THE NEWS LETTER

No.3, October 2021

Reaching the Equator of the Project

Trials of the MyWELCOME App

Trials with TCNs and User Partners have taken place during these past months in Greece, Catalonia and Hamm, Germany.

During the trials TCNs could test the Frist Prototype of the MyWELCOME App and give feedback to the Consortium, so the second prototype can include modifications that adapt to the needs and expectations of TCNs.

Photo: DIFE, Catalonia

www.welcome-h2020.eu/

Successful 1st Review Meeting

The First Review Meeting that assessed the progress of the WELCOME Project during its first year of existence took place on the 28th of May this year. All partners of the Consortium, the Project Officer (PO), who assists WELCOME on behalf of the EC, and two external experts, who acted as Reviewers, attended. It was a very productive collaborative meeting, with many insightful recommendations by the PO and the Reviewers.

Overall, the Reviewers stated that the objectives and technologies proposed by the WELCOME Project continue to be relevant since the integration of migrants arriving to Europe and, particularly, in the participant countries of the Consortium is still a hot topic and an everlasting issue. The WELCOME Project is on a good track to make it easier and more efficient for both TCNs and agents of the hosting country.

The progress of the Project was evaluated very positively. As the Reviewers pointed out, the Project achieved all major Milestones foreseen until month 12, and this despite the challenges and deviations in the Work Plan imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Reviewers also highlighted their impression that the Project is well managed – which is a key for a successful project, especially in times when external circumstances request adaptations of the original schedule.

The Consortium is now about to discuss how the received recommendations should be taken into account in the months and work to come. Particular care will be taken to avoid stereotyping of the end users of the MyWELCOME Application developed in WELCOME, namely Third Country Nationals (TCNs) in terms of specific facial features or clothing of the avatar, a topic that has been widely discussed within the User partners of the Consortium.

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WELCOME

THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

HORIZON 2020

Reception, Management and Integration of Third Party Nationals

WELCOME Personal Assistant
Select what you would like your personal assistant to look like

Complete

Photo: MyWELCOME App

In general, we can state that the positive evaluation of the work done so far by independent experts and the recommendations that the Consortium received from them concerning the more advanced features of the MyWELCOME Application are an indicator that our roadmap of the development of intelligent assistants that shall support reception and integration of TCNs is valid and timely.

Involvement of TCNs and relevant stakeholders on WELCOME

The participation of TCNs and relevant stakeholders in the process of the co-design and development of MyWELCOME Application technologies has been essential right from the beginning of the WELCOME Project. In particular TCNs already contributed in several ways. Thus, in Catalonia, they participated in the recording of role play interactions with the colleagues from iSocial and DIFE (Departament d'Igualtat i Feminismes, Generalitat de Catalunya) in Darija (Moroccan Arabic). The recordings will be used as training material for technologies on automatic speech recognition and synthesis, such that TCNs will be able to speak to the MyWELCOME agent in their mother tongue.

Furthermore, over the last months, TCNs (more than 35) and relevant Stakeholders (more than 20) participated in interviews related to the social and psychological aspects of the TCNs arriving in Europe in order to conduct a psychosocial analysis. Among the Stakeholders were Civil Society Organisations, NGOs, Public Administrations, etc., i.e., all types of organizations involved in the reception and integration of TCNs. These interviews and the report where the conclusions are presented will contribute to further expand the knowledge on the psychosocial aspect of TCNs. In addition, the

Photo: iSocial, Catalonia

results presented in the psychosocial analysis can be very helpful for the Consortium when it comes to taking these psychosocial needs into account during the development of MyWELCOME Application technologies, since the psychosocial aspect is considered to be very important for the successful integration of TCNs. They have been carried out in all three countries of the Consortium from the country-wide (Greece), regional (Catalonia, Spain) and a local (Hamm, Germany) perspectives.

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First Prototype of MyWELCOME App undergoing the scrutiny of Partners and TCNs

Photo: DIFE, Catalonia

Coinciding with this newsletter, the dry-runs of the first prototype of the MyWELCOME App that shall make the User Partners of the Consortium acquainted with its functionality and the trials involving TCNs are taking place. We are happy that due to the COVID-19 related security measures adopted by partners according to their country regulations the trials can be carried out as face-to-face activities.

In its current prototypical version, the MyWELCOME App offers some basic functionality. The TCNs are able to register with the help of a social worker, and, following the instructions they receive via email, download the app and access it using the provided credentials. When accessing it for the first time, they are asked to create their personalised agent assistant. The agent is embodied by an avatar that can be customized selecting the preferred hair style, clothing, accessories, etc. The customizable features have been designed in collaboration between user and technical partners to be inclusive and avoid stereotyping TCNs.

Four different scenarios are currently covered:

- Topic-oriented language skills training: This training is taking place in a Virtual Reality (VR) environment which is accessible through a headset provided by the NGO or organisation where TCNs test the App. It includes basic vocabulary training considered relevant to the integration of a TCN in the host country.

- The First Reception Service: The First Reception Service mainly targets the support of the provision of basic information concerning the procedure of TCN registration in Catalonia as well as the First Reception Course that the TCNs have to take via the completion of a registration form.

- Preliminaries for legal counselling: This scenario covers so far the provision of basic information on the prerequisites the skype registration in Greece.

- Training of TCNs for making appointments with public administrations: The training scenario recreates to a certain extent the context of a conversation of a TCN with a public administration via phone, from the greeting with the agent, to the moment of making the appointment and finalising the phone call.

Photo: MyWELCOME App

NGOs and public administrations involved in migrant reception and integration can register TCNs and manage their accounts via the interface provided by the WELCOME Platform Manager (WPM). Via the WPM, they can also access the Visual Analytics Component (VAC), which facilitates the analysis of the data of TCN cohorts and thus supports the work of these Actors. More precisely, The VAC aggregates, correlates and visualises collective and individual TCN data (e.g. personal, professional, educational, health profile, etc.). The outcome of the analysis is visualized using a representation chosen by the Actor. In its final version, VAC is aimed to contribute hugely to the definition of policies and interventions that are based on data.
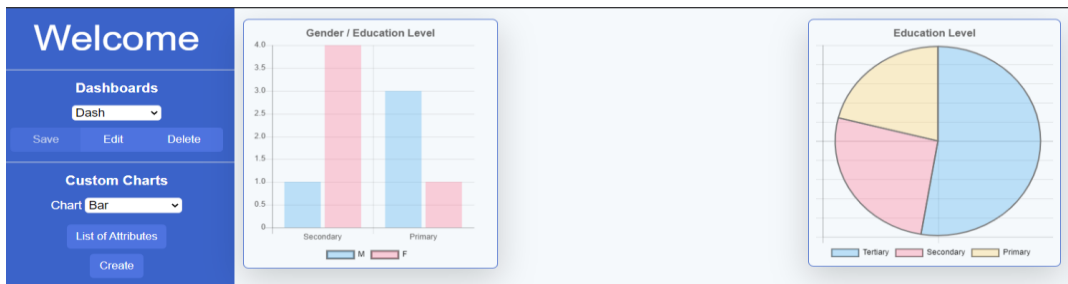

Photo: MyWELCOME App

Blog of articles

If you would like to know more about the work carried out by the WELCOME Consortium and its Partners you can check the articles published in our News and Articles section!

- Mental health challenges of refugees in Germany during the covid-19 pandemic
- Virtual Reality and applications in language teaching for immigrants and refugees
- The importance of the active participation of immigrants in the design of public policies in Catalonia

Partners:

www.welcome-h2020.eu/