Report of the Workshop

Objectives

The overall goal of the ETNA thematic network is to establish a European Web Portal able to provide information on assistive products based on ICT (information and communication technologies) and e-accessibility solutions which are available in Europe, and on related organizations and services. Such a Portal will be developed in collaboration with ATIS4All (Assistive Technologies and Inclusive Solutions for All) – another Thematic Network belonging to the same cluster.

This Workshop was the first of the six workshops planned within the Etna Project. Its main goal was to raise ideas and issues that could be a useful start for mapping information needs related to ICT-based Assistive Technology, which is the objective of ETNA Work Package 2.

The workshop explored the information needs of the various actors involved in research, development, dissemination, provision and use of ICT-based assistive solutions all over Europe. It included analysis of the various delivery models existing in each country (public service delivery system, private market, online procurement, free domain products), the impact they have on information needs (coverage, depth, format of information), and the special challenges posed by ICT vs. non-ICT assistive products.

Furthermore, it represented an important occasion to gather all the partners for the first time and start sharing experiences and comparing different point of views.

The event was split in two parts, corresponding to two different days, in order to give time to participants to familiarize themselves with the context and get to know each other, before starting active collaboration and comparing opinions on given themes.

The first day was mainly informative: besides presenting the partners and their areas of expertise, it provided insight on the ETNA and the ATIS4All projects, on selected national contexts, on specific technology domains and on societal challenges related to ICT-based assistive technology. The second day was devoted to brainstorming and active discussion, plenary as well as in parallel working groups focusing on different issues.

Detailed description

The two-day agenda is shown in the Workshop programme (Annex 1). At the beginning of the workshop, participants were provided with the Instrumentum Laboris (Annex 2), i.e. the preparatory material that had been compiled by FDCGO and circulated to all partners for comments before the workshop. This material mainly regarded key-terms definitions and useful resources, aimed at achieving an agreement on important concepts to be used during the project.

First day: Thursday 24 March

The first day was opened by the President of the FDCGO, Mons. Angelo Bazzari, the Scientific Director, Prof. Paolo Mocarelli and the Head of the Biomedical Technology Department, Dr. Furio Gramatica.

The opening session was followed by a presentation of the ETNA project (Annex 6) given by the ETNA Project Leader, Mr Renzo Andrich, and by an overview of the ATIS4All Project (Annex 7), given by María Elena Gómez Martínez, from
The second session of the morning was devoted to an explanation of selected national cases, starting with Italy (Annex 8) by Renzo Andrich, then Germany (Annex 9) by Nils Hanekamp (FTB) and Petra Winkelmann (IWKOELN), Denmark (Annex 10) by Thomas Lyhne (HMI), Spain (Annex 11) by Lucia Pérez-Castilla (CEAPAT), Netherlands (Annex 12) by Jeanne Heijkers (HZ), Finland (Annex 13) by Tuula Hurnasti (THL) and eventually UK by Dave Clarke (DLF). This session was chaired by Ms Petra Winkelmann.

The third session, facilitated by Alena Galajdova (TUKE) provided insight into some specific domains of the ICT-AT world. Educational Technologies was presented by Stefania Bocconi from CNR (Annex 14), while John Gill addressed the Technical Developments for blind and partially sighted people (Annex 15); Andrew Lysley from ACE delved into Computer access and augmentative communication (Annex 16). Olga Gkaitatzi from CERTH presented the Open Source World (Annex 17), Jari Väisänen from FAIDD gave an insight into Communication software for language impairment (Annex 18) and Lindsay Evett from NTU discussed Advanced frontiers of e-accessibility (Annex 19).

The fourth session, chaired by Manuel Montejo Estevez, was meant to focus on the European Context, which was discussed from different perspectives: Hervé Gauthier from EASPD gave the Service Providers point of view (Annex 20), Anna Evangelinou from DN spoke on behalf of the Users Organizations (Annex 21), while Klaus Miesenberger from JKU discussed AT and e-accessibility challenges (Annex 22).

Second day: Friday 25 March

Sessions 5 and 6, held on the second day of the workshop, were aimed at actively involving participants in brainstorming and discussion to identify and address the most important issues regarding the expected results of Work Package 2. After a brief introduction by the project leader, Mr Renzo Andrich, participants were divided into 3 working groups: “Stakeholders”, “Technology Domains”, and “Challenges”.

Each group was composed of 6 or 7 people, besides the facilitator and the rapporteur. Almost all participants had the opportunity to choose which group to join, according to their interests and expertise in the themes that had been suggested.

The first group tried to focus on the different categories of stakeholders involved in ICT AT and on the kind of information each one needs. Conversely, the second group tried to define technological domains and the kind of interest each category of stakeholders has towards them. Finally, the third group proposed the present challenges and tried to anticipate their possible evolution within the space of 5 years, and how they might affect the ICT AT domain.

The contributions and the results of the discussion raised during each working group are illustrated in detail in Annex 3 (Working Group “Stakeholders”), Annex 4 (Working Group “Technology Domain”) and Annex 5 (Working group “Challenges”).

The outputs of each group were then presented in a plenary session; discussion followed. During the plenary discussion some general issues were raised, regarding the results of the working groups and the wider theme of ETNA objectives.

Some of the participants of WG1 highlighted some difficulties in considering the stakeholders information needs according to what is relevant for ETNA. At the moment its evolution is not clear: the data to be considered significant will depend on the final configuration of the portal, the linked databases, repositories and other external web resources.

As the project is at its starting stage, the future development of the ETNA Portal is not completely clear; basically, it will exploit all the functionalities of the EASTIN system; in
addition to that, it will link many other internet resources, such as open source repositories and downloadable tools; it will also develop a live and active “community”, among users, developers and any other stakeholder, thus giving the opportunity to exchange opinions and capitalize on each other’s experiences.

Another issue raised was linked to the difficulty of harmonizing information coming from so many resources: the possibility of common data structures was discussed, as well as the need to explore leading-edge data search technologies, also involving actors external to the ETNA network.

Other participants underlined the importance for the Consortium to achieve a clear vision of the future Portal as early as possible, as its design layout and configuration will strictly depend on that.

Another question concerned how the ETNA results will be evaluated, since it’s not a development project, but a network. Participants shared the idea that basically what will be measured is the ETNA social impact, and the partners’ involvement.

Finally, participants agreed on the importance of dissemination activities, on which the consortium should think to invest.

Though the workshop officially closed after this final discussion, the afternoon was devoted to a hands-on session held by the FDCGO team: a brief lesson giving instructions on how to lead a presentation through a webinar (led by Ms Sabrina Vincenti) was followed by a visit to the smart-home located in the Fondazione Don Gnocchi explained by Mr Valerio Gower.