Newsflash November 2017

The ENTELIS Network is glad to present to you our November Newsflash.

In this publication you will find information on the ENTELIS Thematic Session held during last AAATE Conference in Sheffield (UK). Furthermore you can read an interesting article by V.T.C. Margarita (GR) on how Digital Storytelling can help people with intellectual disabilities to speak publicly. Also you can get some information from AIAS Bologna (IT) about EDUROB, an EU funded project on the use of robotics in educational environment. At the end, you can read a report on the EVBB’s Annual Conference in Malta about Inclusive VET in Digital Era.

Enjoy the reading!

Domenico Manente
EASPD Project Officer

ENTELIS Special Thematic Session during the AAATE 2017 Conference

During the last AAATE conference, which was held in Sheffield on September the 13th and 14th, the ENTELIS network was promoter of a special session on ICT learning and digital inclusion. Katerina Mavrou from the European University of Cyprus (ENTELIS member) chaired the session.

All six presenters dealt with the challenges of creating more inclusive educational systems by means of the efficient use of appropriate digital technologies. During the session one of the products of the ENTELIS network, the self-assessment framework for inclusive schools supporting disabled students was presented (Evert-Jan Hoogerwerf, AIAS Bologna onlus), as well as results from a study into the use of the framework in schools in Cyprus (Katerina Mavrou, EUC). Other presenters dealt with Web Widgets Barriers for Visually Impaired Users (Letícia Seixas Pereira, Université Paris 8) and Extraction Methodology of Implicit Didactics in Math Schoolbooks for the Blind (Klaus Miesenberger, IIS). In addition, accessibility aspects of Massive Open Online Courses have been discussed (Francisco Iniesto, The Open University). The session was concluded by presentation of another ENTELIS member, namely the Italian network of Assistive Technology Centres (GLIC), which presented its model of independent AT centre where persons with disabilities can be assessed and advised re AT solutions that respond to their needs (Silvio Pagliara, GLIC). The papers are published in the proceedings.

Read the ENTELIS Manifesto, endorse it, disseminate it, and take action!

http://www.entelis.net/en/manifesto
Digital Storytelling: The Pioneers of V.T.C. MARGARITA Project

By Sophia Karagouni, Vocational Training Center Margarita

Digital Storytelling is a new type of narration that has emerged from Web 2.0. A large collection of multimedia life narratives is available online in various forms, a typical status update in Facebook, an avatar in a video game, a blog or a video channel in YouTube. Anna Poletti describes Digital Storytelling as “audio-visual vignettes of approximately two to five minutes in length which present a first-person voice-over in conjunction with visual material sourced from the personal archive of its author, edited together on consumer-grade computers and software” (Poletti, 2011, p. 74). In these few minutes, the protagonist expresses him/herself, exposing his/her inner feelings and thoughts to an unknown public. In this article we will view Digital Storytelling as a medium that will help people with intellectual disabilities speak publicly.

Digital storytelling improves the communication abilities of people with intellectual disabilities and enhance their digital literacy skills through active learning. However, the benefits of Digital Storytelling have a therapeutic value as the act of sharing a story creates links to the community, and their video engages the audience to write comments with which they can interact.

For the disability movement, digital storytelling is a form of self-advocacy as it offers the narrator the chance to generate a personal story instead of having someone else generate a story for him/her. Such a story, with autobiographical characteristics, strays away from the stereotypical views of disability as this is framed from the media and the public opinion.

At this point we have to mention that Digital Storytelling as a form of self-advocating isn’t completely unmediated. A Digital Storytelling Project with narrators with intellectual disability is assisted by experts in matters of training in the use of the medium. However, these participants are committed in an “ethic of participation” in order to ensure the preservation of the individual’s voice (Klaebe, 2007).

V.T.C. Margarita’s Project of Digital Storytelling started in 2016 in the Skills Enhancement Workshop. The Project, while not being directly related to self-advocacy, aimed in the creation of a medium to record the pure and un-filtered thoughts of the participants. The Project is based on the pedagogical method of Capability Approach by Sen (1992) and Nussbaum (2000), that focuses on the abilities of the individual rather than his/her disabilities. Their abilities are determined by what they want to do rather than what they can do.

The team, called THE PIONEERS, consists of 11 people with intellectual disabilities, 40-50 years old; their trainers Ilias Kalaitzis and Irene Sfaelou; and Caterina Chaligopoulou the ceramic artist. The project aims to slow down the appearance of dementia by providing artistic stimulus to the beneficiaries. Ilias, Irene and Caterina organize the museum visits and the meetings with artists, they read together stories and practice pottery. All these activities inspire the team that discuss their feelings and thoughts. Caterina writes their exchanges of ideas without further editing and uploads them to their blog “The Pioneers of V.T.C. Margarita”, thus creating a digital memory record for them to visit and spark again feelings and thoughts related to that particular experience from the past.

You can visit their blog at https://protoporoi.wordpress.com/ (soon available in English) and their Facebook page http://bit.ly/2zzaMUN.
Below you can see the summary of an article published in “KATHIMERINI” Newspaper, 26/05/2017 by Vasiliki Chrisostomidou, titled “I read them stories while they sculp the clay”. Katerina Chaligopoulou describes in the article the origin of THE PIONEERS team. As a volunteer and a potter, she wanted to share her artistic skills with other people. The team of the Skills Enhancement Workshop received her warmly and immediately started to openly discuss with her their feelings and interests.

This exchange of views inspired Caterina to take the initiative and make a list of museums relevant to the wishes of the people in the workshop. This list was presented to them to choose in a democratic manner their next adventure. The pottery lessons had their own adventures as well. While the PIONEERS sculped the clay, Katerina read them stories that travelled them away. Their ceramic artworks were exhibited in the Kaplanon 5 Gallery. For Katerina, creating the blog PIONEERS isn’t just a digital record of their experiences; she wishes to show their amazing personalities and their ability to accept people to the whole world; the only thing the want is to be accepted as well.

Robots in Education

Increasingly robots are being used in a variety of contexts and life scenarios. Education, in particular, is the setting in which robots have started to play an important role and have opened new learning opportunities for students with diverse disabilities.

Last year, the EU funded projects EDUROB (Educational Robotics for Students with Learning Disabilities) has started to spread its results to the wide community of educators who want to innovate their teaching practices through robotics.

In detail, the overall aim of EDUROB was to develop innovative robotic mediated learning strategies for students with learning disabilities, supported by dedicated training material. These strategies and materials were validated through a series of pilot tests.

The main output from the EDUROB Project was an educational robotics pedagogy for people with learning disabilities. The approach relies on an intervention model that fosters improvements in students’ cognitive processes while addressing school curriculum topics. The innovation lies in the use of robotics as a means to engage and immerse students with learning disabilities and have them acquire social and collaborative communication skills. The project’s innovative robotic (and thus ICT-based) mediated learning strategies for students with learning disabilities has provided a pedagogical framework in which robotics play a crucial role in driving students’ cognitive processes.

The Pedagogy, as well as the results of the pilot test conducted to validate it, are available on the Project’s website.

EDUROB as a project is now over, but the community is still active and available to any form of collaboration!

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Every year EVBB, one of the founding members of the ENTELIS network, holds an Annual International Conference in cooperation with one of its 56 member organisations throughout Europe.

This year’s conference took place in Malta from the 04 and 08 October 2017 dedicated to the topic “Vocational Training in the Context of an Inclusive Society - Experiences, Demands and Perspectives”. Once again EVBB put an emphasis on the issues of crucial importance for politicians, VET providers and the labour market. The Conference focused on the challenges of the ongoing digitalisation and digital revolution in Europe and throughout the whole world in respect of training, education and the future labour market.

ENTELIS, represented by Evert-Jan Hoogerwerf (AIAS/EASPD) and Andreas Koth (IB/EVBB), had the opportunity to steer the attention of high-ranking political representatives of Malta, e.g. Dr. Helena Dalli (Maltese Minister – European Affairs and Equality) and Evarist Batolo (Maltese Minister – Education and Employment) and the European Union e.g. Joao Santos (Deputy Head of Unit DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) towards a discussion about opportunities of participation of people with disability (PwD) on an inclusive labour market.

Prof. Klaus Miesenberger (JKU Linz/AAATE) represented ENTELIS at the lively panel discussion by giving insights about challenges and opportunities of Digitalisation & Labour Market/Unemployment and how technology and Assistive Technology (AT) can enhance learning and positive participation of people in the digital era.

ENTELIS was very fortunate to host its own workshop at the conference facilitating the topic “Barriers in Uptake of Technology for Education and Service Providers”. With an input of Prof. Miesenberger, participants were elaborating answers to the question: What are the Barriers hindering the uptake of technology in the VET sector and in the care and social support services? The workshop discussed opportunities technology offers for PwD to participate in VET and how technology can enhance the alignment of formal and informal vocational education within the digital transformation process towards an inclusive society. In response to the barriers identified, goals and needs were formulated and brought to the attention of the floor. A clear consensus was expressed by the workshop participants to foster inclusive education based on a clear vision related to full participation of all students. This would require a more determined shift towards personalised approaches and project based education, without leaving no one behind. There is a need to involve learner in all processes, including design and development of technological solutions. Also teacher training was considered a key condition for change, as well as best practice development and dissemination, collaboration between stakeholders and change management.

The engagement of ENTELIS and the presentation of workshop's results were highly appreciated by the participants of the conference coming from all over Europe, South East Asia and Northern Africa. It brought the positive aspect of an inclusive education, technology enhanced learning and participation of PwD and the opportunities it bares to the attention of European Policy Makers, representatives of the VET sector, experts and other stakeholders. The focus was put on AT provision including assessment and personalisation itself as well as on the high demand of training the trainers regarding the accessibility of AT usage. That included an agreement on the need of including AT and accessibility into curricula, making training and learning
material accessible in order to create an inclusive learning environment and culture.

ENTELIS left a mark on the VET sector and will play jointly with their active members a major role in upcoming events on EU level, national and local level promoting technology enhanced learning in an inclusive society. In order to achieve the goal of developing an all-inclusive society, all experts, decision and policy makers on all levels are needed. ENTELIS values are also part of the joint Maltese Declaration signed by the EVBB president, Thiemo Fojkar and brought to the attention of European policy makers, national political representatives, experts, stakeholders and the participants of the conference. ENTELIS will continue its activities to focus on overcoming barriers of all kind towards an inclusive society.

The ENTELIS network aims to increase the digital participation of people with disabilities and older adults. The network is driven by its members and supported by EASPD, AAATE and EVBB.

In case you are interested in the work of the network or in case you consider membership, please feel free to contact anyone of the steering board:

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