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Audio Description:

A Laboratory for the Development of a New Professional Profile

ADLAB PRO is a three-year (2016-2019) project financed by the European Union under the Erasmus+ Programme, Key Action 2 – Strategic Partnerships.

Despite the incessant advocacy for an inclusive society and the growing need for accessible audiovisual products, there are still few professional figures working in the field of audio description (AD). The few that exist are often untrained and their role is not well defined. Furthermore, the provision of AD – i.e. verbal descriptions illustrating the visual elements of an audiovisual product for the blind and visually impaired community – is uneven across Europe. ADLAB PRO aims to fill this gap. It will define a curriculum for ensuring professional Europe-wide AD implementation in all cultural and media sectors through the creation of training materials to develop the new AD professional profile.

ADLAB PRO's work will produce a comprehensive snapshot of the current AD training practices in Europe and outline the AD professional profile, its required skills and its competencies. It will further delineate concrete training proposals based on different types of AD (TV, cinema, museums, live events). Training materials will be created and made available after thorough evaluation and testing. The project will also look at the evaluation and accreditation of the educational components for both academic and vocational levels through the attribution of ECTS/ECVETS to each educational component. This will guarantee their quality, and also the project's sustainability and resilience. The training material produced by ADLAB PRO will be open, online and free, but also modular and fully customizable: it will be possible to use the modules all together as a comprehensive course, or separately in different combinations.

The project activities will be carried out through the synergy of educational and non-educational partners ensuring that the profile meets multiple market needs and the curriculum designed to train future AD experts is efficient, flexible in implementation, and of high quality. There are eight project partners and they come from seven European countries. The academic partners are the University of Trieste (Italy) acting as leader, the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain), the University of Antwerp (Belgium), and the Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland) – all successfully involved in the project ADLAB (2011-2014). There are four non-academic partners, selected for their diversified expertise and complementarity: Utopian Voices Ltd. is a private UK company supplying high-quality AD, training, research and data analysis in the field of AVT; Soundfocus, is an audio post-production studio specializing in media accessibility and responsible for all major AD projects in The Netherlands; RTV Slovenija, is the national public broadcaster that has recently introduced AD to its programming and strives to implement it and disseminates good practice across the Balkan Regions. Last but not least, the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) is, a renowned UK charity working for and with blind people. The RNIB will rise project awareness in a country where AD is long-established amongst sophisticated AD users and providers.

Besides directly affecting higher education as well as trainees interested in AD and the audiovisual translation market, ADLAB PRO will have a strong long-term impact on a wide spectrum of potential beneficiaries of the ADs produced by the new AD professionals. These include the blind and visually impaired communities and more generally a wide array of persons with disabilities, including age related disabilities and specific needs.

More information on the project on www.adlabproject.eu.