



Grundtvig Project

# DESSDYS

Development of Study Skills For Dyslexic Individuals

## Pilot Studies Report

# PILOT STUDIES for DESSDYS PROJECT

## Introduction

Although learner-centred, institutions, through disability officers, support workers, tutors and lecturers are part of the process too. Their involvement was ensured through focus groups and also through conferences / workshops organized in each partner countries. They provided valuable input as being part of the evaluation process by testing in the learning environment. They will also contribute to sustainability by informing their adult learners about learning skills provided by the project.

Pilot testing was carried out by all partners, using their extensive networks. The testing regime was developed by Italy in collaboration with other partners and carried out by all partners. The main aims of the pilot testing was to measure the satisfaction of the dyslexic individuals towards their needs and understanding and the satisfaction of support workers that have contact with the dyslexic individual.

This report summarises the different strategies and methods adopted by each partner to measure the satisfaction of the target group.

## Diversity of Activities

Each partner addressed pilot studies in a manner that was most appropriate to their specific national, cultural and linguistic environment. Activities included:

- Distribution to students
- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Email and Skype discussions
- Invitations to review



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

## **Dyslexia Association of Bulgaria - Pilot Studies in Bulgaria**

The following summarises the principle pilot study activities in Bulgaria.

The Pilot Testing in Bulgaria was organized in three steps:

- 1/ Pre-Questionnaire about the Study skills among 18+ students
- 2/ Using the project products for one month in "real" situation
- 3/ Post-Questionnaire about the usefulness of the products

For the pilot testing we chose one of the departments of Ruse University. Was formed a group of 20 volunteers - students from two specialties: "Ergo therapy" and "Physiotherapy"; 8 men and 12 women, between 19 and 22 years old.

1/ **Pre-Questionnaire** - It included questions about basic stud skills, like reading and reading comprehension; listening comprehension and note-taking; organizational skills, writing skills, etc. According to the students' answers only 40% have good study skills that make their learning efficient enough. And about 70% of them shared that nobody has taught them HOW to learn.

2/ **Project materials** - Students from the Testing group were given two Guides: Students Guide - to help them better understand their own learning style; and Templates Guide - a set of Templates to improve the study skills, and to make the learning more efficient. Students were shown how to use the materials, and were asked to try to use as many of the Templates as they can, and to see which of the Templates are applicable to their everyday studying. The process was monitored by the lecturers and by the specialists from Dyslexia Association - Bulgaria.

3/ **Post Questionnaire** - After a month students were asked to give feedback.

- 80% found materials useful
- 75% think Templates help them to organize their time and tasks better
- 40% - materials help to improve their studying

Over 75 % said they will definitely recommend the materials to their friends and colleagues

**Conclusions:** Dyslexic students can learn effectively with on time and adequate support

## **Blue Fountain - Pilot Studies in Hungary**

The following summarises the principle pilot study activities in Hungary.

### **Collecting feedback on Dessdys study skills materials in Hungary**

BF Edu

#### Sources of information

1. Conference feedback sheets on usability of information heard on study skills support materials and willingness to adopt it to everyday work
2. Workshops for teachers in 2 highschoools (1 dyslexia specialist, 1 general) - feedback sheets on usefulness
3. Collecting feedback from support specialists and teachers working with the study templates on volume and frequency of use (6)

#### Feedback on usability

178 feedback collected

(Embed final conference 78, SEN conference Budapest 57, AKG school workshop 43)

usability: very useful 94 somewhat useful: 58 not useful: 26

willingness to adopt: yes 107

Ranking of frequency of usage (6 teachers/special educationis working with 52 children, age 14-19)

1. Mindmap
2. Key words
3. Note taking template
4. Scientific conflicts
5. Daily timetable
6. Check your materials
7. Reminder
8. Organize the materials
9. Writing frames

## Fondazione Padre Alberto Mileno – Pilot Studies in Italy

The following summarises the principle pilot study activities in Italy.

We wanted to test our outcomes to a selected target of students with various learning difficulties, including dyslexia. Our latest version of the e-books and templates was given to the target both in paper version and electronic format (on-line e-book). The teachers involved in the pilot study were appropriately informed about the contents of the study materials in order to give an efficient support to their students. Furthermore, all the students involved were informed about the project's website and the aims of the Dessdys project.

We printed a paper version of the material and invited teachers and student to navigate the [www.dessdys.eu](http://www.dessdys.eu) website for further informations, espacially when the students were studying alone at home, with no specific human support.

The Foundation P. A. Mileno Onlus officially involved the Technical Economical Institute “R. de Sterlich” – Chieti Scalo (Italy) - [www.desterlich.ch.it](http://www.desterlich.ch.it)

- It's an high school with 500 students with hi-tech resources
- It has a group of specialized teachers (H-Group) who aid and follow students with various learning difficulties (almost 1 tutor per each student)

We identified these groups of target within the school population:

- **Group A:** 11 learners with various learning difficulties
- **Group B:** 13 learners with unknown learning difficulties
- **Tutors:** 10 H-Group teachers

All learners were post-16- Tutors who support students with severe disabilities did not partecipate to the pilot study.

Since we think that our e-books can be useful also for the students not affected by dyslexia or other SpLD, we decided to divide the students' population into two segments (A and B) because in the intention of our pilot study we wanted to observe if there were any differences between students with unknown learning difficulties and the others.

At the end of the period we submitted two checklist:

- One for tutors
- One for learners

Each checklist was composed by 20 questions

Each question had 5 answers:

- 0: Never
- 1: Seldom
- 2: Sometimes
- 3: Often
- 4: Always

The set is composed by two groups of questions:

- **Group S:** 8 questions about software tools and assistive technology suggested
- **Group H:** 12 questions about hints for better study and increase learning abilities

From the comparison between the two groups of students we observed that:

- Students with learning difficulties slightly prefer software tool suggestions
- Students without learning difficulties slightly prefer conceptual hints

From the comparison between the two groups of questions (considering the whole set of students) we observed that:

- Students slightly prefer conceptual hints
- Tutors gave almost the same valuation both for the software tools and for the conceptual hints (with a very slight preference for sw tools)
- Average score for the whole set of learners: **2.13**
- Average score for the tutors: **2.11**

**We registered a satisfactory average global score of more than 2.00 points that is equivalent to a complessive target opinion of usefulness: “more than sometimes”.**

## **İzmit Guidance and Research – Pilot Studies in Turkey**

The following summarises the principle pilot study activities in Turkey.

The center organized 4 workshops for two separate groups of 34 school counselors to introduce the project products and conduct a pilot study. Participants were selected among from the International Dyslexia Conference attendants. They already had basic information about Dessdys Project and the materials offered by the project partners. As they are the psychological counselors working in different school settings they had the basic understanding of Dyslexia problem and experience with dyslexic learners. Workshops organized with the aim of providing tools for their clients in developing better study skills. For this purpose participants provided information about Study Skills e-book. Also the guide for using the book is presented. The Tutor's Guide on the difficulties of dyslexic adults, links to free assistive technology available through the internet, self-help and best practice sharing forums/blogs for dyslexic learners and their supporters were introduced. Templates for key tasks (note-taking, preparing for exams, creating concept maps, etc) explained and an overview of the techniques and measures provided.

After the seminar sessions participants were asked to use templates, assistive technologies and e books in their profession while helping dyslexic learners about their reading and writing problems. In the last workshop participants were asked to evaluate the benefits of project tools with a questionnaire. Replies were received from 28 Counselors representing various education sectors.

The results confirmed both the considerable success and high relevance of the needs of the dyslexic learners. 54% of them found beneficial to let the students know his learning style. 75% of them stated that use of concept map has facilitated learning. 83% of the participants said that tips were useful to customize students' style of writing on the computer. 79% of them stated that their students found the proposed templates useful. 86% of the participants agreed that the indications that were given facilitated students' reading capability.

Counselors implemented the student questionnaires to their clients. 50 students participated to the evaluation of the proposed project tools. About 50% of them answered the questions regarding using assistive technology as often and always. 44% of them found the templates useful, 30% of them needed less time to write with the help of recommended materials. 42% of them successfully tested Cornell Method of note taking. 36% of them found time management indications useful. 58% of them stated that structured lessons with the use of concept maps has become more confident, 48% of them agreed that tips were useful in customizing their writing style. 64% of them found beneficial to know their learning style. 80% of them stated that changing background color while reading was useful.

## **Belfast Metropolitan College - Pilot Studies in United Kingdom**

The following summarises the principle pilot study activities in the United Kingdom.

**Questionnaires** - Questionnaires were given out to a number of BMC staff to ensure lecturer's input for the Lecturer's Guide. The information received was useful and contributed greatly to the design and content.

A questionnaire was also distributed to BMC students so as to ensure learner input for the booklet. A number of student quotes from the completed questionnaires were then selected and included in the final version of the booklet.

**Drafts** - 3 tutors were issued with a draft copy obtain feedback on the Lecturer's guide. The vast majority of responses were very positive but did contribute to a number of minor alterations

**Student Trials** - 50 students were asked to access a sample DESSDYS webpage and to provide feedback on content, style and ease of use. Again this led to some minor alterations. The students were also asked to trial the DESSDYS templates and provide feedback

**Presentation to Staff** - Presentation of the final draft of the Lecturer's guide and the DYSOSS website and to discuss the how the products could be used to support both tutors and students

As additional wider consultation, Ibis also consulted the following.

### **Sutton College of Learning Adults (SCOLA)**

The book was shared with students and other dyslexia support officers, and provided valuable feedback. Most of this was positive. However, there were also some suggestions for minor alterations.



## **Jersey College**

Dyslexia support officers, and provided valuable feedback. Some minor suggestions were made

## **University of Wales, Newport (UWN)**

The book was discussed with those supporting dyslexic individual. These were a mixture of individuals employed by the university, and those attending a Masters course on SpLD, and who support dyslexic students themselves. There was a general opinion that this provided a useful resource for students.

## Final Summary

From the pilot testing results we can say that informations and outcomes of the project can be successful incorporated to the everyday learning process of the dyslexic adult learners. The project can successful provide information on learning skills, self-teaching methodologies, coping strategies and modern assistive technology solutions. These are to be used by the adult learner as well as their teachers and support organizations to ensure any learning become more successful for the learning disabled student.