



EUROPEAN CLINICAL SPECIALIZATION FLUENCY DISORDERS

Working towards minimal standards for EU fluency specialists

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1. ECSF specialization course

- The European Clinical Specialization on Fluency Disorders (ECSF) is a one-year specialization course of 20 ECTS* credits (equivalent to 600 hours total study time).
- Developed by 10 EU universities from 7 countries (Belgium, Ireland, Malta, Sweden, Germany, Finland, The Netherlands) with EU funding (Erasmus curriculum development: 28095-IC-1-2005-1-BE-ERASMUS-MODUC-1).
- 2 year development ('06-'08) & implementation in 2008.

• The specialization course, compatible with current speech-language therapy (SLT) workload, consists of 2 weeks of intensive teaching and learning (Dublin & Antwerp) with in between home-follow-up sessions (mentor/coach sessions) at regular intervals during the year.

• Lecturing is combined with preparatory readings & home assignments. The specialized clinical training, under supervision of an approved fluency specialist, can start after intensive week 1. Evaluation is portfolio-based.

MODULE 1: Theoretical knowledge and specific therapeutic skills 12 ECTS*
 Phenomenology, causal and maintaining variables 3 ECTS
 Assessment, evaluation and diagnosis 3 ECTS
 Intervention 6 ECTS

MODULE 2: Clinical training and portfolio 8 ECTS*
 Clinical training (min. 120 hours) a maximum of 20 hours observation a minimum of 100 hours therapy
 Portfolio

* ECTS: European credit transfer system
 1 ECTS = 25-30 hours total study time

• Intensive weeks provide strong theoretical and practical components including development of clinical skills. Home assignments consist of critical reviews, academic and clinical-oriented papers, and evaluative exercises.

• The ECSF-coach guides/steers the learning process through face-to-face discussion, follows up and evaluates portfolio, and attends oral case presentation (min. 4 sessions).

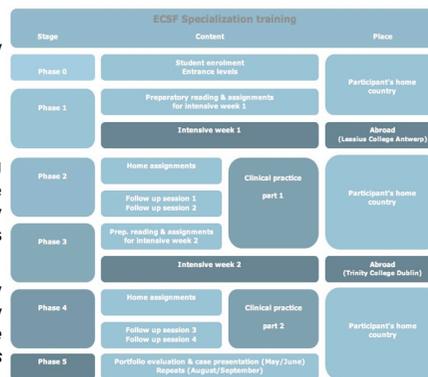
• The fluency specialist mentor is a formally approved by the ECSF consortium (min. 8 sessions).

• Portfolio consists of:

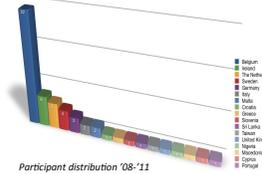
- a complete overview of the specialization process;
- 2 case studies + evidence (forms, questionnaires, therapy reports, videos,...);
- written reports of reflection activities;
- mentor reports; and
- continuous evaluation reports.

• Lecturers are all staff members of the participating EU institutes, were selected based on their expertise. All have numerous years of experience in the field of fluency disorders. In addition, international experts are invited as guest lecturers.

• Program evaluation comments: a) From participants: 'very good' to 'excellent', b) from an ASHA fluency specialist: "very suitable pedagogical approach", "It is simply a miracle to see the level of organization, content and commitment that has gone into this effort."



2. ECSF graduates



• 54 participants over 3 course cycles.

• Course graduates distinguish themselves by their outstanding ability, in-depth knowledge and expertise in the field of fluency disorders.

• ECSF graduates are now undertaking work in Europe and beyond.

• It is clear that further work on guidelines for minimal standards is needed.

3. Need for minimal standards

• Minimal standards are necessary for quality assurance of the certification of new specialists and the ongoing certification of former graduates.

• The development and establishment of 'preferred practice guidelines' relating to standards, covering ethical and professional elements, are integral to the ECSF-objectives.

• Completion of the first year of the ECSF training is the first important step in the certification process as a Fluency Specialist. For ECSF-graduates to become 'ECSF-recognized/registered fluency specialists', the following will be necessary:

- Additional clinical practice working with clients who stutter over a specific period of time;
- Continuing professional development activities (similar to CEUs);
- Participation in mentoring activities;
- Participation at intervision activities (e.g., discussion groups);
- Final evaluation by the ECSF committee.

4. Stages of development

• The proposed project for developing minimal standards consists of the following steps:

- Reviewing documents developed for specialists in other speech language pathology professional organizations, including ASHA, IALP, CPLOL, and a range of EU professional bodies.
- Reviewing minimal standards documents of other disciplines, including medicine and clinical psychology.
- A consultation process among the consortium members and other experts - including ASHA's Specialty Board on Fluency Disorders;
- Collecting and reviewing established documents of major national and international professional bodies;
- Drafting basic principles that need to guide the development of best practice and ethical guidelines and that transcend national boundaries;
- Preparing the first draft of the European specific minimum standards guidelines;
- These draft guidelines will be submitted for review to appropriate professional bodies;
- Further consultation among the ECSF consortium members;
- Finalization of the trans-European agreement on minimum standards.
- Implementation and ongoing evaluation of the minimum standards agreement.