

THE NEWS LETTER

No.1, Sep 2020

WELCOME

THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

HORIZON 2020



Reception, Management and Integration of Third Party Nationals

The first Months of the project

About the project

The goal of the WELCOME Project is to draw upon innovative solutions in the field of Information and Communication Technologies in order to help public administrations and NGOs to overcome the challenges of reception and integration of migrants and refugees (commonly referred to as “Third Country Nationals”, TCNs). For this purpose, WELCOME will develop teams of intelligent conversational agents, which act as dedicated personal assistants to TCNs. Of particular importance in this context are knowledge-based visual analytics technologies, language technologies, immersive Virtual Reality environments, and intelligent agent team-based human computer interaction – paired with the findings from psycho-sociological research.

The WELCOME Consortium consists of [15 highly consolidated partners](#): 6 research institutions, 3 ICT companies, and 6 user partners dealing with migrants and refugees reception and integration. The WELCOME platform is envisaged as a product co-designed and co-created by the entire Consortium and all parties involved in the process of TCN reception and integration.

The Covid19 pandemic forces the temporary cancellation of all face-to-face activities

Since March 2020, the Covid19 pandemic has forced to cancel all planned WELCOME face-to-face working meetings and reschedule them as virtual meetings. Thus, the 1stUser Meeting scheduled for April in Hamm, Germany, the 1st Technical Meeting scheduled for June in Barcelona, Spain and the 1st Plenary Meeting scheduled for July in Prague, Czech Republic were held in the virtual mode. This switch to online meetings is in line with the decision taken by other H2020 Projects and by the European Commission, e.g., with respect to the meeting of six H2020 migration-related projects, originally scheduled to take place in Brussels on March 6 to develop common policies and strategies, was cancelled at the last minute and replaced by five online sessions between 29 March and 27 May, which had a wide participation of WELCOME members. A follow-up roundtable is planned, also online, for mid October 2020.

Kick Off meeting

The Kick Off meeting of the WELCOME project was held in Barcelona from the 11th to the 13th February 2020. For three days, the Poblenou campus of the Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) in the Catalan capital has hosted the meetings of the 15 project partners, represented by thirty researchers. At the meeting, the work plan for the following phases of the Project has been reviewed and validated in detail, and the calendar for the next meetings and milestones has been agreed upon. You can watch a short introductory video recorded at the Kick Off meeting [here](#):



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Reception, Management and Integration of Third Party Nationals



So far, the limitation of face-to-face meetings has not led to significant delays or alterations in the technical progress of the project, although the planned face-to-face interviews and working sessions with TCNs for collection of data and recording of interactions between authorities and TCNs had to be postponed. In order to have some data to work with, our User Partners simulated the interactions in role plays, which can, obviously, be merely a temporary solution. On the other side, in the light of the currently observed increase of Covid19 infections all over Europe, it

seems unlikely that we will be able to carry out any face-to-face activities soon. This may indeed delay our progress in the upcoming months. The pandemic also affects the dissemination activities of the Project, given that some events at which the Consortium planned the presentation of WELCOME have been cancelled and those in the near future will be certainly equally cancelled or postponed.

WELCOME is picking up speed

While the work in WELCOME started from the first day of the Project, it picked up speed with the first online Consortium meetings. To be highlighted are the 1st User Meeting, during which the Use Case scenarios, the types of TCNs that we want to serve and the types of interactions that we aim to conduct have been discussed, the 1st Technical Meeting, which was instrumental for detailing the roadmap for the development of



the WELCOME personal assistants application and drafting of its architecture, and the 1st Plenary Meeting, which was used to review the state of affairs and the progress made in the ten Work Packages of the project during its first five months of operation.

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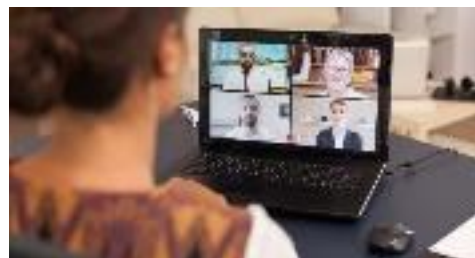
Reception, Management and Integration of Third Party Nationals

Another highlight was the series of workshops of the six H2020 Projects

- WELCOME: 15 highly consolidated partners ([see here](#))
- EASYRIGHTS: Enabling immigrants to easily know and exercise their rights
- MICADO: Migrant Integration Cockpits and Dashboards
- MIICT: ICT Enabled Services for Migration
- NADINE: digital integration system for the social support of migrants and refugees
- REBUILD: ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance

related to the development of technologies for migrant reception and integration between **March 29 and May 27.**

The workshops were organized by **REA (Research Executive Agency)** of the European Commission. The aim of the workshops was to get to know each other and plan synergies, share practices and methodologies with the primary objective to avoid duplication of work and favour collaboration and exchange.



In the near future, further project-internal and cross-project meetings are planned.

Among them, a roundtable of all six projects listed above to decide on joint policies and strategies for support of migrant reception and integration.

Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Centre for Research and Technology Hellas, Charles University Brno University of Technology, Deutsches Forschungszentrum für Künstliche Intelligenz, Sheffield Hallam University, EVERIS, Nurogames, Método, Estudios Consultores, Mind Refuge, Kentro Meleton Asfaleias, Departament de Treball, Afers socials i famílies, CARITAS Verband Hamm e.V., PRAKSIS, ISocial Foundation



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Partners:

