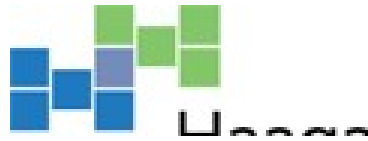




EESTI PUUETEGA INIMESTE KODA
THE ESTONIAN CHAMBER OF DISABLED PEOPLE



SENsationalSTEM Project final report

Implementation time 1st April 2020 – 30th September 2022

Estonian Chamber of Disabled People was lead partner of the Interreg Central Baltic programme project to help young people with special educational needs to find their strengths and work in a cross-border manner to start cooperating for business development and establish joint companies. Project had partners from Finland, Latvia and Estonia. Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences was partner from Finland, Latvian partner was the Latvian umbrella organisation of disability organisations Sustento and from Estonia, project partner was Estonian Agrenska Foundation.

Steering group members for the project were:

For EPIK: Mr. Eero Kiipli, Manager of the Estonian Foundation of People with Disabilities; Mr. Aivar Kamal, Estonian Union of Youth Organisations

For Haaga-Helia: Ms. Terhi Toikkanen, Member of Finnish network of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities VAMY; Ms. Miiä Nousiainen, Vocational special needs teacher in business and administration at Vocational school Spesia

For Sustento: Ms. Gunta Anča, Sustento Chairperson; Ms. Kristīne Veispale, Disabled children assistance Rujū Berns association representative

For Eesti Agrenska: Ms. Gunilla Jaeger, Board member; Mr. Veli Lahtmets, Board member

Project timeline and main events

Project started in April 2020, when already COVID-19 had made corrections to the initial planning. Thanks to rapid and professional action from all partners, in particular thanks to platforms what Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki had in its disposition, the project activities were moved online, with a possible perspective of meeting face-to-face during the course of the project. At first, Zoom platform was used, which later was changed to MS TEAMS, enabling work with documents and better use of group-work break-out rooms.

Communication strategy was approved and project Facebook page and project webpage on the internet established. The project FB page is <https://www.facebook.com/SENsationalSTEM> and the webpage www.sensationalstem.eu All partners also actively shared the content of the project via own social media and internet-based information provision channels.

The first task of the project was to find and train entrepreneurship teachers for better ability to help students with special educational needs to become interested in business, to work in a cross border manner. 20 teachers were involved into the teacher training, taking place 23-24 of November 2020 online.

The aim of the project was to involve 80 students from 3 countries, from about 5 schools from each country. Simultaneously with kicking off the project in the spring and autumn 2020, finding the schools and teachers, recruiting the schools and students with special educational needs, who are interested in STEM topics was taking place.

The participating schools were:

Estonia: Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Center, Narva Paju School, Viljandi Vocational Training Center, Tartu Herbert Masing School and Tartu Art School

Finland: Vocational training centers Perho, Keuda, Omnia, Kiipula

Latvia: College of the State Agency for Social Integration, Technology and Design Technical School of Vidzeme, Talsi State Gymnasium, Riga 66th Secondary School, Torņakalns Private Secondary School



Project 1st steering group meeting 26–27 August 2020 in Tallinn

The project had as well regular staff and steering group joint meetings. In addition, many online meetings took place throughout the project. During the 2nd half of the project, the meetings were hybrid, gathering all participants in each county and making a virtual link. The last meeting was fully face-to-face meeting, followed by a information dissemination event at Estonian Agrenska premises at Tammistu, Tartu county.

The main steering group meetings were as follows:

26-27 August 2020; 08-09 December 2020; 16-17 August 2021, 17-18 January 2022, 08-09 June 2022

During 2021 the student teams were formed and several online meetings with students were taking place. Also, 20 mentors were involved in the project. The process of finding mentors, along with mentors training for information how to work with young people with special educational needs took place, organised by lead partner.

15th of February 2021 all the students gathered for a virtual START Camp meeting. 13 student teams were formed and the cross-border work for business ideas development started.

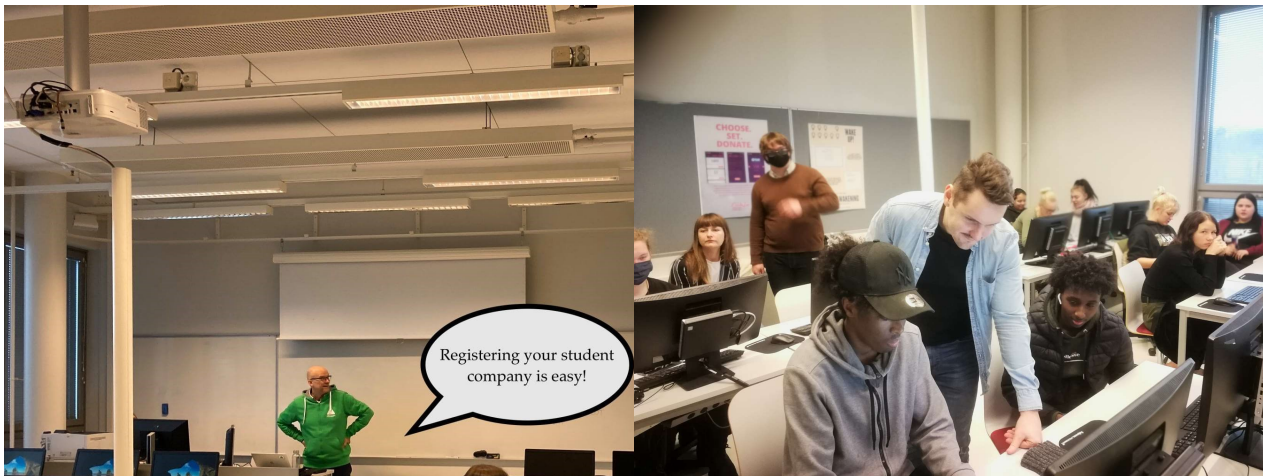
The virtual mentors training was on the 5th of May 2021. For next step, the mentors had to be paired with international student teams, for further discussions and planning during SPRING MEET, taking place 25th May 2021.

After the schools summer vacation, a major face-to-face was about to take place, where all the students, teachers, mentors and staff will meet. The Boot-camp was scheduled to 20-22 of August 2021. However, the COVID still going strong and participating countries and schools different rules and levels of carefulness towards the virus, the decision was made that each participating country is having own boot-camp, where all the students and mentors from that country are meeting and discussing business development and STEM issues. 20th of August a joint virtual event was kicking it off during the morning and the afternoon of 20th and full day 21st of August was earmarked for the discussions. Break-out rooms and individual work with mentors took place.



A break-out room discussion at the Estonian boot-camp with mentor at Estonian Agrenska premises at Tammistu. Realizing that young people have to meet in person is getting stronger and plans are made to organised face-to-face meetings in smaller groups, enabling international teams to meet with thier team members and discuss thier division of tasks, business idea, visaul identity, sales and products/services as well as futher development.

The end of 2021 and 1st half of 2022 was dedicated to fine-tune the business ideas, to discuss with mentors, to prepare for final presentations and continue helping each other and still get assistance from teachers to keep track and work towards a result. 3 student teams face-to-face meetings took place – one in each participating country.



At Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, 15-16 November 2021. Petri Katajarinne from Junior Achievement Finland is explaining how to register a student company. Mentors are assisting students to make efforts for their companies.



2nd face-to-face meeting in Tallinn, March 2022

Winter meet, 9th February, online meeting with all the student businesses was taking place, where the state of play of each team was addressed. Preparations for the face-to-face meetings and the final meet took place as well.

4th of April a Mentors meeting was taking place in order to discuss, which criteria for an internal competition for the international student businesses should be used. 10 criteria (look under outcomes) were agreed and the results were made public during Final meet.

Final meet, 3rd May 2022, also a virtual meeting was wrapping it up for the young participants, while information dissemination, one-to-one work with teams etc. Still continued until the end of August, which was the last month when activities of the project could take place. September 2022 was only for administrative tasks, no more activities took place.



At State Agency for Social Integration, 3rd cross-border face-to-face meeting of student companies in Latvia, April 2022.











Summer 2022 was used to inform about the project results, hold a steering group meeting and plan for reporting. Information dissemination events took place, one in connection with the steering group meeting where all the partners were attending and a final stakeholders seminar was held 25.-26 of August 2022, where lead partner presented the businesses and the course of the project for its stakeholders.



SENSationalSTEM project 5th and final staff and steering group meeting in Tallinn

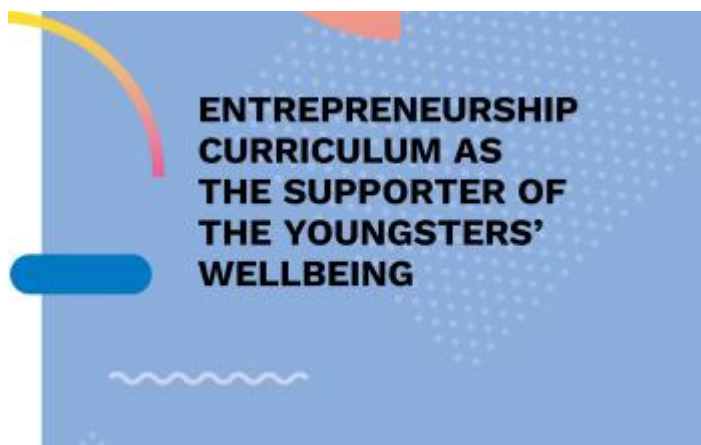
Project outcomes

13 business ideas were working, some with less outcomes, others were having very good results and good teamwork. In close cooperation with the 20 mentors of the project, 10 different fields where the teams did well, were highlighted and the participants were appreciated during the final meet. Best team was KENGA, with its mathematics learning application.

-  Best teamwork: REHOME
-  Joy of learning & Best STEM idea: KENGA
-  Best innovation: BE FOOD & PLAIN SPOKEN
-  Most creative business idea: OCTOARTS
-  Best logo: OWL'S NEST
-  Best pitch and written presentation: HEALTHIER
-  Most environmentally friendly business idea: SAFE-FASH (ECO-LIIKUNTA)
-  Most socially responsible business idea: OWL'S NEST
-  Most active participation: KARM DISAIN
-  Grand Prix: KENGA

Written materials

An important task of the project is the Entrepreneurship curriculum as the supporter of the youngsters' wellbeing. This e-book is available online and is on 76 pages explaining the outcomes of the project, the particular knowledge what is needed to involve students with special educational needs into becoming active in cross-border business development. The editors of the e-book are project staff members from Haaga-Helia, Tarja Römer-Paakkanen, Pirjo Saaranen and Virve Vainio.



<https://www.haaga-helia.fi/fi/ajankohtaista/artikkelit/entrepreneurship-curriculum-supporter-youngsters-wellbeing>

Project information shall be kept at each partner. The source for information at Partners structures, where information will be trackable, shall be the following:
Estonian Chamber of Disabled People: Meelis Joost, meelis.joost@epikoda.ee
Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences: Namrata Sethi, namrata.sethi@haaga-helia.fi
Latvian Umbrella Body of Disability organisations Sustento: Daiga Veinberga, daiga.veinberga@sustento.lv
Estonian Agrenska Foundation: Tiina Stelmach, agrenska@agrenska.ee

Sample product of the PLAIN SPOKEN business.

Many cross-border student companies had ideas in a form of a service, helping people to cope, keep their mental health, contribute to wellbeing and making life easier. Some also had product-type approaches. In order to demonstrate possibilities, results of a business idea, the business PLAIN SPOKEN was elaborating 17 different design solutions, which each could be designed as a project t-shirt. The participants of the business, who were responsible for designing, Mirjam Elessawi and Karl-Theodor Grigor were asked to point out, which design for a t-shirt they themselves would prefer – and the best liked option with Fine-apple design was developed onwards to become suitable as project t-shirt, with the aim of connecting the participants together also when the activities are already all implemented.



Financial and administrative capacity

The overall budget for the project with ERDF and own funding was € 799.269,70

The division of the funds: Lead partner Estonian Chamber of Disabled People € 240.041,70; Finnish partner Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences € 315.932,50; Latvian partner Sustento € 203.870,50; Estonian partner Estonian Agrenska Foundation € 39.425,00

Due to restrictions posed by COVID, many planned events were taking place in a virtual mode, therefore a more flexible use of funds was allowed by the Interreg Central Baltic programme secretariat. Initial 3 months closing period (july-september 2022) was shortened to just one month (september 2022) and the absorption level was made flexible, meaning that if a partner was not using all the allocated funds, but was able to achieve all the outcomes, the implementation is considered complete. Project partners largely absorbed the funds allocated to them, with a slightly lower level of absorption by the Latvian partner Sustento.

Conclusions

On behalf of Lead partner, Estonian Chamber of Disabled People, we would like to thank all the partners, their staff and leadership, their steering group members, all the participants, teachers, mentors and Interreg officials for a successful cooperation, what in harsh circumstances was rapidly taken up and followed through!

Meelis Joost
Project manager