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The Steria – Institut de France Foundation supports the Eysines Motor Education Institute through developing a communication system for children with motor handicaps

In Bordeaux, an innovative communication system has been developed at the Eysines Motor Education Institute for children with motor handicaps who are unable to speak. Developed with the financial support of the Steria – Institut de France Foundation and the help of a volunteer from Steria, this system enables children to create phrases using pictograms, and provides an artificial voice and a sign language module. Once the communication mode has been mastered with the institute, the children can then use it at home to continue to learn with their family. The computer code was developed as open source, and will be offered for national distribution via motor education institutes in France.

An innovative communication code

The principle of the tool is to provide the child with graphic symbols (pictograms) representing objects, verbs or actions, so that they can communicate with the outside world. Every child, according to their ability, will be able to make up their own communication code including 40 to 120 pictograms chosen from a thematic database. The pictograms managed within the thematic database offer a certain number of functions and can be used by several people.

This tool will enable a large number of children to choose the pictograms alone, create sentences, which will increase their language skills (vocabulary and syntactic structure) and meet their communication needs. Children who are unable to talk will be able to form grids in order to create their own communication code with the help of professionals.

The tool also includes a voice synthesiser and a sign language module (video recording of gestures). It has been tested for two months with a child and it is now available so that the medical team can use it either in pairs with an ergotherapist and a child, and also comes in a more fun version for a child alone.

Mrs. Delestrade, an ergotherapist, says: *“The software is easy to use both for the children and for the tutor and the parents. It offers two advantages: its ability to evolve according to the progress of each child, and its mobility, because it can be downloaded wherever the children are.”*

A project that has the support of volunteers from Steria

The communication code is the result of a collaborative effort with a team of speech therapists and ergotherapists at the Eysines Motor Education Institute; it was developed by an engineering student and a person on a professional re-orientation contract, and managed by a volunteer from Steria.

Jean-Marc Ledoux, commercial engineer, computer analyst and volunteer for the project says: *"I particularly appreciated, thanks to this project, making use of my computer skills for children in difficulty, while providing my support, and looking at my profession in a different light. This tool will give children comfort in their everyday life, help their learning and provide new opportunities to communicate with their entourage."* Jean-Marc intends to come up with a distribution method (Internet site or CD) so that the parents can install the product at home and so that the children can continue to use it to communicate with their friends and family.

About the Institut de France (www.institut-de-france.fr)

The Institut de France groups together five academies: the Académie Française, the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, the Académie des Sciences, the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques. It was founded on 25 October 1795 and is currently chaired by Chancellor Gabriel de Broglie.

About Steria (www.steria.com)

As an end-to-end IT services provider, Steria offers its customers (European companies and public authorities) services that combine functional and technological expertise in a bid to align information systems with strategic objectives and run the associated services.

The pertinence of this offer, focusing on dynamic markets -public services, banking, insurance, telecommunications, utilities, transport- is confirmed by the Group's organic growth and profitability, which are among the highest in the sector. Steria booked a revenue of €1.3 billion and an operating margin of 7.1% in 2006.

Steria's corporate culture, which is based on values of simplicity, creativity, independence, respect and openness, is reflected in:

- its ability to undertake complex projects and deliver measurable results to its customers;
- the commitment of its 10,000 employees to developing new services and successfully carrying out their assignments;
- an organisational structure that combines decentralisation (for maintaining close customer relationships) with networking (to encourage the development of synergies and feedback with partners and customers);
- the involvement of employee shareholders in strategic decision-making processes (excluding the founder's stake, 16% of the Group's capital is owned by the employees, making them Steria's number one shareholder).

Steria draws on these qualities to transform technological innovation into value for progress.

Steria is listed on Euronext Paris, Eurolist (Compartment B).

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