frankfurt, Germany
Satakunta University (SAMK)	Tiedepuisto 3, 28600 Pori, Finland
European University Cyprus (EUC)	6 Diogenous Str, Engomi, 2404 Nicosia, Cyprus
Home Farm Trust Limited	Brook Office Park 5/6, BS16 7FL Bristol, UK
Open the Windows	Anton Chehov 32, 1000 Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
National Federation of Voluntary Bodies	Ornamore Business Park 6, Galway, Ireland
Institute for Matching Person and Technology	486 Lake Road, Webster, NY 14580 USA

Most project partners have **previously collaborated** in different configurations in EU funded projects related to the themes of ICT and ICT-AT and lifelong learning aimed at the realization of vocational training paths, the implementation of learning methodologies and tools, the development of digital contents and materials, mostly addressed to vulnerable groups, in particular disabled and elderly people.

They further have a **strategic drive to collaboration**, based on their missions and on the recognition of the value of complementary perspectives on the issues addressed.

The consortium network thus has a core group of driving stakeholding **European umbrella organisations**. They are aware of the need to collaborate on this specific issue and have the ability to reach out to their membership, both for the collection of input, as well as for the dissemination of the results of the project. AAATE proposes its strategic view on ICT and ICT-AT and disability. EASPD adds to the basket the expertise of its members in informal and non formal education and its vicinity to policymakers in Brussels. EVBB is known for the expertise of its members in vocational training and its clear commitment to support vulnerable groups. Although not an European umbrella organisation, also NFVB has an umbrella structure representing many organisations close to people with intellectual disabilities in Ireland.

Further there are **single organisations with a significant experience in this field**, predominantly with an educational or social care background. They provide a

knowledge base and experience based input (access to good practice, case histories, local and national data and projects, evaluation of existing learning and ICT and ICT-AT skills development, etc.). The HomeFarm Trust is a leading organisation in the UK, while Open the Windows (OtW) is so for the Republic of Macedonia. OtW represent an bridgehead in Eastern Europe being one of the most significant experiences of ICT-AT education and service provision in former Yugoslavia.

Last but not least **research organisations** provide methodological support and have a leading role in shaping the foresight scenarios and roadmap or roadmaps. The Satakunta University and the European University Cyprus were selected on the basis of their expertise and motivation, following a call of interest among AAATE members.

Additional input comes from a high profile **third country partner**, the Matching Person and Technology Institute (USA).

AIAS Bologna onlus, an end user representing organisation with experience in EU project management, ICT-AT service delivery and education, took the initiative for this project and is appreciated as the **lead partner**.

Where the consortium embraces only the above mentioned organisations, it is important to highlight that due to budget restrictions many organisations that wanted to become a partner had to be disappointed. In the project writing phase they have been invited to become **Associate partners. All associate partners have signed an expression of interest** and have consented in being included in this list. They are the building stones of the network development and although they don't receive financial contributions from the project, their role and participation is valued and facilitated where possible.

List of associate partners.

Nr	Name of organisation	Type of institution	City	Country
1	Centro per l'Autonomia Ausilioteca Campana Onlus Società Cooperativa Sociale	AT centre	Napoli	Italy
2	Enable Ireland National Assistive Technology Training Service	Disability Service Provider	Dublin	Ireland
3	The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	NGO	Helsinki	Finland
4	Institute on Disabilities, Temple University	University	Philadelphia	USA
5	GLIC Italian Network of Independent AT Centres	National umbrella organization of AT Centres	Bologna	Italy
6	CRPG – Centro de Reabilitacao Profissional de Gaia	Vocational rehabilitation centre	Vila Nova de Gaia	Portugal
7	Istituto Leonardo Vaccari	Research centre and service provider	Roma	Italy
8	National Alliance for Social Responsibility	National umbrella NGO	Varna	Bulgaria
9	Les Papillons Blancs de Dunkerque	Association of end users	Dunkerque	France
10	Infocomm Accessibility Centre - Society for the physically disabled	NGO of end users	Singapore	Republic of Singapore
11	School for elementary and secondary education "Milan Petrovic"	School	Novi Sad	Serbia

12	Centre de Gabrielle - MFPass	Service provider	Claye Souilly	France
13	Department of Education Studies – University of Bologna	University	Bologna	Italy
14	Cyprus Interaction Lab - Cyprus University of Technology	University	Limassol	Cyprus
15	Pancyprian Organization of the Blind	NGO of end users	Nicosia	Cyprus
16	Institut Fédératif de Recherche d'Aides Techniques pour personnes Handicapées	Association	Pantin	France
17	The central Union for the Welfare of the Aged	NGO	Helsinki	Finland
18	Mada – Qatar Assistive Technology Center	Governmental agency	Doha	Qatar
19	University of Glasgow	University	Glasgow	United Kingdom

New partnerships

The following organisation have joined the ENTELIS network in the first 18 months of the project:

20	GAATES (Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments),	International network		Global
21	Lebenshilfe Salzburg gGmbH	Association	Salzburg	Austria
22	atempo	NGO	Graz	Austria
23	APACHES (Association des Professionnels d'Accompagnement du Handicap dans l'Enseignement Supérieur)	Association	Paris	France

Currently the consortium is collaborating with the Centre of Excellence in Universal Design of the National Disability Authority of Ireland.

5. Plans for the Future

In the next 18 months the consortium will:

1. Deliver a track on Education in AT in **the AAATE conference**, scheduled for September 9-12, 2015 in Budapest.
2. Organise the annual **ENTELIS seminar in Dublin** (November 12th 2015) on the role of Education in reducing the digital divide. The seminar will be organised in close collaboration with the Conference on Universal Design in Education of the National Disability Authority with which it will share sessions and key note speakers.
3. Participate in the **Disability Conference** that will be held at the beginning of December in Brussels.
4. In the fall of 2016 the Consortium will organise its third annual seminar in Brussels concomitance with the celebrations of EASPD's 20th anniversary.
5. In the meantime the consortium will have delivered another key deliverable, namely a **foresight study** on the changing scenarios in ICT and ICT-AT education for persons with disabilities and the ageing population. This study will include recommendations for policymakers and **roadmaps** to achieve objectives considered fundamental.
6. **Living labs in three countries** (Italy, Finland and Cyprus) based on the participation of different stakeholders will be actively involved in the preparation of these recommendations and roadmaps.
7. Further the consortium will deliver a **preliminary study of certification methodologies** of ICT and ICT-AT competences of persons with disabilities.
8. These documents, as well as the state of the art report, and their conclusions will be the basis for **brief communications and policy papers** with which the consortium will contact stakeholders at global, European and national level. Also summaries in Easy to Read will be produced.
9. The consortium will seek to actively impact on:
 - a. -The implementation of the European Disability Strategy
 - b. -The implementation of the European Digital Agenda
 - c. -The research agenda of the GATE programme of the World Health Organisation
 - d. -The European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing
10. Regarding the consolidation of **the network** the consortium will decide by the end of 2015 its future configuration and use 2016 to make preparations for handing over the project heritage to the network that will start to exist following a formal agreement between EASPD, AAATE and EVBB. Other umbrella organisations might join.

6. Contribution to EU policies

At policy level the project refers to the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** which is also at the heart of the **European Disability Strategy**. Action Area 1 of the same strategy refers to the need to make the (digital) world a more accessible place and the recognition of the role of (assistive) technology to enable people to fully enjoy their rights. The project further contributes to one of the pillars of **the European Digital Agenda**, namely the promotion of **digital literacy, skills and inclusion**.

The project in all its activities furthers the view that digital exclusion is a huge barrier on the road to **equal participation and full citizenship** of persons with disabilities. It also furthers the view that digital literacy and skills development need to be boosted in order to allow citizens of all ages and in any condition to **participate in the digital revolution**. Empowered citizens and **more accessible digital environments** will not only fulfil the promises of a human rights based society, but also **boost economic activity**, expand markets, **create employment, reduce costs for care** and **further democracy, social innovation and dialogue**. Further **societies will be safer**, with vulnerable people better **protected against risk of abuse and exclusion**.

Appropriate digital literacy educational programmes for children with disabilities, will improve their school success and reduce the frustration of parents and teachers. It will allow **traditional educational systems to develop in a more inclusive way**.

Many pilot projects in the development and testing of integrated care platforms (medical and social care) have identified in the lack of digital competence of the elderly a major obstacle for the full deployment of their systems. **Lifelong learning in ICT** will help the future generations of **elderly** to be competent in **managing their own integrated care plans** that will be delivered through mobile technologies. This will allow European societies to spend the available resources for welfare services better, serving the needs of the children of the demographic boom in the 50ties and 60ties.

7. How to join the ENTELIS network

The ENTELIS Mission

*ENTELIS – European Network for Technology Enhanced Learning in an Inclusive Society – is an open network of organisations that have a common interest – as part of their institutional mission – in fostering the **empowerment of persons with disabilities** and improving their participation in daily life, education and work, by increasing their **digital skills** and ability to make effective use of **assistive technology**.*

The ENTELIS project – an EU-funded project within the Lifelong Learning Programme – intends to initiate this network and develop it into a long-term sustainable network that will continue after the three-years-funded time.

This network will not include the formal partners of the ENTELIS project only: it will be open to any other organisation that shares the ENTELIS vision, commits to the ENTELIS mission and wishes to actively collaborate by sharing expertise, collecting good practices, and take advantage of mutual collaboration for improving their initiatives.

*The main keyword of the project is **education**, believed to be a major strategy to reduce the digital divide and not intended as just formal education (i.e. provided by formally established educational agencies such as universities, schools or vocational training centres) but also as informal (e.g. based on communications among peers) and non-formal (structured learning activities outside formal education e.g. job related training, educational activities in day centres, etc.).*

Overall, any form of knowledge transmission to actual or prospective end-user of assistive technology, from awareness dissemination to education to digital skills training, falls within the scope of the project, as it addresses a population that is permanently at risk of exclusion.

The ENTELIS vision

The ENTELIS network is intended as a response to the persistence of the digital divide worldwide and in particular in Europe.

The vision pursued by the ENTELIS network is that every citizen with disabilities who may take advantage of ICT-based solutions for enhancing his/her independence and participation in society:

- *has the digital skills needed to make effective use of these solutions in all domains of life such as social interaction, education, employment, leisure, etc.;*
- *has the knowledge needed to make informed and responsible choices of the related assistive technologies; and*
- *knows where to find information as well as the appropriate professional resources needed to support the choice and the learning to use.*

*This vision is consistent with, and to a great extent inspired by, the goals pursued by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**¹ and by the **European Disability Strategy 2010-2020**².*

In order to make this happen and to overcome fragmentation in the strategies to tackle the digital divide, a coordinated multiple-stakeholder action is needed whenever possible.

*Within this network, **academics and researchers** involved in ICT, accessibility and assistive technology can help develop the conceptual thinking that leads to effective*

¹<http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

²<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0636:FIN:EN:PDF>

educational models and tools, produce educational material, train qualified people to be good teacher and educators in this field, identify priority research areas to be addressed, assess the actual effectiveness of available ICT and AT solutions for end users.

Service providers working in the disability area can bring their field experience, concrete examples of educational initiatives, case histories and good practices; **education providers** and **vocational training providers** can bring their specific educational knowledge and their expertise on employment opportunities and the related skills demand. Jointly, service providers and education providers could engage in experiencing innovative models emerging from the network, within the context of their institutional activities.

End-users and their organisations could bring their perspective related to participation and citizenship and especially indicate roadmaps for the fulfilment of the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that speak about accessibility and assistive technology.

Established international networks such as the AAATE (Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe), the EASPD (European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities) and the EVBB (European Association of Institutions for Vocational training) will serve as the initial core of the ENTELIS network.

Overall, by raising awareness and disseminating education and knowledge, the ENTELIS network intends to contribute to the empowerment of people with disabilities, to support independence, choice and control in relation to ICT assistive technology, and to inform and develop the work of professionals involved in the disability field.

Last but not least, within the ENTELIS network the partner Organisations have also the opportunity to initiate collaborative projects in the assistive technology education area that tackle specific aspects of the challenges, and to share views that may contribute to the development of national policies.

Rules for joining the ENTELIS network

Any Organisation sharing the ENTELIS mission and vision - and willing to engage in the commitments involved - can apply to become **Associate Partners** of the ENTELIS network.

The admission procedure is very simple:

- The Organisation interested in joining the network asks for admission, by sending an application letter (template to be downloaded from www.entelis.net) declaring its adherence to the ENTELIS mission and rules. The application letter – on the Organisation's letterhead, signed by an authorised representative – is e-mailed to the ENTELIS project coordinator, along with a concise **one-page profile** which is helpful to understand the nature and the mission the Organisation itself.
- The project co-ordinator – or another Consortium Partner appointed by the coordinator – analyses the candidate Organisation in relation to the ENTELIS objectives, also taking direct contact and discussing with its representative if needed; based on this analysis he or she formulates a recommendation to the Consortium Partners to accept or decline the application.
- Each Consortium Partner expresses its view within two weeks; if no view is expressed it is assumed as a favourable opinion.
- The ENTELIS coordinator – taking into account the Consortium Partners' views – takes the decision and (if positive) sends out the acceptance letter.
- After acceptance, the new Associate Partner is registered on the ENTELIS website and its appointed contact person is given the credentials to access the private area. After that he or she will start receiving all communications reserved to the network members and submit material on the website, and will start active participation.

