



Speech Pathology Tools

Newsletter 2 - March 2019

## INTERACTIVE TOOLS FOR TEACHERS AND CHILDREN AT INITIAL EDUCATION Project

### Release of the second research document



The second research document is entitled “The current situation in speech and language pathology in the EU”. It presents the current situation regarding Speech and Language Pathology provision in the partner countries, with particular emphasis on the implementation with regard to children’s services and schools.

Its aim is to give a broad overview of regulation, structure and implementation of speech and language pathology across the consortium countries of the UK, Bulgaria, Turkey, Belgium, Slovenia and Serbia. It goes on to summarise our research into the technologies being used in the field of Speech and Language Therapy. It highlights the parts of the assessment and therapy process which can be achieved with apps in the different languages, and aims to identify gaps in the availability of free tools with the aim of highlighting the focus for our future developments.

A summary of the findings is given on the second page of this Newsletter.



### Speech Pathology Tools project announced within International conference

In November 2018 the NARHU team took part in International conference, promoting active communication and interaction. Speech Pathology project and its results were promoted in front of more than 200 participants, including guests from Finland, Norway, Poland, UK and other EU countries. Among the audience were mainly speech pathologists, teachers, resource tutors, psychologists and policymakers. The event was held in 3 days between 12-14.11.2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

### European Day of Persons with Disabilities event in Brussels

On 3-4th December 2018 the European Commission ran their annual International conference dedicated to the European Day of People with Disabilities. Participation is upon special invitation and only invited guests can have access to the event held in one of the buildings of the European Commission in Brussels. PhoenixKM had the honour to promote its projects related to tablet-based games and applications designed for PwD and professionals working with them. Speech Pathology was actively



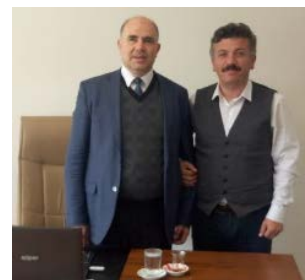
Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

promoted during the two days by PhoenixKm and NARHU representatives. Thus more than 600 key stakeholders were familiarized with the project and its outcomes. The contacts made will be used in the future for extensive piloting and exploitation of Speech Pathology results.



### Turkish team meet with key stakeholders

REDVET contacted the Istanbul Directorate of Family and Social Policies Ministry. Vice Director Halis Kuralay who is responsible for the disability services gave general information about their activities. Redvet members informed him about the project and both sides are agreed on the piloting process cooperation for speech pathology activities in mainstream schools and rehabilitation centres.



The REDVET Team also visited Üsküdar Regional Governorship in Istanbul. Mr.Onur Cantimur has accepted the courtesy visit of the REDVET Team to share their experience with disabled people in the region. Both sides were agreed about the importance of



correct articulation of children and in provision of successful intervention tools and strategies.

*Copyright ©2017-2020 Speech and Language Pathology Interactive Tools for Teachers at Initial Education - This project (2017-1-BG01-Ka201-036295) has been funded with support from the European Commission (Erasmus+ Programme). This newsletter reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

## Findings on the current situation in speech and language pathology in the EU

### Prevalence of Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Across the EU, speech, language and communication disorders are a high priority, and often account for a major section of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) component in schools. In some countries however the training for professionals in this field is only emerging. In some cases, the only speech professionals present have been trained in overseas programmes.

The statistics for children in special schools in Bulgaria highlight that there are very few children with SLCN present, indicating that these children are present in the mainstream education system. There is a described tendency in each of the countries to move towards inclusive education for all children with SEN, (as has been directed by the EU). The long term effect of this strategy will be to increase the need for non-SEN specialist teachers to teach greater numbers of children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs. Access will, therefore, be needed to tools that could help them to manage this both in terms of identification of the need for therapy and in helping with therapist recommended interventions.

It can be noted from the different definitions of Speech and Language Therapy found, that different languages require the production of different sounds and articulations. This is key to any application for assessing and practicing speech sounds, and will be a major part of the design of any application for the project. Each language will require its own sets of materials in order to elicit positive results for the sounds within that language.

### Legal aspects and regulation

A common regulation for inclusion exists across the EU states, the implementation of which varies widely and dramatically across the partner countries of this project. This seems in part down to the historic frameworks of how schooling is implemented, the historic ways which children with special needs have been dealt with, and the financial and organisational restrictions on the implementation of new directives over these existing infrastructures and methodologies.

The overarching drive towards inclusion is being tackled in each of the countries in different ways, and from different starting points, and is leading to the earlier detection of greater numbers children in schools with speech, language, and communication needs.

It is clear that the EU members involved in the project are each moving towards the EU's vision for inclusion and thus applications which target methods to detect SLCN and then improve SLC skills in children will drive their inclusion in the classroom.

### An Overview of SLT provision across the consortium

The models for the provision of SLT across the consortium countries vary widely as you would expect. The UK offers a health service model, where SLTs are distinct from schools as health professionals and will go in to schools as required. In Bulgaria and Serbia, logopedists are located within schools. In Slovenia, children with SLCN are supported by the SEN support in the schools. In Belgium, the children with SLCN would attend a Centre for Educational Guidance. In effect, the child would go to the therapist. In Turkey, SLT provision has been low until recently, when their connection with the EU has brought about

new training programmes and professional bodies to increase the quality of SLT provision. The methods for this provision are only just emerging, but in general, suitable therapy services are provided for these students at guidance and research centres.

The numbers of available therapists per capita also vary widely. Even in the countries with well-established SLT professional bodies, there is a shortage of SLTs, and often long waiting lists for their services. This fact points to the need for both parents and other professionals such as teachers and teaching assistants to be able to take some of the load off the SLT professionals. Well-structured tools for assessment of SLCN and practicing SLC skills could be invaluable in assisting SLTs with their programmes of intervention.

### An Overview of Assessment across the consortium

The assessment practices in each of the countries are carried out by trained professionals, psychologists, teachers or SLTs. In Serbia, children are examined by a speech therapist before starting school. In Slovenia, speech is checked in general medical examinations at age 3 and 5. The UK checks speech of children on starting school and has periodic reviews of progress.

In each case, the children are compared to a set of expected abilities for their current age, and only a discrepancy between actual ability and expected ability will trigger a need for intervention. The application will, therefore, need to compare a student's current speech abilities in a particular language with those expected at their age group in order to identify whether there is any need for referral to a therapist.

### Recommendations for the development phase

From the research undertaken, the need for a free, simple to use app, which enables a child to practice their word pronunciation skills is a priority for development. This would need sets of words for each language with each practice sound in different scenarios (initial, medial and end of words). As the literacy of the children using the application would vary, the use of symbols or images, as well as words to instigate the child's speech, is also a requirement.

It is also clear that there is a need for a simple and free app that can help a professional to perform a simple analysis of a child's SLC skills, and present the results in a clear and simple way. In order to do this, the app would be used with a professional, assessing the pronunciation of a set of prescribed words and logging the results. In order to create such an app, it will be necessary to identify for each language the sounds to be assessed, and to create sets of words to test the pronunciation skills in different scenarios (initial, medial and end of words). An app which could do this would enable initial assessment of a child for referral to therapy, and would also provide a means to record the ongoing development of the child's speech skills. In conjunction with an age calculator and some information on expected development, which could also be delivered by the app, it could be used to assess the child's development compared to age expectation.

You can download a full copy of the report from the project website: <http://www.speechpathologytools.eu/downloads.html>

**Work on the first version of our app - has already begun, so you can look out for the release of a prototype version in the very near future!**