



Acting Recommendations for applying the EILEEN Approach

Enhancing Inter-cultural Learning in European Enterprises

English Language Version



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The 'EILEEN' Acting Recommendations

Introduction

EU is making significant efforts to eliminate the barriers to labour mobility, both by integrating the legislative basis and upgrading systems to allow more jobseekers to be aware of vacancies in other EU countries and to make it easier for employers to find people with the right qualifications and experience to fill their vacancies. However, most of the enterprises in European countries do not necessarily have the essential intercultural 'know-how' for receiving employees 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

The main objective of the EILEEN project (09/2014-09/2016) was to explore the obstacles hampering the mobility among European countries in terms of intercultural barriers and set up tools to overcome them and to become a truly European enterprise with a welcoming culture. For this purpose, the EILEEN partners developed an approach to enhance and validate intercultural competences in European enterprises.

The EILEEN approach consists of comprehensive training via the EILEEN online platform complemented with some face to face input, a learning project that encouraged participants to further develop their intercultural competences in a real-time business environment during internships abroad, and the validation of the newly acquired competences at the end of the training period using the innovative LEVEL5 system for validating informal and non formal learning.

This approach was applied and tested in all involved partner countries during a practical phase. Each partner reported on their findings and lessons learnt which are summarised in an overarching European report. It is available for download on the EILEEN website (www.eileen-eu.org).



The EILEEN approach is now ready to be implemented by all organisations interested in receiving interns or workers from abroad, and by young people interested in seeking new job opportunities in a foreign country. The approach is very flexible and can also be used and adapted by other interested parties.

So, how can you go about implementing EILEEN in a successful and effective way? In the following paragraphs you will find a collection of concrete recommendations for applying the EILEEN approach.

Our Recommendations

Based on their experience of piloting both the learning resources and facilitating the learning projects, the EILEEN partners draw up a number of recommendations for applying the EILEEN approach. These are grouped according to the target groups – enterprises, young people or both – and to topic areas – intercultural learning and validation with LEVEL5.

Intercultural learning

For enterprises and organisations interested in receiving foreign workers

- Prepare for implementation of the approach by talking about the opportunities of interculturalism and its value in the workplace to overcome potential reluctance;
- Introduce and create awareness for informal learning and for the intercultural dimension; the opportunities and pitfalls for collaboration in European enterprises;
- Highlight the benefits of validation as a holistic way to strategically planning competence developments in a team, e.g. define which competences are needed, which are missing, how can we develop them, validate the learning;
- Make a realistic estimation of the time needed for training, practical phase and validation;
- Promote an exchange amongst colleagues – exchanging ideas on ways to improve competences is very valuable;
- Publish your interest in taking an intern from abroad on respective websites, e.g. insert your organisation as host organisation for the European EYE programme, Erasmus for Entrepreneurs (<http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/>);
- Identify staff members that are interested in becoming a mentor for future interns;
- Facilitate the process, at least in the first phase, when the mentor and the intern meet for the first time and start relationship building;
- Make yourself familiar with the culture of the country your intern comes from to better understand their cultural context and behaviours;
- Set up sustainable structures for welcoming a foreign workforce.

For young people seeking job opportunities abroad

- Seek an opportunity to take up an internship in a European enterprise to broaden your horizon, gain professional experience, get new perspectives, learn or improve another language, gain flexibility, reduce prejudices, find a job, etc.
- Identify funding schemes for your internship abroad;
- Prepare yourself and gather background information in order to know what to expect;
- Make yourself familiar with the culture of your host country and the receiving company;
- Learn about different business cultures through the range of intercultural learning units on the EILEEN platform;
- Plan your internship as a ‘Learning Project’ and reflect on the competences you want to develop and enhance;

- Reflect on and assess your competence development by means of the LEVEL5 validation system; collecting and recording ~~and get an~~ evidence of your learning outcomes.

For both groups

- It is important for learners to receive an introduction to the EILEEN approach and become familiar with the toolkit before commencing the online learning programme. This is best achieved via a tutor led face to face pre-course training session.
- Your most effective learning progress will be achieved through observation, reflection and experience; in particular by finding opportunities to discuss different cultural approaches and behaviours with people from other countries and cultures – communication is key to dealing with cultural diversity.

Validation with LEVEL5

- Use LEVEL5 as a reflection and assessment tool for understanding and assessing your intercultural competences;
- Make yourself familiar with the LEVEL5 system with its five steps and its 3-dimensional approach;
- Make yourself familiar with the repository of competences that was set up for EILEEN;
- Choose one or more competences that you would want to improve through your Learning Project. Identifying, in advance, the competences that you wish to improve, leads to a richer and more fulfilling experience;
- Read carefully the reference system of the competence(s) you have chosen before you start rating yourself;
- Rate yourself in all three dimensions by ticking one level per knowledge/skills/attitude at the beginning and at the end of your learning project;
- Think of concrete examples from your learning project that illustrate and reason your ratings and fill them in the respective fields in the grids;
- In the first instance use the reference systems provided on the platform as ‘warm-up’ before you actually access the LEVEL5 software where you can insert all your data, ratings and reasoning;
- Discuss these ratings, and the reasons for them, with your mentor/colleague/HR manager – maybe they can contribute with other examples;

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