

# REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTED PROJECT SUPPORT OF SNOEZELLEN AND ITS INTEGRATION INTO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION (ERASMUS+ KA203 – STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION 2020-1-CZ01-KA203-078267)

**Kateřina Janků**

The current trend of the 21st century, which responds to the uniqueness of each person with its social approaches, is, among other things, increasing the demands on the competencies and skills of workers in helping professions who contribute to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities and social disadvantages. The expanding and specialized fields of the Faculty of Public Policies of the Silesian University in Opava are proof of this innovative development.

The project *Support of Snoezelen and its Integration into University Education*, which has been implemented at this faculty since September last year (9/1 2020), aims in a completely unique way and anchors the innovative concept of Snoezelen – Multisensory Environment (abbr. MSE) in tertiary education and future training of professionals not only in the field of special education, but also graduates of helping professions, who will be able to adequately respond to the needs of the labour market.

Specifically, the project concerns the inclusion of the innovative course Snoezelen in the instruction of students of special education, educational psychology, and social, therapeutic and rehabilitative fields which are related to specific partner universities. The planned innovation also includes increasing the skills of university teachers and experts and the developing of strategic partnerships in scientific and research activities.

Snoezelen is now regarded as an innovative method whose aim it is to encourage a person with disability or disadvantage to be active by means of sensory stimulation thanks to a unique environment created. Snoezelen uses and combines numerous therapeutic, educational and relaxation activities which enhance the quality of life and purposefully promote human development. The concept was already created in the 1970s in the Netherlands and its development is evident throughout the world. Its professional patronage is formed by the International Snoezelen Association (abbr. ISNA-MSE), which brings together professionals from around the world and holds regular meetings in the form of international conferences. (The last conference in 2019 was organized in Prague and its organizer was the Czech ISNA section).

The priority of the project relates to the specific axis focusing on tackling skills gaps and mismatches, and the axis supporting the internationalization of universities. The main direction of the project objective is to achieve specific development of curricula aimed

at learning outcomes which meet the educational needs of students better while remaining relevant to the needs of the labour market and society as a whole. This direction can be ensured by systematically structuring methodical content of the specific "Snoezelen" course at the international level. At the same time, we will thus contribute to a strengthening of strategic cooperation among higher education institutions, especially by eliminating specific obstacles in the integration of mobility into curricula. Obstacles to integrating mobility into study programmes include differences in the content of offered courses which are of a particularly pro-national character and whose performance requirements relate to the practical application of the course only in a specific country, with the assumption of having mastered the local mother tongue and the resulting labour-market application of graduates only in the country of the specific university. The practical course „Snoezelen“, which the project proposal is concerned with, does not at the moment have homogeneous content – to the contrary, external social, cultural and human factors are involved in its structure, segregating it from subjects suitable for instruction to foreign students. The innovative development of educational courses within the strategic partnership is always connected with the possibility of information comparisons, wider discussions, transfer of experience and improvement of instructor competence. However, it is also associated with the creation of instructional materials and modification of existing course curricula in individual countries which aim at their use for international mobility of foreign students. Sharing large amounts of information about Snoezelen is a driving force for further development of the programmes which implement it.

The three cooperating universities who constitute the proposed partnership in this project include a team of scholars from the Czech Republic from the Faculty of Public Policies, Silesian University in Opava, a team of scholars from the Republic of Poland from the Faculty of Rehabilitation, *Academie Wychowanie Fizycznego im. Bronislaw Czecha*, Cracow and a team of scholars from the Kingdom of Spain from the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Social Affairs, University of Lleida (*Facultat d'Educació, Psicologia i Treball Social de la Universitat de Lleida*). By profile, the team from the Czech Republic focuses on the education and development of people with disabilities and social disadvantages. The team from the Republic of Poland is profiled in leisure-time, therapeutic and vocational rehabilitation. The team from Spain directs their activities in the field of educational psychology, counselling, recreational and therapeutic work with various clients.

The international partnership undoubtedly brings specific value, as the unification of contents of instruction of the course at the university level will help create a methodically structured instruction model focused on Snoezelen, which is currently missing completely. Consequently, it is possible to further develop the subject, strengthen and clarify its content, and make it more transparent throughout the whole European area.

The anticipated positive outcome is the elaboration of methodological materials, professional publications, and providing comparative outputs, which will of course be available to all students and scholars of the partner coalition. As part of the project, we expect the newly created partnership to also bring about innovative increase

in competences of the participating university instructors, connected to both their professional profile in science, and their approach to the students thanks to the planned short and intensive expert training. As part of the project, comparative outputs associated with the process of instruction in the field of Snoezelen are expected to be based on feedback and intensive use of the results for further development and innovation of instruction within existing programmes.

The cultural and social heterogeneity of countries whose universities are incorporated in the cooperation is also connected with the selection of activities and strategies which are used in Snoezelen. For students from abroad, one needs to unite the course content and instruction model so that it is enriching for all the partners, and by extension for each student. The project activities will therefore aim to create such a course which could be generally and strategically better applicable for instruction not only in the Czech Republic.

### **Author**

Mgr. Kateřina Janků, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Special Education,

Faculty of Public Policy, Silesian University in Opava

Address: Bezručovo náměstí 885/14, 746 01 Opava, Česká republika

katerina.janku@fvp.slu.cz