Municipality of Varna

The disabled persons, the digital divide and citizenship
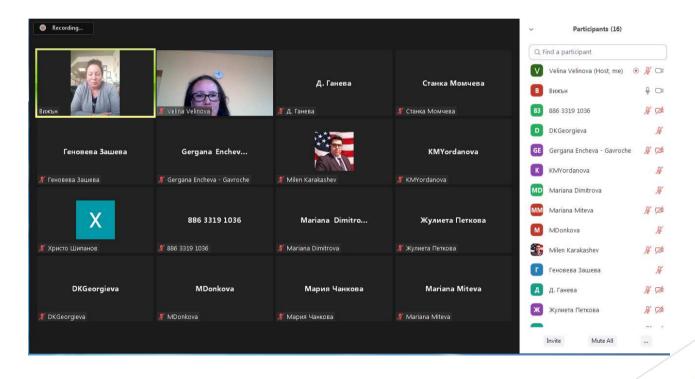
February 15th 2022

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![EUDIGIT logo]

The disabled persons, the digital divide and citizenship

![VARNA logo]

Number of attendees (citizens): 16   % Women: 81.2 %
Number of experts (local stakeholders, cities staff): 8   % Men: 18.8 %

Expert committee stakeholders

▶ **Action/Project n°1: Association for support for people with intellectual disabilities / RIVIERA Day Centre:**
- Created online Clubs for communication, mutual assistance, sharing and implementation of the learning programmes – "Social skills", "Bulgarian traditions and customs" and "Psychological Support and Counselling", where users receive daily individual tasks to perform. Organised trainings for the people with disabilities to work with computers and social networks as well as safe use of internet to be able to participate in the activities.
- The Centre implements the Project "Inspired by Nature – Mission Health" consisting in training in new skills aimed at environmental protection and healthy living, promoted with the participation of the users of the centre.

▶ **Action/Project n°2: Empathy Foundation offers services for people with lasting visual impairments.**
- Empathy Foundation offers courses for initial computer literacy, online computer training for advanced users using speaking software in Bulgarian language, consultations for using smart phones with Android.
- "Virtual assistant" - remote assistance centre. Operator and information specialist in the centre accept requests via Internet platforms for audio and video contact for those in need (check their appearance, read a document, register on websites etc.)

Expert committee stakeholders

▶ **Action/Project n°3: Special school for visually impaired students "Prof. Dr. Ivan Shishmanov"** provides training, rehabilitation and socialization of students from 6 to 19 aimed at achieving independence and social integration. Using tools like the speaking software and artificial eye, the school encourage students to increase their digital competences through participation in extracurricular activities and STEM activities.

▶ **Action/Project n°4: Agency for Social Development Vision provides services in the fields of education, employment, culture and social development for people with disabilities and others in need of support.** It organizes and offers courses in Computer Literacy, Computer Design, Safe Internet. The Agency also assists the users in finding employment

▶ **Action/Project n°5: Nikolaevka Foundation created social enterprise Infoteka.bg : It employs people with disabilities for** an information website for local news, cultural and historical sites, advertisement and digitizing various documents in the municipalities of Dolni Chiflik and Byala in Varna region.
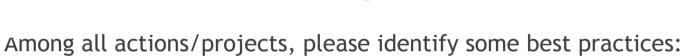
Citizens committee

Main reactions, lessons learned, expressed needs and proposals "from the field":

- **New technologies are still expensive for people with disabilities and funding is a problem, e.g. orCam (artificial eye) device is very expensive and students can not afford it.**

- **There are not enough trained specialists to work with people with disabilities;**

- **Involving more advanced users in helping training other people with disabilities in computer literacy is beneficial for both;**

- **insufficient equipment;**

- **For some people with intellectual disabilities communication through the computer is easier than in person;**

Best practices

Among all actions/projects, please identify some best practices:

1. Empathy Foundation "Virtual assistant"

2. Project "Inspired by Nature – Mission Health" activities and results disseminated by the users of RIVIERA Day Centre

3. Agency for Social Development Vision providing an inclusive and stimulating environment for people with disabilities, creating conditions for social integration

4. Social enterprise Infoteka.bg created by Nikolaevka Foundation

Relevance of selected best practices
Link with EUDIGIT's objectives

EUDIGIT's objectives	n°	Action/ project
Strengthening EU citizenship and citizens awareness	3 4	Special school for visually impaired students "Prof. Dr. Ivan Shishmanov" Agency for Social Development Vision
Contributing to reduce the digital gap in cities	1 2 3 4 5	RIVIERA Day Centre Empathy Foundation Special school for visually impaired students "Prof. Dr. Ivan Shishmanov" Agency for Social Development Vision Infoteka.bg
Co-building digital policies with citizens		

Thank you for your attention!