

A globe is held in the center by several hands of different skin tones, symbolizing global unity and collaboration. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

A Collaborative Communication Project in Bulgaria

Participation, Inclusion and
Occupation in the Global Community

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Occupational Therapy:

Participation, Inclusion and Occupation in the Global Community

A single case study using an assistive communication device becomes a metaphor for a collaborative communication project that demonstrates the potential to engage individuals, students, communities, organizations, and nations in promoting occupational justice through the medium of occupational therapy education projects while also illustrating that the process *is* the outcome.

Project Goal

- Goal: Establish interactive use of an assistive communication device to enhance dignified and meaningful participation in daily life and improve well-being and quality of life for a person with disabilities living in a residential facility in Ruse, BG
- Use an inclusive POJF approach

Participatory Occupational Justice Framework 2010 : Enablement is a Collaborative Process



Gerard: Case Study

- 20 y.o. male
- Medical History Essentially Unknown
- Occupational Narrative:
 - placed in an orphanage prior to 4 y.o., lived in village-based institution of +40 children, was often confined to his bed, small for age, suffered from malnutrition and SIB, leg deformities possibly secondary to unset fractures make walking impossible, confined to a wheel chair, non-verbal, partially sighted, at age 16 was removed from institution and placed in a group home with 8 other children, he was also the same year a subject of a BBC film that deeply criticized the orphan home system in BG, received a person-centered evaluation from Frontline Partnership UK organization in 2008

Gerard



Meeting project goal
Evaluate potential of success
between the Client and the Device :
are Client Factors adequate to
support use of a simple interactive
communication device?

Excerpts from 2008 Client-Centered Evaluation by UK Frontline Partnership Written in the First Person Client Factors

- **Communication: potential**
 - I say ‘no, no, no’ I communicate by reaching out to an object
- **Cognitive Skills: potential**
 - I can work out how things work eg. I can make musical rhythm with percussion instruments, I can discriminate different shapes
- **Gross and Fine Motor Function: potential**
 - I can grasp a variety of objects such as maracas, pencils, spoon, toys; Given time and help I can explore objects using both hands together, to discover what the objects are and what they do. I can reach out to another person to give and receive objects

Project Outcomes

Understanding:

The Project Process As The Outcome

Communication :

Identifying and Hearing the Voices of Marginalized Groups and Persons During the Process

- Persons with Disabilities: Gerard's Voice
- Marginalized Professions: Occupational Therapy Student's Voices
- Other Persons

Persons with Disabilities in Bulgaria

- There are no programs to accommodate the needs of disabled people in the mainstream environment and ‘Community Services’ are not subject to monitoring and evaluation
- The number of institutionalized disabled people is alarmingly high. Statistics placed Bulgaria second in Europe after Russia by number of institutionalized children ... there were still 17, 253 disabled children and adults in residential care [by the end of 2008]
- Developmental, occupational, and participation opportunities are limited...modern technical solutions are inaccessible to disabled people

ANED <http://www.disability-europe.net/countries/bulgaria>
<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home>

Joint Destiny

A Profession serving persons who experience lack of inclusion in larger society is a profession that also experiences lack of inclusion in occupational justice opportunities and resources:
the outcome for both populations is a joint destiny

Persons with Disabilities in Bulgaria



Occupational Therapists (students) in Bulgaria



Project Outcome

Gerard: A Person with Disabilities Receives Occupational Opportunity



Project Outcome

Occupational Therapy As A Marginalized Professional Population

Occupational Therapy Students in Bulgaria Receive Occupational Opportunities



Client Outcomes



4 Students Responded To Questionnaire
:Gerard is answering correctly whether it is pure coincidence ...because the people asking the questions are not Bulgarian speaking, therefore the results could be inaccurate.

:Gerard is becoming more familiar with the device and always picks it up when it is placed on his lap and is ... becoming more familiar with the individual button positions

:Gerard is communicating with the device (although we are unsure of the intentions at present) but the sessions are allowing us to spend more time with Gerard and he is therefore receiving more interaction from others

: Frequently pushes “гладен” receives food in response

Student Learning Outcomes :
Direct, Parallel, Ancillary Student Outcomes



Direct Student Learning Outcomes

York St. John Students (Erasmus Exchange)

- Action: Students implemented protocol & collected data
- 4 Students Responded To Questionnaire about the project goals including the **personal educational value** they felt it had for them:
 - It has altered our initial impressions of Gerard
 - We feel we have gotten to know Gerard much better



- This is the best piece of equipment I have ever worked with. It fascinates me that potentially this can give somebody the gift of communication. If I imagine my life without communication, it would be empty – no emotions, no expression of thought. It is definitely something I will remember for future clients who I work with.

Because of using the GO TALK device during this project “We feel we have built a rapport with Gerard which in turn has influenced other sessions i.e. arts and crafts, outdoor play and music sessions”



Parallel Student Learning Outcomes : Bulgarian OT Students

Occupational Challenges:

- Role Definition
- Challenges in training opportunities
 - Mentoring
 - Acquiring skill sets
 - Clinical supervision
- Challenges in Economic Participation & Employment:
Challenges in finding social & professional place



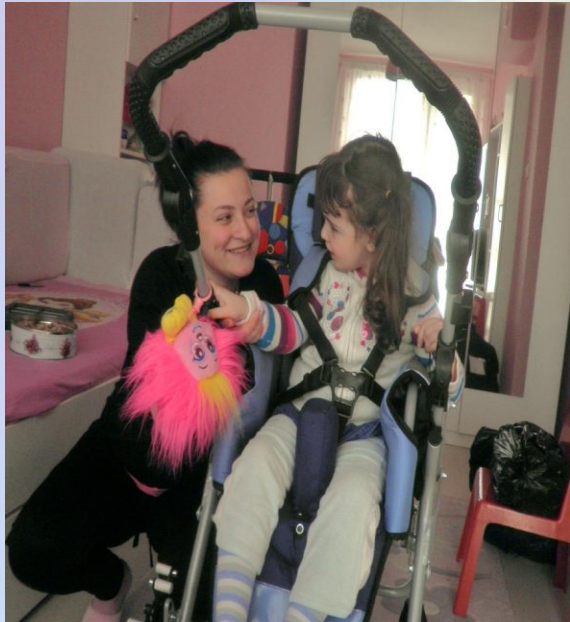
Rujdie Salieva

Occupational Outcomes:

- Evaluated Potential for use of device with fieldwork client
- Project sustainability
- Creating a case for the need of OT services in society: role definition
- Mutual modeling & Training opportunities
 - Mentoring
 - Acquired skill sets
 - Familiarity with new technology

Bulgarian OT Students : Framing the Future

22 students responded to an open-ended questionnaire
about their hopes for the future



Rudjie & Client Joana

Half of Students reported wanting to work in Bulgaria

One-third reported being worried they would not find a job in Bulgaria

More than one-third were worried they would not be recognized as a profession in Bulgaria

One-quarter were worried they would not be respected by other professionals in their work settings

Most reported wanting to be successful OTs who helped their clients

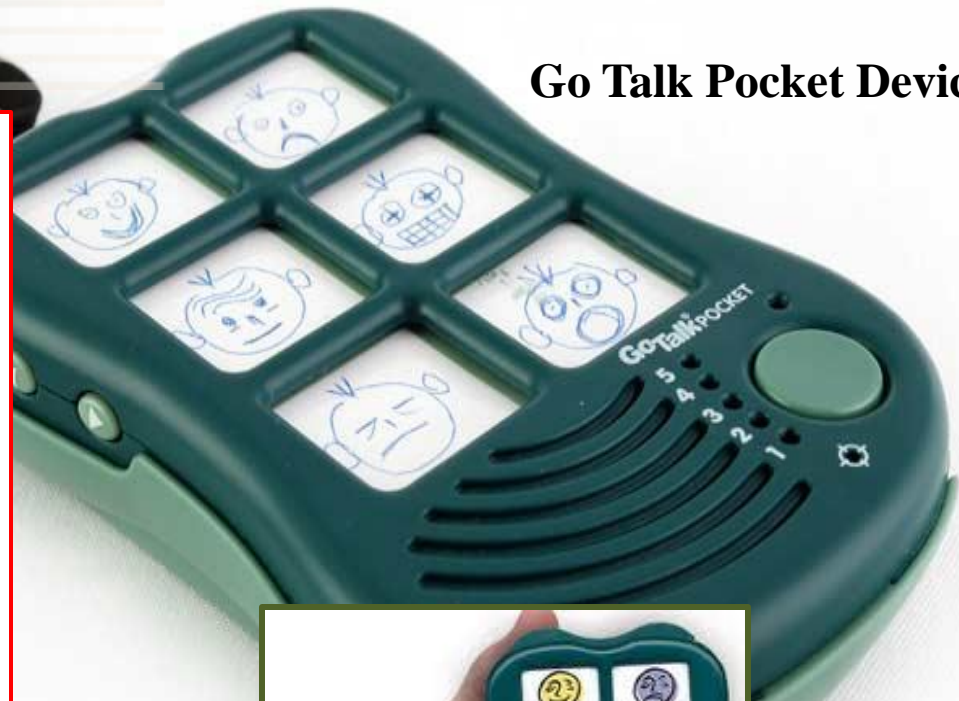
“I really want to continue my work here in Bulgaria, no matter how hard it will be. Bulgaria is my Motherland and I don’t want to leave it”

Ancillary Student Learning Outcomes : Eastern Washington University OT Students

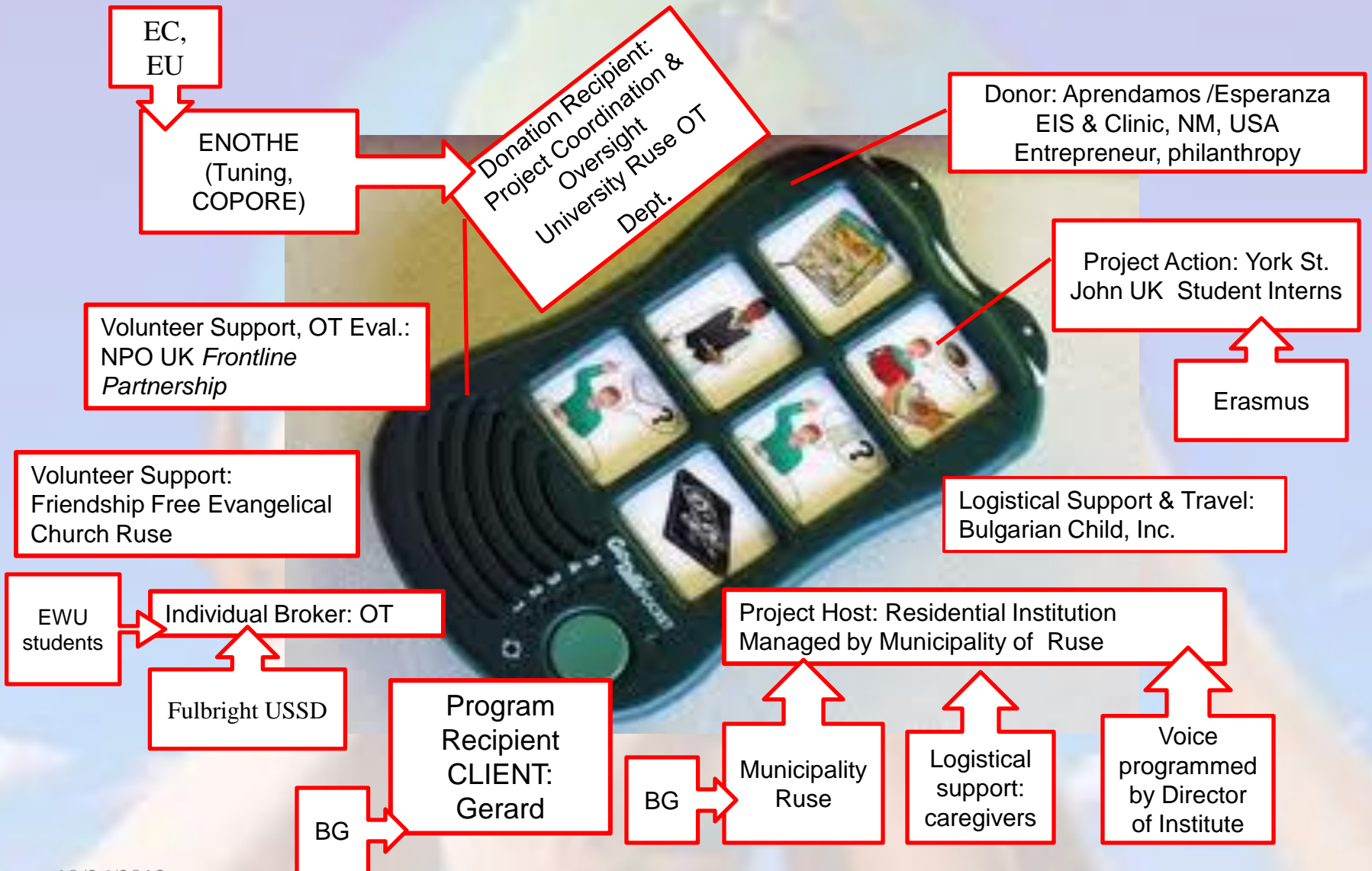
- Class Met with University Ruse Students via Actual Time Video Conferencing
- Students Reviewed Data Collection Protocol for Communication Device Implementation
- Maintain Communication via Social Media EWU-University Ruse OT Student Facebook Page
 - <http://www.facebook.com/groups/227994310605926/>



Go Talk Pocket Device



How a Simple Device Becomes an Intersection of Engagement: Understanding Process as Outcome



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- **FRIENDSHIP FREE EVANGELICAL CHURCH, RUSE BG**
 - Emilia & Daniela Nalbantska
- **FAMILY TYPE HOME, MUNICIPALITY OF RUSE, BG**
- **APRENDAMOS / ESPERANZA EIS & THERAPY CLINIC, LAS CRUCES, NM**
- **EWU: STUDENT FEEDBACK ON DATA COLLECTION SHEETS, ACTIVE USE OF EWU – University Ruse Facebook page**
- **FRONTLINE PARTNERSHIP NPO/ NGO UK:**
 - Gill Soper & Team
- **BULGARIAN CHILD, INC. Judy Ridgway <http://www.bulgarianchild.org/>**

Resources

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