



**IM-TWIN: from Intrinsic Motivations
to Transitional Wearable INTelligent
companions for autism spectrum disorder**
a European-funded project

Press Conference
Deliverable 6.16



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Consortium: Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (ITA), Universiteit Utrecht (NLD), Centre de Recherches Interdisciplinaires (FRA), Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza (ITA), Plux-Wireless Biosignals S.A. (PRT).

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Acronyms of partners

CNR-ISTC	Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Istituto di Scienze e Tecnologie della Cognizione (Italy)
UU	Universiteit Utrecht (The Netherlands)
CRI	Centre de Recherches Interdisciplinaires (France)
LA SAPIENZA	Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza (Italy)
PLUX	Plux - Wireless Biosignals S.A. (Portugal)

Table of contents

1. Overview of the deliverable	4
2. Press release content	4
3. Dissemination of the press release	6

1. Overview of the deliverable

This deliverable presents the press release content, prepared by the partners to announce the completion of the IM-TWIN project. Last section provides details about the dissemination of the press note through the press office.

2. Press release content

“Reaching out to Autism through the Use of Novel Technology”

The European project IM-TWIN (from Intrinsic Motivations to Transitional Wearable INtelligent companions for autism spectrum disorder) ended in October 2023. The 3-year project, supported by 5 international partners, developed new interactive technologies, also based on Artificial Intelligence, to support early intervention in autism spectrum disorders.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the global incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is estimated to be approximately 1 in 100 children worldwide. One way to support these children originated in the European project "IM-TWIN: from Intrinsic Motivations to Transitional Wearable INtelligent companions for autism spectrum disorder". The 3-year project, which ran from November 2020 to October 2023, involved five European partners from Italy, Portugal, France and the Netherlands.

As explained by the project coordinator Gianluca Baldassarre, from the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies (National Research Council of Italy, ISTC-CNR), *“The project aimed to create a technological system, called ‘IM-TWIN’, to support neurodevelopmental therapists and neuropsychiatrists in the early treatment of Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD), with particular reference to ASD”*.

The IM-TWIN system is formed of 3 components: innovative, interactive soft toys that look like animals, called ‘*Transitional Wearable Companions (TWC)*’, a wearable sensorised T-shirt for the detection of a child’s physiological parameters, and sensorised camera glasses, for the detection of eye contact between child and therapist.

Beste Ozcan, researcher from ISTC-CNR and inventor of the TWCs, explains that *“smart soft toys can be used to stimulate the curiosity and engagement of autistic children. For example, the TWC “Panda PlusMe” can produce gratifying sensory responses, such as coloured lights, amusing sounds and mild vibrations when its paws are caressed. Another example is the TWC “Octopus X-8” that is able to produce responses that are different when its tentacles are touched by the child versus the therapist. These features allow the therapist to set up play activities that train a child’s social competencies: e.g. imitation, eye contact, joint attention and turn-taking”*.

PLUX Wireless Biosignals, a Portuguese partner company, highlights that *“the sensorised T-shirt was designed to collect physiological data in very young ASD children. In particular, it allows the detection of galvanic skin response, heart rate, skin temperature, and body motion --*

all parameters related to the stress level of the subject". In the pilot test, the T-shirt proved to be able to collect reliable data on children involved in therapeutic play activities. In this regard, the researchers headed by Egon L. van den Broek from Utrecht University in the Netherlands, developed an innovative algorithm, called "fast Continuous Wavelet Transformation - fCWT". The fCWT outperforms currently existing algorithms in extracting meaningful patterns from intrinsically noisy physiological signals. After this processing, the data can potentially be used to train an Artificial Intelligence (AI) to 'understand' the affective states of autistic children during the therapeutic activities. These states can be challenging to comprehend in ASD.

Finally, the sensorised camera glasses were developed to use AI and Computer Vision to reliably detect eye contact between therapist and child. This behaviour is crucial for monitoring social engagement in ASD children.

All experimental activities involving ASD and neurotypical children were performed respectively at the University of Rome *Sapienza*, Department of Human Neuroscience, Section of Child Neuropsychiatry, supervised by Vincenzo Guidetti and Carla Sogos, and at a team headed by Kevin O'Regan at the Learning Planet Institute, in Paris.

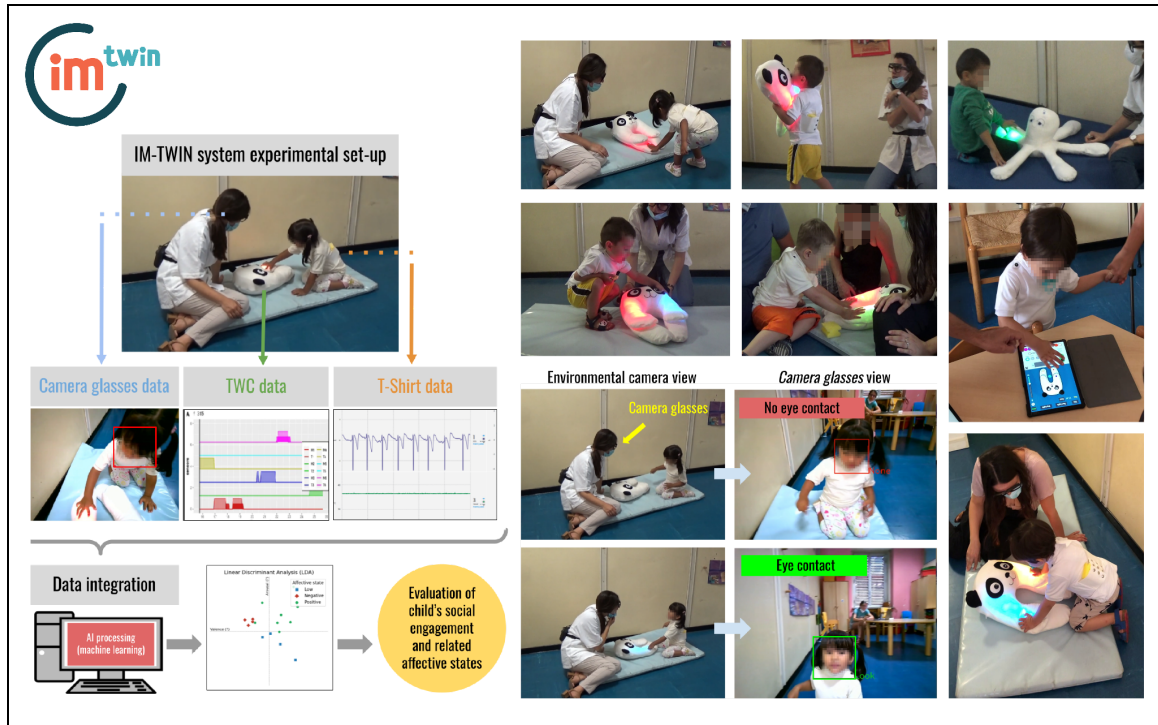
As remarked by Gianluca Baldassarre "*the IM-TWIN system represents an innovative new technological tool built for ASD early intervention, that can help the therapist to monitor and stimulate children through play-like activities, thus facilitating the development of social skills*".

Dissemination material:

- website: <https://im-twin.eu/>
- brochure: [IM-TWIN booklet](#)
- promotional video: [IM-TWIN project technological outcomes](#)

For information:

- Gianluca Baldassarre, gianluca.baldassarre@istc.cnr.it, coordinator of the project Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies, ISTC-CNR



3. Dissemination of the press release

The Italian version of the press note was released by the CNR press office on date 7 December 2023, and is available at the following link: www.cnr.it/it/nota-stampa/n-12406 (fig. 1).

The English version of the press note is available on the project website at the following link: <https://im-twin.eu/press-kit/>.

CRI released the press note on the website of the Learning Planet Institute at the following link:

www.learningplanetinstitute.org/2023/12/13/press-release-reaching-out-to-autism-through-the-use-of-novel-technology-the-im-twin-project/ (fig. 2).

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"Science and Innovation Slovenia - Italy": al via il programma di cooperazione scientifica tra Cnr e Jozef Stefan Institute
Nota stampa 05/12/2023
Si è svolto ieri a Roma, presso la sede centrale del Consiglio nazionale delle ricerche, l'incontro bilaterale "Science and Innovation Slovenia - Italy", nel corso del quale è stato siglato il programma operativo di cooperazione scientifica per il biennio 2024-2025 tra il Cnr e il Jozef Stefan Institute (JSI), la principale istituzione di ricerca slovena

Plù Libri Plù Libert: il Cnr alla Fiera nazionale della piccola e media editoria
Evento 06-10/12/2023
L'Unità Editoria del Consiglio nazionale delle ricerche partecipa a "Plù Libri Plù Libert", la Fiera nazionale della piccola e media editoria, promossa e organizzata dall'Associazione italiana editori (Aie), con la direzione editoriale a cura di Chiara Valerio, che si svolge a Roma dal 6 al 10 dicembre 2023, presso il "Roma Convention Center La Navoia"

Il meccanismo che porta allo sviluppo di pensieri suicidi in adolescenza
Comunicato stampa 06/12/2023
Secondo uno studio del gruppo di ricerca MJSA del Cnr-Irpps, i pensieri suicidi coinvolgono oggi circa la metà degli adolescenti italiani. Il gruppo ha indagato il meccanismo del loro sviluppo, dimostrando che i disagi psicologici che li alimentano non costituiscono l'origine del problema, rintracciata, invece, in particolari dinamiche di interazione sociale e in specifiche caratteristiche socio-demografiche. Lo studio, pubblicato sulla rivista Scientific Reports di Nature, fornisce risultati utili alla comprensione del problema e alla progettazione di interventi mirati a sostegno del benessere giovanile

Ecco come reagiscono i ghiacciai dell'Himalaya al global warming
Comunicato stampa 04/12/2023
Un team di ricerca internazionale guidato dall'Istituto di scienze polari e dall'Istituto di ricerca sulle acque del Cnr ha scoperto un fenomeno sorprendente: l'aumento delle temperature globali ha portato i ghiacciai dell'Himalaya a raffreddare sempre più l'aria a contatto con la superficie ghiacciata, mitigando a livello locale le temperature. Lo studio, realizzato in collaborazione con l'Institute of Science and Technology Austria, è stato appena pubblicato su Nature Geoscience e spiega come tale raffreddamento, riscontrato in tutta la catena himalayana, potrebbe preservare il permafrost e gli ecosistemi d'alta quota

Pnrr: una visione del futuro
Video Cnr WebTv dicembre 2023
Il workshop, che si è tenuto a Roma il 5 e 6 dicembre 2023 presso il Teatro di Villa Torlonia, ha avuto come obiettivo un confronto con la comunità scientifica di riferimento in vista della scrittura e approvazione del Programma Nazionale di Ricerche in Antartide 2024-2026

Al via il secondo bando rivolto ad enti parco e aree marine protette per il finanziamento di progetti innovativi
Nota stampa 05/12/2023
Dopo un primo finanziamento che ha permesso di assegnare oltre 9 milioni di euro a 57 progetti in tutta Italia, il Consiglio nazionale delle ricerche -

imtwin
Nuove tecnologie interattive per l'intervento precoce nei disturbi dello spettro autistico nei bambini: il progetto europeo "im-Twin"
Nota stampa 07/12/2023
Si è concluso il progetto europeo triennale "im-Twin", coordinato dall'Istituto di scienze e tecnologie della cognizione del Consiglio nazionale delle ricerche di Roma (Cnr-Istc) e condotto con cinque partner europei da Italia, Portogallo, Francia e Paesi Bassi. Il progetto ha permesso di sviluppare nuove tecnologie interattive per supportare l'intervento precoce nei disturbi dello spettro autistico nei bambini

Figure 1: screenshot of the CNR webpage on date 7 December 2023. The press note about IM-TWIN is placed at the lower right corner.

The screenshot displays the Learning Planet Institute website. At the top left is the Learning Planet Institute logo. A navigation menu includes links for 'Vous êtes ?', 'Nos actualités', 'Ce en quoi nous croyons', 'Ce que nous faisons', 'Qui sommes-nous ?', and 'Comment agir avec nous ?'. The main header features a large image of a child with the text: 'Press Release – “Reaching out to Autism through the Use of Novel Technology: the IM-TWIN project”'. A date '13/12/2023' and category 'Education, Press, Research' are shown below. A breadcrumb trail reads 'Accueil > Actualités > Press Release – “Reaching out to Autism through the Use of Novel Technology: the IM-TWIN project”'. The main content area contains a paragraph about the IM-TWIN project, followed by a PDF viewer showing a document with the same title and date (7 December 2023). The PDF content includes the project description and a WHO statistic on ASD.

Figure 2: screenshot of the Learning Planet Institute webpage, where the press release can be downloaded.