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COGNITION & INCLUSION

NEWSLETTER 2

THE LEARNING SKILLS OF ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES



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EDITORIAL

Where are we in the project and key aspects of cognitive approaches. By Johan Warnez, project coordinator, vzw den achtkanter, Kortrijk (Belgium)



The first intellectual C&I output is an overview of cognitive approaches.

The Cognition & Inclusion-project celebrates the first anniversary **by sharing with you the first of its four intellectual C&I outputs**. It is an exhaustive report with an **overview of cognitive approaches**, including a coherent analysis and reflection on methodologies as used by many of our European partners and starting from the viewpoint of practitioners. These methodologies are actually used in different settings, but always intend to promote **Quality of Life** by focusing on **transversal, especially cognitive skills** to support **successful adaptation, social participation and employment of adults with a learning disability**.

During the first year, the C&I partners shared methodologies to learn about critical success factors on three levels: the **professional**, the **organization** and the **client**.

Well prepared and original workshops in Valencia, Plovdiv and Stenungsund (by Spanish, Swedish, Belgian, Portuguese and Bulgarian partners) invited partners to reflect on *common* critical conditions, although the cognitive methodologies were very different in scope, orientation, goals, context... The Finnish partner from Tampere University of Applied Sciences - leading the realization of the first intellectual output - with the support of the Portuguese University of Evora - finalized the report on the overview of cognitive approaches (<http://www.ensa-network.eu/cognitionandinclusion/index-c-i.html>). The reader will find **descriptions of methodologies**, a **practical analysis** with strengths and challenges (self-analysis; peer review) and a **summary of 'lessons learnt'**.

These lessons learnt, combined with the expertise of the organizations involved, are starting points for the development of **three innovative tools that focus on conditions for successful implementation of cognitive approaches which will represent the other intellectual outputs of the C&I project.**

Three innovative tools that focus on conditions for successful implementation of cognitive approaches will represent the other intellectual outputs of the C&I project.

Lead by **IVASS** (Spain) and by **'den achtkanter'** (Belgium) the first tool that will assess the **belief system** of the **professional**, who is expected to support the acquisition of transversal/cognitive skills of adults with a learning disability, is almost ready for a first try out. This instrument is to be used in Human Resources and is a *starting point* for reflection with the professional on beliefs and implicit theories that influence the quantity and quality of the efforts done to promote cognitive competence.

Irecoop (Italy) and Narhu (Bulgaria) are presently preparing the first steps of the development of the other two tools to be carried out **on organizational level** and on **client level**.

Next meeting in Spain (Spring 2019), hosted by Asociacion Vale (Granada) will be a first **monitoring** meeting.

With the support of the ENSA network, this project and its first outcomes are on international agendas. During the meeting of the ENSA general assembly in Sweden, the project was presented and discussed in the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Furthermore "Cognition & Inclusion" has been debated on Spanish television, and is continuously given attention on national level by all partners, using newsletters and social media. Local expert groups in all countries guarantee significant dissemination and impact. A lot of valuable efforts are done by a very enthusiastic C&I partnership, that believe that adults with a learning disability are able to develop a mindset that is characterized by 'I have never done this before, so I think I can do this!' (you may know whose baseline it comes from....)

...and this is only possible when the professionals and organizations involved are presuming competence.

ABOUT TRANSVERSAL SKILLS

By Johan Warnez and University of EVORA by Nuno Costa



One's **Quality of Life** is significantly influenced by **active participation** and contribution to society – referring to the universal rights for all. To be successful in this matter, environmental and individual conditions are critical. When the individuals involved are dealing with an intellectual, learning or other disability, additional challenges appear. Factors that contribute to successful participation in society, are related 1. to the efforts done by society to **adapt the 'environment'** (physically, mentally,...) to the persons with a disability, and 2. **to the adaptive skills of the persons** who aspire to participate and contribute to the society. These skills help people to adapt to environmental and changing conditions. In education and in support services, **these skills are often linked to practical skills, although it is known that transversal skills are critical for adaptation.**

Transversal skills don't refer to specific domains or contents, but **are 'general' skills**, useful in all domains of life and contents, and contribute to a successful outcome. Between others, cognitive, metacognitive, problem solving skills are part of the transversal skills, necessary for adaptation. Especially when persons are challenged by intellectual or learning disabilities, **specific approaches are needed to help them acquire these skills. This C&I Erasmus+ project wants to contribute to this challenge.**

At the very beginning of the project, the partnership defined the **'cognitive' transversal skills**, that – according to the partners involved – are playing a major in the distal goal of this project: **successful participation and employment of adults with a learning disability.** We are aware that the outcome is a selection of 'cognitive' adaptations/transversal skills, but the selected skills are a very significant. Based on R. Sternberg (b.o. 1997) and supervised by prof. Adelinda Candeias (University of Evora – partner in this project), the partnership agreed to work with a framework below, **defining five critical (meta-)cognitive, transversal skills: problem solving, self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, self-directedness and creativity.**

Bibliography: Sternberg, R. (1997) Successful Intelligence: How Practical and Creative Intelligence Determine Success in Life. Plume Book, NY.

- **Problem solving**

Problem solving is a higher level cognitive process that can be conceived as a cycle of emotional, cognitive and behavioral activity, starting with the awareness that a problem exists, then the definition of the problem, the allocation of mental and physical resources to solve the problem, the finding of a strategy (or strategies) that could be implemented to solve the problem, the implementation of that solution, the monitoring of the ongoing problem solving process, and the evaluation of the solution found as well as of the completed process.

- **Self-regulation**

Self-regulation (SR) refers to the subject's competence to change himself and have control over its internal processes and external resources. It implies and promotes transversal competences useful in different situations: learning, professional activities, personal and social life. Self-regulated learning (SRL) refers to the subjects' abilities to control his learning, planning, monitoring and evaluating his thoughts, feelings and actions. SRL is an active and constructive process through which subjects determine their goals and monitor, regulate and control their cognition, affect, motivation and behavior in order to achieve those goals. Self-control consists of using specific techniques to direct attention, to use self-instructions, to manage time, to structure the environment, to search for help and to maintain motivation.

- **Cognitive flexibility**

Cognitive flexibility, as a high cognitive function, influences the way knowledge is received, represent, (re)structured and applied during response elaboration. This way, cognitive flexibility incorporates three dimensions: attention flexibility; representation flexibility and response flexibility.

- **Self-directedness**

Self-directedness is a dimension of character that refers to self-determination or willpower, and is considered the ability to control, regulate or adapt behaviour in regard to chosen goals or values.

- **Creativity**

Creativity is the ability to innovate (being divergent and original) and to respond to requests, challenges, or imposed or self-imposed goals. The creative process is a systemic phenomenon, because it is developed in accordance with potentiality from the setting (extrinsic features) and the characteristics of people (intrinsic features) to produce innovative, divergent and/or original solutions for old/new problems.



Transversal skills, interview with the University of EVORA: Nuno Costa.

-What are transversal skills why do we need them?. How did we find out they were important ?

The transversal skills were defined by UNESCO (2006) as integral to life in the 21st century. These Transversal Skills are required for people's holistic development and to be able to continuously adapt to changes. Within the axis from Transversal competencies (UNESCO, 2006), Cognition & Inclusion focuses on the intrapersonal skills, namely, in Cognition. People with special needs must be included in society and must develop their transversal skills in order to succeed in life and in the labor market. C&I focuses on Cognition because it involves mental processes present in daily life, for instance learning and thinking, that sometimes are underdeveloped or are neglected. Cognition guides our thoughts and actions, and also influences how information is processed and how people interact with the world.

Therefore, we need to effectively work on these skills. Based on the five ones previously mentioned here are some remarks:

Problem solving is a skill needed throughout the lifespan. The process of defining a problem and finding a strategy to solve it is used in daily life, in decision making efforts and in adapting to everchanging on-the-job tasks.

Self-regulation skills are essential for the person to take control of their own life and they promote transversal competences as control learning, thoughts and self-instructions.

Cognitive flexibility skills influence the way people manage information, knowledge, and how that is put into action.

Self-directedness is a transversal skill that emphasis autonomy and self-determination, and its power towards the person chosen behaviors, values and goals.

Finally, **creativity** as a skill is important because it influences the way people overcome new problems and how people use information in an original way.

FOCUS ON THE OVERVIEW OF SUCCESSFUL METHODOLOGIES TO TRAIN TRANSVERSAL SKILLS OF ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

By Tampere University of Applied Sciences TAMK



As greatly promoted by the project coordinator in the editorial of this newsletter, the report about the first intellectual output of this project has now been published.

The publication illustrates the five transversal skills described in the point two of this newsletter, develops short descriptions about the five approaches used by the partner organizations in Belgium, Portugal, Sweden, Bulgaria and Spain, and last but not least, focuses on lessons and recommendations learned for upcoming intellectual outputs and mindset tools.

We have included comprehensive descriptions and self-analyses done by the partners as well as the peer-analyses of the approaches.

One can also find the self-analysis tool developed in this project and used by the partners when self-evaluating the approaches, it can be used freely by anyone.

The main lessons that we have learnt from the approaches are:

1. the Importance of a safe and challenging environment;
2. not wanting to look smart and avoid challenges;
3. the essential role of reflection;
4. the success of others is my success;
5. the Importance of commitment;
6. professionals and organizations need the will to keep learning;
7. appreciate don't praise.

For further information, please see the report online <http://www.ensa-network.eu/cognitionandinclusion/index-c-i.html>

PARTNER'S NEWS

• Next consortium international meeting: Granada 28, 29 March 2019



This meeting will be hosted by the Asociación a Favor de Personas con Discapacidad Intelectual, "Vale", which has as a person centered approach focusing on each individual own life project, promoting inclusion as full citizens and calling upon public powers to establish coherent policies to get a more righteous society.

C&I aims to raise awareness about the importance of transversal, cognitive skills in the training of adults challenged by a learning disability, this monitoring meeting will work towards assessing the impact of the mindset of the professional, the organizations and the adult with a learning disability on the effectiveness of the cognitive methodologies.

• About ENSA General Assembly 2018 and the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

This event has been a joint collaboration between ENSA, the Veneto Region, the European Youth Care Platform and the Vänersborg Municipality which hosted it.

The representative of the European Commission Representation in Sweden, Magnus Astberg, who actively contributed, illustrated the European Pillar of Social Rights. He highlighted that it has been jointly signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in 2017, at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg, Sweden. He reminded the key principles upon which it is built, structured around three categories:

- Equal opportunities and access to the labour market
- Fair working conditions
- Social protection and inclusion which includes specifically the inclusion of people with disabilities.

He also underlined that the European Social Fund Plus will support the delivery of the European Pillar of Social Rights as a more flexible and simpler version of the current European Social Fund by merging a number of existing funds and programmes: European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI); Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD); EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation; EU Health Programme.

As the future time-table, an EU budget is expected in spring 2019, Legislative proposals are now being discussed in the Council and the European Parliament.

In connection with the principle related to the inclusion of people with disabilities of the Pillar, the project the Cognition and inclusion project has been selected and illustrated at the speed dating session where the approach used in the learning potential and skills of persons with disabilities has been highlighted together with the need to develop transversal skills.





Among the conclusions It was underlined that the European Pillar of Social Rights is not innovative as such but means a further step oriented to the Commitment for a social Europe. It expresses principles and rights. To be enforceable they require dedicated measures or legislation and delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights is a shared political commitment and responsibility.

To download: Presentation of Magnus Astberg and brochure of ENSA selected Projects go to <http://www.ensa-network.eu/cognitionandinclusion/index-c-i.html>

• First International Conference on Augmentative and Alternative Communication, Bulgaria 12, 14 November 2018

The NARHU team took part in the First International Conference on Augmentative and Alternative Communication. During the Conference contemporary approaches and technologies for children and adults with communication difficulties were presented. The disabilities addressed were: cerebral palsy, autism, multiple disabilities, intellectual disabilities, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and others. The experts talked on the modern approaches, methods, and technologies for augmentative and alternative communication. The NARHU team also took part in workshops presenting the experience and best practices in working and teaching children and adults with disabilities. They had the chance to introduce informally the C&I project, as well as to communicate with key experts on the future development of the mindset tools.

• Bulgarian Local Expert Group

In line with the plan for conducting Local Expert Group's activities, NARHU has carried out a brainstorming session on 11 November 2018 to collect items for the Mindset tool for professionals which is the second intellectual output of the project. The background of the experts has been on psychotherapy and educational psychology, cognitive behavioural therapy, clinical psychology, and psychiatry. The next meeting will be dedicated to the further development of the mindset tool for organizations, as well as for the evaluation of the learners mindset.



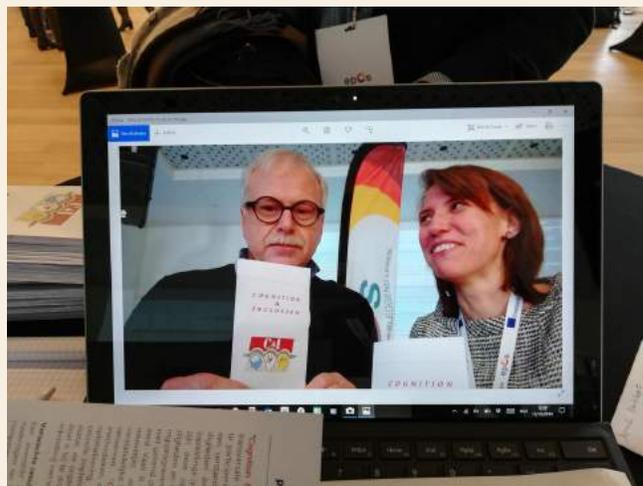
• **Visit of Valencia delegation of representatives of persons with disabilities, Brussels 4 December 2018.**

Organized by the Valencia Regional Brussels office, a delegation of 26 people from Valencia came to the Veneto Region's Brussels office headed by Mr Luis Vaño, President of the Spanish Committee of Representatives of People with Disabilities (CERMI) and Ms Concha Andrés, member of the Valencian Parliament, who was accompanied by labour unions, persons with disabilities, representatives of professional associations of social workers, representatives of several municipalities, social educators and psychologists. The visit aimed to know the European Institutions and to become aware of the different funding available for the inclusion of people with disabilities. They were interested to know the good practices developed among which the Cognition and Inclusion project.



• **Dissemination of the project in Flanders**

On 13th December (Brussels), the partners of 'den achtkanter' participated to the annual event of the National Agency EPOS 'GRENSVERLEGGERS'. This event wants to share innovative projects with schools, universities and other stakeholders to inspire and to support new initiatives. This year the focus was on 'social inclusion'. Cognition & Inclusion was selected to present the project, having the opportunity to share ideas and reflections with about 150 participants. It's always surprising to find a lot of people interested in 'mind set' and 'belief system' topics, especially when the goals to develop tools for assessment is mentioned. This is really innovative!



• **Sweden: December 2018 - Music Aid on Radio and TV – focus on person with disabilities**

“Music aid” has been broadcasted on radio and TV in Sweden for the last 11 years on themes such as clean water, women to survive their pregnancies, children's right to go to school during war among others. In these spots three presenters are closed in a “glass cage” and financial resources are collected. This year's theme has been: Everyone's right to work differently, with the focus on people with disabilities over the world. FUB in Lysekil (Municipality of Västra Götaland) has worked with the theme of music aid for years, and we enjoyed collecting financial resources but above all it has been educational, Sveriges radio, our broadcast company collected relevant material for schools. They have learned that sometimes life is quite tough and that help is needed. The year related to women's right to survive their pregnancy really made an impact.

In 2018 the subject of the challenges and obstacles of persons with disabilities has been one of their focus so we wished to take this opportunity to raise funds. We contacted the Kultucentrum väst and Goa Gänget in Lysekil and set up a music evening at Bohusläns Museum. The radio came and interviewed us and the event shaped into singing, music, dance and sign language songs. There had been also a brief information about disability. There were a few crowns that were deposited in the Music help account and it felt good that we have been one of 606 337 commitments and that we contributed to the collected 50 550 204 kronor.

*From Annie Pettersson
Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan (SV) is
a leading Swedish non formal
association for education, training
and culture for adults.*



EU NEWS

About the European Day of persons with disabilities

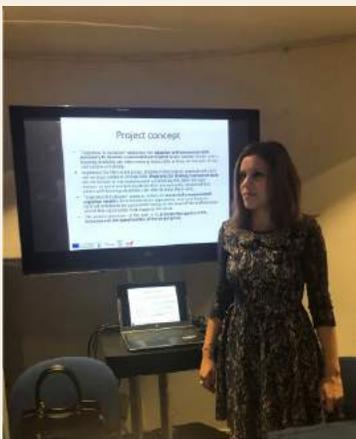


The European Commission, in partnership with the European Disability Forum, has been running an International conference dedicated to the European Day of Persons with Disabilities. The NARHU team had the unique chance to attend the event in Brussels as the participation is on invitation only. They were guests on a special stand where the C&I concept and the first intellectual output was presented. Among the visitors were more than 250 key stakeholders like policy makers, representatives of umbrella organizations, people with disabilities, and other professionals working in the field of inclusion. During the two days we made useful contacts and agreements for the future collaboration with organizations that are interested in innovative approaches and assessment tools in the field of disability and inclusion.

The official agenda of the event has included topics of high importance for the independent living of persons with disabilities, as well as for their personal and cognitive development. Among them were:

- how will the next Multiannual Financial Framework contribute to the implementation of the new European Disability Strategy;
- the transition from institutional to community-based care;
- intellectual disabilities and self-advocacy.

One of the most exciting speeches were those given by person with intellectual disabilities who spoke about their rights and desires in line with the new European Disability Strategy.



Other EU news:

International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2018: Statement by Commissioner Thyssen
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-6603_en.htm

EUROPEAN DISABILITY MOVEMENT DEMANDS THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN 2019
<http://www.edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/european-disability-movement-demands-right-vote-2019>

Some improvements in the lives of people with disabilities but disadvantage remains
<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/news/news-articles/some-improvements-in-the-lives-of-people-with-disabilities-but-disadvantage-remains>

European Pillar of Social Rights: Statement by President Juncker, Vice- President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Thyssen one year following its proclamation
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=it&catId=89&newsId=9240&furtherNews=yes>

EU budget: a new Social Fund and Globalisation Adjustment Fund
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=it&catId=86&newsId=9114&furtherNews=yes>

2018 Annual Report of the Social Protection Committee
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=it&catId=89&newsId=9239&furtherNews=yes>

Greetings and Happy 2019 from the Cognition&Inclusion partnership!



Further Information <http://www.ensa-network.eu/cognitionandinclusion/index-c-i.html>
Editors: Veneto Region's Brussels Office, Director Marco Paolo Mantile.
Ensa Team: Elena Curtopassi and Valentina Faraone
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