

# HUMAN-DOG TEAMS IN ANIMAL ASSISTED EDUCATION AND ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY



Erasmus+

# **Index**

- Introduction
- Definitions AAE and AAT
- Project-goals and topics
- Project Partners
  - The research in partner countries
  - Poland's 'Animals for People Association'
  - Norwegian: Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology
  - The Netherlands: Open University of the Netherlands (OU)
  - Estonia: Estonian Association of Assistance and Therapy Dogs (EAATD)
- Summarising the research part
- The need for standardization



**This Brochure is developed  
as part of the Project  
'Preparation and Training of  
Human-Dog Teams in Dogs  
Assisted Education and  
Therapy', co-funded by  
Erasmus Plus Program of  
the European Union.**

**Project Number -  
2017-1-PL01-KA202-038652.**

Dear reader,

Thank you for your interest in this brochure. It gives an overview of the project 'Preparation and Training of Human-Dog Teams in Dog Assisted Education and Therapy'. You might have heard or read about the project as a practitioner in the working field of Animal Assisted Education or Animal Assisted Therapy. Or you are just interested in the guidelines and the courses that will be developed within the project in the next two years.

The brochure is intended as a guide to those who want to learn more about the project goals and outcomes like guidelines and standards, recognized and accepted by international and European organizations like International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO).





## Definitions AAE and AAT

One of the challenges in the field of Animal Assisted Interventions is the use of the various terminologies which results in confusion. Therefore, in this project, the terminology of the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO) is maintained:

### **Animal Assisted Therapy:**

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is a goal oriented, planned and structured therapeutic intervention directed and/or delivered by health, education and human service professionals. Intervention progress is measured and included in the professional documentation. AAT is delivered and/or directed by a formally trained (with active licensure, degree or equivalent) professional with expertise within the scope of the professionals' practice. AAT focuses on enhancing physical, cognitive, behavioral and/or socio-emotional functioning of the particular human recipient. The professional

delivering AAT (or the person handling the animal under the supervision of the human service professional) must have adequate knowledge about the behavior, needs, health and indicators and regulation of stress of the animals involved.

### **Animal Assisted Education (or Animal Assisted Pedagogy):**

Animal Assisted Education (AAE) is a goal oriented, planned and structured intervention directed and/or delivered by educational and related service professionals. AAE is conducted by qualified (with a degree) general and special education teachers. AAE, when done by special (remedial) education teachers are also considered therapeutic and a goal-oriented intervention.

The professional delivering AAE, including regular school teachers (or the person handling the animal under the supervision of the education professional), must have adequate knowledge about the behavior, needs, health and indicators and regulation of stress of the animals involved.

# Project-goals and topics



Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) with dogs is a broad concept that enhances all the activities in which a human-dog team interacts with others. Animal Assisted Activities (AAA), Animal Assisted Coaching (AAC), Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) and Animal Assisted Education (AAE) are all forms of AAI.

In Europe, AAI is becoming increasingly popular but is still unregulated. There is a lack of rules and standards that guarantee the high quality of services and sometimes even the safety of patients. IAHAIO, the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations, is one of the main organizations advocating and working on standards to professionalize the working field of AAI. Certain countries, mostly Western European and Scandinavian, follow the practices advised by IAHAIO and have been able to work out a set of good recommendations for human-dog teams while countries in Central and Eastern Europe deviate from these standards.

International projects offer the opportunity to learn from each other and prevent that every country has to re-invent the wheel. In 2014-2016 a partnership made up of the Polish organization SZL and the Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology developed a training program

and course of AAA-visiting teams. The course and handbooks developed in the aforementioned project are used by each partner.

This current project is a coherent and necessary continuation of the previous project. The purpose of this project is to go one step further and develop guidelines certified handlers that want to follow an advanced course so that they can assist professionals (teachers, pedagogues and psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.) as well for the professionals that want to work with their dogs themselves (educators and therapists). Therefore, the purpose of this project is to develop a standard for the countries involved, followed by a pathway dealing with the training teams working in AAE and AAT. These standards will be based on those proposed by IAHAIO so that the results of the project will be easy to implement in other countries that are not participating in this project.

Finally, the introduction of standardized courses that have clear guidelines and a common methodology will also improve the quality of the training offered by other entities- it will determine the direction to strive forwards. Priority of this project is to offer transparency and recognition of skills, knowledge, and qualifications. And besides, enhancing access to training and qualifications for all. This would increase the labor market mobility and the employability of the professionals in the AAE and AAT working field.

The results of the project are, besides this brochure, a methodology handbook and a course that will serve as an introduction for professionals. The course will be conducted through the use of modern e-learning platforms. Because AAE and AAT are practical working fields that require certain skills, the e-learning course will be followed by an eight-day training camp where students from all countries will be present. This will allow an exchange of experiences and practices among different countries and will be the next step in solidifying a standard AAI level in the EU. Human-dog teams (28 teams) in Europe are invited to participate in the project and will have the opportunity to share their experience and also to improve their skills. After evaluation of the methodology and course, the end-results of the project will be disseminated for 160 people during an international conference. The project has a total duration of two years and will be finished at the end of 2019.

# Project Partners

In this project, four European countries are involved:

Poland

Norwegian

Estonia

the Netherlands.

Every country is represented by one organization.





## The research in partner countries

The research was carried out in June 2018 in partner countries. The aim was to determine the most popular AAI training system in the countries and to find possible similarities and good practises. We were also interested in checking what is the education and experience of teams working in AAI. Unfortunately, due to specificity and experience of the countries, each has different AAI certification systems, and often they are inconsistent within the countries. This makes difficult to verify the team's qualifications, which threatens the quality of the activities and sometimes their safety. Below we present shortened research reports. For more information - we encourage you to visit the project website.

After analysing the research results, we decided to recommend one AAI team training path(see attachment to the brochure), coherent and recommended by partner organizations. The path also gained the IAHAIO recommendation as the recommended training and certification model.



# Poland's 'Animals for People Association'



Poland's Animal's for People Association (SZL) was founded in 2008. It is a non-governmental organization and was also involved in the previous Erasmus Plus project 'Animal Assisted Activities with Dogs'. The Association currently consists of 15 people: therapists, pedagogues, psychologists and dog trainers. Their work is supported by an administrative team and coordinating activities from the formal side. The Association also has a group of about 30 volunteers of various specialties.

The main areas of activity of the Association are:

- professional therapeutic interventions with dogs and cats in such institutions as special schools and kindergartens, social welfare houses, children's hospitals
- educational classes with dogs - programs supported by the city of Warsaw.
- training human-animal teams and preparing them to work in AAI.

*Two members are participating in this project.*

**Magdalena Nawarecka-Piątek** is president of the Association, educator, and sensory integration therapist. She creates and coordinates educational and therapeutic projects, combining knowledge from different fields. She is co-author of training programs for therapists and volunteers and professionally associated with AAI since 2006. Since 2017 a certified evaluator of Human-Dog Teams in American Organization Pet Partners.

**Michał Plewczynski** has been involved in the implementation of projects financed from EU funds (both domestic and international as part of the Life Long Learning) since 2009. He gained experience at all levels of implementation and recruitment for marketing campaigns, product design, implementation training, financial accounting and reporting, and coordination. He specializes in educational projects that function on the border between the humanities and modern technology.



## Results Surveys in Poland

The survey was conducted in Poland among people actively involved in the fields of therapy and education assisted by dogs. The survey was conducted online and by phone among organizations and individuals by Animals for People Association.

In Poland, we had 77 respondents. Handlers declare to have very different education, but most of them were teachers, and thereby worked with AAE/T in schools and kindergartens. The most common breeds used were Golden Retriever and Cavalier Kings Charles Spaniel, but other breeds were used as well. Almost 80 % of the respondents worked with AAT or AAE at least once or twice a week for 30-60 minutes. More than 71,5 % evaluated the program afterwards. Almost 92 % of the respondents had screened their dog's suitability to do AAI, and most of them by a team of evaluators. About 10% of the dogs had obedience exam instead of mental tests. More than 90 % completed a course in AAI, and most of them graduated a course provided by the organization or company. 12% completed university courses.

As we can see in the results, the education of dogs and handlers in Poland is very differentiated and there is no common standard. There are many organizations and companies providing courses, and the length of the courses is 14-750 hours. Some of them are only theoretical, without any dog training or practical exam.

This survey has shown that we need some guidelines and good practices to unify and improve the quality of human-dog teams training. The field of AAI is very embroiled and it is not possible to give a clear summary of training, examination and conducting AAI.

# Norwegian: Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology



Dr. Christine Olsen



Line Sandstedt

The Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology was founded in 2004 and has the leading experts on human-animal interactions in Norway. This organization works in the field of human-animal-relationship and is an interdisciplinary association, comprising of individuals with expertise in ethology, rehabilitation, public health and special needs education. There is both practical experience and theoretical knowledge about dogs, dog-mentality, screening and testing of dogs, dog training and training of human-animal teams.

The Centre has a lot of practical experience in carrying out animal-assisted interventions in a variety of settings, like schools, hospitals, and nursing homes. Together with the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, The Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology offers a university course in AAI. This course gives professional handlers theoretical and practical competence in AAI. In addition, they educate volunteers with their dog in AAA, also here both theoretical and practical together with the Norwegian Kennel Club.

The organization was involved in several projects, among which the previous international Erasmus Plus project "Animal Assisted Activities with Dogs". Nationally there has been a collaboration with the Norwegian Health directorate, Norwegian Dyslectic Organization, the Norwegian Council for Mental Health, Oslo University Hospital, and The Norwegian Federation of Organizations of Disabled People.

*Two members are participating in the current Erasmus Plus project:*

**Line Sandstedt** is managing director of the Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology. She is a lecturer in science and a postgraduate in special needs education and coaching. Sandstedt is also a dog behaviorist and dog trainer, and screens dogs personality for AAI. Sandstedt gives courses in dog training both nationally and internationally. She is responsible for all of the education given by the Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology, both dog training, and training of human-animal teams. Line has been working for the organization since 2006.

**Dr. Christine Olsen** is the founder of the Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology, and chair of the board. She has a master degree in ethology, and a PhD in public health focusing on animal-assisted interventions. Dr. Olsen is also a post graduate in rehabilitation and coaching, she is a dog behaviorist and dog trainer, and screens dogs personality. She is currently doing research on dog behavior. Christine founded the organization in 2004 and has been working for the organization since then.



## Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology



## Results Surveys Norway

In Norway, we had 43 respondents. Most of them were teachers, and thereby worked with AAE in schools. The most common breeds used were Puddle, Golden Retriever and Labrador Retriever, but other breeds were used as well. Almost 80 % of the respondents worked with AAT or AAE at least once or twice a week. More than 75 % evaluated the program afterwards. Almost 90 % of the respondents had screened their dogs suitability to do AAI, and most of them by a team of evaluators. More than 80 % completed a course in AAI, and almost all of them, a university course.

From this, we can conclude that most of the respondents were performing AAI on a regular basis, and that they were dedicated to their work. Since the majority of respondents obviously had attended the university course held by the Norwegian University of Life Sciences together with the Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology, almost everybody had completed both a theoretical and practical exam.

This survey has given us valuable information about the prevalence of AAT and AAE in Norway, as well as the level of competence of the teams. A huge bias is that the survey was distributed through the Norwegian Centre of Anthrozoology's social media channels. Since Norway is a small country, the field of AAI is very transparent and the results fits well with our assumptions.

# The Netherlands: Open University of the Netherlands (OU)

The Open University of the Netherlands, founded in 1984, has as core activities research, education and training. The Open University is specialized in e-learning for scientific education and is the only university in Europe with a Chair for Anthrozoology. Besides, it has a lot of experience with international projects within the EU programmes. The project is conducted by two members of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, section Anthrozoology. This section does research on the human-animal bond and is an expert in the field of Animal Assisted Interventions. The section works closely together with International organizations and in The Netherlands with the Institute for Anthrozoology (IVA). Together with practitioners of AAI, they are developing guidelines and accredited courses to professionalize the working field of AAI in the Netherlands.

*Two employees are participated in the current Erasmus Plus project:*

**Prof. Dr. Marie-José Enders-Slegers** is a professor in Anthrozoology at the Open University since 2013. She is President of IAHAIO, board member of ISAZ, founder, and chair of the Institute for Anthrozoology in the Netherlands; founder of the Circle of Violence (the link between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence); founder and nowadays adviser of AAIZOO (Animal Assisted Interventions in Care, Research and Education); fellow at the Denver University; advisor of the Management Board of HABRI International and member of the Advisory Board of Green Chimneys, New York. She published numerous articles, book chapters and is a well-known international speaker.



Prof. Dr. Marie-José  
Enders-Slegers



Drs. Tynke de Winkel (MSc)

Drs. Tynke de Winkel (MSc) works as a researcher at the Open University of the Netherlands, at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Department of Anthrozoology. Besides, she is a PhD student at the same Faculty. Her research is focusing on the animal wellbeing in AAI. She is also a certified dog trainer and she works as an lecturer in animal behavior and as a project manager at the Institute for Anthrozoology (IVA).



## Results Surveys in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands the number of practitioners, working in the field of Animal Assisted Therapy and Animal Assisted Education, is not clear. Past years several surveys have been carried out mostly by students, and the numbers that are quoted in the reports are divers, as are the definitions used (Engelen, 2016). In our survey (2018) 30 people reacted: 38% was working in health care; 31% worked as coach, 10% worked as educators. AAT and AAE (and AAC?) is given in a group for 48%; the others get individually AAT; AAE and AAC. More than half of these people were working in an organization.

The dogs, mostly Retrievers and Doodles, 'work' for 45-60 minutes, one or two days per week. Nearly 80% of the sessions are evaluated; 90% of the dogs have had a behavioral test, carried out by an expert in animal behavior of the organization.

Most of the practitioners (80%) were educated within the own organization; in human behavior as well as in animal behavior. The length of the education varied from 20 hours to a couple of years, followed by a theoretical exam (75%) and a practical exam (80%). In 75% of the cases the dogs pass an exam as well.

As expected the results show an immense diversity: in education of practitioners, as well in breed and education of the dogs.

The Erasmus project will be helpful in streamlining the national and international educational pathways and initiatives, in the Netherlands e.g. in working together with the Institute for Anthrozoology.





**Maarja Tali**, a member of the board since 2014, a dog handler and examiner is participating in the international project. She is co-author of training programs for dog-handler teams.



# Estonia: Estonian Association of Assistance and Therapy Dogs (EAATD)

Non-profit association Estonian Association of Assistance and Therapy Dogs is a national umbrella organization, established in 2008, representing natural and legal persons working with therapy dogs in healthcare, education and social affairs or those who raise and prepare therapy dogs for work. Their goal is to advance canine-assisted interventions in Estonia, promote responsible pet ownership, and value the bond between a human and a dog.

Estonian Association of Assistance and Therapy Dogs is the only organization in Estonia testing, training and examining therapy dog-handler teams. All the dog-handler teams hold an international license.

Together with its partners, the association draws up and develops a system that fits the Estonian social, education and healthcare systems the best. The organization also collaborate on an international scale to bring professional knowledge, practical skills and best practices to Estonia, and we participate in scientific cooperation. On a daily basis, it bring prepared dog teams together with clients, help develop a suitable intervention plan, methodology and standards for the programs, and coordinate the work of the teams. Together with the Estonian Association of Equine Assisted Therapies, EEATD founded the Estonian Union of Organizations Involving Assistance and Therapy Animals.



**ESTONIAN  
ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANCE  
AND THERAPY DOGS**

## Results Surveys Estonia



The Estonian Survey consisted of 37 participants, from who 35 incorporate dog to AAE or AAT programs. In total 83.8% of the participants belong to the Estonian Association of Assistance and Therapy Dogs and 2.7% are not affiliated to any organization. It can be said that 28 teams are visiting schools, 24 visit kindergartens, 14 visit libraries, 11 visit hospitals, 11 visit elderly homes, 4 visit physical rehabilitation centers, 3 visit psychiatric institutions and no one goes to private homes. Interestingly, one person added that she visits a dental clinic. Expectantly, most of the respondents (75,6%) work with dogs in the sessions 45 minutes up to 60 minutes. All the respondents who work in AAE or AAT have been assessed. All the respondents indicated that they learned about dog behavior in the course. The results indicate that from all respondents 100% answered "dog behaviorist" among others to the question about who assessed the dog team.

Summarising the research part, we need to underline big diversification in almost every aspect of AAI. The field good practises and regulations are now under construction, as it is quite a new profession in Europe, and it have started in a very informal way – parallel in different parts of the world. It has supported varied needs, and because of that, different qualification were needed. Now, as we have a structure and we can distinguish different kinds of AAI (therapy, education, activity (visiting), the next step is to set standards and make the requirements more clear.

According to lack of unity in the countries and different certifying organization, we weren't able to collect all the data. In each country we have about 10% (or less) of working teams pool, but it is also a significant information about lack of the system and possibility to verify teams. So that, we can clearly see the differences and mess with certification system. There are different ways of training, the length of the courses and requirements for teams are diverse. When person, or facility is interested in employment of AAI team there is no easy way to verify it's quality.



## The need for standardization

There is a demand for the professional therapists and educators supported by dogs services on the European market and it is still increasing. Because there is a lack of uniform standards for AAI in and in partner countries, potential employers have a problem with the verification of candidates and often employ unqualified persons. In addition, there are significant differences in standards between countries. Standards in the field of animal assisted therapy meanwhile, are crucial for the effectiveness and safety activities. It is in the interests of people with disabilities and other groups of clients that use this type of service is to standardize certification and to set minimum standards that every human dog team should fulfil. Aim of our partnership is to increase the level of quality of the AAI sector in affiliate countries.

### Why the standardization is needed?

- To guarantee patients safety and welfare
- To guarantee patients receive good quality of interventions that supports their needs
- To guarantee dogs welfare during the interventions

Law in European countries doesn't support the needs of AAI market – there are no regulations that makes this field predictable, and the procedures safe and plain. In western countries there is more "labour culture" that forces handlers to certify themselves and their dogs, but in Poland and Estonia there is still lack of this kind of good practises. Even in Norway and the Netherlands there are teams that are working without certification and any control of dogs and handlers education and predispositions.

Recommended, and common for countries, path of certification for teams would be a great convenience not only for facilities and clients, but also for handlers. In today's mess it is very complicated to find a valuable course. There are plenty of certifying organisations, and the handler needs to decide by himself which one is worth trusting and paying money. International standard, that organizations can follow would be a great advantage. It will help handlers to choose good quality course and clients to employ well educated AAI team.

We hope this brochure gives you more information about the project and the working field of AAE and AAT in general in Europe.

If you want to contact us or want more information please look at Facebook.

### **Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/HumanDogTeams/>

<https://www.facebook.com/events/586368878412777/>

Publication financed from European Commission funds under the Erasmus + program.

The publication was implemented with the financial support of the European Commission.

The publication reflects only the position of its authors. The European Commission and the National Agency of the Erasmus + Program are not responsible for its substantive content.

FREE PUBLICATION

