

Autimelody GoMad Report

Autimelody was selected for the 2023 Go Make A Difference award with Alice Haywood and Iva Milas as project coordinators.

The goal of Autimelody as a project was to build an app that utilises music as a universal language to facilitate communication between carers and individuals with a strong mental disability. Through personal experience Alice Haywood noticed the potential that music had for communication, seeing how simple tunes could open up a pathway of communication, and act as a simple tool for non-violent communication. Alongside roommate and close friend Iva, they decided to embark on this journey and create something tangible to make a difference in this sector.

With the help of the GoMAD grant the team was able to make the first demo of our app and turn towards our future clients for crucial feedback. As enthusiastic as Iva and Alice were to programme the app themselves, they noticed they were out of their depth and relied on a portion of the GoMAD budget to seek exterior help. The first version of the app is currently available on www.autimelody.com and available in 4 different languages, a tribute to international aspirations. This demo consists of 24 Audigrams divided into 4 categories; personal care, activities, outings and routine. Each Audigram had music composed by Iva Milas, and the pictogram drawn by Alice Haywood, however it is their collaboration that ensured the final Audigram.

This grant opened up a world of possibilities as with this first demo Alice went on to win 'The Frisian student startup competition- Enterprijs' to continue Autimelody. With a bigger budget, and even bigger plans, Alice and Iva are now working hard on creating a version of Autimelody set to go out into the market in 2025. With hopeful collaboration with regional conservatories for music, and centres of entrepreneurship to learn about how to make Autimelody reach its full potential, the hope is Autimelody will soon be able to make a difference in the world of care for people with mental disabilities.

Links to Articles about Autimelody:

<https://www.rug.nl/cf/campus-fryslan/bloggen/inside-autimelody-with-alice-haywood?lang=en>

<https://lc.nl/economie/Muziekapp-Autimelody-wint-Enterprijs-29089065.html>

Project Overview and reflection

How do you think you have made a difference?

We would like to think that we have sparked a change and a discussion in the field of care, especially for those with mental disabilities. Although Autimeldoy has not yet gone to market like we had originally anticipated, the conversations we have had with carers, professionals, business leaders, friends and family along the way had led us and said people to take the time to reflect. Thankfully, the difference we have already made is not the end, as we keep putting work into Autimelody the change we make will only be amplified. We still hope to be able to make the lives of cares, families and moreover patients more comfortable.

What have you achieved?

Looking back we had high hopes and goals for Autimelody, and we still do, but we have had to revise the time-line along the way. What we originally thought would take a summer, took well over a year to accomplish, and we are still working! We made a demo like we anticipated including 24 carefully curated Audigrams. Then, although it was not in the original plans, we have ensured that Autimelody has the start-up title and is working its way towards a company in order to continue making a difference on a wider scale.

What are you proud of?

Something that never deterred us was a setback, we started Autimleody with 3 different programmers and accumulated months of delay before finally having our finished demo. Then after talking to clients, we realised the way Autimelody was currently set up, was not going to work for its users, so back to the drawing board we went! We still have the same heart and drive to make Autimelody come to life post UWC that we had writing the project proposal in our room in Duino over a year ago.

The enduring successes of the project?

The project itself may be the enduring success because it is not the end! The GoMAD grant gave us the push to start this project and build a demo. From here we were able to pitch it and enter competitions for more funding, and now we are applying for subsidies to ensure that it can continue to flourish. Without this first leap of faith from the GoMAD team, we would not be where we are today with a demo made, a second version on the way, newspaper articles writtens and more ideas and hopes for the future. Although we have not yet revolutionised the way the healthcare system works for individuals with strong mental disabilities, we are working towards impacting the current system.

How has the project made a difference to the people you were aiming to help?

Although our target groups may have not felt the full effect of the difference we are striving to make, we spent time talking to carers of various facilities, and parents of children with disabilities that Autimelody aims to help. In those conversations and interactions, we opened up a conversation about a different approach and thinking outside the box. Not only did this teach us a lot, and help us pivot Autimelody in the 'right' direction, I think it was beneficial to the people we spoke to, to hear about projects such as Autimelody and see young people striving to make a difference in this way.

How has the project made a difference for you and the project team?

Alice: I would never have envisioned myself as an entrepreneur to begin with. This has pushed me so far out of my comfort zone, and allow me to discover new passions, aspirations, and connections along the way. It has strengthened my belief in myself and showed me why I should not shoot for the stars. I am now in an incubator for Autimelody, and learn every day what it means to build up a business, and it's not easy! So I am learning resilience, and decision-making, project leading, and so much more! I think the impact Autimelody has had on me has fundamentally changed me and I cannot wait to see what more it brings me.

Iva: I think for me it changed the way I perceive apps. It might sound silly, but I genuinely did not know just how many aspects go into making an app and how much effort it would take for just one step. On the more musical side, I think this project made me explore the technical side of music and its ability to make a change. I was used to music as a form of expression before this project, yet now I have begun to see it as an effective form of communication, sometimes even more than words. I think this is because of the tone of certain melodies and their ability to not be conveyed by words but by feeling. I also developed a big understanding of working with a partner who is also a friend and the ability to set a professional tone so when talking and critically analysing steps in our project, there are no personal feelings involved.

Where was the money spent?

The budget was spent mostly on travel for us to meet in person to be able to work and collaborate on this together during the summer months.

The second part of the budget was spent on app development and paying our software developer. He was in charge of developing the app and its functionality with the guidelines, design and aesthetics we created. Throughout the development process, he was quick to respond and we managed to develop our first demo through it.

What lessons have you learnt from the project?

Speaking for the both of us, we both feel that we have learnt a lot regarding project development and management. We learnt about the delays when working in a collaborative project, have learnt a lot more about setting up a business, collaborating with people, how healthcare systems work, the life of a carer, musicology the list feels endless. Yet I think the biggest takeaway is that there are so many ways to make a difference, and that there are so many skills combined to set something up such as Autimelody, and hence that to make a difference in the world you do not always need to be a human rights lawyer, a red cross medic, or a politician, but that all different skills can make a difference at their own scale and in their own way.

What would you do differently?

We first built the app then did more customer and end-user research, which is now leading us to the second version of the app. Hence, if we were to start again, I would take the time to understand our future clients, their problems, needs and more rather than just diving into a product, but at the same time I immensely value the way we did it and the mistakes we made that allowed us to make this learning journey.