



## **Innovative Solutions To Acquire Learning to Learn / INSTALL**

Final Report

Public Part

**Project information**

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## Executive Summary

This report describes the progress of the implementation of the INSTALL project. It deals with the advances made regarding its implementation, including the project objectives, approach, outcomes and results, partnership, plans for future, and contribution to the EU policies.

The project is focused on preventing drop-out in higher education institutions in relation to non-traditional students on undergraduate degree programmes. With the growth of mass higher education systems retention has become an important and rising concern for policy-makers at national and European levels. It is considered as a measure of the efficiency of higher education with implications in terms of the needs of the economy and as a return on investment for individuals, society and the whole EU.

The project objectives were designed to help improve the learning to learn experiences of disadvantaged and non-traditional students in HE. The project outcomes contributed to enable staff in higher education and policy-makers more widely to achieve this objective through improved practice across Europe.

The concrete aim of the project was to develop, test, fine-tune and validate the innovative methodology of the Narrative Mediation Path (NMP) and integrating them into the current services offered by the universities to their students, in order to contribute to the development of a more flexible and inclusive university cycle.

The NMP was based on currently widely-used psychological methods, to concretely help students in acquiring/enhancing the L2L key competence. The concrete objective of INSTALL was to improve the L2L competence of disadvantaged-non-traditional students through the use of the innovative NMP. Also, INSTALL aimed to empower the tertiary education system to more precisely tailor flexible learning paths for disadvantaged-non-traditional students in view of their specific needs identified through the NMP.

The methodology hinged on merging 4 narrative models (Metaphoric, Iconographic, Writing and Bodily) combined and consolidated into the innovative NMP. The NMP used the different sensorial channels to facilitate the mentalization process among participating students and further empower them to acquire/enhance the “Learning To Learn” key competence, ultimately increasing their completion rates and academic achievement.

The first project activities were focused on two main objectives: 1) to define the profile of disadvantaged-non-traditional students, and 2) to define mechanisms to combine the four Mediation Modules based on different sensory channels. Next, the Consortium focused on the modelling and development of the NMP to sustain the acquisition of the Learning to Learn competence among the disadvantaged-non-traditional students through enhanced mediation. The aim was to increase the Learning to Learn competence in order to decrease university drop-out and increase academic performance.

The activities designed to deliver, test, fine-tune and validate the NMP are divided into five main phases: 1), research and modelling 2) two cycles of testing the NMP with the student target groups, 3) two cycles of evaluation, 4) two cycles of fine-tuning, and 5) final validation of the NMP.

Each validation cycle consisted in: the selection of students who attended the training cycle, the delivery of an integrated series of 7 meetings of 2.00-2.30 hours each, the administration of both competence and perceived efficiency area tools to the participant students, data analysis, and the fine-tuning of both the evaluation tools and the finalized NMP training model.

The students' performance was monitored during one semester of studies, tracking their improvements in terms of academic achievement as well as their personal attitude towards their university studies. Comments were collected, benchmarked and used to fine-tune the results and produce the final validated version of the main deliverables.

This project was carried out by a consortium of four universities from a geographical spread from across Europe, representing the south, east, west and north. All partners had extensive experience of research in this field, although they were from different disciplinary backgrounds such as psychology and pedagogy, which has facilitated a better and broader understanding of the issues.

The main aim of INSTALL was to prevent the phenomenon of dropping out, while improving the quality of educational paths at university.

Specifically, the project had the following objectives:

- To provide university students with new competencies to be used during their educational path at university as well as in the world of work; in particular, the project aims at developing and enhancing the Learning to Learn key competence;
- To provide innovative models of teaching and learning useful to acquire Learning to Learn. This means aiming at a more flexible education, inspired by concepts such as fairness and excellence, in line with the demands of the European Commission;
- To prevent the drop-out phenomenon through the innovative approach of using narrative devices;
- To enable university students to fully reap the benefits of higher education in a lifelong learning perspective.

During the lifetime of the project, a large number of results have been achieved and diverse products developed.

- The Baseline Report was drawn up. It consolidates the findings and results of the research and analysis of the disadvantaged-non-traditional students. The Report identifies the specific needs of the target group. In addition, the Report highlights the most suitable combination of the sensorial mediation Modules that, once combined in the NMP, sustains the reflective process of mentalisation and mediation.
- The 4 day Induction Workshop was held in Naples in June 2012. It enabled the Mediators to apply the NMP and Modules in their respective contexts. Upon return to their countries, the partners' representatives delivered the Induction Workshop to operators with previous experience in applied psychology, who became the Mediators who applied the NMP to the students.
- The Operational Manual and Guidelines for Trainers was delivered. It describes the guidelines on how to use the NMP and the related modules to achieve the mediation outcome. The Manual incorporates a specific set of operational

guidelines designed to properly empower the Narrative Group Trainers who will moderate the NMP and facilitate the mediation of the participating students.

- The Toolkit for Students was realized. It collects a set of learning tools to allow participating students to fully benefit from the NMP. The Toolkit contains a set of learning materials and handouts, specifically related to each narrative code: the Metaphorical Module, Iconographic Module, Writing Module, and Bodily Module.
- The two rounds of the NMP were delivered in Italy, Spain, Romania and Ireland. In total, 198 students participated in the NMP training course in 4 partner countries.
- The two validation phases were carried out. Specific validation materials have been created. Each partner administered the evaluation tools to students and to Narrative Group Trainers (NGTs) during the two INSTALL rounds. The related data were analyzed and were useful to fine tune the NMP.
- The Final Test & Validation Report was delivered. It describes the analyses and results of the two validation cycles.
- The main deliverables were fine-tuned taking into consideration the feedback of an "External INSTALL Quality Committee", composed of 5 experts in the field from 5 different countries. The External Committee's feedback was collected by using a specifically-designed questionnaire for each deliverable. Each of these reports were thoroughly analyzed and discussed among partners in order to identify the potential issues to be modified in the deliverables, as well as the best way to integrate the main proposals received from the Associated Partners. After the discussion, all deliverables were fine-tuned.
- The Internal evaluation was carried out. It aimed to offer a structure to monitor all activities realized and results produced during the project, and evaluate them against project objectives. The precise tools, actions and timetable of the internal monitoring were illustrated in the Quality Assurance Plan. According to this Plan, the internal evaluation is focused on management, organizational, research and team issues, and it aims to promote a reflection on the quality and progress of the work.
- The project website was set up: <http://www.intsallproject.eu>. It will remain active after the end of the project. The website contains several items some of which are available in different European languages. There is information about the project itself - what it is about, its aims and objectives, and the latest news. The partners and their contact details are listed. Documents and products of the project are also available for download. Dissemination activities such as conference papers and publications can also be viewed. A contact facility (email) is available for people to write to the project team.
- An integrated dissemination strategy was carried out. The Partners participated in national and international conferences and events, published a scientific article in a specialized journal, published articles in newspapers, produced disseminating materials and contacted students, researchers and other people interested in the project through the website, newsletter and e-mail. A video

dealing with the experience of the Spanish students who participated in the INSTALL training course was published on the website.

- The main exploitation activities consisted in organizing a number of workshops for potential trainers, that is professionals interested in adopting /adapting the NMP in/to their context, drawing up conference paper presentations and journal articles on the INSTALL results and methodology, discussing them with relevant research and policy networks and adult education networks at national and European level. Furthermore, 508 universities throughout Europe were invited to adopt the validated NMP model in their context, an International Final Conference took place in Naples in March 2014, this conference was streamed and this recording was published on the website, the *Operational Manual and Guidelines for Narrative Group Trainers* as well as the Proceedings of the Final conference were published on line. Finally, the INSTALL results became an integral part of the services and methodologies used by the University of Naples Federico II to tackle the issues of drop-out, students performance, and to facilitate the role of tertiary education as a mean to promote social inclusion

The Dissemination and Exploitation activities will continue beyond the life of the project.

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# 1. Project Objectives

INSTALL, *Innovative Solutions to Acquire Learning to Learn*, aimed to respond to an ever-changing Europe and calls for a high level education that is freed from contents and instead focuses on skills.

The project specifically targeted disadvantaged/non-traditional students who are often defined as underachieving students in delay with their exams and with a low performance at university. The main aim of INSTALL was to prevent the phenomenon of dropping out, while improving the quality of educational paths at university.

Specifically, the project had some objectives:

- To provide university students with new competencies to be used during their educational path at university as well as in the world of work; in particular, the project aims at developing and enhancing the Learning to Learn key competence;
- To provide innovative models of teaching and learning useful to acquire Learning to Learn. This means aiming at a more flexible education, inspired by concepts such as fairness and excellence, in line with the demands of the European Commission;
- To prevent the drop-out phenomenon through the innovative approach of using narrative devices;
- To enable university students to fully reap the benefits of higher education in a lifelong learning perspective.

The project targeted disadvantaged/non-traditional students. Terms like “disadvantaged” or “non-traditional” are increasingly being used to refer to the new, non-conventional populations coming into higher education who might experience some difficulties adapting to the institution or successfully graduating from university. In the international literature, according to Crosling and colleagues (2008), ‘non-traditional’ students are those appearing in international access and retention studies as being: low income or economic status groups; people with disabilities; students who are the first member of their family to participate in higher education; mature students and/or people from minority groups and refugees.

INSTALL aimed at developing for these students a Learning to Learn competence; in a university context this competence includes being able to study, as well as knowing how to study. Importantly, it involves becoming aware of one’s learning process and needs, which then helps with the identification of both the available resources, and of any obstacles which need to be overcome, in order to learn effectively. The L2L key competence is, therefore, regarded as a reflective meta-competence, or rather a higher-order competence, which consists in becoming aware of what, how and why one knows.

The INSTALL project assumed that in order to develop such a competence in studying it is necessary for students to activate a process of mentalization of their own educative path (Fonagy, et al., 1997; 2002; Allen, Fonagy, 2006). Mentalization is a process aimed at understanding the reasons for one’s own and others behaviors in order to act in the university context in a way which is instrumental to achieving academic success. In other words, the mentalization/reflective function allows the learning individual to see and recognize him or herself while acting, and it combines the emotional, cognitive and social dimensions which go across the educational experience, in order to give them a strategic direction. Furthermore, mentalization allows a person to recognize, elaborate on, and regulate their mental states (e.g., emotions, intentions, desires, beliefs, etc.) which underlie the learning process (Fonagy et al, 1997; Allen, Fonagy, 2006). In this sense, the student can activate a reflective process of mentalization about what and why he or she learns so that the students can give a new and more functional direction to their academic performance.

Despite the large number of studies and interventions carried out in educational and training contexts, studies designed to promote mentalization in academic contexts are rare. Due to the paucity of research and mentalization based interventions in academic contexts,



INSTALL aimed to be an innovative intervention which compensated for the lack of studies on the reflective function in the academic context.

The general INSTALL objective was to contribute to increase participation in lifelong learning by non traditional students or belonging to disadvantaged groups, regardless of both their socio-economic and/or educational background, who were at risk of drop-out. In other words, INSTALL aimed to enhance disadvantaged-non-traditional students' completion rates while lowering the risk of drop-out.

Two main operative objects can be identified:

- To create tools to allow HE institutions to prompt flexible learning paths for target groups: the NMP empowers both students and HE Institutions to address the challenge of underachievement, low completion and drop-out.
- To develop, test and validate the NMP in order to lower the barriers to the successful course completion and improved performance of disadvantaged-non-traditional students. Once tested and validated in the 4 countries, the NMP will be deployed through full roll-out at the EU scale, facilitating the sharing of knowledge and good practice.

The project specifically targeted university students with the aim of preventing the phenomenon of dropping out, while improving the quality of educational paths at university. Therefore, the project had two main specific objectives:

- Firstly, to provide university students with new competencies to be used during their educational path at university as well as in the world of work and to provide innovative models of teaching and learning useful to acquire key skills. This means aiming at a more flexible education, inspired by concepts such as fairness and excellence, in line with the demands of the European Commission;
- Secondly, to prevent the drop-out phenomenon through the innovative approach of using narrative mediation. The goal is to enable disadvantaged-non-traditional students to fully reap the benefits of higher education in a lifelong learning perspective. The narrative mediation course aims to develop and enhance the Learning to Learn key competence.

Finally, another two INSTALL key objectives were:

- To disseminate the INSTALL activities and results through regional workshops, national and international conferences, the website, the newsletter and the dissemination materials; and
- to exploit the INSTALL results through technical National and European conferences and a range of publications aimed at practitioners, policy-makers and academics, and to encourage other universities, or educational institutions to use the NMP Model in their contexts.

INSTALL targeted the group of students with educational disadvantages caused by personal, social, cultural or economic circumstances and developed innovative paths and mechanisms to enhance the acquisition of the Learning to Learn Key Competence so as to improve their academic achievement in a Lifelong Learning perspective.

In this sense, INSTALL aimed to respond to an ever-changing Europe and called for a high level education that is freed from contents and instead focused on skills. It promoted

disadvantaged-non-traditional students' development/enhancement of key competences, specifically Learning to Learn.

In this framework, INSTALL was a project aiming at contributing to the implementation of the EU2020 Strategy as it sustained the empowerment of Europeans in inclusive societies through enhanced HE.

The project focused on supporting the achievement of a European Area of Higher Education, specifically the social dimension of Higher Education, by supporting disadvantaged-non-traditional students' participation and success in HE.

INSTALL was positioned to improve social inclusion and performance in HE as it widened the participation and raises the completion rates of disadvantaged students and non-traditional learners.

## 2. Project Approach

The INSTALL project, planned by SINAPSI-Federico II University, started in October 2011. Its main objective was to develop a support system to students to be integrated into current services offered by each University, with a concrete long term approach.

EU University systems differ in terms of the mechanisms to tackle the underachievement of students and drop outs; rates of underachievers and drop-outs are a concern in all Member States. INSTALL developed and validated a methodology to enhance the “Learning To Learn” competence of disadvantaged-non-traditional students by enabling Universities to flexibly provide support services to students.

INSTALL responded to the acknowledgement that Learning To Learn should not be taken for granted in those students approaching tertiary education. The use of the NMP allows the tertiary educational system to flexibly adjust the learning opportunities for the relevant target group. In this sense, the NMP became a multidisciplinary model to increase completion rates and enhanced the educational achievements of the clearly identified target group of disadvantaged-non-traditional students.

INSTALL developed, tested and validated a methodology and educational path that has the potential to improve the provision of services to disadvantaged-non-traditional students. This generated opportunities for the higher education system to modernise the offer of specialised services to this target group.

INSTALL concretely enhanced the L2L competence of a clearly identified target group, raising completion rates while empowering tertiary education institutions to develop flexible learning paths for disadvantaged-non-traditional students.

The aim of INSTALL was the acquisition of the key competence of Learning to Learn. Such a competence, within the university context, represented a competence in studying, a being-able-to-study, based on a set of abilities and knowledge integrated in a knowing-how. Such a competence consisted, therefore, in the acquisition of the awareness of one’s own process of learning and one’s own needs, identifying the available resources and the obstacles to overcome in order to learn in an effective way.

The INSTALL project assumed that, in order to develop such a competence in studying, it was necessary for students to activate a process of mentalization of their own educative path (Fonagy, et al., 1997; 2002; Allen, Fonagy, 2006), that is, a process aimed at understanding the reasons for one’s own and others’ behaviours in order to act in the university context in a way which is instrumental to academic success.

Mentalization, also known as reflective competence or reflective function (Fonagy & Target, 1997; Fonagy, 2002; Allen & Fonagy, 2008; Meehan, Levy, Reynoso, Hill, L.L. & Clarkin, 2009; Fonagy, Twemlow, Vernberg, Nelson, Dill, Little & Sargent, 2009), at a university level, allows students to become aware of their and others’ mental states (thoughts, beliefs, emotions, wishes, motivations), to recognize, elaborate and modulate emotions throughout the learning process, to strategically use cognitive operations and to communicate with and relate to others effectively.

Scientific evidence (Hermans, 2001; Davidsen, 2008; Freda, 2008a; 2008b; 2011) demonstrates the key role of narration as instrumental in the reflecting process of mentalization. Narration, in fact, acts as an activator and a promoter of reflective competences when it is used in a continuous alternation between narrative and meta-narrative processes. This alternation promotes the transition from narrative sequences describing events to reflective narrative sequences in which the subject uses narration to reflect about his own being in the experience. This happens through the “narrative group” who activate and improve the potentialities of reflection inherent in narration, the abilities to

address complex problems, and to build knowledge through experience (Freda, 2008a; 2008b; 2011).

INSTALL tested and validated an innovative methodology based on Narration, the Narrative Mediation Path (NMP), with the aim of promoting the Learning to Learn Key Competence, by developing the mentalization/reflective competence. Specifically, the NMP consisted in a group training process targeted at groups of disadvantaged-non-traditional students who had not passed all the exams requested.

The NMP was the INSTALL innovative solution to enhance disadvantaged/non traditional students' completion rates while lowering the risk of drop-out. This NMP Model used narration as the key facilitator of mediation and hinged on the psychological concept of mentalisation, the ability to understand oneself or someone else's mental state.

This was an innovative methodology because it:

- transferred into educational and academic environments a methodology used in medical science, notably psychology, and which has rarely been applied to the specific goal of Learning To Learn, nor focused on the specific needs and features of the target group; and
- combined and merged four modules that were currently used in isolation - in domains not related to education - into an innovative integrated support service: the partners had created a suitable combination of the four modules, the Metaphoric, Iconographic, Writing and Bodily modules, to generate an innovative cognitive/emotional/learning/ process poised to involve and stimulate various sensory channels (sight, sound, and touch).

Specifically, the NMP was a group training process which combined four discursive narrative codes into one methodology. The four codes were implemented in a cycle of seven meetings conducted by Narrative Group Trainers (NGTs) who were trained to use such a methodology with disadvantaged/non-traditional students. Each code made use of specific narrative inputs: in the metaphoric one there was a reference to proverbs and mottoes related to university experience; in the iconographic code some vignettes, portraying students involved in a typical university situation, were used; in the writing code three narrative tasks were given; lastly, in the bodily code, the students were asked to "sculpt" their university future, representing it through their own bodies. These codes had all been used individually in earlier research activities seeking to foster reflective processes within educational and psychotherapeutic settings. However, the methodology applied here combined all four codes in an innovative way.

In summary, the training was designed as a circular reflective process looking at participants' individual university experiences that, starting from a synchronic and summarized representation (proposed by proverbs and mottos), gradually led to a diachronic analysis focused on specific moments and situations (proposed by the iconographic and the writing codes), to finally move back, in the bodily code, to a synchronic level in which the same experience was re-investigated in the light of the reflective and meta-reflective processes previously activated.

The training was designed as a path to foster the following processes:

- a) the progressive cognitive and emotional involvement of the student;
- b) the gradual transition from an exploration of the entire university experience to the focusing on a specific and individual experience;
- c) the gradual transition from a reconstructive function of the formative experience to a planning function allowing the students to act in an effective way within the university context.

During each training session (irrespective of the specific code) the same methodological sequence was used:

1. Presentation of a narrative input
2. Narrative construction of the experience through different discourse codes

3. Group narrative meta-discourse on the proposed narration
4. Transformation of the narrative experience

The Narrative Mediation Path was tested, fine-tuned, and validated through two subsequent cycles in each Partner country.

Each cycle consisted in the selection of disadvantaged-non-traditional students according to the profile of the target group according to the definition and the parameters of academic achievement and performance, the delivery of the NMP to this sample of students through 7 workshops of the duration of 2.00/2.30 hours once a week using the methodology, the guidelines for trainer and the Toolkit for students developed previously by the Consortium, the evaluation of the NMP, the administration of specific evaluating tools (developed previously by the Consortium) to trainers and students participating in the course, the analysis of the data, and the fine-tuning of the NMP before its administration to the second round group.

Different validation tools to control the effectiveness of the project (outputs) had been identified in order to test, fine-tune and validate the NMP. The validation tools were divided into tools of self-reporting, that were targeted at students, and hetero-evaluation tools targeted at the narrative group trainers. In addition at the end of the NMP, the students were monitored and their performance tracked in order to verify the efficacy of the NMP.

The Quality Assurance activities had great importance in monitoring all activities carried out and results produced during the project, and evaluating them against project objectives. To ensure objective quality control, the Consortium appointed 5 external peer reviewers competent in the field of the project forming the "External INSTALL Quality Committee". The main INSTALL deliverables were submitted to this Committee and fine tuned taking into consideration the peer reviewers' feedback.

Each member of the Committee sent to the consortium a written report and these evaluations circulated amongst the different partners. In the meetings and in the communication via Skype there was a specific time dedicated to the analysis, discussion and potential integration of the proposals received from the evaluators in order to improve the quality of the implementation of the project.

Partners put great emphasis in the definition of effective dissemination and exploitation strategies.

The dissemination strategy of Install was made up of two consecutive phases:

- a) The goal of the first, the **awareness-oriented phase**, was to raise awareness within a qualified community about the project and its objectives.
- b) The second, the **result-oriented phase** aimed to promote the results of the project, in order to allow potential interested parties to get to know the achievements and the related benefits of the Install project.

Both phases required different methods and activities to be initiated in order to be able to achieve the goals.

**a) The raising awareness phase** involved the setting up of the basic marketing materials and awareness-raising presentations at different related events. Therefore, the main activities of this phase were as follows:

- Developing the Dissemination and Exploitation Plans on the basis of partners' experience and on their membership of networks at local, national and European levels. Both Plans detailed roles, responsibilities, a schedule and tools for the dissemination and exploitation activities envisioned during the entire duration of the project and beyond (2 more years).

- Identifying the tools and mechanisms to be used to guarantee visibility, among which there are both offline (press releases, press conferences, events, roundtables, etc) and online (website, webzine, mailing lists, etc) means of dissemination.
- Setting up a common project design, e.g. the Install logo, templates for documents and presentations.
- Creating the project website; this describes the challenges and the goals of the project and introduces the project partners and team members.
- Designing the dissemination materials (posters, leaflets, stickers, banners, bookmarks etc.)
- Giving introductory presentations at conferences and workshops about the challenges and goals of Install in order to raise awareness among the scientific and educational stakeholders and to establish the basic brand name of Install.
- Participating in national and European events and conferences, such as info-days and other events devoted to practitioners in the field.
- Contacting the LLP National Agencies.
- Defining a list of relevant stakeholders, including local, national and European institutions who would be the target of specific awareness activities.

In order to **promote the results of the** Install project, stakeholders in education and lifelong learning areas were addressed. Specific activities in this respect referred to:

- Updating of the project website with public deliverables and news and sending of five newsletters in order to encourage active communication, to keep interested parties informed and to demonstrate project liveliness and progression.
- Presentations of the research-oriented theoretical and practical results of the Install project at international conferences and workshops.
- Submission of high-level articles to scientific conferences and publications.
- Publishing and dissemination of press releases following the finalization of important project milestones.

An integrated dissemination strategy was carried out. The Partners participated in national and international conferences and events, published a scientific article in a specialized journal, published articles in newspapers, produced disseminating materials and contacted students, researchers and other people interested in the project through the website, newsletter and e-mail. Furthermore, the whole Final Conference was transmitted on streaming and this recording is available on the website. A video dealing with the experience of the Spanish students who participated in the INSTALL training course was also published on the website.

The main exploitation activities consisted in organizing a number of workshops for potential trainers, that is professionals interested in adopting /adapting the NMP in/to their context, drawing up conference paper presentations and journal articles on the INSTALL results and methodology, discussing them with relevant research and policy networks and adult education networks at national and European level. Furthermore, 508 universities throughout Europe were invited to adopt the validated NMP model in their context, an International Final Conference took place in Naples in March 2014, this conference was streamed and this recording was published on the website, the *Operational Manual and Guidelines for Narrative Group trainers* was published on line. Also a book collecting all the scientific contributions presented during the Final Conference was published on line. Finally a proposal of a book dealing with the INSTALL results and methodology has been submitted to Springer publishing house.



### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

There have been a large number of outcomes and results achieved during the project lifetime. The main outcomes and results are described below:

- **Baseline Report – workpackage 1**

The Baseline Report presents the contextual analysis of the five universities<sup>1</sup> engaged in this project, in relation to the number, characteristics and situation of disadvantaged-non-traditional students who are the targeted population of INSTALL. The analysis addresses three key topics: the national and institutional context, the profiles of underachievers, non-traditional and disadvantaged-non-traditional students, and the statistics on drop-out and underachievement in each of the universities. A general view of the number, characteristics and situation of disadvantaged-non-traditional students is provided which allowed us to provide some methodological guidelines for the design of an intervention aimed at coping with their disadvantages. The report also illustrated the criteria to select the target students and the methodological guidelines for such intervention, in accordance with the previous analysis.

In relation to the project's objectives this output has increased our knowledge and understanding of the issues as well as identifying factors which promote or constrain drop-out. Finally the report gives an overview of the effectiveness of the intervention.

The Baseline Report has been published on the website.

- **Induction Workshop – workpackage 2**

The Induction Workshop (D2.3) was held in Naples on 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

All Partners devoted four days to familiarize themselves with the concept of the Narrative Group Trainer who would implement the NMP in the different contexts and countries to test and validate the innovative methodology.

It aimed at clarifying the process of reflectivity, rethinking the narrative inputs provided by the NMP and relative to the four narrative codes, discussing and optimizing the evaluation tools, and highlighting the fundamental principles necessary to facilitate the group learning processes in an educational context.

on this occasion SINAPSI showed the Reflective functioning scale to be used by the Partners during the quality evaluation and a diagram, illustrating the emotional position of the group in relation to each object, to evaluate the students' answers to the Semantic differential.

This workshop gave Partners the opportunity to reflect on changes/adaptations needed to fine tune the content and structure of the Operational Manual and the Toolkit for Students.

The representatives of the Partners who participated in the Workshop, in September 2012 delivered its contents and methodology to the Mediators identified in each Partner organisation as the people who would deploy and roll-out the NMP.

- **Operational Manual and Guidelines for the Narrative Group Trainers – workpackage 2**

The Operational Manual and Guidelines for the Narrative Group Trainers (D2.2) illustrates the theoretical aspects of the phenomenon of non traditional/disadvantaged students, and the common and differential patterns in the contexts and in the disadvantaged-non-traditional

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<sup>1</sup> The participating universities are: University of Naples Federico II, Italy; University of Seville, Spain; National School of Political and Administrative Studies, Romania; Aarhus University, Denmark; National University of Ireland-Maynooth, Ireland.



student profiles. It analyzes the profiles of underachieving, non-traditional and disadvantaged students, examines the core elements and components of the L2L competency, and investigates the connection between reflective competence and Learning to Learn. It suggests how to promote mentalisation in a training context, specifying the effects of mentalisation on the students' learning to learn key competence, and describes how to use narrative methods to promote the reflective competence.

A large space is given to the role of narration to promote mentalisation, and to the definition of the NMP, its structure, aims and procedures, and its articulation in four NMP discursive narrative codes.

This Manual deals also with operational aspects: it gives useful suggestions to trainers for managing groups, establishes the criteria to select the student target group, and encourages the disseminating of the route offered to students. Finally it explains to the mediators how to administer and, first of all, assess, the evaluation tools.

The Operational Manual has been published by Aracne publishing house. It is available on the INSTALL website as well as on the Aracne website for free <http://www.aracneeditrice.it/aracneweb/index.php/pubblicazione.html?item=9788854870130>.

- **Toolkit for Students – workpackage 2**

The Toolkit for Students (D2.4) collects a set of learning tools to allow participating students to fully benefit from the NMP. The toolkit contains a set of learning materials and handouts.

Specifically, the Metaphorical Module: contains a set of texts and metaphors; the Iconographic Modules: a series of vignettes; the Writing Module: texts and narration; and the Bodily Module: the request to sculpt the students' university future using only the students bodies.

All the mediation tools describe situations particularly relevant to disadvantaged-non-traditional students who engage in dialogue and comment on their situation in the educational and academic context.

Specific forms for evaluation, to be administered before and after the course, are part of the Toolkit. It includes also a set of guidelines on how to provide constant support and guidance to participating students to enable the mediators to use the mediation tools.

The Toolkit was adapted by each partner in its country context/language. It was fine tuned after the first round of the NMP (Partners developed detailed feedback forms to monitor progress, and achievement and capture any element useful to validate the methodology, curriculum, modules and tools).

The Toolkit for students has been published on the website.

- **Deployment of two rounds of the NMP Model – workpackage 3**

198 students participated in the first and second round of the NMP course in the 4 partner countries (the course was delivered in Italy, Spain, Romania and Ireland, but not in Denmark).

The first round of the NMP was organized in 6 sessions, the second round in 7 sessions lasting 2.00/2.30 hours. The results of the first round were useful to fine tune the NMP before the delivery of the second round.

One of the primary strengths of the methodology was the group based format of the training but the small size of the groups allowed the mediators to work on each student's role, without overlooking the total group context. One of the main high points was the novelty of the approach, the fine path to their inner selves and the combination of different codes.

The two rounds of the deployment showed how the NMP can improve the level of reflective competence and mentalization in the participating students.

Many students were interested in the INSTALL methodology. For students INSTALL was a good occasion to stop and reflect on and recognize their resources and limits, and to act in a more strategic way in the university context. There were not only benefits in terms of

developing the students' learning related skills, reflection and metacognitive skills, but also a positive influence on the students' approach toward university.

- **Two validation phases – workpackage 4**

During the two validation phases, specific validation materials were collected.

Each partner administered the evaluation forms to the students and to the Narrative Group Trainers (NGTs) during the two rounds. In general, the NGTs expressed positive opinions about the INSTALL training course, underlining positive and negative aspects of each code and the related narrative inputs administered to the students during the seven INSTALL sessions.

Regarding the evaluation forms for students, the following forms were administered before (ex-ante forms) and after (ex-post forms) the INSTALL training course:

- - Entry Forms (ex-ante)
- - Semantic Differential (ex-ante and ex-post)
- - Reflectivity Forms (ex-ante and ex-post)
- - Satisfaction Questionnaire (ex-post)
- - Follow-up Forms (6 months after the training course)

Regarding the evaluation forms for NGTs, the following forms were administered:

- Form of Social and Personal Data of NGTs
- - INSTALL first round of the training course
- - Evaluation training process for NGTs

All these evaluation forms were useful to fine-tune the Operational Manual and the Toolkit for students.

- **Quality Assurance External Reports – workpackage 5**

The Quality Assurance Plan initially appointed five associated partners from five different countries and all of them were selected on the basis of their expertise in the field of the project.

The External Committee evaluated the main deliverables of the project and provided the consortium with critical feedback. The feedback was collected by using a specifically-designed questionnaire for each deliverable. The deliverables that were submitted to external evaluation were: the Baseline Report, the website and other dissemination materials, the Operation Manual and Toolkit for Students. The Final Validation Report will be submitted in the near future. To date, three of these deliverables have been evaluated and reported in:

- The First External Evaluation Report: which deals with all suggestions received from Associated Partners regarding the Baseline Report.
- The Second External Evaluation Report that contains feedback about the website and other dissemination materials.
- The Third External Evaluation Report, focused on the main adaptations to be made in the Operation Manual and the Toolkit for Students. In order to increase clarity and precision, this report is divided into two parts (one for each of the deliverables).

Each of these reports were thoroughly analyzed and discussed among partners, via Skype Conference and e-mail, but especially in the meetings, in order to identify the potential issues to be modified in the deliverables, as well as the way of integrating the main proposals received from the Associated Partners. After the discussion, all deliverables were fine-tuned.

- **Quality Assurance Internal Reports – workpackage -5**

The Detailed Quality Assurance Plan (Deliverable 5.1.) aimed at offering a structure to monitor all activities carried out and results produced during the project, and evaluate them

against project objectives. This Plan proposed precise tools, actions and a timetable of the internal monitoring and quality assessment.

According to the Detailed Quality Assurance Plan, the internal evaluation is focused on management, organizational, research and team issues, and it aims to promote a reflection on the quality and progress of the work. Five periods were established to internally monitor the project development: months 1 to 4, 5-11, 12-18, 19-24, and 25-30. Three periods have been monitored during the last 18 months and three internal reports have been produced.

Their results (presented in five different reports) were discussed during communication exchanges via Skype, e-mail and during the project meetings in order to promote a better development of the project.

- **Website – workpackage 6 (<http://www.installproject.eu>)**

The INSTALL website was designed and developed in collaboration between NSPSPA and SINAPSI. The website includes a summary of the project in each of the partner country's languages. Information is available under the following headings: the project, partners, meetings, documents, dissemination, links and articles and finally contact details. All the written outputs from the project, such as the literature review, the deliverables, the evaluation tools, the minutes of the skype conference and the Report of the Consortium meeting, etc. are available in the restricted area of the website. Part of these materials (interviews to students participating in the course included) will be published in the next few months in a public area. The project website is regularly visited and used. The website serves as a key dissemination strategy within the project's objectives and will continue to do so for two years after the project has finished.

- **Dissemination Activities – workpackage 6**

A wide range of dissemination activities were undertaken and will continue to be undertaken in the future. The key dissemination activities include the presentation of a conference paper, and roundtables and symposiums at national and European conferences in order to reach a large number of academics, policy-makers and practitioners. Each partner carried out a local dissemination strategy to communicate to a large number of students the opportunity to participate in the INSTALL training course.

The Universities involved as partners used their internal communication mechanisms to reach the interested groups of students, in particular University web sites, newsletters, university assemblies, notice boards in the different University buildings. This way, The Consortium reached more than 200.000 students, that is the number of students enrolled in the involved universities, by sending official University e-mails talking about INSTALL and giving information about the project through the Install through posters placed in the main university buildings. A large number of students were reached through the INSTALL Facebook group created by each partner.

Each partner disseminated the INSTALL activities and results during National conference to disseminate primarily the findings from their own country but also the findings at a European level. These were attended by academics, policy-makers and practitioners.

The partners wrote and published one journal article and some newspaper articles about different aspects of the INSTALL project. A video dealing with the experience of the Spanish students who participated in the INSTALL training course was published on the website.

A mailing list of networks and potential stakeholders – composed actually of about 40.000 contacts – received 6 Install newsletters.

In total, a wide range of dissemination materials has been produced: through about 27,000 items (brochures, posters, leaflets, bookmarks, etc.), more than 60,000 people have been reached.

About 10,000 people have been reached through conferences, events, and the publication of articles and more than 16,000 have visited the Install and Partners' websites.

An average of 100 visitors per day have visited the INSTALL website and the this number is supposed to increase in the next few months.

- **Exploitation Activities – workpackage 7**

The main exploitation activities consisted in organizing a number of workshops for potential trainers, that is professionals interested in adopting /adapting the NMP in/to their context, drawing up conference paper presentations and journal articles on the INSTALL results and methodology, discussing them with relevant research and policy networks and adult education networks at national and European level. Furthermore, 508 universities throughout Europe were invited to adopt the validated NMP model in their context, an International Final Conference took place in Naples in March 2014, this conference was streamed and this recording was published on the website, the *Operational Manual and Guidelines for Narrative Group Trainers* as well as the Proceedings of the Final conference were published on line. Finally, the INSTALL results became an integral part of the services and methodologies used by the University of Naples Federico II to tackle the issues of drop-out, students performance, and to facilitate the role of tertiary education as a mean to promote social inclusion.

## 4. Partnerships

Four European Universities have been the Partners of the INSTALL Consortium: the Centre SINAPSI (Services for Active and Participated Inclusion of Students) of the University of Naples Federico II, Italy; the University of Seville (US), Spain; the National School of Political and Administrative Studies (NSPSPA), Romania; and the National University of Ireland-Maynooth (NUIM), Ireland.

The Consortium represents excellence in EU research on social and educational challenges in HE. INSTALL pooled the expertise required to tackle the challenge of disadvantaged-non-traditional students and to develop a more responsive educational system. The Partners brought to the consortium specific technical and operational experience, making the INSTALL partnership uniquely positioned to address the issues with a multidisciplinary approach.

SINAPSI is a multidisciplinary Academic Centre providing services to the entire Federico II University (94.510 enrolled students) on the active social inclusion of disadvantaged-non-traditional students. It is internationally recognised to be the forefront of research and development in this field. SINAPSI is a large organisation with a solid and reliable management structure that is already coordinating large projects and activities in the area of disadvantage and social exclusion in tertiary education.

The University of Seville has consolidated experience on disadvantaged and non-traditional students; it is internationally recognised as a centre of excellence in this field. The National University of Ireland-Maynooth is also at the forefront in the research about non-traditional students (women, disabled students, migrants and ethnic minorities). Both these Universities brought to the consortium consolidated experience and expertise to advance research and, most importantly, develop innovative mechanisms to improve the L2L competence to enhance academic achievement and limit drop-out.

The institutional mission of the National School of Political and Administrative Studies is to promote academic cooperation among international institutions and is a prestigious higher education institution in Romania, with extensive experience in international cooperation and projects.

The Consortium capitalised on the partners' respective competences and expertise and maximised complementarities while minimising overlap in view of resource efficiency. All partners were involved in all WPs. They were greatly committed to transversal activities such as Quality Assurance, Dissemination and Exploitation. Operationally, the partners cooperated and contributed to all research, analysis, development and testing phases and activities envisioned in the project.

In particular,

SINAPSI was the Coordinator of the Consortium: it set overall methodological and technical frames and coordinates implementation. In addition to leading WP8 Project Management, SINAPSI also led WP2 Modelling, and WP4 Test&Validation. SINAPSI actively contributed to all other WPs. SINAPSI dedicated to the project a specialised team of researchers, as well as a project management team with extensive experience.

US brought into the INSTALL project the relevance of its policies and teaching methods in the area of disadvantaged-non-traditional students, where it is recognised internationally as a leading research centre. US led WP1 devoted to research activities to investigate the determinants of the group of disadvantaged-non-traditional students, as well as the Quality Assurance WP5, capitalising on its consolidated experience in high level research as well as internal quality mechanisms.

Thanks to its direct experience, and proven track record, in communication, NSPSPA led WP6 Dissemination. Building on its consolidated expertise, NSPSPA developed the strategies for the proper dissemination of project activities and results throughout the

duration of the project, as well as actions for the future uptake of project results after the end of the project.

NUIM contributed to all project activities in INSTALL building on its consolidated experience as center of excellence in research and the development of innovative teaching and learning solutions for a wide range of students. NUIM led WP7 Exploitation to ensure the proper uptake and mainstreaming of project results and products also after the end of the project.

The Consortium included and integrated contributions from Universities in 4 Member States, who brought different methodological and cultural approaches to the same solution.

The Consortium provided EU relevant solutions:

- a) The project addressed a Europe-wide target group of disadvantaged-non-traditional students that could benefit from the project results regardless of the country of origin (disadvantaged-non-traditional students are an increasingly EU relevant phenomenon regardless of educational domain and country);
- b) INSTALL developed innovative methodologies and tools and validated them in order to be flexibly applied across the EU tertiary education system;
- c) leveraged EU excellence to advance research in this field: the composition of the consortium, its technical relevance and expertise, and its geographical distribution was instrumental to generating positive spillover effects across the EU.

The development of multilingual content, deliverables and methodologies in 4 language versions also served the purpose of multilingualism in the EU.

The INSTALL partners provided a wide range of different types of higher education institutions and educational, political and cultural contexts to compare and contrast the issues of preventing drop-out in non-traditional and disadvantaged students. For example the different countries had different percentages of drop-out students, and different completion and drop-out rates.

Geographically the partnership was spread across Europe which provided the Consortium insight into different institutional, regional and national cultures and practices. These factors contributed towards providing a European added value and enabled partners to learn from each other and share and exchange ideas about 'what works' in relation to policy and practice on preventing drop-out in non-traditional and disadvantaged students.

The experience of working together in a European partnership provided the Consortium with different and broader perspectives in relation to methodological and theoretical approaches and higher education policies and practices. A cross European partnership enabled the Partners to look at the issues in new ways rather than being entrenched in their national perspectives and approaches. It enabled the Consortium to become more 'eurocentric' rather than 'ethnocentric'. Two of the partners had worked together on previous European projects and this helped the understanding and knowledge of the different higher education systems across Europe. The partners were also experienced researchers and came from different disciplines which facilitated an inter-disciplinary approach and a greater and broader understanding of the issues.

These factors ensured a good working relationship. Working together also raised the awareness of the need for sensitivity in relation to languages. While English was the working language for the project, all the Partners acknowledged and valued the richness of each other's languages.

It is important to stress that there was great agreement among partners regarding the good working atmosphere, the high level of involvement of participants, and the efficient coordination by the leading partners.

The general opinion was that the project was very well managed and there existed an efficient coordination between partners, especially considering the high volume of work that had been carried out during the 30 months of the project lifetime.

All the partners have ensured that the work and the findings of the project will be disseminated in the future after the project has finished. All partners will continue to write and present conference papers, round tables, and publications. They will continue to use national and European networks such as ESREA (the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults) to promote the work of the project. A book dealing with INSTALL will be written after the project has finished.

All the partners have access to the materials, findings and data of this project. In relation to intellectual property rights all partners have the right to use the research and project materials for publication purposes: journal articles, conference papers and book chapters based on this project.

The Consortium exploitation strategy is important for embedding the work and findings of the project. In order to achieve this, it will be essential to continue to work closely with existing networks as well as to look at the possibility of establishing a new European network in this field.

The website is an important aspect of the exploitation strategy- [www.installproject.eu](http://www.installproject.eu) - as this will continue to function after the project has finished. All of the website is public except for a private area which is available only to team members.

## 5.Plans for the Future

The partners involved are willing to keep all the relevant content developed during the project on their institutional websites so as to guarantee the sustainable use and exploitation of the results of the project: the project results will become an integral part of the services and methodologies used by the universities involved in the project to tackle the issues of drop-out, student performance, and to facilitate the role of tertiary education as a means to promote social inclusion.

In addition, the partners will disseminate further the INSTALL innovative integrated model so as to promote its adoption also in academic environments other than those directly or indirectly involved in the project: both project and associated partners are fully committed to share the project results, methodology and applications with the academic and scientific community at large. The scale and scope of the consortium with a considerable geographical and thematic outreach (i.e. five partners representing five countries) will allow for a greater mainstreaming of project results.

Moreover, the partners will continue to carry out activities to support the mainstreaming of project activities and results towards institutional, academic and political stakeholders at the local, national and EU level.

The Partners will continue to carry out the following activities to provide visibility to the project after the lifetime of the project;

- Presenting the project, its activities and results through seminars and events: from informal workshops to more formal conferences;
- Presenting the project in national and international technical conferences;
- Disseminating information on the project, activities and results to a large number of universities through Europe;
- Communicating the INSTALL activities and results to the Consortium mailing list, to INSTALL website visitors, to the Partners' websites visitors, to the four INSTALL Facebook groups.
- organizing workshops with potential trainers, that is mediators who could administer the NMP to their students in other University Departments. These teachers should have some kind of professional competence connected with a helping-relationship
- adapting the NMP to other contexts, e.g. secondary schools, in particular by investigating the relation between reflectivity and agency
- encouraging students to write their university thesis about the INSTALL research;
- publishing a book about the INSTALL results (its draft has been already proposed to a prestigious publishing house)

The above mentioned activities will ensure the widest outreach possible for the potential mainstreaming of the project and uptake of the results in the educational and academic sector as a whole, and not only in the countries directly represented by the consortium, but also on a real European scale.

Finally, the Consortium, together with new partner countries, has already applied for a new EU project aiming at monitoring the agency of the students who participated in the INSTALL Narrative Mediation Path. This application is based on the INSTALL results and will contribute to higher completion rates and lower drop-out by developing innovative narrative group counselling and tutoring methods for students in Higher Education.



## 6. Contribution to EU policies

INSTALL was well positioned to contribute to the implementation of the EU2020 Strategy as it sustained the empowerment of Europeans in inclusive societies through enhanced HE.

The project contributed to key EU policy, objectives and priorities in a number of ways. It responded to the LLP specific strategic priorities such as promoting the acquisition of key competences throughout the education system at the tertiary education level. As highlighted by the 2010 Joint Report on Education and Training, the implementation of the key competences framework had been uneven: while advanced at the school education level, the implementation of key competences across the EU had lagged behind in the higher education system. INSTALL responded to this specific issue, as it promoted the KC 5 Learning to Learn at the tertiary education level.

The project sustained the implementation of EU policies in the field of tertiary education and LL by supporting the development/enhancement of Key Competences as identified in “Key Competences for LL - A EU Reference Framework”, 2006. In addition to KC5 Learning to Learn – the specific focus of the project - INSTALL supported the acquisition of KC7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and KC8. Cultural awareness and expression.

Furthermore, INSTALL responded to the EU objective to support the achievement of the EU Area of Higher Education as it strengthened the linkages and working relations among higher education institutions. Also, INSTALL was aligned with the EU objective to facilitate the development of innovative practices in education and training at the tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others since the project aimed at developing innovative methodologies and tools that would be implemented and replicated throughout the EU.

INSTALL promoted the strategic objective of “equity, social cohesion and active citizenship” of the Council Conclusions, “Strategic Frame for EU Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020), 2009. INSTALL was instrumental in ensuring that “vulnerable groups [..were not..] excluded from knowledge” (EU2020)

INSTALL was, indeed, well positioned to address the EU priority “social inclusion in higher education”, as it aimed at widening the participation, and raising the performance and completion rates, of disadvantaged students and non-traditional learners. In addition, the project developed methodologies and tools to empower tertiary education institutions to more flexibly respond to disadvantaged-non-traditional students’ specific learning and pedagogical needs.

The project related to the Lisbon Education and Training Progress Indicators and in particular to the target ‘Making Learning More Attractive’. The project did this by looking at issues of retention and non-completion in higher education for non-traditional students. A key outcome of the project was the identification of strategies and policies to support non-traditional students in their undergraduate studies

INSTALL indirectly impacted on any EU policy and strategy for education and LL as it responded, with multidisciplinary methodology, to the multifaceted issue of academic achievement and the L2L key competence of the specific target group of disadvantaged-non-traditional students.

In addition, INSTALL aimed to increase the student target groups’ Employability Skills, defined as the transferable skills needed by an individual to make them ‘employable’. (Commission Communication - New Skills for New Jobs: anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs -Dec 2008; Commission Communication: An Agenda for New Skills and New Jobs -Nov 2010).

These skills are those which EU policies recommend to equip young people to carry out their role in the labour market to the best of their ability. Employability depends on people's knowledge, skills and attitudes, how they use those assets, and how they present them to employers (Expert Group Report: New Skills for New Jobs: Action Now -Feb 2010).

The key competence Learning to Learn, as a reflective competence or mentalization, in the INSTALL project, was the result of a group training process - the Narrative Mediation Path, aiming at increasing the students' awareness of their own representations of the Self in training/education. Within the university context, it represented a competence in studying, a being-able-to-study, based on a set of abilities and knowledge integrated in a knowing-how. It means becoming aware of one's own process of learning and one's own needs, identifying the available resources and the obstacles to be overcome in order to learn in an effective way.

This methodology can also be successful out of the university context, e.g. when students finish studying and begin to find a job. If it is true that the objectives of the NMP consisted in analysing the competences used to realize actions in order to build and make explicit new meanings of experience, and in fostering an awareness of how people know and how they know how to act in order to achieve more effective performances, supporting participants' strategic action is, not only, instrumental in their university success but also in their whole life. Through the NMP they can acquire strategic competences and employability skills that will be very useful to increase their opportunity to access the labour market.

In this sense, INSTALL contributed bridging the skills gap for the jobs of the future and making our education systems more responsive to the future needs to be promoted so as achieve a critical mass that will raise European competitiveness, as recommended by the Council conclusions on the "Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training ET(2020).



