

UMSIC

Usability of Music for Social
Inclusion of Children



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Music activities enhance social coherence

Music is one of the most popular recreational activities in people's everyday lives – it connects people and cultures and is used by many people to regulate their emotions and moods. Children are known to enjoy singing, dancing, and music making and music activities are known to positively affect children's emotional, social, and intellectual development. In addition, early competences in music and language are interwoven and thus, music is able to help all children to develop language skills. In particular, children with learning difficulties and with bi-cultural backgrounds benefit significantly from music activities.

UMSIC offers an intelligent and accessible tool to support children's social inclusion through music.

The multidisciplinary and transnational S&T UMSIC project develops a system - the JamMo (jamming mobile) - that uses familiar modern technologies to create an interactive environment for children to communicate musically by. With a special focus on child-centered usability, intelligent musical engineering and carefully developed pedagogical design, JamMo allows children to use the product in both stand-alone and networked mode with easy start up and large extensibility.

Children will benefit from the targeted musical material by being able to independently learn the usage of musical software required to enter musical online communities. Whilst intended for all children, UMSIC aims to particularly support, through music, those children who are at increased risk of being marginalized.



Who we are

The UMSIC project is run by an interdisciplinary and multinational group of experts. The fields of expertise are developmental psychology, music education, music technology, music therapy, software engineering, and Human Computer Interaction for Children. Moreover, an Ethical Advisory Board which has been established especially for the project UMSIC, constantly monitors ethical issues such as privacy and informed consent.

UMSIC Project rationale at the European level

One of the major challenges in European preschools and schools today is the inclusion of different learners. Among the most common types of learning disabilities are attention deficit disorders (ADHD) which are frequently accompanied by mental or behavioural disorders. Another challenge for inclusive education is the increasing migration and multicultural environment. Children with bi- or multicultural backgrounds may find themselves isolated from peers, both by language and culture.

In order to offer children better chances to integrate into the multicultural European society, the UMSIC project assumes that language and music are essential for building a cultural identity and for actively participating in various cultural environments. In addition, language and music are both powerful means to integrate into social groups.

UMSIC objectives

The UMSIC project is developing JamMo, a mobile time- and place-independent system that provides an interactive environment for children whilst also enabling them to communicate musically with other people such as peers and teachers. JamMo combines modern technology and effective educational principles to foster social inclusion and prevent marginalisation of children. In particular, UMSIC's objectives concern targeted groups of end-users, preschool (aged 3-6) and school-aged (6-12) children with an emphasis on those with moderate learning difficulties, those who are immigrant, or studying in unsupported integrated school classes.

