



SpeakApps 2

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

SpeakApps 2 builds on the outputs and results of the Multilateral LLP project SpeakApps which took place in 2011-2012. Speaking fluently in a foreign language is a challenge for both language learners and teachers. The first SpeakApps project developed ICT-based services and pedagogies to practise oral skills online: speaking production and interaction in the CEFR. The activities and tools provided in SpeakApps were designed to be used both within face-to-face and blended courses and as the main speaking activities for online courses. From its start the SpeakApps project was aimed at foreign language teachers who want to offer their students further opportunities for speaking production and interaction. While not being the main target audience of the project, language learners remain the main end-users and their needs are the prime reference for the design of materials and contents.

The main aim of the SpeakApps 2 project is to further enhance and disseminate the results of the SpeakApps project with an emphasis on a) teacher training, both large scale-online courses and well as local face-to-face workshops, and b) building an ever-growing body of Open Educational Resources (OER). SpeakApps 2 targeted not only HE educators and teacher trainers but also those in VET and Secondary Education, and aimed to widen the pool of resources for building language teaching skills via scalable trans-European collaborations and innovation using ICT and mobile technologies. SpeakApps 2 also aimed at expanding the use of the results of SpeakApps by incorporating 5 new languages (Spanish, French, German, Italian and Croatian) to the previous ones (Catalan, English, Dutch, Swedish, Polish and Irish).

The configuration of the Consortium ensured the necessary expertise and contacts were available to fulfil the project objectives. The Consortium partners, the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain) the University of Groningen (The Netherlands), Dublin City University (Ireland) and Jagiellonian University (Poland) gather together expertise in the use of ICT for language learning and teaching, teacher training and development of learning technologies.

SpeakApps 2 generated a broader impact on language teaching methodologies, empowering educators to use OER materials in their online or blended learning approaches to advance language learning production capacity, where teachers can take advantage of SpeakApps 2's growing, mobile community to synergize and mash-up other open language learning solutions. Finally, with the emphasis on teacher training, SpeakApps 2 enabled a new wave of participants to capitalize on open, trans-European practices and quality approaches for the development of their own creative and pedagogical skills for teaching languages.

The SpeakApps platform is available from its website (www.speakapps.eu) with an open area with general information of the project, public documentation, videos and other dissemination contents. From the website registered users (anyone can register by creating a free account) can access Moodle classrooms where the three tools developed in SpeakApps1 are available, User guides and video-tutorials. A key application in the project is the SpeakApps OER space with a repository for tasks and materials, where contents can be shared, downloaded, or edited online by means of the OER editor. Collaborative creation of contents online is also possible, and contents can be easily searched for according to search criteria. Finally, a community space integrated into the platform provides a space for professional interaction amongst language teachers, as well as technical support for the community.

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1. Project Objectives

Speaking is one of the hardest skills to put into practice when learning a foreign language. Very often formal second or foreign language acquisition settings provide insufficient opportunities for everyone in the classroom to practise the language. In addition, for distance / online education technological solutions are needed to make oral communication possible and easy for users. The Multilateral LLP project SpeakApps developed over 2011 and 2012 ICT-based services and pedagogies to practise oral competencies online: speaking production and interaction in the CEFR. The activities and tools provided in SpeakApps were designed to be used both within face-to-face and blended courses and as the main speaking activities for online courses. The first SpeakApps project was mainly aimed at foreign language teachers who want to offer their students further opportunities for speaking production and interaction. Organised as an open source software community and cloud service, all materials, activities and tools are available for download, online use and further development. In this way, the project was also aimed at developers who wish to contribute further to the development of the tools. While not being the main target audience of the project, language learners remain the main end-users of the tools developed within the project and their needs are the prime reference for the design of materials and contents.

The objectives of SpeakApps2 were to further enhance Europeans' language learning skills through both self-directed learning and purposeful, teacher-designed materials that can leverage an ever-growing body of Open Educational Resources (OER). SpeakApps 2 targeted not only HE educators and teacher trainers but also those in **VET and Secondary Education**, and aimed to widen the pool of resources for building language teaching skills via scalable **trans-European collaborations** and innovation using ICT and mobile technologies.

SpeakApps 2 aimed at expanding the use of the results of the first SpeakApps project by incorporating **5 new languages (Spanish, French, German, Italian and Croatian)**, including new institutions in other education sectors in each partner country, plus bringing in the active engagement of 7 new Associate Partners. It also developed a scalable digital framework able to bring in more languages, while spreading SpeakApps methodologies and mobile solutions through a series of highly visible workshops in each country, targeting the interests of open source communities and other projects for the sharing of resources and future innovations.

2. Project Approach

The approach chosen in SpeakApps 2 concentrated on training teachers as a way to reach out to more sectors and languages. Training teachers has a cascading effect and this - together with an iterative methodology - was the reason behind the work plan, which was structured as follows:

WP1 Project Management

WP2 Teacher training and workshops

WP3 Quality of contents: Teacher Training and Pedagogical contents

WP4 Technical and Community Support for sustainability

WP5 Dissemination

The iterative process affected WP2, WP3 and WP4. The implementation WP was Teacher training and workshops. The outputs of the teachers training were assessed in WP3. At the same time, the reviewed outputs of WP2 and WP3 contributed to WP4. The Teacher Training first deliverable was the workshop design and methodology guidelines. Each partner ran workshops for their main target language. In addition, each partner was responsible for the teacher training of an associate partner. This resulted in the following:

| Partner | Associate Partner | Language |
|---------|---|----------|
| FUOC | University of Nice, France | French |
| FUOC | University of Southern Denmark, Denmark | Spanish |
| RUG | Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany | German |
| UJ | Polskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne "Mikolaj Kopernik" | Croatian |

Whilst Romani was one of the intended target languages of the project through collaboration with Associate partner Fundació Pere Closa (Spain), it was mutually agreed that the incorporation of the language was not feasible. This position was communicated and agreed with the European Commission. The SpeakApps team decided to add in Italian to the project and validated and ensured the use Italian across the various activities of the project.

Furthermore, another goal of the project was to increase the educational sectors, working with previous collaborators and associated partner Institut Obert de Catalunya, Spain (secondary education and VET).

The workshops generated two outputs that were evaluated in WP3: the training materials and the educational materials created by trainees. The results of this evaluation went back to WP2 to keep improving the “workshop design and methodology guidelines”, which resulted eventually in a Teacher Training Handbook, which is accessible through the SpeakApps website. Surveys were administered at the end of online courses and workshops. The results of these surveys served as input for the revision of the training materials and methodology, as well as for the technical team refining technical support delivery and improving the SpeakApps tools.

A mechanism employed for quality assurance of contents was the evaluation of the Open Educational Resources (OER) in order to provide suggestions for improvements of the OER as a system and to establish the criteria for evaluating educational content in the OER. Enhancing the usability and ensuring the quality was made possible due to the extensive

and varied use of the SpeakApps resources by a range of users and participants. Data and feedback has been received from new users of the OER in a variety of settings. In particular, it was received, from those taking part in teacher training sessions or attending events connected to the dissemination of the project's outputs. Furthermore, an important input into the preparation of the report was the engagement of the Review Board. The Review Board is constituted by the Consortium Members, by representatives of Associate Partners and also by external experts in CALL and in other associated disciplines. The objective of the Review Board was both to share experience but also to disseminate knowledge. The Review Board engaged in these activities virtually, facilitated within a group in the SpeakApps Community area (Mahara-based). Board members made recommendations based on their expertise and their experience with the SpeakApps project. Feedback from WP2 and pilots in WP3 was also taken into account to augment and consider more broadly recommendations.

The Deliverable "D3.1_Quality Assurance: Review Board's report and recommendations" available from the SpeakApps website (under Dissemination>Documents> SpeakApps 2) considers the problems of evaluation of the OER system and many of the issues raised during the discussion of Review Board connected to the criteria for evaluating educational content in the OER.

The board recommendations served as input for WP4. This resulted in improvements in the tools and better quality assurance mechanisms in the OER environment, which in return updated the teacher training programme as well as the Mahara groups (community building).

In sum, the methodological approach was both iterative and empirical. The success of the project was ensured by reaching out to real end-users, representatives of different languages and educational sectors, and assessing these activities. The empirical approach results were of significant importance in disseminating the project to stakeholders throughout Europe and ensuring sustainability by the successful establishment of the SpeakApps consortium.

Another objective was ensuring the quality of the pedagogical content by providing criteria and recommendations for task creation and evaluation. In order to achieve this aim we incorporated pedagogical design and focus group discussion to Teacher Training outline. The range of supporting guides were created, discussed and evaluated by teachers of different languages. As a model for task design we adopted LanQua model. A description of the stages in LanQua model was used during the Teacher Trainings, provided by the partners to guide the focus groups discussions and help teachers/participants of the teacher training sessions to prepare their own tasks and evaluate the task prepared by SpeakApps instructors. Identification of the stages of the pedagogical design in a user-friendly way (by asking the questions) helps teachers prepare high-quality learning materials (<http://www.lanqua.eu/>).

The focus group discussions and analysis of the teachers' feedback enabled the selection of best practices and tasks' examples for all the project languages. Activities reflecting best practices serve as examples in demo classrooms designed for 10 project languages: English, Catalan, Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch, German, Irish, Polish and Croatian. These Democlassrooms are an open service for all interested in testing the tools and materials from the learner's perspective – the Democlassrooms are available at: <http://moodle.speakapps.org> (for more detail see also: D3.2_Pilots_preparation_execution_analysis available from the SpeakApps website under Dissemination>Documents> SpeakApps 2).

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The project outcomes and results fall under following categories:

3.1 Teacher training and workshops

One of the main objectives focused on providing training and workshops to teachers, language coordinators and other stakeholders in designing tasks for oral production and speaking interaction online and using them for language teaching on the basis of the SpeakApps tools. During the first SpeakApps project, teacher material was developed by each partner in the different countries and for different purposes. During SpeakApps 2 a generic template and approach to further develop and standardize the SpeakApps workshop format was created, followed by a teacher training plan that can be offered partly offline and partly online. A strong focus in the training is put on the Open Educational Resources (OER) task databank for creating and sharing tasks with new groups of users.

During the project training and workshops have been delivered both locally and online. Three main formats for the training and workshops were employed, with a total of xxx participants that included stakeholders in foreign language education:

- 40 local workshops consisting of a combination of a hands-on session together with an online follow-up in a SpeakApps Moodle classroom;
- 5 on-line teacher training courses
- 3 conference events. One of them connected to EUROCALL 2014, which is regarded as a high-profile language event.

The first format was used to introduce teachers from local networks and participating institutions to the tools on site. This might have been either at the partner's institution, an associate partner's institution or at another location in the network. This format took into account that teaching and learning online is a novel experience for many teachers. An 'on-the-ground' introduction lowers the threshold and prepares teachers for the follow up which was fully online and was supported by the SpeakApps teacher trainers. A good example are the workshops at the Ruhr University in Bochum and the RWTH Aachen in Germany in June 2014, after which the participants were invited to the online training on Moodle.

The second format was used for teachers for whom fully online training is the preferred or best possible option. The greater flexibility of this format helped to bring training to teachers who weren't able to combine participation in local events with their everyday teaching responsibilities, or who might have been too remote from the workshop location. The online training was delivered and supported by the SpeakApps teacher trainers in Spring 2014.

The final format was targeted at (senior) management and policy and decision makers in particular. Dissemination of good practice is an important element in this format. We offered a hands-on three hour workshop at the EUROCALL 2014 conference at the University of Groningen in which all partners were involved, even the associate partner from Germany. The workshop was followed by various papers on the implementation of SpeakApps in different teaching practices. The University of Jagiellonian organized the event *Innovation in Foreign Language Teaching* in Krakow (19-20 September 2014) which combined international invited keynote lectures on the use of technology in language education and hands-on workshops. Finally the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya organized the *SpeakApps: Tools and Tasks* event in Barcelona (13th December 2014) with the same approach of combined invited keynote lectures and hand-on workshops.

During the workshops and training events each partner has tried to reach out to the secondary, tertiary, and vocational sectors to attract a wider audience to further develop the task repository for the different sectors, as well as to attract more languages.

3.2 Open Educational Resources site: contents for speaking production and interaction

During the project 16 product upgrades were performed on the OER following recommendations made by the Review Board. Some of these changes also affected the Tandem tool, a tool that distributes in real time contents to students carrying out a synchronous speaking task. Following we summarize those changes that are not of an exclusive technological nature.

The OER was originally contemplated for the design of Tandem activities to use in the Tandem tool but its function was widened so that it was also a repository for general activities and tasks for speaking skills. A comments function was available for users to give feedback on each others' activities but during the first project period it was observed this system was not used to its full potential. For this reason, during SpeakApps 2, the OER was discussed by the Review Board with the aim of determining how to ensure the quality of the contents and also to improve usability. Various possibilities were considered for ensuring the quality of the contents and in the end, a star system has been implemented whereby users can quickly rate a particular task.

Another improvement which has been implemented, mainly as a result of comments from users during SpeakApps 2 is the possibility of incorporating transition screens to Tandem Activities, within a series of Tandem Tasks. Each Tandem activity consists of a number of smaller tasks. These transition screens can be included at the beginning, between and at the end of a Tandem Activity.

Another key change in the OER is the possibility of working collaboratively with another user to create tasks and activities together.

The navigation system of the OER has been improved in four main ways; firstly the tagging system has been optimised; the initial tag cloud for activities has been reduced and a search option has been added so that users can more browse for tasks and activities more effectively. Secondly, within Tandem Tasks, it is now also possible to search for Tandem tasks by task typology (e.g. role play, spot the difference). Thirdly, it is now also possible to search by author name. This means that users can now browse all the contents in the OER by language, level, a key word, title (or part of a title), author, typology (in the case of Tandem Tasks) and status. Finally, the navigation between items identified using the search function has also been modified to improve usability. When the user has selected an item during a search, it is now possible to return to the items identified in the initial search, or to go from page to page of the items in the search.

Finally, the mobile-friendly version of the OER was developed.

Contents

As one of the main outcomes of WP3, Democlassrooms for each of the project languages were required so that examples of best practice activities and tasks for Oral Production (in

Langblog) and Speaking Interaction (in Tandem) could be viewed by visitors to the site. These demo classrooms were set up as part of WP4 with the latest versions of the tools, together with links to the SpeakApps Infoblog, the Support Blogs for each tool and an explanation of each tool on the home page.

The following table summarizes the contents of the OER by the end of the project.

| Languages | | Number of items in the OER (31 Dec 2014) |
|---------------|---------------------|--|
| 1 | English | 610 |
| 2 | Spanish | 135 |
| 3 | Dutch (Nederlands) | 112 |
| 4 | French | 89 |
| 5 | Italiano | 58 |
| 6 | Gaelic (Gaelige) | 53 |
| 7 | Catalan | 47 |
| 8 | Swedish (Svenska) | 44 |
| 9 | German (Deutsch) | 31 |
| 10 | Polish (Polski) | 19 |
| 11 | Croatian (Hrvatski) | 3 |
| 12 | Greek | 1 |
| 13 | Euskera | 1 |
| Total Entries | | 1203 |

3.3 SpeakApps platform & tools

With the implementation of teacher training done in WP2, quality control and piloting in WP3, the output from those work packages provided input for WP4 so that technical improvements to the tools could be implemented.

Main outcomes for WP4 are:

1. Translations of the tool interfaces

In SpeakApps 1, translations were realised and implemented for Catalan, Dutch, English, Irish, Polish and Swedish. During SpeakApps 2, translations were realised and

implemented for Italian (replacing Romani), German, Croatian, French and Spanish for the tools Langblog, Tandem, Videochat and the OER.

2. Translations of the tool manuals

During SpeakApps 1, separate user manual blogs were created for the different languages for Langblog, Tandem and Videochat. During the SpeakApps 2 phase, a team of translators worked on producing manuals for the updated tools Langblog, Tandem and Videochat and also the newly created OER manual.

3. Creation of SpeakApps Info blog

Building on the existing separate language blogs for the user guides for the tools during SpeakApps 1, SpeakApps 2 undertook a complete revision of the existing manual system to produce a multi-lingual, user-friendly blog (<http://langblog.speakapps.org/speakappsinfo/>) which includes updated translations of all the SpeakApps tools (Langblog, Tandem, Videochat and the OER) into Italian (replacing Romani), German, Croatian, French and Spanish. In addition to producing a more user-friendly system, the aim was also to develop a system which is more sustainable with regards to updating the information. As all of the different language versions of the manuals are centralised into one blog, updating of information will be a faster and simpler process as files no longer need to be sent.

By the end of the project there were 11,923 users on the SpeakApps platform.

3.4 Pilots

The SpeakApps platform is open for any teachers who would like to request a classroom and bring their students to it in order to avail of the SpeakApps tools and contents for speaking practice in a foreign language. During SpeakApps2 there were 38 pilots, 25 conducted by teachers who had previously participated in the teacher training workshops. A total of 27 secondary and Higher education institutions were represented, and 1,895 students participated in these pilots. Through the experience of these pilots, feedback and technical queries the infrastructure of the platform and technical support mechanisms were refined and improved.

By the end of the project period a pilot of a different nature was conducted, the Spanish-English tandemMOOC which was conducted in the SpeakApps platform and made use of the SpeakApps tools to facilitate telecollaboration between Spanish learners of English and English learners of Spanish. Tasks were designed following tandem language learning principles. There were a total of 1296 registered participants, 775 learners of English and 521 learners of Spanish. To ensure a balance of native speakers and learners of both languages, registration was closed when the difference went over 250. The result was a waiting list of 559 learners of English. The number of students who completed the course was 173. This MOOC will be offered again in the Fall semester of 2015.

3.5 Dissemination

Dissemination has played a significant part within the SpeakApps 2 project and dissemination activities were engaged in throughout the project.

SpeakApps Website

The SpeakApps website (<http://www.speakapps.eu>) is at the core of our dissemination strategy. The website has been used to promote, explain and engage the project's goals and services. Significantly the website has acted as a conduit or entry point for new users to access the SpeakApps platform and also to view and download the public project outputs. The website has also communicated many of the events, workshops and activities

undertaken by the project's partners and associated partners, through its blog which was updated regularly throughout the project.

SpeakApps Dissemination Plan

The SpeakApps dissemination plan was initially constructed at the start of the project and has been updated consistently throughout. The plan provided the structure by which the SpeakApps partners engaged with the project's stakeholders and new sectors; such as the five new project languages, and secondary educators. The plan ensured that a wide variety of communication channels were used, these included:

- Online and Social Media – [Twitter](#), [Slideshare](#) and Blogging on the SpeakApps site
- E-zine – two issues of the e-Zine were published in soft and hard copies during the project, click to view [Issue 1](#) and [Issue 2](#).
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Other elements of the dissemination plan focused on conferences, events and seminars where the SpeakApps team would participate either through demonstration, presentations, workshops, and seminars. All of the activities of these activities were captured in the SpeakApps engagement record; here is a brief taste of some of these activities:

- 22nd October 2014 Training Workshop for teachers of English, Greek, Turkish, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian at the University of Cyprus Language Workshop. Language teachers, new language
- 17th July 2014 22@ Association: Summer Innovation Meetings, Barcelona Growth Centre, Barcelona, Spain Presentation. SpeakApps Tools for the Teaching and Learning of Foreign Languages New sector
- 21st -22nd March 2014 CALL-PL CONFERENCE Building Bridges Between School and Academia, Warsaw, Poland Presentation and workshop Designing tasks for practicing oral skills through the SpeakApps Open Educational Resources Language teachers policy makers
- 25th-27th June 2014 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NEW HORIZONS IN EDUCATION - INTE 2014, Paris, France Presentation: Langbog, Tandem and Videochat - holistic solution for teaching speaking skills in a foreign language in a distance mode Language teachers policy makers
- 10th October 2014 Annual Study Day of the SIG ICT and Blended learning of the BVNT2 Demonstration Language teachers, policy makers new languages
- 27th February – 01st March 28. AKS-Arbeitstagung 2014 in Braunschweig Two Presentations Language teachers, new languages
- 14th November 2014 St.Patrick's College (Teacher Training College), Workshop for language teachers Workshop Language teachers
- 20th June 2014 National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Training Workshop for teachers of Irish language teachers in the United States and Canada under the Fulbright and ICUF Teaching Assistant Scheme Workshop Language Teachers and Policy makers

The SpeakApps dissemination plan outlined the need to ensure that the SpeakApps project was available to the wider academic and practitioner community. It was decided to engage with the process to publish a paper within an academic journal to allow for this dissemination to happen. A SpeakApps paper has been accepted for publication in the [International Journal of Information and Learning Technology](#), the paper will be published during 2015.

SpeakApps Conferences and International Events

Eurocall 2014 was targeted by the project team as providing an international event by which the project could be disseminated to practitioners, researchers and policy makers. Eurocall is the professional association of researchers and practitioners in the areas of Computer-Assisted Language learning and it has members from over thirty-three states. The theme of the Eurocall 2014 conference was “*CALL Design: Principles and Practice*”. SpeakApps conducted a substantial workshop which was the most attended workshop at the conference. Five papers and presentations associated with the project were delivered in Eurocall by project partners, three of these formed part of the conference proceedings:

Ó Ciardubháin, C. & Nic Giolla Mhichíl, M., Creating tasks in a less-commonly taught language for an open educational resource. Why the CEFR is important for Irish, *In: Thouesny, S., Jager, S., Bradley, L. & Meima, E.J. ed. EUROCALL 2014: CALL Design: Principles and Practice, 20-AUG-14 - 23-AUG-14, University of Groningen*

Appel, C., Nic Giolla Mhichíl, M., Jager, S. & Prizel-Kania, A., European Projects 2: Speaking Practice in a Foreign Language through ICT Tools, *In: Thouesny, S., Jager, S., Bradley, L. & Meima, E.J. ed. EUROCALL 2014: CALL Design: Principles and Practice, 20-AUG-14 - 23-AUG-14, University of Groningen*

Nic Giolla Mhichíl, M, van Engen, J., O Ciardubhain, C. O Cleircin G. & Appel, C., Authentic oral language production and interaction in CALL: A conceptual framework for the use of learning analytics within the SpeakApps project, *In: Thouesny, S., Jager, S., Bradley, L. & Meima, E.J. ed. EUROCALL 2014: CALL Design: Principles and Practice, 20-AUG-14 - 23-AUG-14, University of Groningen*

Appel, C., Gutiérrez-Colón, M. & Pujolà, J.T., MOOCing language learning: reconsidering elearning issues, *EUROCALL 2014: CALL Design: Principles and Practice, 20-AUG-14 - 23-AUG-14, University of Groningen*

Ohlsen, G. & Van Engen, J. Differentiated forms of feedback for writing and speaking skills in an output-oriented approach, *EUROCALL 2014: CALL Design: Principles and Practice, 20-AUG-14 - 23-AUG-14, University of Groningen*

Further information on the conference is available at [Eurocall 2014](#). A further two conferences and major workshops were organised and attended by SpeakApps partners. The first of these was held in September 2014 in the Jagiellonian University [Krakow](#) Poland. The conference theme was “*Innovation in Foreign Language Teaching*” and consisted of plenary sessions including a session by Dr. Robert Debski, papers, a key note delivered by Dr. Sake Jager and an in-depth SpeakApps workshop delivered to national and international teachers of Polish as a foreign language. In December, 2014 a conference and a workshop was held in the [Institut d'Estudis Catalans](#), Barcelona, the conference focused on maximising student learning through the use of technology and the design of tasks, perspectives were given from a number of stakeholders including Dr. Joan-Tomàs Pujolà of the University of Barcelona and Usoa Sol, English teacher and Head of the English Department at Sant Gregori School in Barcelona. Perspectives were also provided by other partners within the project.

4. Partnerships

The configuration of the Consortium ensured the necessary expertise and contacts were available to deliver the project objectives. Four of the original SpeakApps Consortium partners, the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain) the University of Groningen (The Netherlands), Jagiellonian University (Poland) and Dublin City University (Ireland) continued as partners within the consortium, whilst Jyväskylä University (Finland) continued as an associate partner of the project. The consortium provided a range of expertise and context in the use of ICT for language learning and teaching, teacher training and development of learning technologies. Furthermore, the project had six associate partners who were linked to the project to ensure that the objectives of delivering the project goals into the new target languages in particular and sectors could be realised. The associate partners included:

| Associate Partners |
|--|
| Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany |
| Polskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne, Croatia |
| Fundació Pere Closa , Spain |
| University of Southern Denmark |
| University of Nice, France |
| University of Jyväskylä , Finland |
| Institut Obert de Catalunya, Spain |

The Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) coordinated the project, liaising with partners and associated partners to realise the effective implementation of the project. The university is a fully online institution with over 8,000 students studying language each semester. The UOC has extensive experience of addressing both pedagogical issues and technical issues associated with online language learning. UOC as leader of work package four provided technical support to partners, users and other stakeholders as they engaged with the tools and Open Educational Resources (OER) as the number of courses, users, languages and materials in the SpeakApps platform increased during the project. This support included working with institutions and individuals who expressed an interest in integrating SpeakApps tools within their institutions learning systems. Furthermore, UOC took an active part in workshop delivery, design and technical support, whilst also engaging with many dissemination activities during the project. UOC worked closely with associate partners from University of Nice, the University of Southern Denmark, the Institut Obert de Catalunya, and the University of Jyväskylä to ensure that the objectives of the project were reached in the existing target languages of Catalan and Swedish, the new target languages of French and Spanish (with the addition of Finnish in the last part of the project) as well as the new targeted sectors of secondary education and telecollaboration.

UOC, also worked with the Fundació Pere Closa to try and bring Romani within the auspices of the project, however, it was mutually agreed that the incorporation of the language was not feasible. This position was communicated and agreed with the European Commission. The SpeakApps team decided to add in Italian to the project and based this decision on Italian being a language of Europe and also because it addressed an aim of the project to expand into more isolated regions of Europe. UOC validated and ensured the use

of Catalan, English, Italian and Spanish across the various activities of the project, whilst also engaging in dissemination and quality assurance activities.

The University of Groningen (RUG), led partners in the second workpackage which was focused primarily on providing training and workshops to teachers, language coordinators and other stakeholders, whilst also validating content and associate materials in the Dutch language. These stakeholders came from secondary, tertiary, and vocational sectors as well as new languages in an effort to attract more languages within the SpeakApps platform and to further develop and promote the OER. The University of Groningen worked closely with the associate partner from the Ruhr-Universität Bochum to ensure that German was integrated within the project but also to validate German cultural and linguistic pedagogical content and to engage in workshops and pilots. RUG coordinated the development of materials related to workshops, such as a core syllabus, training materials and a teacher training handbook were made available whilst also developing a workshop execution plan. RUG participated in dissemination, technical support and quality activities of the project.

Jagiellonian University (JU) was responsible for work package three which was primarily associated with the issue of quality assurance. They ensured that language activities were validated by partners and associate partners. Furthermore, JU confirmed that all materials were developed according to the appropriate benchmarks for language and quality models. An additional element of the work involved organising the review board with partners, which was constituted to make recommendations on how best to improve the platform, to consider pedagogical issues and to review the functionality of the OER. JU participated in dissemination, technical support, workshops and the validation of content and materials in the Polish language. JU, also worked closely with the Polskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne which ensured the translation and validation of Croatian cultural and linguistic contents of SpeakApps pedagogical and other project related materials.

Dublin City University (DCU) coordinated workpackage five which was aimed at the dissemination of the project to promote participation, increase awareness and stimulate engagement. As part of this work DCU developed a dedicated dissemination plan to guide partners and to deliver on its wider dissemination objectives. The principles of the dissemination plan included: the building and growing of awareness and engagement with target users through activities such as participation in conferences, seminars, presentation and demonstrations to stakeholders. Furthermore, DCU worked with partners to engage with website localisation and to publish to issues of the SpeakApps eZine. The SpeakApps website was updated using its blogging functionality. Other social media channels such as Twitter and Slideshare were used to disseminate project activities and outcomes and to drive traffic to the SpeakApps website. DCU coordinated and led the writing of an academic article for publication with partners in the International Journal of Information and Learning Technology¹. DCU engaged with workshops and pilots focusing on new sectors such as the secondary level, whilst also inputted into technical support and quality assurance activities of the project. DCU was responsible for the validation and development of pedagogical content and other project-related materials associated with the Irish language.

¹ Title: Designing the Online Oral Language Learning Environment SpeakApps. (Forthcoming).

The partnerships within the project realised the aims of the project and this was evidenced by the influence and impact the SpeakApps partners played in international events such as the Eurocall 2014 conference, where five SpeakApps related papers and presentations were delivered with three papers accepted into the conference proceedings. All partners contributed meaningfully to work packages. The depth and breadth of experience and context enriched the outcomes achieved and ensured that the project could deliver additional outcomes such as the Spanish-English Tandem MOOC.²

² <http://mooc.speakapps.org/>

5. Plans for the Future

The SpeakApps community is the basis by which the target groups will be sustained after the project is finished. The activities carried out during the project improved and grew the SpeakApps community consolidating in a great number the new practices and tools within the target languages and sectors of the project. Each partner will continue contributing to dissemination activities and has the commitment to act as the local or regional SpeakApps contact and liaison with the target groups. As an example, each partner and some associate partners are committed to continuing providing support through the Support Groups in Mahara after the end of the project period so each of the 11 languages covered by the project (Catalan, Dutch, English, Irish, Swedish, Polish, French, Spanish, German, Croatian, and Italian) will have the community support ensured after the end of the project.

Each partner also has the commitment to perform a minimum of two activities per year, one focused on the improvement of languages of the platform by the teachers community actions (adding contents to the Open Educational Resources site) and the other in the field of teacher training. There is also a commitment to adapt the materials and activities for the Online Teacher training course in English to a MOOC format, given the demand we have encountered. Online teacher training courses performed during the project had to be restricted to 100 places after the experience with the first one in which registration surpassed 100 participants within three days of opening the registration form. The Consortium agreed prepare this MOOC during Spring 2015 and offer it during the Fall Term 2016. Each Consortium partners will coordinate one week of the 4-week long MOOC course on teaching oral production and speaking interaction in a foreign language online.

Regarding the new languages to be added to the community, thanks to the dissemination strategy of the project, some agreements are currently in preparation with the *Helduen Alfabetatze eta Berreuskalduntzerako Erakundea (HABE)*, an institution of the Basque government dedicated to the teaching of the Basque language, and with the University of Jyväskylä with the purpose of identifying a set of best practice tasks out of the pilots planned in Finnish.

Commercialization

SpeakApps 2, as an accompanying measures project, was built on the previous LLP KA2 Languages project *SpeakApps* (511552-2010-KA2MP). This previous project developed solutions (tools, resources and methodologies) for oral production and speaking interaction teaching and learning online. The three main tools set up was Langblog, Tandem and Videochat. These tools are available from the SpeakApps platform which comprises also Moodle virtual classrooms, a community space, and a space for Open Educational Resources. The first SpeakApps project exploitation plan provided and recommended some actions for commercialization of these SpeakApps results that partners should explore in both ways, commonly and separately. One of the conclusions in the first SpeakApps report was that given some technical issues, Videochat was an outcome that could not be exploited in that format. As a consequence of the SpeakApps sustainability and exploitation plan, the UOC – coordinator of both, SpeakApps and SpeakApps 2 project – has been investing since the end of the SpeakApps project and in parallel of the SpeakApps 2

execution in the commercialization of the three SpeakApps tools. This includes Videochat for which a new technological solution was developed in 2013.

The business model and commercialisation of the SpeakApps tools set up by UOC consists on providing the tools following a software as a service model (SAAS), creating a cloud-based platform that offers clients – all kind of educational institutions – access to the tools so that they do not have to worry about infrastructures, installation and maintenance. These clients are able to contract also a Learning Management System in the cloud – Moodle – or to connect the tools with their own Learning Management System – Moodle, Blackboard, Canvas, D2L and many others –. The service pricing and conditions will be made available at the project website shortly.

Thanks to the commercialization of the tools, educational institutions can benefit from the use of the tools without having to set up or adapt technological infrastructure for that. Since SpeakApps tools have been using multimedia resources intensively, the use of these tools locally usually requires bandwidth upgrades and technical architecture reconsiderations as well as specialized staff. Those institutions that can face these investments have the tools available for free to install locally, as was explained before. However, these institutions that cannot or do not have technological infrastructure – for example a small traditional school of languages – have the possibility to contract the service in the cloud with at competitive prices. The services offered by UOC include also teacher training and support, so institutions can also invest in mechanisms to improve the teacher staff digital skills in the field of language learning.

This commercialization of SpeakApps tools is key part of the sustainability plan for SpeakApps 2. The UOC, as the first partner to set up commercial strategy, has the commitment to promote and sustain the SpeakApps community after the end of the project. This community provides to the language teachers the opportunity to set up an online course fully operable for one year and up to 30 students. Therefore, teachers can teach and use the SpeakApps tools for free during this period. In addition, the SpeakApps website offers free registration to the SpeakApps Open Educational Resource Repository, so teachers can create, share and discuss learning activities for practicing oral production and interaction in each of the languages available in the project. This is a language teacher community that allow teachers not only to download and share specific activities related to SpeakApps tools but also generic ones that can be used as best practices in both, online and face to face environments.

6. Contribution to EU policies

SpeakApps 2, as a Lifelong Learning Programme KA2 Accompanying measures project, was built on the previous Lifelong Learning Programme KA2 Languages project called *SpeakApps: Production and interaction in a foreign language through online ICT tools* (511552-2010-KA2MP). SpeakApps 2 aim was to enlarge the scope of the SpeakApps project outputs and results. From the initial 6 languages of the SpeakApps original project, this project implemented new languages (French, Italian, German, Spanish and Croatian), brought in new institutions as associate partners as well as new educational sectors. SpeakApps 2 increased progressively the SpeakApps community and the use of SpeakApps tools and materials both at a European and international level.

Through the SpeakApps 2 accompanying measures, the SpeakApps initiative (<http://www.speakapps.eu>) directly tackles some of the key EC priorities:

SpeakApps provides language skills which are essential for the mobility of European citizens and businesses in line with initiatives such as Youth on the Move or Erasmus for all.

SpeakApps directly enhances language learning according to the *strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* (ET 2020). It provides tools and materials to facilitate the oral production and interaction. This is a much needed skill when learning a language and one that has not yet been totally solved neither in face-to-face education nor in elearning environments. Therefore, SpeakApps increases opportunities for oral practice.

SpeakApps addresses both widely taught languages (i.e. English, French, Spanish, German, Italian) as well as less widely taught language (i.e. Catalan, Irish, Croatian, Swedish, Dutch). It is a cost-effective solution for providing linguistic skills in different languages which are essential to strengthen European citizenship, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

SpeakApps is in line with the “Council conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility”: it supports language learning at all levels of education, broadens the choice of languages on offer and introduces innovative ways of learning languages - all areas in which European cooperation can play an important role.

SpeakApps contributes to the increase of ICT competences of teachers and learners. This is an EC priority since the launch of the Lisbon Strategy, it was part of ET2010 and is key in ET2020.

The SpeakApps Open Educational Resource (OER) bank fosters the spread on the use on Open Educational Resources. The project is committed with the Paris OER Declaration 2012 promoted by UNESCO.

The project contributes to the upskilling of teachers and facilitate large parts of them to upgrade their teaching practices in line with the ET2020 strategy.

Regarding the Lifelong Learning Programme, and besides the specific objectives of the Accompanying Measures, SpeakApps 2 addressed the following objectives:

To promote language learning and support linguistic diversity in Member States: SpeakApps provides ICT-based content and services to improve the speaking skills related

to foreign language acquisition; and a multilingual platform and community that by its characteristics also promotes awareness on linguistic diversity. SpeakApps 2 increased the 6 original languages (Catalan, Dutch, English, Irish, Swedish and Polish) with French, Spanish, German, Croatian and Italian. SpeakApps outputs are now offered in 11 languages. In sum, this is a project that directly promotes language learning and supports linguistic diversity in Member States; it is the philosophy of the project and its underlying aim.

To support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning: SpeakApps 2 was focused on test and disseminate innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies in the setting of a second of further language learning process for University, adult lifelong learners, school and vocational training. Moreover, since the tools of the project are web 2.0 tools and cloud services, SpeakApps users are practicing and improving their language and ICT skills seamlessly.

To promote the quality and transparency of Member States' education and training systems: SpeakApps 2 promotes the use of existing best practices in different education and training systems. The project, being a multicountry resource, it openly showcases the content and services being developed and used; thus contributing to their quality and transparency.

To promote an awareness of the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity within Europe, as well as of the need to combat racism, prejudice and xenophobia: A multilingual and open platform and community such as the one devised by SpeakApps promotes the exchange and contribution among its users, thus leaving behind all discrimination types such as those related to culture. Online ICT-based services are initially blinder to race or ethnic origins than face-to-face approaches and can therefore promote a different way to get to know and accept people. Also SpeakApps contributes to the cultural diversity providing tools for foreign people to learn local language, or for second/third generation of foreigners to learn and keep in contact with ancestor's language and culture.

To make provision for learners with special needs, and in particular by helping to promote their integration into mainstream education and training: The "usability for all" concept (which includes both usability and accessibility) has been the bases (user characteristics and profiles) for the development of the tools and community. Moreover, online learning has provided access to formal training to a wider audience, especially to students with special needs. SpeakApps offers the same advantages offering a more independent and flexible learning process.

