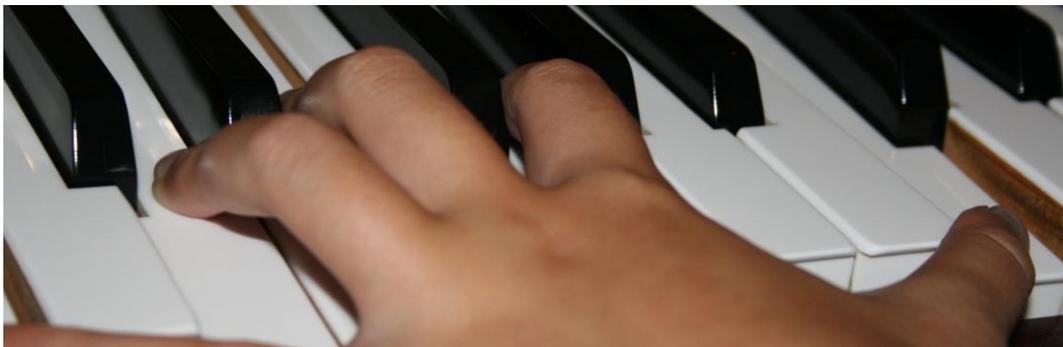




D4.2 PILOT COURSE ACTIVITIES



D4.2

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Transversal Programme:
Mus4VIP project: Music for visually impaired people
LLP - KA3 ICT: Multilateral Projects
Project N° 530990-LLP-1-2012-1-IT-KA3-KA3MP
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Education and Culture DG

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Authors: Francesco Facchin, Giuseppe Nicotra Conservatory of music of Padua with the collaboration of Irifor, EKMS, UR2J, NCW
<p>Abstract: The deliverable gives a thorough description of the pilot stage in its various aspects - the courses, the number of teachers involved and their feedback, the number of students involved, and the interventions required, for example, to reinforce teacher training, consult on software installation and software updating.</p> <p>The Q3 questionnaire has been used as a descriptive tool of the activities developed.</p>
Keyword List: Blind, music, education, computing, Internet, difficulties with existing systems, Braille music, Evaluation

Executive Summary

The pilot phase started on the basis of outcomes of WP4.2, that is the contact activity with the teachers and the preparation of the material required by the teachers aiming at developing a meaningful activity with their students.

Therefore, in the early months of the school year, October and November 2014, the rigorous experimentation test phase took place, led by the teachers.

Before the teachers who made themselves available to work with the project on this activity started their work we prepared a verification questionnaire, called V3 in order to make sure that everything would be ready and that the materials required had been received, were appropriate to the teachers' requirements and to establish whether further help from the project's partners was needed.

D5.1 evaluation plan includes the criteria and the general building plan of the whole activity, which was defined for the testing and experimentation of the project resources phase. The evaluation phase consists of four phases, numbered V1 to V4 and it must be considered a work tool, consisting of the four questionnaires, V1 to V4. For further information on the structure of the whole evaluation it is, therefore, necessary to wait for D5.1.

For the purpose of this report, the V3 evaluation and the Q3 tool have been created with the aim of being one last contact with the teachers before the final phase of data collection on the satisfaction with the experimentation carried out.



At the end of the period during which the teachers tested the resources provided with their students, the consortium partners once again had a dialogue with the teachers in order to gather all the information that is going to create the D5.2 document that is the presentation in a statistical form of the evaluation data of the teachers satisfaction with the work carried out.

The evaluation was made filling in the Q4.1 for the teachers, the Q4.2 for the students and the Q4.3 for the parents.

Therefore, in this deliverable, we present the numbers of teachers and students involved, which courses or kinds of activity were carried out and whether during the project, there needed to be further contact with the project's partners in order to gather further information or to discuss any problems with the resources provided or to provide assistance with the software installation or any other activities.

Tables of contents

Executive Summary	7
Tables of contents	9
1. The MUS4VIP Project.....	11
2. Description of the activities carried out for the pilot phase	15
2.1 The Q3 questionnaire results.....	15
2.2 Overview of the pilot activity	20
3. Conclusions and further work.....	25
4. Annex: questionnaire 3	27

1. The MUS4VIP Project

The Mus4VIP project aims to develop the best possible use of new technologies in the field of Braille music, so as to prevent further disadvantage to visually impaired people and in order to reverse the dramatic decline in music literacy among blind people. In recent years there have, in fact, been signals (New York Times articles by Rachel Aviv, Published: December 30, 2009) of a serious return to musical illiteracy, due to the fact that new basic technologies (iPad, smartphones, and similar technologies based purely on listening), have discouraged the visually impaired from learning Braille, offering them the easy, but inferior, alternative of relying on learning by ear. This method is indeed very easy to implement; in fact today, the Internet allows the retrieval of almost anything, as well as offering immediate results. On the other hand, it is also known that learning only on the basis of listening tends to limit the ability to conceptualize learning contents. In fact, hearing / listening recalls written symbols in those who are literate, while, for those who are not literate, it does not produce concepts, but only labile traces in the memory, which cannot easily be refreshed, corrected or enriched, through the continual, flexible and personal reference to a written source. This turns out to be a very significant obstacle to genuine education, and denies the principle of equal opportunities.

Mus4VIP seeks to overcome these problems by exploiting the best of available resources, both in terms of the functioning senses (touch and hearing), and the best possible use of existing technology based on these two senses.

Mus4VIP will, therefore, derive maximum advantage from the sense of touch, which offers the only effective means of achieving real literacy for a blind person. By comparison the sense of hearing, gives an "overview" of a musical score but, crucially, it does not allow the same degree of accuracy in examining details. With regard to the available technologies, Mus4VIP will combine the use of tactile devices, such as Braille display and Braille embosser, with acoustic devices, including sound cards and speech synthesis.

The outcome of this will be to promote Braille music literacy, because hearing and touch will support each other in the complex process of deciphering and comprehending music as a language.

In particular, the project aims to:

- Develop an educational methodology that will attract students and support teachers in the field of accessible music.
- Offer the opportunity to develop training materials in a collaborative way, taking into account knowledge and understanding of the cultural differences between the various participating countries (each country has developed its own local Braille language, with small, but significant differences; the project will consider this aspect, by collecting and systematically organizing the differences between countries).
- Help young visually impaired students to develop a more attractive and accessible method for studying music, bearing in mind what an important contribution music can make to an individual's intellectual and psychological development.
- Help new generations of teachers, teaching assistants and lecturers to acquire specific basic skills in the area of accessible music, by offering them powerful resources and workplace opportunities, both in special schools and in institutions devoted to training the visually impaired.
- Develop, test and disseminate new teaching models in the areas of Braille music theory, reading and writing, based on the use of new technologies.

- Create a collaborative process among schools at the European level, aimed at improving both basic training and services for music teachers and other categories of people working in schools, such as teaching assistants for visually impaired students. The purpose of this collaboration is to exchange experience, with a view to developing new teaching strategies aimed at improving music teaching quality and the use of Braille both in schools and special institutes, particularly in those classes with one or more visually impaired students.
- Develop a guide to the use of available computer tools that will meet the training needs of teachers at primary, secondary schools of theoretical and practical subjects in music conservatories and music high-schools, considering the conditions of each participating country in terms of school integration and education provided by special institutes.
- Dialogue with projects and networks that operate on the same themes
- Improve the quality and European dimension of training for teachers of visually impaired students;
- Promote the development of contents, services, pedagogical solutions and innovative practices based on IT in the field of permanent learning.
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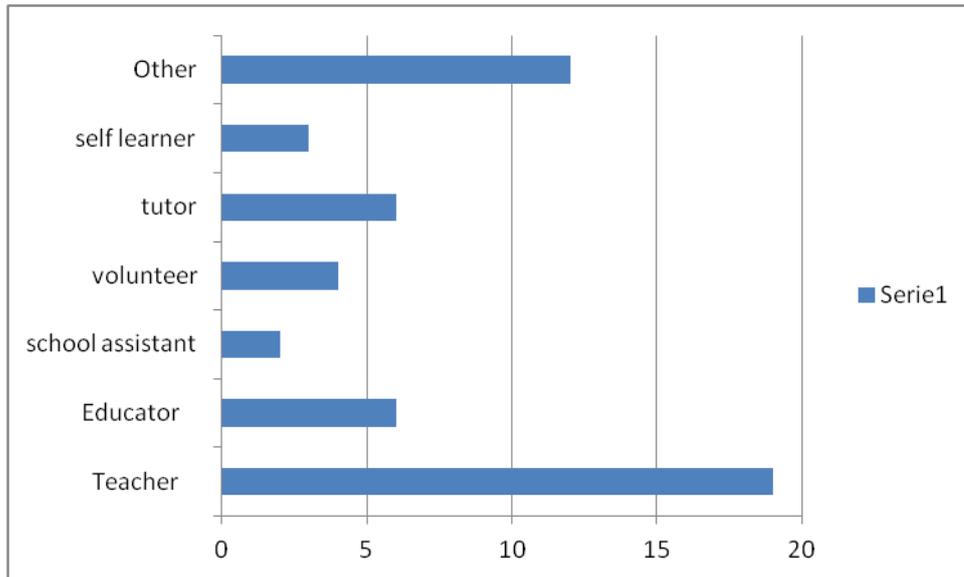
2. Description of the activities carried out for the pilot phase

2.1 The Q3 questionnaire results

The number of Q3 questionnaires filled in corresponds to the same number of the Q2, that is 52 questionnaires filled in as described in the document D4.1 Contact with the teachers took place mainly by phone.

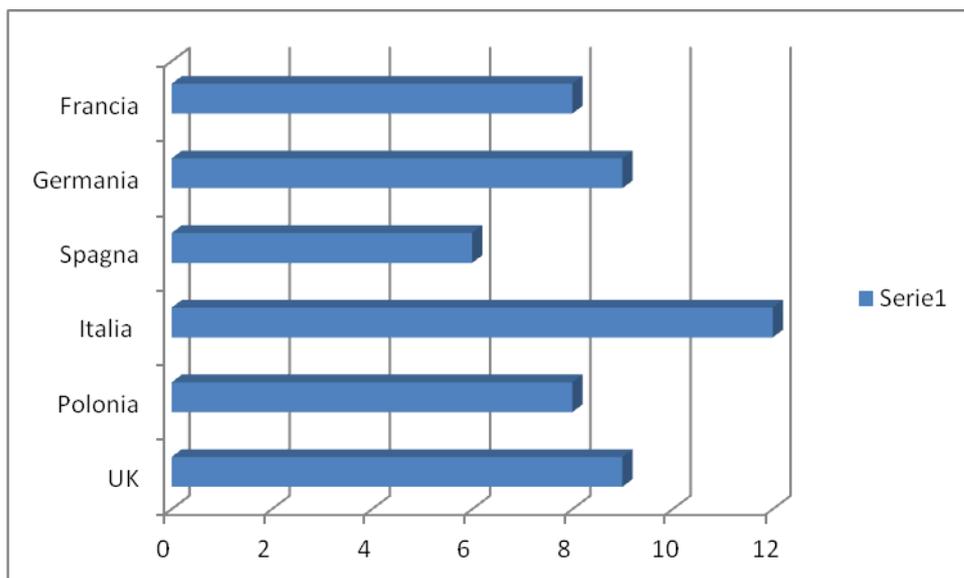
The people interviewed correspond to the same number of Q2, as described below:

Teacher	19
Educator	6
school assistant	2
Volunteer	4
Tutor	6
self learner	3
Other	12



Sharing of the questionnaires collected in various countries

UK	9
Poland	8
Italy	12
Spain	6
Germany	9
France	8
	52



Analogously, the students involved are 52 and the majority of them are students between 12 and 19 years old.

private lessons;	18
inclusive school;	21
special school;	2
private school;	10
other (please specify)	1

The activities are mainly carried out in private lessons or in inclusive schools.

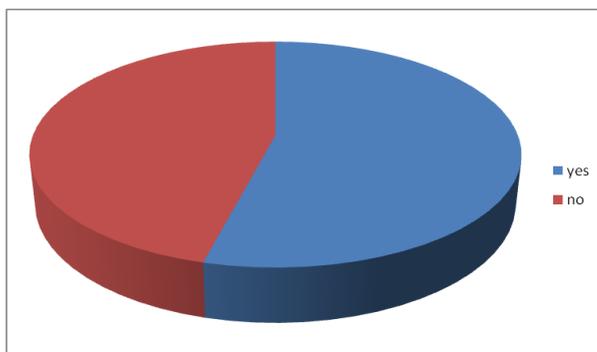
The main purpose of Q3 questionnaire was also to make it clear to teachers that the consortium is at their side to help them with anything that they need.

The first question asked whether the teachers had developed more materials than agreed (as it emerged in the V2), and if therefore they needed further help from the consortium.

The first question was :

Did you develop some new material? If yes can you describe please:

Yes 54%. No: 46%



We were delighted to find that the positive answers were 54%, and the majority of respondents had worked to produce new scores or examples using the on-line conversion program from MusicXML to Braille

Experimentation with the portal created considerable interest and the teachers involved in this phase of the project are very likely to produce new materials for their own students in future using the resources available on the portal.

The following question aims at finding out whether new didactical units were developed.

Did you realize also one or more didactical units? If yes, please describe

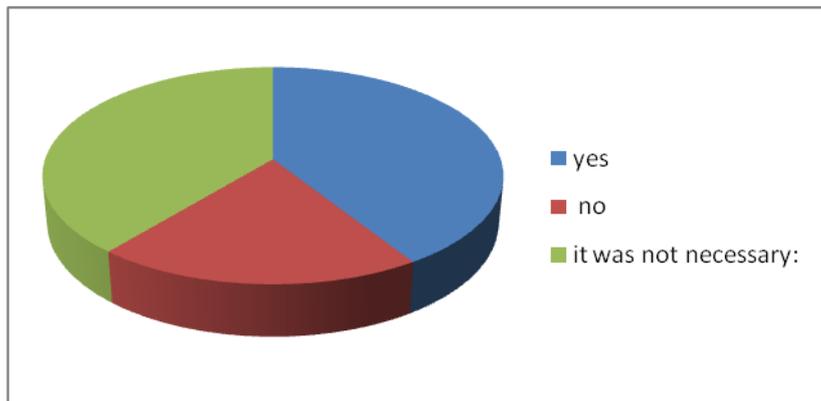
The answer is not quantifiable on a statistical form because in many cases the didactical units were changed and in other cases the teachers did not use a didactical unit and they develop the lessons only through the use of Braille music texts obtained through the conversion using the project portal.

The project's partners asked for the various materials developed by the teachers and those materials that were sent to us, with consent to publication, are present in the project portal.

The following question asks whether any help has been requested from the project partners for the modification or realization of new materials and didactical units.

In case you received some help / support from our team, please describe in which terms

yes 41% no 20% it was not necessary: 39%



A good percentage benefited from help from the project partners. Others, often, used the website support or received help from the tutorial information.

Note that in the majority of cases, the support request were:

- 1) Requests for checking of the Braille scores created using the conversion tools in the portal. This request arises because not all of the teachers are expert in Braille syntax and since the conversion is automatic, they are keen to have the resulting score checked by an expert. Normally each partner answered directly to the users with whom they were in contact. The transcriptions realised were based on quite simple music such as solfeggio and easy piano pieces and therefore, on checking the transcribed scores that were created automatically by the Mus4VIP portal, they proved to be correct in every case. In some cases, shortened syntactic forms could have been used but the project system does not provide such solutions. These can, however, be added manually very easily by the teacher, if

required.

- 2) Direct requests for BMML electronic Braille scores, because the teachers often only had the TXT version, that cannot be used with the BMR software. This request required the use of the Resonare program that is in a development phase at ARCA and therefore especially for some scores sent by the Polish and English partner, ARCA developed the text recognition and interpretation work in order to assign to it a musical meaning.
- 3) Finally some teachers asked for their didactical units to be checked by the project's partners and any necessary corrections made.

Which resources of the web portal are you going to use during your experimentation?

Almost all the resources present on the web have been used, in the following order of preference:

- 1) The conversion system from MusicXML to Braille
- 2) The manuals of theory and acoustics
- 3) The glossary and the database of the Braille music symbols.

Further information on this point will be presented in D5.2 when all the elements of the users' satisfaction are analysed.

2.2 Overview of the pilot activity

The period of testing and demonstration with the users varied, depending on the activity being developed – in some cases a single lesson, in other cases two or three weekly meetings.

Here below we list the categories of activities carried out in order of preference by the teachers:

- 1) Instrumental lessons based only on the use of a score produced through the online conversion module.
- 2) Music theory and acoustics lesson which used as a tool work provided by the project or by the project's acoustics manual.
- 3) A didactical unit was planned that used a Braille music score in addition, the score in question being produced either by the teacher or by the project partners at the teacher's request.
- 4) Self learning activity exploiting the simplification and the music text features offered by the BMR program.



At the end of the period monitoring the teachers' activities a further questionnaire was not prepared even though in an early planning stage this tool was conjectured. This was because the contacts with the teachers especially near the beginning of the activities had been really exhaustive and at the end of the experimentation phase, the teachers have been contacted once again for an extended interview to evaluate the results. It was decided, therefore, that a further questionnaire at this stage would be overly burdensome.

However the WP coordinator, that is the Padua conservatory partner, gathered from the consortium partners, in the period from October to November, all their

impressions and information on any further contact with the teachers.

This further monitoring activity, carried out by the Conservatory through several Skype meetings, shows that only a few teachers contacted us during this phase and this shows that the preparation and discussions that took place before the start of the activity were useful and well conceived, obviating the need for further requests. This aspect has been highlighted in the evaluation as you will read in D5.2.

The few questions and contacts received were for the following reasons:

- 1) The teacher intends to videotape the demonstration and asks the project which kind of disclaimers have to be released by the student's parents.
- 2) In one case, the BMR program had been installed in a new computer of the student's choice and they urgently needed to have the technical support for the new installation and, especially, guidance on where to find the Jaws scripts.
- 3) In six cases, the teachers (including the self-learning) requested support regarding the functioning of the BME program. In some cases this was not actually a support request, but a query as to whether the program could be installed on an Apple PC on which screen reader is better to use.
- 4) One teacher asked about extended functionality of the BMR program, wanting to know if it can handle complex operations such as multiple time signatures, and different key signatures in different parts. Such requests have to be considered as suggestions for the developing of a new BMR and BME2 release and have been gathered for future software development.

Three of the teachers gave us a videotape of their demonstration activity that in a clearer and more exhaustive way can give us more information than many words or interviews.

The videos have been published in the project portal under users' contributions.

Video1: Learning Varzer of Chopin, through electronic file BMML. (see the fill video on www.music4vip.org)



Video2: Using BME2 to write a musical dictation (see the fill video on www.music4vip.org)



Video3: After learning the scale with BMR, the student tries on Xylophone
(see the full video on www.music4vip.org)



3. Conclusions and further work

As mentioned above, this deliverable is the first part of a more complex work, which includes testing, evaluating and gathering of information about the level of users' satisfaction.

First of all we wish to express our sincere thanks to all of our users, that is teachers, students, self-learners, parents and voluntary staff. Without their help our work could never been carried out.

Numeric results deriving from the analysis of feedback (both formal and informal feedback) seem to support the following provisional conclusions:

a) The majority of our interlocutors preferred to use our resources in a creative way, that is they grasped the sense of our project, as a new "authoring tool", and produced new learning material, tailored to the needs of their students. This could suggest a contradiction between our efforts towards providing structured learning material and its exploitation in concrete situations. It seems sensible to state that our innovative materials have satisfied both the more creatively oriented teachers and those who prefer to follow tested routes.

Q2 suggest a deeper reflection about the difficulty in labelling complex situations. Our interlocutors show us that some concepts which we consider to be clear and comprehensible, seem not to be so in practice. On the other hand, interlocutors seem to be very clear about their preferences. In particular our conversion modules from music xml to Braille BMML seem to be very popular.

Q3 tells us that help and support undoubtedly needs to be available, although our materials including tutorials have proved to be clear enough for a significant

percentage of interlocutors.

Duration and complexity of performed activities. - These have proved to be very variable, depending on the complexity of didactical goals. As a provisional conclusion, it seems fair to say, based on informal feedback from users, we have attained a significant level of user friendliness.

Finally, the three videotapes from our interlocutors will serve for further refining of our work in the near future.

In conclusion, we would like to thank all the participants in the research for their invaluable contribution, both in terms of their work with the project resources and in providing detailed feedback, which enabled us to end the project in the best possible way. The number 52 is a substantial figure compared with the benchmarks of the blind population of school age in the various countries taking part in the project.

The next step is an overall evaluation of the project's several parts, fundamental for a global judgment regarding this demanding but productive project.

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4. Annex: questionnaire 3

European Project MUS4VIP Nr. 2012- 4250

Demonstration phase

Questionnaire 3

Note for the interviewer

Once the teacher / self-learner have carried out the agreed activity (see Q. 2), the interviewer contacts his / her interlocutor via e-mail or via phone.

Main goal

- check level of satisfaction of interviewee with regard to effectiveness of visited solutions;
- check level of satisfaction about accessibility.
- check whether extra help / support is needed.

Section 1 compiler

Filled in by:

Date:

Type of contact

- Face to face
- e-mail
- phone
- mobile app
- Skype
- _Other (please specify): _____

Section 2 Personal data of interviewee

First name and family name (Optional) _____

Country: _____

Type of activity

- teacher
- educator
- school assistant
- volunteer
- tutor
- self learner
- _Other: _____

Questions

1. Did you develop some new material? If yes can you describe please?

2. Did you realize also one or more didactical units? If yes, please describe

3. In case you received some help / support from our team, please describe in which terms

4. Which resources of the web portal are you going to use during your experimentation?