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Electronic and print media in Croatia

## Subject: Announcement after the public presentation and second dissemination event of the project “ICT Competence Network for Innovative Services for Persons with Complex Communication Needs”

### Innovative information-communication services for the youngest children in Zadar

Among persons with complex communication needs who cannot communicate in the most usual and typical way, there are often the youngest children who due to different reasons cannot reach their environment through speech. Along with the [Third Croatian Symposium on Early Childhood Intervention](#) (Zadar, September 26-28, 2013) two events were organized in order to promote the project [ICT Competence Network for Innovative Services for Persons with Complex Communication Needs \(ICT-AAC\)](#). The goal of this international symposium was focused on the importance of the team work and collaboration among different professionals, but also on the new types of services like the high-technology solutions that can improve communication between the youngest users and their environment.

In Zadar, the ICT-AAC project was presented with two events: public presentation and dissemination event. Those events are important project activities because their goal is to explain the project idea and the results of its realization to the public. When presenting the project, the project coordinator, **Vedran Podobnik, PhD** from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing introduced the main goals of the project. Four faculties of the of the [University of Zagreb: Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing \(FER\)](#), [Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences \(ERF\)](#), [Faculty of Graphic Arts \(GF\)](#) and [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences \(FF\)](#) implement the project together with eight associated organizations; **three associates are Croatian knowledge-based SMEs** ([iStudio](#), [Diversitas IT systems](#) and [HSMInformatika](#)) and **five associates are professional associations and institutions dealing with people with CCN** ([Polyclinic SUVAG Osijek](#), [Inclusion Support Center IDEM](#), [Croatia Down Syndrome Association](#), [Croatian Association on Early Childhood Intervention](#) and [Parental association OKO](#)). The ICT-AAC project is focused on the research and development of innovative information and communication technology (ICT) services for people with complex communication needs (CCN) in Croatia as well as the transfer of know-how in the field of

augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) between participating academic institutions and knowledge-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The project will include children, youth and adults involved in programs of care, education and rehabilitation in Croatia, primarily with the aim of building a competence network of stakeholders from the academic, industrial and (non)governmental domain with the knowledge and capacity in the AAC design. Afterwards, team leaders or their representatives presented the role and activities of their institutions in the project ICT-AAC. **Vedran Podobnik, PhD** (FER) emphasized the role of multidisciplinary approach in the field of the AAC based on ICT and **Gordana Kuterovac Jagodić, PhD** (FF) focused on the importance of evaluation of new services in order to test applications and adjust them with the user's requests. **Jasmina Ivšac Pavliša, PhD** (ERF) talked about the necessity of joining practice and theory, team work as well as the importance of the environment which is essential during the use of the AAC. Afterwards, **Lidija Mandić, PhD** (GF) presented the role of the design which manifests through creation of information for AAC users. The presentation continued with introductions of associated organizations from the category of professional associations and institutions whose users are persons with complex communication needs. **Dinka Vukovic** presented the "Croatia Down Syndrome Association" and **Nadica Bjelčić** presented the "Parental association OKO". The representatives of parental associations concluded that results of the project will significantly contribute to the reduction of time needed for the preparation of material for communication and learning for persons with complex communication needs. **Zrinka Dumančić** and **Jadranka Brkljačić** jointly introduced the Inclusion Support Center IDEM to the auditorium. **Ivana Sekol** presented the Polyclinic SUVAG Osijek which is one of the rare polyclinics in the Osijek-Baranja County specialized for persons with complex communication needs. **Marta Ljubešić, PhD** talked about the Croatian Association on Early Childhood Intervention, which was also the Symposium organizer. The public presentation of the ICT-AAC project was concluded by **Marin Vukovic, PhD** (FER) who presented applications developed within the project. During this presentation, 120 participants were present (representatives of the associations, parents and professionals).

Dissemination of the first results of creating the competence network for persons with complex communication needs included five oral presentations from the ERF team (**Marta Ljubešić, PhD** and **Jasmina Frey Škrinjar, PhD**), GF team (**Lidija Mandić, PhD**) and FER team (**Marin Vuković, PhD**). Presentations were focused on the overview of the different examples of the use of AAC in the early age, new applications, materials and on the importance of the application personalization. **Andrea Feješ** summarized the main message of presentations in a phrase „A piano does not make a pianist“ which tries to say that applications should be made within a team of different professionals, what is confirmed in successful multidisciplinary collaboration within the ICT-AAC project. This event was most visited and participants were searching for an extra chair.

During the implementation of the ICT-AAC project the competence network will be extended with new members from the Croatian academic community, as well as industry and (non)governmental organizations. We invite all interested parties to contact the project participants in order to obtain additional information about the ICT-AAC project as well as get further information about the possible involvement in the competence network.



**All the participants had an opportunity to see project posters and to check out applications during the Poster & Demo session**



**Šimo Brtan, the full-time employee of the project, demonstrates the developed applications during the Poster & Demo session**



**The ICT-AAC project is additionally presented with promotional stools and other promotional materials**



**The manager of the ICT-AAC project, Ivana Rašan Sladoljev is receiving „The Best IPA Manager“ Award from the representative of the Third Croatian Symposium on Early Childhood Intervention, Marta Ljubešić**



**The representative of the Polyclinics Osijek, Tvrtka Gerstner, specialist of early intervention and the project coordinator, Vedran Podobnik, started with the preparation for the next dissemination event**



**The last preparations prior the dissemination event**