

THE NEWS LETTER

No.4, January 2022

WELCOME

THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

HORIZON 2020



Reception, Management and Integration of Third Party Nationals

First Prototype Trials

Between September and October of 2021, the WELCOME Project carried out trials with TCNs (Third Country Nationals) on the premises of all three User Partners of the Project. The trials took place on PRAKSIS' premises in Thessaloniki, Greece, where 17 TCNs participated, on CARITAS' premises in Hamm, Germany, with 10 TCNs and, in the case of the Ministry of Equality and Feminism of the Government of Catalonia (DIFE), in three different municipalities in the region of Catalonia (Consell Comarcal de l'Anoia, Terrassa and Cambrils), where a total of 27 TCNs and 3 public officers contributed to the testing of the First Prototype.

During the trials, the TCNs were asked to test the different functionalities of the 1st Prototype of the MyWELCOME App. They were coached by professionals from the User Partner institutions, who helped them, when necessary, in order to make things run smoothly. After trying the app and getting familiar with it, TCNs also experimented with a Virtual Reality (VR) setup, which supposed a new experience for many of them and made the trial of the app more interactive and fun.

The WELCOME project has proceeded with pilots in the three countries (1st prototype), using the followings scenarios:

First Reception Service

This scenario has been specifically designed for TCNs coming to Catalonia, where they are required to register for the First Reception Service, which provides, among other things, a First Reception Course with an individual interview, and different modules that include language teaching, labour knowledge and knowledge on the host society.

In the First Prototype, the MyWELCOME App provided information on the Registration procedure as well as on the First Reception Course. It helped TCNs to complete the registration form for this service and offered to the authorities the possibility to monitor the participation of TCNs in the different modules through a recompilation of statistical data. The corresponding functionality is incorporated in the Visual Analytics module and can be accessed by the authorities.

Happy New Year!

Happy New Year! The WELCOME Project wishes you a Happy New Year and a good return to work. Let's work together to make 2022 the year in which we get a step closer to the successful and smoother integration of migrants and refugees in their host societies!

HAPPY

New Year!

For a 2022 full of new opportunities for everyone



Welcome Consortium



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Reception, Management and Integration of Third Party Nationals

Providing Basic Legal Information

In the case of PRAKSIS, the prototype focused on the provision of basic information to TCNs and specifically information concerning the pre-registration procedure of the solicitation of an appointment with the Asylum Service. The prototype also provided customized frequently asked questions on specific services in Greece such as health care, social care, education, employment, legal support, etc.

Each TCN was informed about the project and the possibilities of the current functionalities and they personalized the Avatar. They tried the dialogue with the Agent and the VR App and then evaluated the prototype using specific questionnaires.



First Prototype Trial in PRAKSIS premises, Greece

Training of TCNs for making appointments with public administrations

This scenario, created for Germany, re-creates the context of a phone conversation of a TCN with a public administration in order to make an appointment with an officer (in this case, specifically a job councillor). The scenario starts with the greetings and introductions of the Agent and the TCN, which are followed by the simulation of the procedure of appointment making. The conversation finishes with the formalities of a brief farewell to end the phone call. The particularity of this dialogue is its generic design, which makes it possible to be replicated with several authorities and different scenarios. Currently, it is being adapted for legal counselling appointment solicitation.

Virtual Reality (VR) App

VR is used in WELCOME to allow for an immersive experience of the TCN in different educational, social, and cultural contexts. In the First Prototype, VR focuses on topic-oriented language skills training. It consists of two mini games: a spelling game with basic vocabulary considered relevant for the integration of TCNs and a geography game, in which TCNs can learn the names of countries around the world and where they are located.

TCNs can engage in these games thanks to the VR headsets provided by the participant User Partners.



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Other functionalities of the MyWELCOME App realized in the 1st Prototype

Other functionalities of the MyWELCOME App at its current stage of development include the possibility of personalizing the avatar, i.e., of the embodiment of the Agent that interacts with the TCN. The users can choose from a wide range of options, going from different items of clothing and accessories to the type of hair, skin or the eye colour. This way, the TCNs using the App can make it their own and associate the voice with an actual face, even if it is only on the screen.

The MyWELCOME App also has a FAQ Service, which is customized to account for the needs which a region or country may have. It contains answers on several topics or direct links to where the TCNs can find the complete information regarding their question. It is thus a quick and easy way for TCNs to find information. Furthermore, there is the possibility of the Agent reading aloud the written text, making it more accessible to those who are illiterate or have visual impediments, for instance.



VR Trial in Hamm, Germany

Evaluation of the 1st Prototype

After the trials, TCNs and the public officers who participated were asked to fill in an Evaluation Questionnaire in order to gather their opinions on the prototype in a methodical way that allows for a more comprehensive evaluation. There were minor deviances between the answers according to the region, but overall, the reactions were positive.



Photo: Pixabay

In general, TCNs felt that their expectations towards the app were completely or mostly fulfilled. Most of them would recommend the use of it to friends and family. They highlighted the fact that being included in the trials was something they were excited about; especially knowing that it is a technical solution that targets their needs and their problems. Therefore, they were even keener on giving their opinion and participating in the project.

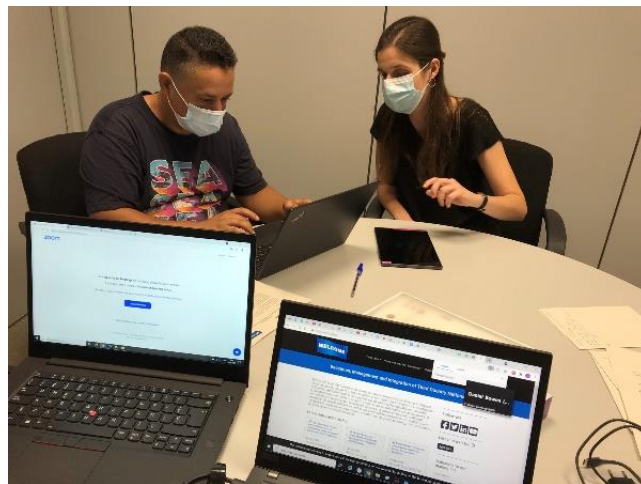
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Regarding the information offered on concrete services (mainly related to health, education, legal, employment, accommodation, language, etc.), the users provided very valuable feedback on what type of services they would like to have information about and in what way. Of course, there were points which TCNs considered improvable, such as the speed of reaction of the virtual agent, which was considered slow, making the usage of the app more difficult.



Answering the Evaluation Questionnaire, Catalonia

The feedback received from the TCNs and the professionals will be used while the Consortium is working on the Second Prototype and the Final Demonstrator of the MyWELCOME Application.

Blog of articles

If you wish to know more about the fascinating world of Virtual Agents and how they work, here is an article that may be of your interest:

[Thinking virtual agents. The source of their wisdom, and novel ways to visualise it into migration-related graphs. | WELCOME H2020 \(welcome-h2020.eu\)](#)

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