



Enhancing Intercultural Learning in European Enterprises

Newsletter

May 2015

Who is EILEEN?

EILEEN stands for Enhancing Intercultural Learning in European Enterprises. EILEEN is a 2-year project (01.09.2014 - 31.08.2016) funded by the ERASMUS+ Programme. The project seeks to promote intercultural competences and a welcoming culture in European enterprises.

The Europe Union is making significant efforts to eliminate the barriers to labour mobility. However, most of the enterprises in European countries do not necessarily have the essential intercultural know-how for receiving employers with a different cultural background. At the same time, often the foreign employees are not ready to face the challenge of working in a different country, and encounter difficulties in identifying the new cultural paradigms, accepting the differences and acquiring cultural knowledge.

Given this context, the EILEEN project team will develop training modules on intercultural topics both for multipliers in European enterprises and for young people that are ready to do an internship abroad. Both groups will be trained on how to cope with cultural diversity at the workplace. After the preparatory training, the young people will do an internship in one of the participating enterprises. The competences (e.g. intercultural, entrepreneurial and mentoring competences) acquired by both groups will be validated and documented through the innovative LEVEL5 methodology developed by the network REVEAL (www.reveal-eu.org), aimed to promote, visualise and validate informal and non-formal learning.

Where is EILEEN?



EILEEN has successfully concluded the first big task and finished the EILEEN study on intercultural competences.

In the first project phase the EILEEN team carried out a study to obtain a detailed view of interculturality in the workplace throughout Europe. The perceptions, interest and available tools regarding interculturality were investigated in a total of nine participating countries.

Subsequently, a quantitative questionnaire gave insight into the perceptions in each of the regions concerning the intercultural momentum, i.e. the perception of the own behavioural pattern as well as of those from other regions we meet in professional practices. Based on some intercultural statements, the reactions of people to cultural differences were investigated. Finally, the intercultural competences deemed important to deal with people from other cultures were identified for each of the European regions.

These results were more deeply investigated through qualitative interviews carried out with 12-15 CEO's, HR professionals or team/project leaders in each country. This gave a better insight into why certain intercultural statements were chosen and what the perceived benefits of intercultural competences for the companies are. All together these will help EILEEN partners identify training needs and develop appropriate and relevant training modules.



Results

All nine regions have to cope with increasing amounts of workers with a foreign origin. Spain is the main exception as it has become more of an emigrant country because of the economic crisis. In all regions, a foreign origin is likely to be a disadvantage for employability, mainly due to practical problems such as language barriers.

Some countries have developed a set of measures to stimulate interculturality such as the welcoming culture in Germany or diversity labels in France. However, these do not always help the most vulnerable groups of migrants such as unskilled workers. Furthermore, positive quota have the risk of increasing cultural tensions.

While practical solutions to everyday problems or general training courses on interculturality are widespread, no tools for the measurement and validation of interculturality and intercultural competences exist.

Despite the general idea that cultural differences within the EU are a thing of the past, our quantitative survey confirms that each region has its own set of preconceptions. These stereotypes are even present in the regions themselves. The North and West are seen as more time-efficient and well-prepared, possessing a more dominant leadership style. However, on a personal level they are less open and less hospitable. The South and East are seen as less efficient and professional and more compromise oriented towards others but with less democratic decision making within the company and less gender equality. However, they are also seen as more open and hospitable. Within these two subdivisions, each region attributes more positive properties to themselves than to their partner region.



The nine EILEEN partner regions

In terms of intercultural statements (based on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) organised into six “stages” of increasing sensitivity to difference: denial, defence, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, integration), acceptance is the most common attitude towards interculturality, followed by adaptation and minimization. Denial is much less frequent and is mostly present in over-fifties and people from the North.

Open-mindedness, active listening and understanding diversity are seen as the most important intercultural competences. There are only very small interregional differences in these priorities.

From the gathered data can be derived that only a minority of the companies has a means to perform an intercultural competence evaluation at the moment. Those that do use their own methods as standardized tools are lacking. Nearly 2/3's of respondents, however, indicate their interest in such a tool.

The qualitative interviews confirm the quantitative results and give some deeper insight. For example, the reasons given for choosing the statement linked to minimization are mostly more applicable to acceptance, re-enforcing its status as the most prominent attitude throughout Europe.

Over all regions, the interest in tools for measuring and validating interculturality was confirmed, with a preference for (short-term) intercultural trainings and workshops or the external assessment of competence development and tools for self-assessment.

Please find all results of the study on our website:

<http://eileen-org.eu>



Project Partners



BUPNET

Coordination

BUPNET GmbH, Göttingen, Germany
www.bupnet.eu

apricot

Apricot, Loughborough, UK
www.apricot-ltd.co.uk

CATRO

CATRO Bulgaria EOOD, Sofia, Bulgaria
www.catro.com



CECE, Madrid, Spain
www.cece.es



INSUP, Bordeaux, France
www.insup.org



OCEAN, Athens, Greece
www.oceanorg.gr



Materahub, Matera, Italy
www.materahub.com



Time4Society, Mechelen, Belgium
www.time4society.be



Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação

SPI, Porto, Portugal
www.spi.pt



Co-funded by the
 Erasmus+ Programme
 of the European Union

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.