



Dyslexia Association – Bulgaria

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Grundtvig Project

DESSDYS

Development of Study Skills For Dyslexic Individuals

STUDY VISIT

10 – 11 March 2011

4th Partner Meeting

Ruse, BULGARIA



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study visit was to provide the partners with an opportunity to network with Bulgarian teachers, psychologists, speech and language therapists, parents and dyslexic individuals. The secondary intention was to provide an opportunity to share the products of the project, and gather feedback, in order to make final adjustments before the end of the project.

The conference was held in Best Western "Bistra & Galina" Hotel in Ruse, Bulgaria, with invitations sent out to targeted key individuals in the area. In order to ensure their interest and participation, the partnership also delivered a conference that would be of interest to the audience. The Conference Programme was as follows:

Local Dissemination Conference

14.30 - 14.45	Project DESSDYS - Elena Mihova
14.45 - 15.00	Do students know how to learn effectively? - V. Vaneva
15.00 - 15.15	Dessdys Students' Guide - Dr. Ian Smythe
15.15 - 15.30	Dessdys Lecturers' Guide - Joe Higgins
15.30 - 15.45	Dessdys Templates - Daniela Boneva
15.45 - 16.00	Dyslexia Policies in Europe - Anna Gyorfi
16.00 - 16.15	How helpful the project products are - Results of the Pilot testing - Mariana Kisiova
16.15 - 16.30	Q & A
16.30 - 17.00	Coffee/Tea + Informal Communication



CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Welcome

The Welcome introduction was provided by Daniela Boneva of the Dyslexia Association of Bulgaria, who thanks those attending for their support during the project, and for coming to this conference / workshop. Some of the key players were duly noted and acknowledged.

Project DESSDYS

Elena Mihova (Dyslexia Association of Bulgaria) provided an overview of the project. She presented the main objectives of the project, and the activities realized in order to achieve them in partner countries, and particularly in Bulgaria. The importance of the project ideas was highlighted; the satisfaction of the results was expressed.

Do students know how to learn effectively?

Professor Violeta Vaneva (Ruse University) shared her experience as an University lecturer who has been working for years with young people. According to Mrs. Vaneva most of the students don't know how to study, and it makes their learning ineffective, and their knowledge unstable. That's why Dessdys is so important and the impact can be really considerable, because it brought up the idea about the importance of the study skills development.

Dessdys Students' Guide

Dr Ian Smythe (Ibis Creative Consultants Ltd) acknowledged the pleasure in working with colleagues that work with dyslexic individual, who find many of the same challenges, but who may be hampered by a lack of resources available in that cultural and linguistic context. He also highlighted that projects such as this are not about imposing "foreign" resources on the local population, but sharing and acknowledging both similarities and difference.

Dr Smythe went on to talk about the way the book was developed. Things seemed difficult until he decided to try doing a concept map about the book. As a consequence, he mapped out the entire book in 20 minutes, and wrote the content in about two weeks. This brought up two conclusions:

- 1) The concept map, despite his previous apprehension, had proved to be a very useful tool.
- 2) The people seemed to like this story because it turned the usual "Do this!" approach into "This is what I do. It is up to you if you try it."

Dessdys Lecturers' Guide

Joe Higgins (Belfast Metropolitan College) is part of the disability team in a college that has over 40,000 adult learners. Many of them have failed to enter higher education due to various difficulties, including dyslexia. The way that dyslexia support differs in the UK from say Bulgaria is that there has been wide recognition in the UK, including legislative support, for more than 30 years. However, although legislation is useful support, it does not create resources. Furthermore, the resources do not create the support. It is only the combination of training and resources that can ensure appropriate support.

There was careful consultation across the partnership to ensure that the information was neither too detailed, and thereby putting off support teachers that they would have too much to do, and being too shallow, and not being effective support. It was working with teachers and lecturers across the partnership, using focus groups and extensive feedback, that ensure the best product was made available.

Dessdys Templates

Daniela Boneva (Dyslexia Association - Bulgaria) provided an overview of the topic about Study skills, what do we include in this category and how good study skills can affect the students' achievements and results. Based on this understanding a set of Templates has been developed in order to help students in developing/improving their study skills. They were accomplished with instructions how to use. All the Templates are free available on the project website and can be downloaded from there.

Dyslexia Policies in Europe

Anna Gyorfi (BF Edu - Hungary) talked about her extensive knowledge of policies across Europe, and highlighted in particular the report of Iva Boneva of the

Centre for Inclusive Education in Sofia, which brought together information from six partners in the Embed project partnership.

There are three very important aspects:

1. Teacher training

- A professional consensus should be achieved over the minimum level of identification and support skills in the compulsory curriculum in initial teacher training.
- Existing in-service training courses provided by approved organizations should be officially recognized and funded.

2. Dyslexia-Friendly Schools

• A program should be established for the development and accreditation of 'dyslexia-friendly' schools.

3. Accessibility of learning materials

- A strategy should be formulated on how to achieve maximum accessibility of instructional materials at all level of education.

Finally, Anna highlighted the point about a database of resources, and how the Dessdys book would sit well in that.

How helpful the project products are

Mariana Kisiova (lecturer in Ruse University, Faculty of Pedagogy), who led the Pilot study in Bulgaria presented the results, based on two questionnaires - one done before the Testing period, and the other - done after this period. Students from the testing group used Dessdys materials (Guides and Templates) for a month - during the semester and during the exam period. Results show that more than 70% found materials very useful and would share them with their colleagues and friends.

Q & A Session

A plenary session was held, where members of the audience were able to put questions to a panel of Bulgarian specialists and international project partners.



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Coffee/Tea



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