CT▼
Complex Toolbox for VOLUNTEERS

Preparing and Running International Projects

e-Course:

Platform for Volunteers to learn how to prepare and run international projects

Index

About the project

CTV "Complex Toolbox for Volunteers on preparing and running international projects" aims to develop the skills of volunteers in **planning** and **managing European** and **international projects**, to enhance their **digital skills**, **intercultural competence**, their sense of **initiative** and **entrepreneurship**. Volunteer organisations, particularly those that are not part of international projects, will therefore be able to increase their capacity, **gain new sources of funding**, run more **effective operations** and establish **new international networks**. Local and regional adult education, and vocational education and training providers will be able to diversify their offer by including the resources developed into their educational curricula.

Objectives:

✓ **To improve and extend** the supply of high quality learning opportunities tailored to the needs of volunteers, especially the ones not involved in international projects.

✓ **To increase** the capacity of volunteer organisations to operate transnationally, and to develop and reinforce European networks.

✓ **To develop** digital learning materials and tools, and support the effective use of digital technologies in education and training.

✓ **To disseminate** widely the results in order to reach as many volunteers as possible, and volunteer organisations throughout the European Union.

Learning Unit 1

CATEGORY

Defining Internationalisation

SHORT DESCRIPTION

In this unit we will provide a definition of internationalisation, we will analyse why you should internationalise your organization, and we will also answer the question: Does everyone benefit from internationalisation?

TRAINING CONTENT

A definition of internationalisation

The internationalisation of organizations, enterprises and other types of associations is a complex process, which can be explained from many different points of view depending on the context given. Therefore, providing a simple and easy to understand definition can be quite challenging.

An initial approach to a definition of this phenomenon could be the following: The internationalisation of organizations/enterprises is the result of the implementation of several different strategies which take into account the resources and capacities of the given organisation/enterprise, as well as its own opportunities (and threats) in its international setting, with the objective of moving its activity, either totally or partially, to that international setting, generating different kinds of flows (knowledge, resources, financial...) between the countries involved. Or, in other words, to go global.

Source:
https://pixabay.com/phot
os/hand-world-ball-keep-
child-earth-644145/

This set of international operations leads the way to the establishment of different links between that enterprise/organisation and international markets, but this does not mean that non-profit organisations, as we will see next, are outside of this reality: Considering their goals, related to solidarity and international cooperation, such organisations are actually really prone to growing inside their own international "markets". This growth is explained because of the high demand of those kind of services nowadays existing in underdeveloped countries.

Therefore, if we focus on non-profit organisations such as voluntary organisations, going international is actually growing exponentially through the creation of international links and the implementation of their activity in other countries and situations, developing specific projects either alone or with other partners in those countries. This will increase the reach of its actions and provide access to more resources and funds, as well as visibility in an international setting, increasing awareness about their field of work. Onn the other hand, costs will rise as a result.. The perfect balance between those extra costs and the extra funds obtained will be the key to success when internationalising your organisation, as we will see in the following units.

Why should you internationalise?

Nowadays, the phenomenon of globalization is a reality that a lot of enterprises around the world are facing. Their traditional production and commercialization processes are now being questioned by this new reality, and the unstoppable search for more productive and efficient models inevitably leads them to foreign markets. But this reality, notwithstanding, does not only affect commercial enterprises and businesses: Non-profit organizations and other types of associations are currently facing the same challenges, looking for better ways to communicate and increase their effectiveness and efficiency, no matter what their target is or what specific field they work in.

In the last decade, the importance of this kind of organization has risen. However,, in most cases, this development has been based purely on social criteria. Despite that, the economic pressure nowadays suffered by these non-profit organizations has also increased, which is caused by their funders demanding a more efficient use of resources and more transparency in their finances. In other words, this kind of activities, while being non-profit, need to be conducted in the most efficient way possible, assuring a correct use of the resources provided.

An efficient approach to the funds and other resources donated to an organization can be useful, as well, to increase the reliance and attention that this organization has within society. This is a crucial factor, as it will help to increase the engagement of more donors and resources and to decrease the dependency that most of these organisations usually have with public funds and aid.

So the question is: why should you internationalise your organisation? We can summarize the information given thus far as following:

- To gain visibility internationally, increasing social awareness in society of the specific topic attached by your organisation.
- To increase the number of potential donors and their engagement with the purpose of the organization.

Photo by Perry Grone on Unsplash

- To increase the impact of your organisation, reaching out to more people needing your work in other countries of your international setting.
- To get to know other organisations and associations with similar or related purposes (creating your own network), and thus gaining access to collaborations.
- To increase potential income of funds and other resources.
- To obtain greater profitability of the use of those funds and resources.
- To acquire prestige and recognition internationally.
- To reduce costs.

As we will see later, with internationalisation come several benefits, but also some risks. This is one of the most important issues to be aware of when thinking about going international. This topic will be discussed on the Learning Unit "Benefits and risks of internationalisation".

Does everyone benefit from internationalisation?
To answer this question, we need to identify the main stakeholders involved in the process:

Organisations: They are the key point of internationalisation, and the success or   of that process depends almost exclusively on them. As previously discussed, internationalisation brings several considerable benefits to organisations, such as gaining visibility, reaching out to more donors, gaining access to more resources, developing their activity in other countries and therefore reaching wider target groups, increasing the efficiency of their use of resources and funds, acquiring recognition and reducing costs.

Photo by Marvin Meyer on Unsplash

However, it has to be considered that internationalisation brings extra costs and management procedures for the organisation. Non-Profit organisations usually base their funding on donors and small funders, that selflessly provide their small contributions to the organisation. This can also be noticed by the dependency of these organisations on volunteers. With this in mind, creating projects in other countries normally needs prior funding, related to the search and engagement of new donors and funders of that country. The management of those funds will also increase, both in workload and costs. We will discuss these risks in the following units.

Volunteers: One of the most interesting consequences of internationalisation is the possibility of creating a network between different organisations of different countries, sharing knowledge with them and learning about thei approaches to our field of work. In this respect, volunteers play a huge role: New people from other countries have the chance to get engaged with the organisation and its social purposes, and both new and current volunteers of the organisation can share an international experience, getting to know each other.

Photo by Cristi Tohatan on Unsplash

Another important aspect of achieving an international setting with your organisation is the attractiveness that it will gain for new volunteers: An organisation that develops different projects in different countries, with the possibility of engaging in those projects internationally and working with people from different countries is incredibly attractive for new volunteers. Also, the recognition and visibility that your organisation will have when going international will also help to both increase the engagement of current volunteers and increase the chances of gainining new people for the organisation.

Target group: Each organisation works with a different target group and has a unique and distinctive approach to it. With internationalisation, the possibility to reach out to more people to take benefit from your selfless work becomes a reality, increasing its number exponentially. Sharing your knowledge and collaborating with different partners of your international setting also provides the chance to share your target groups, and for them to benefit from that collaborative work.

Another important consideration is that with proper internationalisation development comes an increase in funds and resources, which is translated almost immediately into a better and more useful work with your current (and new) target groups, no matter what specific sector of the population it is or the purpose of your organisation. With those extra resources, more activities can be conducted, an improvement of your installations can be achieved, and even more dissemination and promotion activities can be arranged.

Photo by Josh Appel on Unsplash

Donors and other funders: Lastly, for donors and other funders, internationalisation brings them recognition and confidence with your organisation. Seeing how their small donations are converted into big projects, not only in their countries of residence but also in others', with the collaboration of different organisations like the one they are currently supporting, that share common goals and purposes, brings donors a feeling of satisfaction and joy, as well as improving their engagement with your organisation and its purpose.

On the other hand, disseminating your activities and the purpose of your organisation in other countries helps to increase the number of donors and funders to your projects, as more people get to know your work and organisation. Furthermore, being an international organisation attracts much more selfless funders, who will contribute in acquiring the resources, installations and materials needed for your activities.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=3202468 – The Internationalisation Process of Enterprises (SP)

- http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/agc/v24n1/v24n1a19.pdf - The main conceptual approaches explaining company internationalisation (SP)

- https://upcommons.upc.edu/bitstream/handle/2099/9366/victoria%20rodriguez.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y - Managing risk and knowledge in the internationalisation process

- http://orga.blog.unq.edu.ar/wp-content/uploads/foro_deluni/INTCI_Canals_2_Unidad_1.pdf - The Enterprise Internationalisation (SP)

- https://core.ac.uk/reader/86443250 - A Theoretical approach to Business Internationalization (SP)

- https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/646/64615176009.pdf - Globalisation and Business Development through internationalisation (SP)

- https://ojs.uv.es/index.php/ciriecespana/article/view/7625/11541 - Relation between internationalisation and efficiency in non-profit organisations (SP)

Learning Unit 2

CATEGORY

Factors behind internationalisation processes in voluntary organisations

SHORT DESCRIPTION

In this lesson will see which are the main reasons why voluntary organisations all around the world keep internationalising, as well as different examples of internationalised voluntary organisations.

TRAINING CONTENT

Which are the main reasons why voluntary organisations internationalise?

Globalisation has brought a lot of economies the chance to prosper, creating business networks and providing needed resources, as some kind of exchange between different countries. However, it has also created inequalities, as undeveloped countries have seen how richer countries take advantage of their resources without obtaining fair prices or developing advantages with those trading operations. This has led to an increase in poverty levels in already poor areas of the world, weakening the political institutions of those countries, which, in most cases, cannot provide cases the basic services needed by their population. This is where voluntary organisations play a part.

As researchers Betty Plewes and Rieky Stuart have stated, "*Organisations send volunteers to participate in programs to reduce poverty, promote social justice and/or contribute to peace. They identify partner organisations often in civil society, but sometimes in the public and private sectors which host the volunteers. There is often considerable emphasis on skill transfer and strengthening organisational capacity*".

Photo by Bennett Tobias on Unplash

In the lesson "Defining Internationalisation", we concluded that a good definition for that term could be the following: "the Internationalisation of organizations/enterprises is the result of the implementation of several different strategies which take into account the resources and capacities of the given organisation/enterprise, as well as its own opportunities (and threats) in its international setting, with the objective of moving its activity, either totally or partially, to that international setting, generating different kinds of flows (knowledge, resources, financial…) between the countries involved".

If we try to study this topic, gathering articles and information about it, we see that it seems to be exclusively related to business: The internationalisation of enterprises. This can be explained because it has been deeply analysed by researchers and professors all around the globe, but only in regard to economy, trading and business. The lack of resources (either raw materials, customers, market…) and the willingness to grow continuously pushes a lot of enterprises into internationalisation. So, why would voluntary organisations be interested in it? What are their interests? What are they looking for?

Photo by Nareeta Martin on Unplash

Voluntary organisations differ from enterprises both in terms of interests and goals, as their capability to grow is not so heavily dependent on internal resources, but rather on its capability to create and maintain links with people and other organisations, in order to get more funds and donations, improving its installations and reinforcing its activity. This causes, as we have argued in previous inits, that voluntary organisations willing to spread on other countries incur elevated costs when searching for funds and new donors, as well as managing those new funds. Notwithstanding, when an organisation achieves a significant internationalisation level, the donor's network that has created during the process, as well as the partners met, will reduce costs and provide more powerful sources of resources, improving its capability to conduct its activity or purpose.

On the other hand, voluntary organisations seek new opportunities to bring their activity and be useful. Therefore becoming an international organisation opens the door to a wide variety of undeveloped regions, which do not have strong institutions providing the services and the help that those organisations can provide. These organisations will look for areas that need their activity, as well as suitability for an international project to be conducted (donors, volunteers, political stability...).

The following graph shows the growth process involved in internationalisation, where each of the circles represent a reason to internationalise:
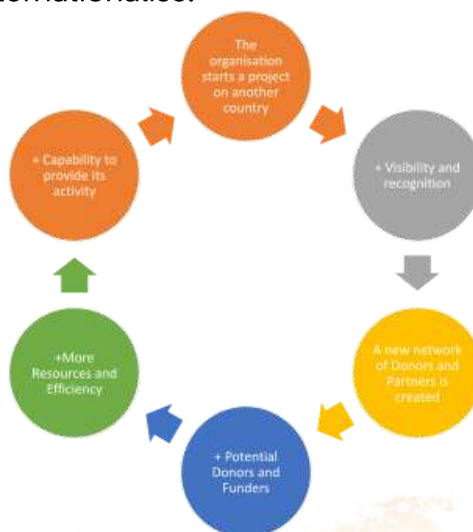
As we can see, organisations have several reasons to internationalise, which are, moreover, correlated to each other. It is a complex process that involves different actors and factors, where each step reinforces the following one. The first thing that happens when an organisation starts a project in another country is that its visibility and recognition grows exponentially, as a lot of people get to know the organisation, its purpose and its members. This will lead to the creation of a new network, based on people from that country and other organisations with similar or complementary purposes. This network will be the key to success in the internationalisation process, as it provides the help and support needed to overcome the risks that it brings to an organisation.

New potential donors and funders will appear thanks to that network and the visibility gained with the process. This is a crucial factor of the process, as it is needed to face the extra costs that internationalisation will bring to the organisation at the beginning. The immediate consequence of this is gaining access to more resources, better installations and improving, in general, the efficiency of its use.

This process will finalize with your organisation developing more capability to provide its activity and fulfil its purpose. That is the main consequence and reason for an organisation to internationalise: improving the impact on the target group and contributing a lot more with the aimed objectives.

For a more detailed approach to why your organisation should internationalise, you can check Learning Unit 1. On the other hand, for a more detailed analysis on the benefits of internationalisation, as well as its risks and other concerns, you can check Learning Unit 3.

Photo by [Capturing the human heart](#) on [Unplash](#)

Building strategic partnerships

We have talked quite a lot about building partnerships and its importance in the internationalisation process. But the question is: how do you build a partnership from scratch?

To begin with, we have to identify and search for potential partners for our project. We can conduct a local research or use tools like LinkedIn or Google to find who we are looking for: maybe similar organisations, legal counsellors, other NGOs… it depends on our needs or interests. The most important thing, however, is making the first call: contacting potential partners and explaining them your project can be tedious and difficult, but it is actually the fastest and easiest way to start creating your network. After that, it could be a good idea to conduct a meeting and specify together the ideas and questions related with your project.

When building partnerships, it is crucial to take into account your partner's point of view: Is it going to benefit from the partnership? Is it interested at all in participating in your project? You need to select partners that fit best with your organisation and the given project you are starting in their country, as these kinds of partnerships will lastlonger and provide better results for both organisations.

Another important thing that you have to notice is that you will start working inside a partnership, not alone any more: this implies agendas, shared working plans, deadlines and commitment. Moreover, a follow up of the state of the project and the partnership itself would be ideal. A Quality Plan being the best option for this kind of projects.

Different examples of internationalised voluntary organisations

In the following chart we will describe some examples of international voluntary organisations. These organisations were originally based only on a country, usually where they keep their management institutions and headquarters, but then went international, currently offering their volunteers international opportunities and different programs in several countries around the world.

VSO is a British volunteer organization. Its goal is to raise the standards of living in the poorest countries. Volunteers help educate children and adults, contribute to improving local medical care and health system and basically do their best to prevent people from living below the poverty line. The VSO is much more interested in professionals rather than in ordinary volunteers since participants will be responsible for providing qualified support and assistance to those who need it.

Service Civil International was founded by a Swiss engineer Pierre Cérésole in 1920. Nowadays Service Civil International is one of the biggest volunteer organizations in the world with 42 branches and a growing number of partner organizations. Their main goal is to promote a culture of peace by organizing volunteer projects, where people of any age and background can contribute to the world's welfare.

Service Civil International offers a variety of volunteer options, for example, short-term projects (workcamps), long-term projects as well as educational sessions. Over 1200 short-term projects can be found on the official website

Conservation Volunteers was founded in 1982 and nowadays unites different divisions all around Australia and New Zealand. Organization's main goal is to preserve a healthy and sustainable environment. In particular, a lot of attention is paid to the care of land resources, the improvement of the population, natural heritage and assistance in post-disaster reconstruction.

Global Volunteers is a respected non-profit organization, which has been engaged in human and economic development by conducting short and long-term volunteer programs. This organization has formalized a relationship with UNICEF. Over the years Global Volunteers have engaged more than 33 000 people in 34 countries by addressing such issues as poverty, hunger and the importance of education.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

As many people choose to volunteer abroad during their gap year, Plan my Gap Year is tailored to fit the needs of either people leaving school, university or are in-between and are in need of academic break. Plan My Gap Year is an award-winning organisation that was found by volunteers and seeks to achieve long-term sustainable goals in collaboration with local

http://forum-ids.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Forum-2007-Future-Trends.pdf - Opportunities and challenges for international volunteer co-operation.

https://www.volunteeringoptions.org/international-volunteer-organizations/ - A great portal concerning international volunteering offers and organisations.

http://personal.lse.ac.uk/lewisd/images/Volunteering%20-%20Vol%20Action%202006.pdf - Globalization and international service: a development perspective

Learning Unit 4

CATEGORY

Benefits and risks of internationalisation

SHORT DESCRIPTION

In this unit we will cover the benefits and risks that the internationalisation process brings to an organisation. On the other hand, we will see what a SWOT analysis is and its purpose and also how we could decide which countries to go with our activity.

TRAINING CONTENT

Explaining benefits and risks of internationalisation

In the learning unit 1 "Defining Internationalisation" we discussed this phenomenon and defined it as the result of the implementation of several different strategies which take into account the resources and capacities of the given organisation/enterprise, as well as its own opportunities (and threats) in its international setting, with the objective of moving its activity, either totally or partially, to that international setting, generating different kinds of flows (knowledge, resources, financial…) between the countries involved. Or or, in other words, to go global.

Globalization is one of the most important terms when talking about internationalisation, as it can be seen as both cause and effect of internationalisation itself, and thus generally share most of its benefits, risks and flaws. Globalisation brought developing countries the chance to access foreign markets as well as to import and export cheap goods, enhancing economic development through competition and a worldwide market, and increasing the flow of information between countries.

Image by Jan Vašek from Pixabay

Focusing on internationalisation, as we discussed in previous units, the main benefits can be summarized as the following: internationalisation helps your organisation togain visibility internationally, increasing the awareness of the specific topic attached by your organisation. It also increases the number of potential donors and their engagement with the purpose of the organization, its impact (reaching out to more people needing your work in other countries of your international setting) and the potential income of funds and other resources. It helps your organisation to get to know others with similar or related purposes (creating your own network), and thus gaining access to collaborations, acquiring prestige and international recognition in the process. Economically, it helps to reduce costs and to obtain greater profitability of the use of those funds and resources.

However, with internationalisation also come several risks that have to be taken into account in order to succeed in the process. Regarding the organisational strategy needed to take your activity into another country, a lot of risks can appear: Firstly, the funding forecasted for that project (which, by itself, implies an increase in costs for your organisation) can be wrongly calculated, incurring unbearable unexpected costs. On the other hand, the procedures or way of work of your organisation can lack adaptation to this new country, as well as its policies, laws and culture. You will incur extra costs when sending people from your organisation to the new country and when researching possibilities of collaboration In general, the costs of management of your organisation will increase exponentially.

Concerning the management of the projects conducted in other countries, your organisation has to be ready to simultaneously bear different situations in different countries, and channels of communication have to be improved and used regularly. Also, it is crucial to be successful when finding partners in that country, enhancing your relations with them and creating effective alliances with some of them. Another crucial aspect is when facing the cultural, political and legal differences between countries. Tax policies may vary substantially, as well as political and economic stability of the destination country. And all of this without taking into account the language and cultural barrier.

We can summarize all this information in the following table, presenting in a visual approach the main benefits and risks of internationalisation:

| PERSPECTIVE	BENEFITS	RISKS
Economic	· The number of potential donors and their engagement increase · Increasing the potential income of resources and funders. ·Better profitability obtained of the use of those resources and funds. · Costs will be reduced in the long term.	· The costs of your organisation increase exponentially during the process. · A wrong forecast of the funds needed for the process can lead to bankruptcy. · Going international implies extra costs, concerning education of people from your organisation and recruitment of new people (even if they are purely volunteers, costs will be created – installations, materials…).
Visibility and awareness	· Your organisation will gain international visibility, increasing the social awareness on the specific topic attached. ·Your organisation will acquire prestige and recognition internationally. · A network of similar organisations, sharing common goals and purpose, could be formed.	· Finding partners on the destination countries might not be an easy task. · The political and economic stability of the destination country might change rapidly.
Management	· New approaches to the same topic could be learned from other organisations and partners. · Studying the situation of other countries could help to enhance the efficiency of your activities, as your methodology will be tested in different environments.	· Management workload and costs will increase exponentially. · Differences in policies and laws have to be considered by management teams. · Developing different projects in different countries can be a hard task if not prepared.
The international experience	· Your organisation and its volunteers will benefit from international experience and an interchange of cultures and approaches to the same topic. · Exchanging values with other people and cultures · The target group of your organisation (or its purpose) will take huge benefits from this process. · Joining your organisation as a volunteer will be more attractive if it is possible to engage in an international experience.	· The language barrier has to be considered and can be extremely difficult to overcome. · Cultural and political differences can be also difficult to overcome.

Conducting a SWOT analysis

Organisations and SMEs face daily the challenge of becoming more productive and efficient, in order to get more profit from its given resources and achieve their goals. It becomes a continuous process of creating, implementing and evaluating decisions to overcome problems, ensuring the achievement of its objectives. This process is called Strategic Management.

In words of the researchers Emet Gürel and Merba Tat, "strategic management consists of the analysis, decisions, and actions an organisation undertakes in order to create and sustain competitive advantages. The strategic management process is a sequential set of analyses and choices that can increase the likelihood that an organisation will choose 'good strategy', that is, that generates competitive advantages". Every organisation needs to design a long-term strategy at the beginning of its activity, defining its aspirations and identifying possible risks and threats that it should try to avoid during the process.

In order to deal with that, organisations use and external and internal analysis, or the so-called SWOT analysis. SWOT Analysis is a tool that involves four areas into two dimensions. It has four components: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and Weaknesses are Internal factors and attributes of the organization, while Opportunities and Threats are External factors and attributes of the market setting. This can be easily seen in the following graph:
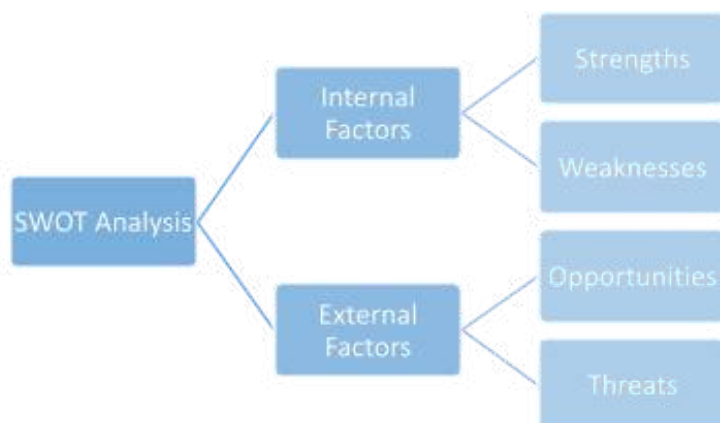
But, what does each component of the SWOT mean? Let's analyse them:

- Strengths: According to professors J.A. Pearce and R.B. Robinson, a strength is a "resource, skill, or other advantage relative to competitors and the needs of the markets an organization serves or expects to serve. It is a distinctive competence that gives the organization a comparative advantage in the marketplace. Strengths may exist with regard to financial resources, image, market leadership, buyer/supplier relations, and other factors".

  In other words, the strengths of a project, organisation or enterprise are the specific competences and values that have the potential to make a difference in its "market", giving it different advantages against its competitors and an efficient use of its resources. Obviously, when talking about non-profit organisations, we are not speaking about competition inside a "market", but the potential to bring something fresh and new to an existing setting: a different approach to a social problem, an innovative method to attach that problem, etc. Also, financial resources can make a huge difference as a strength of your organisation, and therefore a proper use of resources and funds, together with good dissemination efforts, can serve as one of the main strengths for your projects.

Photo by Victor Freitas on Unsplash

- Weaknesses: This component mainly works as the opposite of Strengths, as it refers to the disadvantages and lack of competency of an organisation or project. It is a situation where the current capacities of an organisation are surpassed by its competitors, giving it a disadvantage against them, and being less efficient and effective than them.

These aspects negatively affect the organizational performance and weakens the organization among its competitors. Consequently, the organization is not able to respond to a possible problem or opportunity and cannot adapt to changes. It is crucial for any organisation to acknowledge and identify its weaknesses as soon as possible, in order to prevent long term issues and difficulties, and to properly forecast the future of its projects. Neither planning nor creating strategies should be done without taking into account current and future weaknesses, as they are as important as strengths (if not more!).

- Opportunities: This component is the first external factor to take into account when analysing your international setting / market setting. An opportunity is nothing but a chance to take advantage of a specific current or future situation, which characteristics are favourable are suitable for an action to take place. This action can be a new project, the creation of an organisation, the development of a new approach to a specific problem, etc.

Looking for opportunities in different countries is the key to internationalisation, as we will see next. Analysing the situation of a country and identifying opportunities and chances for your organisation to be useful is a must before beginning internationalisation projects, and a wrong forecast of it can lead into their failure, as well as threats.
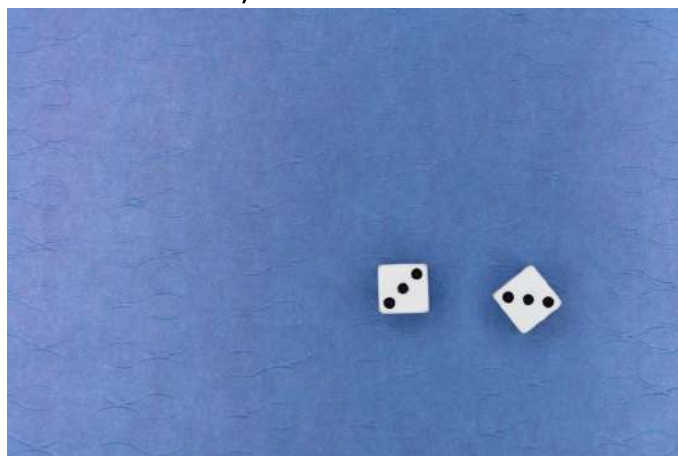
Photo by Markus Winkler on Unsplash

- Threats: A threat is the risk of a disadvantageous situation to happen and affect negatively your project/organisation, complicating its way to achieving its proposed goals, or even making them impossible to achieve. When talking about internationalisation, the threats for our organisation are going to be highly dependent on each country that we decide to go. This is why both topics, SWOT analysis and countries, are deeply related to each other, as we will see next.

In order to overcome these threats, it is crucial to assure our strengths and prepare our organisation/project for those threats to become realities. Internationalisation often involves working in dangerous and unstable countries, where political, social, demographic, cultural, legal and economic systems can change rapidly and violently, endangering our goals.

Deciding which countries to go to

As it can be easily noticed reading through the previous section of this unit, while the Strengths and Weaknesses depend strictly of our organisation, the other two components do not: neither the Opportunities nor the Threats are in control of our organisation, so our efforts cannot be aimed at changing those environments (such as creating opportunities or fighting threats), but on improving the internal factors provided by the SWOT analysis and conducting a proper external factors analysis, so as then to assess the most suitable countries to go to.

Photo by Glenn Carstens-Peters on Unsplash

That is why we went through the SWOT analysis before going into this section, as it is exactly what we have to do in order to decide which countries to go to. Obviously, there are different approaches to this topic, and the specific characteristics of your own organisation (and even your own personal preferences) may influence this decision quite a lot. However, conducting a SWOT analysis (or a similar type of analysis method) can help you decide which countries are perfect for your organisation to bring its activity to

As previously stated, there are two factors to consider here: Opportunities and Threats. We have to try and find the perfect balance between those two factors in order to find the most suitable country for our organisation. Obviously, perfect situations may not exist, with no threats and lots of opportunities in the same country, but comparing these two factors is the key to success in this search.

The first thing that we should do is look for Opportunities outside our country. Depending on the type of organisation that you are managing, its target group, purpose, financial capability and resources, opportunities may appear in countries where others do not find, and vice versa??? What does this sentence mean???. It is recommended that you define your priorities first and then start your search. Opportunities can appear in the form of partner organisations, target groups, language compatibility, governmental aid, financial opportunities. As mentionedas said, it depends highly on your own organisation.

Subsequently,, the most crucial part is to detect potential Threats in that list of apparently suitable countries. We mentioned a few of them before, but you will have to look for economic, political and social stability, a target group willing to get engaged with your project, access to resources, financial capability and a well-designed dissemination plan. It depends, again, highly on your own organisation. But this analysis is even more complex than the previous one, as you will to take into account the existence of unavoidable risks and predict in a long-term future the possibility and impact that they could have in your project.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

http://sosyalarastirmalar.com/cilt10/sayi51_pdf/6iksisat_kamu_isletme/gurel_emet.pdf - Interesting article concerning SWOT analysis.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikecollins/2015/05/06/the-pros-and-cons-of-globalization/#3f400c61ccce - The pros and cons of Globalization

https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8R2177Z - Benefits and risks of Globalization: Challenges for developing countries

https://www.bis.org/repofficepubl/arpresearch200903.07.pdf - Dealing with the benefits and costs of internationalisation: the example of the Korean Won

https://zicklin.baruch.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2018/12/Paper-Series-November-2018-11-13-18.pdf - The Internationalization of the Nonprofit Sector

Learning Unit 4

CATEGORY

Internationalisation strategies

SHORT DESCRIPTION

In this lesson three different internationalisation strategies will be presented and studied: Multidomestic strategy; global strategy; and transnational strategy.

TRAINING CONTENT

There are several different strategies that an organisation can follow in its internationalisation process. These strategies are different approaches to the internationalisation of its activity, and each organisation should decide which one fits best its interests, purpose and goals with the process. We will present the main three strategies that both enterprises and organisations follow when going international. It has to be noticed that these are not closed categories, as each organisation will end up following its own particular strategy, that maybe does not fit completely in none of these strategies, but it is a mix of some of them. Let's check'em out!

Multidomestic strategy

The multidomestic strategy is an approach to internationalisation that focuses the efforts of the organisation, as well as the use of its resources, on the local necessities of each specific zone seperately, instead of adopting a global or standardised approach to it. This means that the organisation studies those specific necessities of that zone/region/city/country, and creates a project accordingly, taking into account its cultural and social factors too. With this approach, the organisation makes a great effort to adapt its' activity to those necessities and tries to engage locals instead of a more widespread audience.

For a multidomestic strategy to succeed it is crucial to invest resources into local research, which contributes to an early increase on costs. Notwithstanding, this approach will provide incredibly valuable information about the necessities of that specific zone, which brings the chance of achieving great levels of achievement in the purpose of your organisation and the specific project being conducted in that zone. Nevertheless, efficiency on the use of resources will be sacrificed, turning this strategy into the most expensive to manage.

Photo by Robert Collins on Unsplash

By taking the time to learn how to connect with locals and its necessities, it is possible to use the multidomestic strategy to create a wide range of tactics that can be adapted to fit zones and regions that share a lot of similarities. The main flaws of adopting this strategy are the huge costs for research that have to be conducted at the beginning of the internationalisation project. Moreover, nothing assures that this research will provide positive results, as your activity may not fit the necessities of that specific zone, and all the effort and resources put into research would be "wasted". Notwithstanding, these costs would be smaller than starting an internationalisation process without this previous research and failing as a result.

This strategy best fits small organisations that want to spread their activity into one or maybe only a few countries, without needing much capability regarding resources or finances.

Global Strategy

This strategy is the complete opposite of a multidomestic strategy. It sacrifices responsiveness to local requirements within each of its zones and regions in favour of emphasizing efficiency. This does not mean that minor modifications or adaptions in the activity will be made regarding those zones/regions/countries, but in general terms a global strategy will be adopted, and management decisions will be taken following global objectives, without taking local necessities into account.

As previously stated, this strategy aims at achieving the greatest possible levels of efficiency in the use of resources and finances, by deleting the costs of researching and adapting the activity to the needs of specific zones of the world. This reduces the complexity of managing the organisation, but also creates a lot more risks: the lack of adaption to local necessities reduces the reaction possibilities against events on those zones, as well as compromises the usefulness of the activity and service provided by your organisation.

Photo by Martin Sanchez on Unsplash

When we conclude that this strategy is easier to manage than others, we are not stating that it is an easy task at all: Making global decisions and managing an organisation spread into several countries without much information about each of those projects is really complex. A global following and analysis of the organisation situation is mandatory.

This strategy best fits big organisations that want to spread their activity globally, into dozens of countries, and already having the capability to do so (a good network of donors and funders, installations, access to resources...)

Transnational Strategy

This strategy is a middle ground between a multidomestic strategy and a global strategy, trying to balance efficiency with adaptation to local necessities within several zones, regions, or countries. It takes advantage of globalisation and tries to work on a global level, but at the same time does not forget about local necessities, trying to learn about different environments and cultures, in order to adapt its activity into those zones, regions and countries and make it useful for locals.

The level of domestic versus global approach in this strategy depends on each organisation and its own purpose. Some organisations will adopt a more domestic strategy, doing research and trying to help with local necessities, but with global aspects like a global decision-making process or some level of sacrifice on adaption??? What does this mean?? to save on resources. Or, on the other hand, other organisations will follow a global strategy, trying to save costs and manage decisions globally, but then doing some follow up on the local implementation of their activity, and providing changes and adaptations to it in order to make it useful for locals and their needa. Considering these factors, a transnational strategy can be difficult to manage, as following both local and global necessities can be really stressful and expensive for an organisation. A correct balance between efficiency and adaptation is the key to success in this strategy.
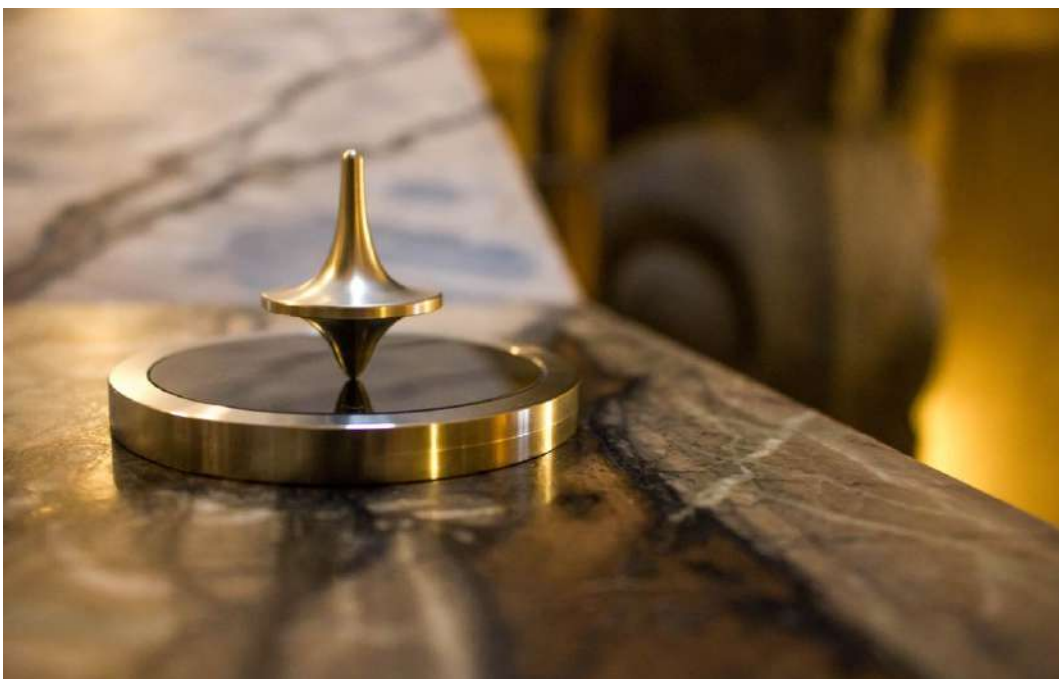
Photo by Ash from Modern Afflatus on Unsplash

This strategy is highly mouldable to each organisation's approach, so it fits any type of organisation with a minimum capability to spread globally, but also to work on local needs.

Comparative analysis

In the following graphs we are able to analyse several factors and their respective impact regarding the three different strategies that we just studied. The X axis corresponds to time and the Y axis to the level of each aspect analysed.
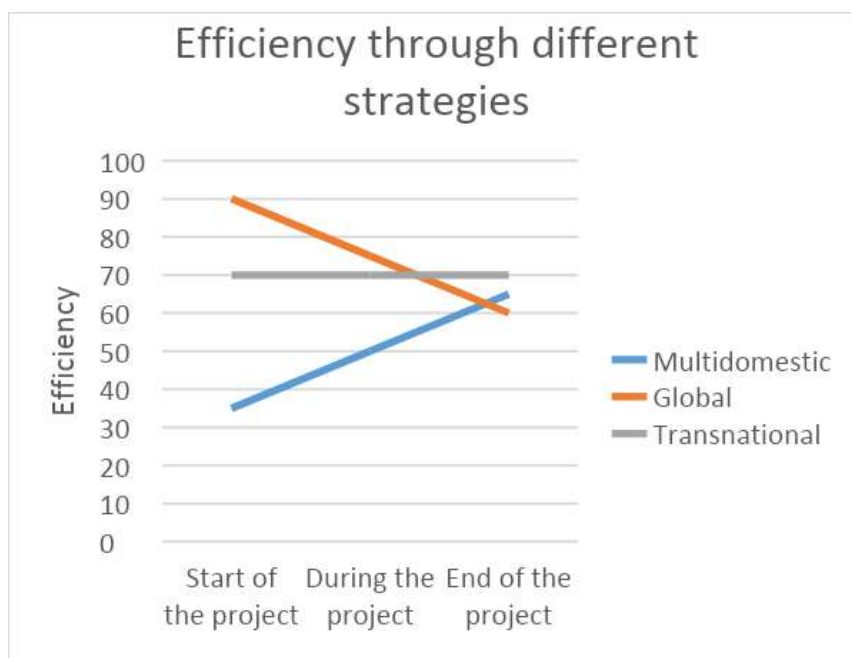
In the graph "Efficiency through different strategies", several conclusions can be extracted. Whereas the percentage of efficiency achieved with a global strategy starts at the top, it decreases constantly due to the lack of adaption and corrective measures concerning the local necessities. This does not translate into a progressive increase on costs, but on a lack of utility of the resources used for that project. On the other hand, a multidomestic strategy is considerably more expensive at the beginning of the internationalisation project, but it eventually becomes more efficient, as the adaptation to the local necessities helps to achieve a better use of the given resources. Lastly, a transnational strategy should aim at keeping a good level of efficiency without sacrificing too much adaptation to the local necessities.
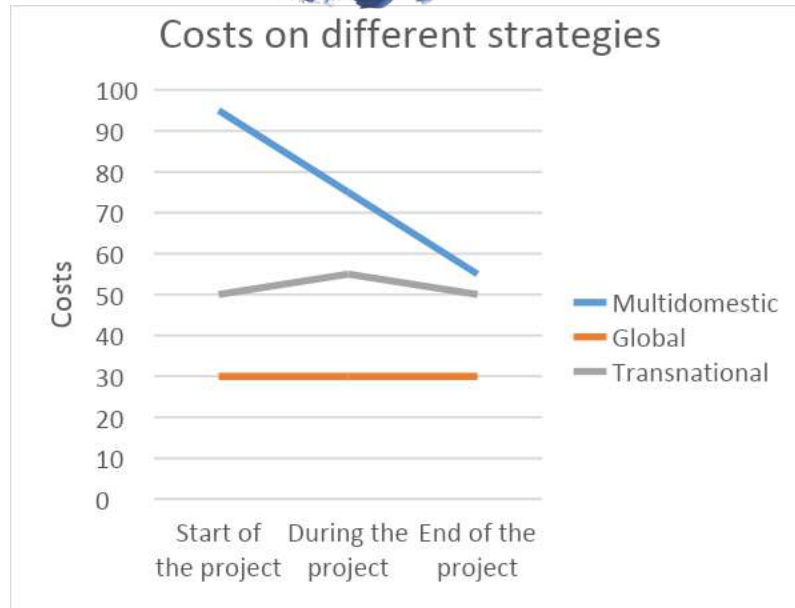
In the graph "Costs on different strategies", we can clearly see the huge increase in costs that a Multidomestic strategy brings to the internationalisation process at its beginning. On the other hand, a Transnational strategy stays cheaper at every state of the project, with little fluctuations concerning adaptations and researchers, while a Global strategy costs much less during the whole process.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

https://www.globalnegotiator.com/international-trade/dictionary/multidomestic-strategy/ - What is a multidomestic strategy?

https://smallbusiness.chron.com/differences-between-multidomestic-transnational-company-33807.html - Differences between a multidomestic & a transnational company

https://study.com/academy/lesson/multidomestic-strategy-definition-examples.html - Multidomestic strategy: definitione & examples

https://opentextbc.ca/strategicmanagement/chapter/types-of-international-strategies/ - Types of international strategies

https://www.prucommercialre.com/que-es-una-estrategia-multidomestica/ - Multidomestic strategy (SP)

Learning Unit 1

CATEGORY

Dissemination and exploitation of results

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Dissemination and exploitation of results are core activities in projects funded with European grants. Here you will find the main points to think about when planning and sharing the results of your international & volunteering projects. You will also be able to find links to more reading and audiovisual materials on the topic. Once you are ready, a few quiz questions and practical exercises will help you confirm your knowledge!

TRAINING CONTENT

1. Intro Quiz

a. True-False:

Technical language and jargon used in dissemination activities shows a high level of quality in project management.

○ True   ○ False

● Check

b. Drag & Drop:

It is very important to set the communication & dissemination strategy right from the beginning and involve all project partners, their different spheres of influence and networks in order to reach the biggest and most varied target audience possible.

c. Single Choice:

Dissemination activities should be carried out:

- ○ Only in English since it is a language spoken by many people.
- ○ Only in the languages of the project partners.
- ○ In as many languages as possible.

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2. What do dissemination and exploitation mean?

Dissemination refers to a process of sharing the results of initiatives to potential users and key actors (e.g volunteers, volunteer-involving-organisations, adult learners, trainers). This means spreading the word about the project successes and outcomes as far as possible. At the beginning of the project, a dissemination plan is designed so that there is a better chance of the results being successfully shared. The dissemination plan should propose answers for the following questions: why, what, how, when, to whom and where dissemination of the results will take place. It should include online and offline actions for both during and after the funding period.

Exploitation refers to a planned process of:

(a) transferring the successful results of the programmes & initiatives to decision-makers and other key stakeholders (eg volunteer-involving-organisations volunteer centres, civil society organisations, regional & national platforms for volunteering, education and training providers, municipalities, regional and national governments (b) convincing individual end-users to adopt and/or apply the results of programmes and initiatives.

This means maximising the potential of the funded activities, so that the outcomes are used beyond the lifetime of the project.
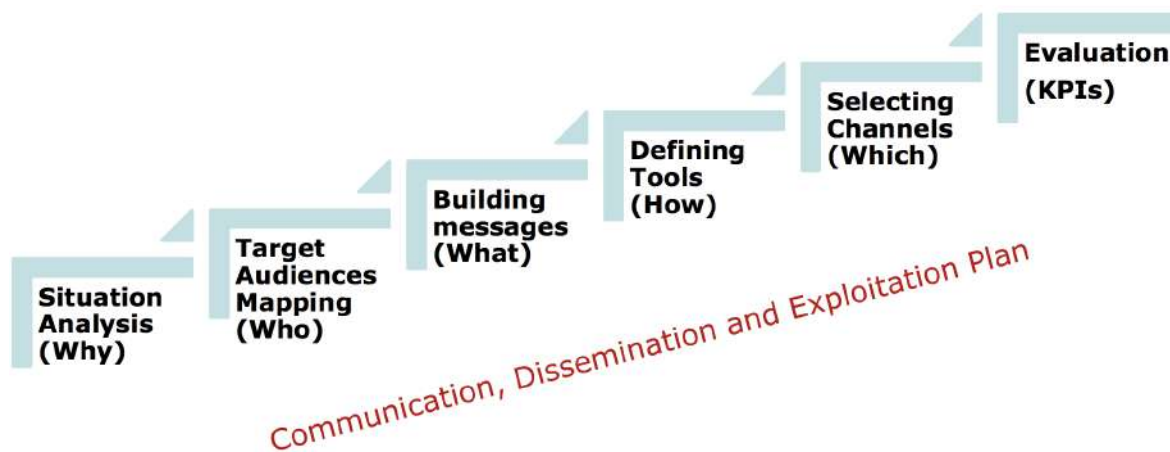
Source:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/coordinators_day_communication_dissemination_exploitation.pdf

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What is the difference between communication and dissemination?

Communication is a broader concept. It includes all information, promotion activities and visibility actions about a given project / initiative. The dissemination and exploitation of the project outcomes start as soon as they become available, while communication about the projects should start once the project proposal is approved. It is very important to set the communication & dissemination strategy right from the beginning and involve all partners and their different spheres of influence and networks in order to reach the biggest and most varied target audience possible!
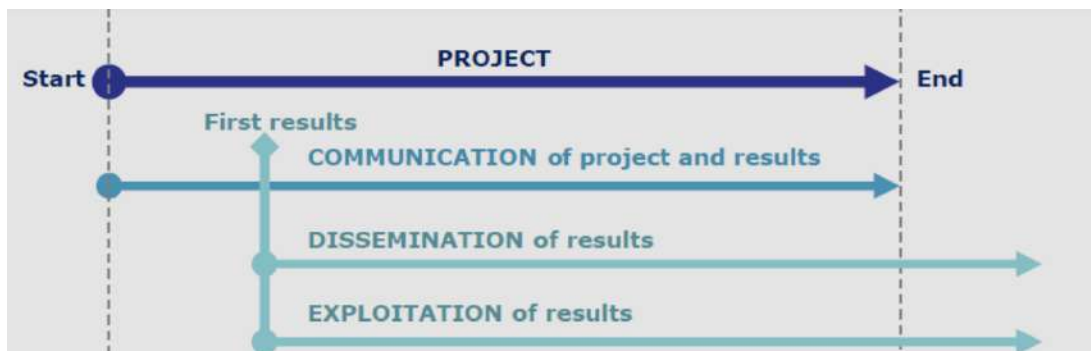
Source:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/coordinators_day_communication_dissemination_exploitation.pdf

3. Aims, objectives, planning, sharing results!

A good quality dissemination and exploitation plan should include:

- measurable and realistic objectives,
- a detailed timetable,
- a resource plan for the activities to take place,
- suitable target groups (e.g. volunteers & their organisations, volunteer centres, education & training providers)

Dissemination and exploitation goals may be to:

- raise awareness,
- extend the impact,
- engage stakeholders and target groups,
- share solutions and know how,
- influence policy and practice,
- develop new partnerships.

Participating organisations should:

- discuss the aims & objectives of the dissemination and exploitation activities/plan.
- decide on the best activities and approaches.
- share the tasks among partners taking into account the particular specifics of the project and the profiles of each partner.
- agree on realistic targets and deadlines with partners to monitor progress.
- offer sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs of the target group as well as wider developments in policy and practice.
- Include the use of existing communication channels and networks in the plan.

What are project outcomes?

Projects involving volunteers or run by volunteers may have very diverse results. A distinction between tangible and intangible outcomes can be made.

Tangible results are concrete outputs and may include for example:

- an approach or a model to solve a problem.
- a practical tool or product, such as handbooks, curricula, e-learning tools.
- research reports or studies.
- good practice guides or case studies.
- evaluation reports.
- recognition and validation certificates.
- newsletters or information leaflets.

Intangible results may refer to new skills, competences, experiences and may include for example:

- knowledge and experience gained by volunteers and beneficiaries, learners or staff,
- increased skills or achievements,
- improved cultural awareness,
- better language skills.

Intangible results are more difficult to measure. The use of interviews, questionnaires, tests, observations or self-assessment mechanisms may help to record them.

NB: The type and intensity of dissemination and exploitation activities should be proportional and adapted to particular needs and the type of project. Dissemination and exploitation activities can create new opportunities to extend the project and its results or develop new partnerships for the future, may lead to external recognition of the work carried out, and enable and inspire others to benefit from the activities and experiences of the European Programmes.

Dissemination and exploitation of project results can help to inform future policy and practice. The aims and objectives of the dissemination and exploitation plan should link to the project aims to ensure that the methods and approaches used are appropriate for the project and its results, as well as for the identified target audiences (see next section).

4. Target audiences and how to reach them

Every dissemination and exploitation strategy must identify target groups for its messages. Target groups can be decision-makers at local, regional, national, European levels. They can be volunteers, volunteer managers, staff in different institutions- museums, hospitals, schools, local authorities, other volunteer-involving-organisations, networks, education and training providers, researchers, press and media, and so on. Activities and messages must be adapted to each audience.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Some tips!

- Translate as many communication materials and project outputs in as many languages as possible. Cover all languages of the partnership and English;
- Link the topic of the project to current concerns in society
- Avoid technical language and jargon
- Capitalise on visual and interactive ways to send your message out
- Use social media based on needs and project capacity

Which tools to use?

- the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform.
- project or organisational websites.
- meetings and visits to key stakeholders.
- information sessions, workshops, (online) seminars, training courses, exhibitions, demonstrations, or peer reviews.
- reports, articles in specialised press, newsletters, press releases, leaflets or brochures.
- audiovisual media: radio, TV, YouTube, Flickr, video clips, podcasts or apps.
- social media channels.
- public events, (specifically planned for the project or others existing for other purposes that can also be used)
- project branding and logos.
- existing contacts and networks.

5. Impact! Was the strategy successful?

Indicators can be used to measure progress towards goals. These are signs that help to measure performance. Indicators can be both quantitative relating to numbers and percentages as well as qualitative relating to the quality of the participation and experience.

Questionnaires, interviews, observations and assessments can also be used to measure the impact. Defining indicators relating to the different project activities should be done at the start of the project as part of the overall dissemination plan.

For instance:

- Facts and figures related to the website of project organisers (updates, visits, consultation, cross referencing),
- Numbers of meetings with key stakeholders,
- Numbers of participants involved in discussions and information sessions (workshops, seminars, peer reviews),
- Production and circulation of products,
- Media coverage (articles in specialised press newsletters, press releases, interviews, etc.),
- Visibility in social media and attractiveness of website,
- Participation in public events,
- Links with existing networks and transnational partners; transfer of information and know-how,
- Impact on regional, national, EU policy measures,
- Feedback from end-users, other stakeholders, peers, policy-makers.

Module 2

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/programme-guide/annexes/annex-ii_en - Erasmus+, Programme Guide, Annex II – Dissemination and exploitation of results
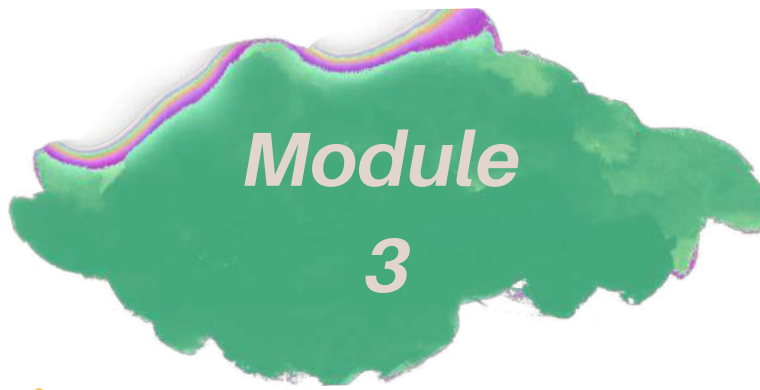
https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/erasmus-project-results-platform-tutorial-video_en - Erasmus+ Project Results Platform tutorial video

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-project-results-platform-explained_en - Erasmus+ Project Results Platform Explained.

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-results/impact-and-dissemination-toolkit_en - the Erasmus+ Toolkit on impact and dissemination of projects.

https://ec.europa.eu/easme/sites/easme-site/files/howtocommunicateyourproject_vertical.pdf - slide - how to communicate your project

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/coordinators_day_communication_dissemination_exploitation.pdf presentation "Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation" Maria Jose Amaral, EC Research Executive Agency.

Learning Unit 1

CATEGORY

Intercultural Communication in Transnational Work

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Culture is "the way in which a group of people solve problems" – Fons Trompenaars
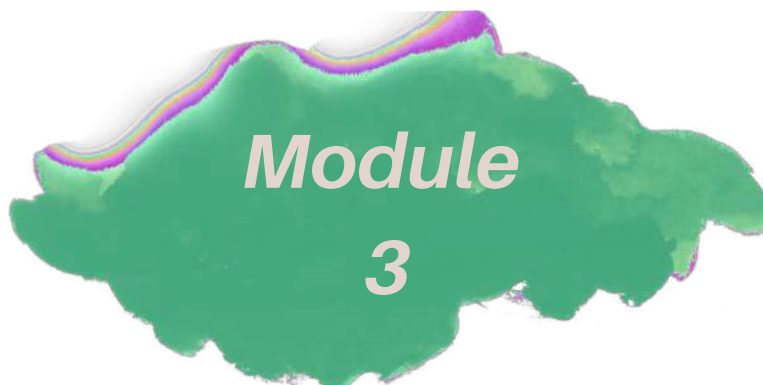
As a volunteer or volunteer organization on the way to working internationally you may encounter some challenging situations when working with people from other cultures. The way of communicating may seem "strange" to you, or the way how your international partners approach tasks may be different. This module on Intercultural Communication will help to solve problems you may encounter by taking into account the cultural background of your counterparts.

Bild von Gordon Johnson auf Pixabay

Learning outcomes

The Module on Intercultural Communication in Transnational Work covers four main topics.

The **first topic** is about "**Culture**". In this unit you will learn about three definitions of the term "culture" in relation to the volunteer context. The unit will help you understand how culture can be visualised and it will introduce you to the concepts of "cultural dimensions" which represent core elements of cultures. You will have a closer look at how the cultural dimensions are related to volunteer work and you will explore where cultural dimensions show and how they can be detected in volunteer work.

The **second topic** is about **"Intercultural Communication"**. This unit will introduce you to the concept of "Intercultural Communication" by approaching a definition in the first section of this unit. You will learn about some challenges on the verbal, non-verbal and value level when interacting with people from other cultures. The second section "Transnational Communication Skills" you will discover useful skills other than speaking foreign languages for effective transnational communication. You will understand the fundamental importance of intercultural awareness that enables to react to the specific needs of the intercultural communication situation.

The **third topic** is about **"Intercultural Conflict Management"**. This unit will introduce you to some challenging elements in Intercultural Communication. You will learn what can be the reason(s) for miscommunication and you will analyse different approaches cultures have towards conflict strategies. You will also receive useful tips how conflicts can be prevented.

The **fourth topic** is about creating an **"Intercultural Image"** for your organisation. This unit will show you why it is important to work on the image of an organisation also in the non-profit sector. It will introduce you to the reasons why it is helpful to consider cultural aspects when working on the image of an organization. You will learn about some particular aspects related to culture you should consider on your way to internationalisation.

The duration of the module is estimated at 12 hours.

TRAINING CONTENT

What is culture?

In recent times the words "culture" and "intercultural communication" are used more and more frequently. We somehow all seem to know what "culture" means when we experience new encounters with people from other countries, nations or ethnic groups. In addition, travelling to other countries and connecting to people from other countries via social media seem to have become a new normality to us all which makes "intercultural communication" seem easy.

But if somebody asked you to define the concept of "culture" could you give a precise definition? And could you say which elements may be relevant in an intercultural encounter?

There are numerous definitions of culture. As early as 1952 Kroeber and Kluckhohn counted over 150 definitions of the term "culture" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 291). Here are some of the most popular ones. Culture is...

- ...the human-made part of the environment (Harry Triandis, 2002)
- ...a collective programming of the mind (Geert Hofstede, 2009),
- ...the way in which a group of people solve problems (Fons Trompenaars, 1997)

A definition, which is widely accepted today, understands culture as an "system of orientation" (Thomas, 2010, p. 19), that "allows us to find meaning in the things, people and objects that surround us, as well as in complex processes and the consequences of our behaviour" (Thomas, 2010, p. 20). This orientation system is typical of a specific nation, society, organisation or group. The system defines and influences our perception, our thinking, our values and actions. The system is based on specific symbols (language, gestures, dress-code, greeting conventions etc.) and is passed on from generation to generation, creating a sense of group identity and giving meaning to what we see, perceive and do. The orientation system provides us with behavioural motivators and opportunities but it also sets "conditions and limits" to our behaviour (Thomas, 2010, p. 19).

We could say that this orientation system is our own GPS that helps us to intuitively find our way through the world. For you as a volunteer or a member of a volunteer organisation it can be helpful to have in mind that culture as an orientation system often works on a subconscious basis. We often aren't aware that culture leads us in our perceptions and judgements. In fact, we can't avoid perceiving the world around us through our own "cultural glasses", that means from our own perspective. Especially when you work internationally it is important to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity so to prevent falling into the pitfalls of prejudices, stereotypes and assumptions.

Just take a minute to reflect: Imagine what would happen if you thought people from South Mediterranean Europe are chatty, don't stick to agreements but friendly. Would these attributes be enough to make you want to develop an international project with them? Maybe not.

Understanding culture and its core elements is a first step towards developing cultural awareness and sensitivity. The concept of culture as an orientation system is still reminiscent of the idea developed in the 18th century - also thanks to the work of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744 – 1803) Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind – that cultures are defined, homogeneous entities each with a common ethnic identity (Löchte, 2005, p. 29f.; Straub et al., 2007, p. 13). For Herder, cultures were limited to a certain territory and cultural contact wasn't taken into account. Today however the idea of linking one nation to one culture seems rather unrealistic (Welsch, 1999, p. 195).
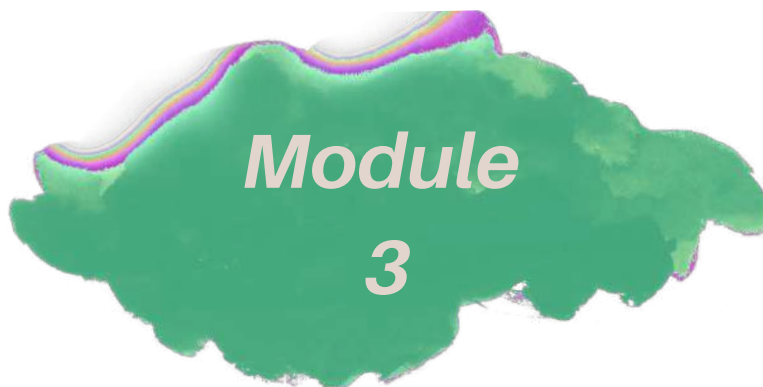
In fact thinking of volunteers and volunteer organisations wanting to internationalise, talking of homogeneous cultures could seem an anachronism (see also Welsch, 1999, p. 195), especially in our globalised world. In the last years there has been a tendency to perceive "culture" as changeable and interrelated and as something that can't be clearly distinguished from another. This is why some researchers think that one of the characteristics of these modern societies is a strong orientation towards processes and networking (Bolten, 2013, p. 5). "Culture" in this sense has become a network of reciprocal relationships between people. People are members of more than only one group, i.e. people participate in more than one group-culture. This is why they constantly bring in different elements from other group-cultures into each new group they are in contact with. The result of this process is an ever changing, heterogeneous structure as we can observe it in modern societies. It is difficult to say what is part of our own culture and what is not. This is why some say that cultures are "fuzzy" (Bolten, 2013, p. 6s.).

Culture is like an Iceberg

https://pixabay.com/de/illustrations/eisberg-wasser-blau-ozean-eis-1421411/
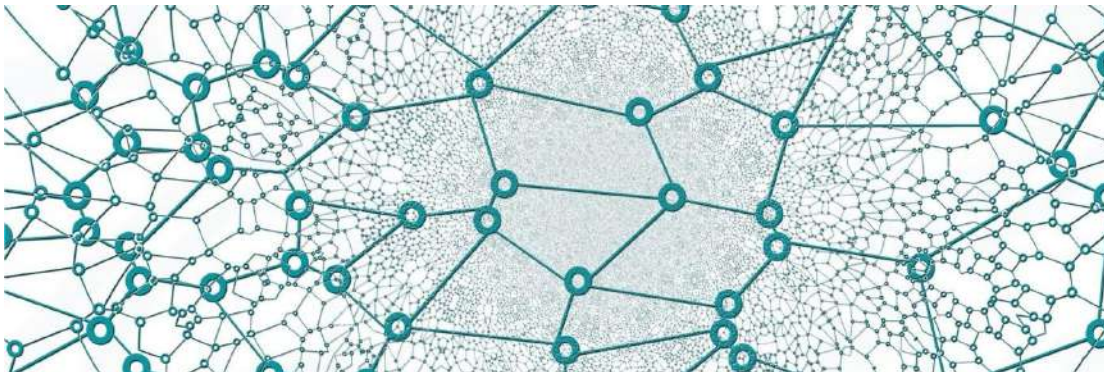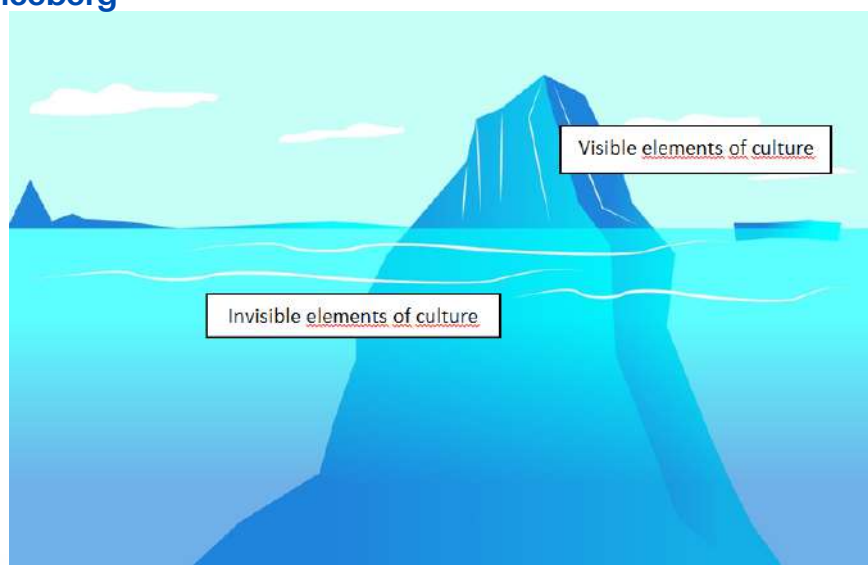
An easy way to represent culture is by imagining that culture is like an iceberg with a visible tip and an invisible part underneath the water surface. The visible tip corresponds to the areas of culture we can see in the physical sense like architecture, dress, food, gestures, devotional practices and much more.

None of the visible elements can ever make real sense without understanding the drivers behind them. It is these invisible, often unconscious elements related to the bottom part of the iceberg which are the underlying causes of what shows on the visible part. So, when thinking about culture, the bottom part of the iceberg will include elements such as religious beliefs, rules of relationships, approach to the family, motivations, tolerance for change, attitudes to rules, communication styles, comfort with risk, the difference between public and private, gender differences and more.

When intercultural conflicts arise people often dispute about the visible representations of cultural elements (Why do Muslim women wear headscarves? Is it right to have a Christian cross in a class-room at school?) – not conscious of the fact that in most cases the values and attitudes behind are the real causes of the conflict.

Culture and its core elements
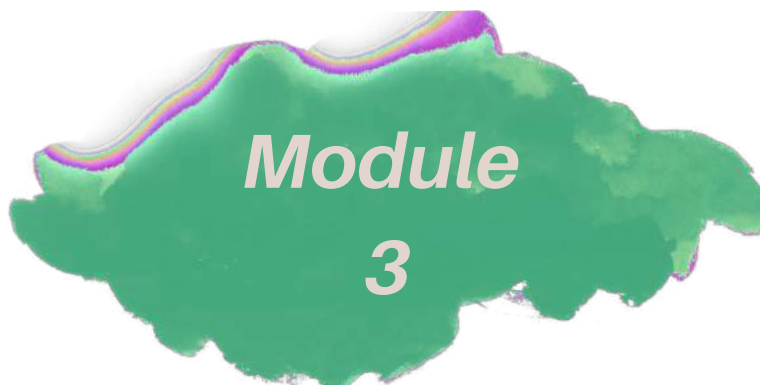
Just take a minute to reflect: Imagine for a moment how your volunteer organisation makes important decisions. Do you feel involved in the decision making process?

Depending on the cultural background of your organisation, you may have answered yes or no. This depends on certain elements like the understanding of hierarchy and the manifestation of power of your organisation, for example. Both are relevant elements of the leadership style of your organisation.

There are different tools that help to observe, understand and compare elements of culture. They provide a basis for reflection concerning behaviour which may seem strange to us.

For those working the context of volunteer work the so called cultural dimensions are a suitable basis of reflection when it comes to working in international contexts. Cultural dimensions are based on the hypothesis that there are universal categories of human behaviour common to all cultures but of which cultures show culture-specific manifestations when it comes to find solutions for certain challenges (Layes, 2010, p. 53s.).

Here are some country clusters taken from the Globe Study (https://globeproject.com/results/clusters/middle-east?menu=list#list accessed 21.5.20) that may be relevant for volunteers or volunteer organisations wanting to internationalise:

Country Cluster	Countries
Anglo	• USA • Australia • Canada • England • Ireland • New Zealand • South Africa
Eastern Europe	• Albania • Georgia • Greece • Hungary • Kazakhstan • Poland • Russia • Slovenia
Germanic Europe	• Austria • Germany • Netherlands • Switzerland
Latin Europe	• France • Israel • Italy • Portugal • Spain • Switzerland
Nordic Europe	• Denmark • Finland • Sweden

https://pixabay.com/de/illustrations/vernetzung-personen-gruppe-3712818/

Related to the country clusters are certain universal cultural dimensions that have, however, country-specific manifestations. In the following you will find some cultural dimensions taken literally from the Globe Study that may be important for your work (House 2013, p. 12f.). Please keep in mind that the degrees of how strongly or evidently a dimension manifests itself, depends on culture specific factors:

https://pixabay.com/de/illustrations/vernetzung-personen-gruppe-3712818/

Related to the country clusters are certain universal cultural dimensions that have, however, country-specific manifestations. In the following you will find some cultural dimensions taken literally from the Globe Study that may be important for your work (House 2013, p. 12f.). Please keep in mind that the degrees of how strongly or evidently a dimension manifests itself, depends on culture specific factors:

Dimensions taken from The *Globe Study* (House, 2013, p. 12f.)	Dimensions in volunteer work /context	Questions for understanding the dimensions in volunteer work
Performance orientation: The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards (and should encourage and reward) group members for performance improvement and excellence.	This dimension may show in the way your organisation encourages and supports engagement, training measures and development activities for volunteers in order to enhance their efficiency for a new international project.	How are you rewarded (with immaterial praise, badges "best volunteer of the year") when you did especially well? At how many trainings did you participate during the last year?
Assertiveness: The degree to which individuals are (and should be) assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationship with others.	This dimension may show in the attitude your organisation or your colleagues have towards measuring achievements among each other and towards bringing forward one's own interests. Less competitive cultures lay more importance on relationships and bonding.	How strongly do you show your desire that your idea be implemented or your objective realized?
Future Orientation: The degree to which individuals engage (and should engage) in future oriented behaviours such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying gratification.	This dimension may show, for example, through the effort your volunteer organisation puts in planning meetings or future steps of a project.	How much in the future do you plan to harvest the fruits of your work? How is your monetary spending attitude?

Humane Orientation: The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards (and should encourage and reward) individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others.	This dimension may show, for example, in the attitude a society has towards volunteer work.	Is it easy for you as a volunteer organisation to engage people in your activities? Is it easy to do fundraising?
Power Distance: The degree to which members of a collective expect (and should expect) power to be distributed equally.	This dimension may show, for example, the extent to which you are accustomed to hierarchical structures in volunteer organisations. It can be also noticed in the way people address their boss or peers.	How do you address your boss – is it like you would address your fellow volunteers?
Uncertainty avoidance: The degree to which a society, organization or group relies (and should rely) on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate the unpredictability of future events. The greater the desire to avoid uncertainty, the more people seek orderliness, consistency, structure, formal procedures, and laws to cover situations in their daily lives.	This dimension may show, for example, in the complexity of the processes determining the acceptance of new volunteers in an organisation.	How comfortable do you feel with working processes that don't seem clear to you? How detailed do you define your working processes?

In summary: The contents of this unit and in particular the table above may help you to understand some invisible and maybe unconscious elements of your culture. Being aware of the own cultural core elements is a step towards a better understanding of one's own behavioural reactions. Linked to the country clusters the table may help you to better assess some experience of otherness you can't explain when in contact with new cultures.

Disclaimer: Of course there is the risk of stereotyping when one tries to attribute what are 'typical' behaviours. But one has to keep in mind that cultural dimensions are based on what can be observed and what is normal for most members of a certain culture. It is important to remember to approach another culture not by looking at it through one's own cultural lens but by observing it neutrally and by postponing judgments.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Bolten, J. (2013). Fuzzy Cultures: Konsequenzen eines offenen und mehrwertigen Kulturbegriffs für Konzeptualisierungen interkultureller Personalentwicklungsmaßnahmen, Mondial: Sietar Journal für interkulturelle Perspektiven, pp. 4-10.
Discussion about new perspectives on the term culture

Hall, E. T. (1976). Beyond Culture. New York: Anchor Books.
Discussion of cultural dimensions

Hofstede, G. and Hofstede G.J. (2009). Die Regeln des sozialen Spiels. In: G. Hofstede and G.J. Hofstede, ed., Lokales Denken, globales Handeln. 4th ed. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, p. 2.
Discussion of cultural dimensions
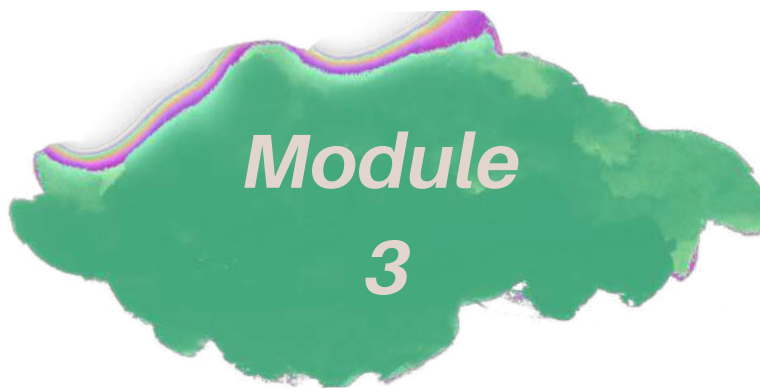
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Discussion of cultural dimensions

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Discussion of the concept culture

Learning Unit 2

CATEGORY

Intercultural Communication in Transnational Work

SHORT DESCRIPTION

The unit ¨Intercultural communication¨ will introduce the intercultural communication concept defining it in the first section of this unit. It will be focused in some verbal challenges, not verbal ones and the present values when interacts with people from another cultures.

In the second section ¨transational communication ability¨ , examinate the util abilities apart of speaking foreign languages, to have an efficient transnational communication. It´s show the fundamental importance of intercultural consciousness that allows reaction and apaptation to the specific needs in a situation of intercultural communication.

TRAINING CONTENT

Intercultural communication

What is intercultural communication?

Just take a minute to reflect: If your fellow volunteer with an Anglo-Saxon background said to you during a discussion about a new project "I'm not quite sure, but I would rather suggest XYZ" how would you understand this sentence?

Would you think a) your counterpart is hesitant about what he/she is saying? Or b) would you understand it as a rejection of what was previously said?

Depending on your own cultural background and on the communicative strategies you are personally used to, you may know that the only way to interpret the sentence is b).

The above situation is an example for *intercultural communication*. As for the definition of *Culture*, also for the term *intercultural communication* there are several definitions depending on the line of research and the focus of the researchers. In a very broad sense the term *Intercultural Communication* refers to "all kinds of communication between individuals from different cultures" (Thomas, 2005, p. 113) [translated by the author of the module].

When thinking of intercultural communication the challenges are very often underestimated, especially when both partners share a common language, which may not be the mother tongue of at least one partner. Being able to speak the same language may be helpful but in some cases it can also be misleading. Although it is true that intercultural communication is comparable to communication among a culturally homogeneous group when it comes to taking into account certain universal elements of communication like setting, register, choice of verbal / non-verbal means of communication, relationship between the counterparts and so forth, there is one element, however, that makes the difference between inter- and intracultural communication: culture with its country-specific characteristics influencing communication.

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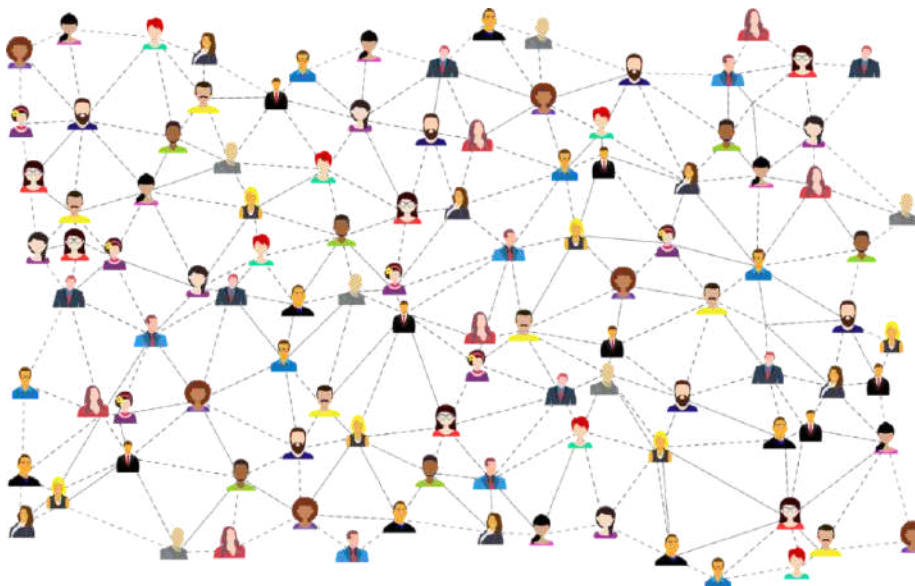
Which are the challenges in intercultural communication?
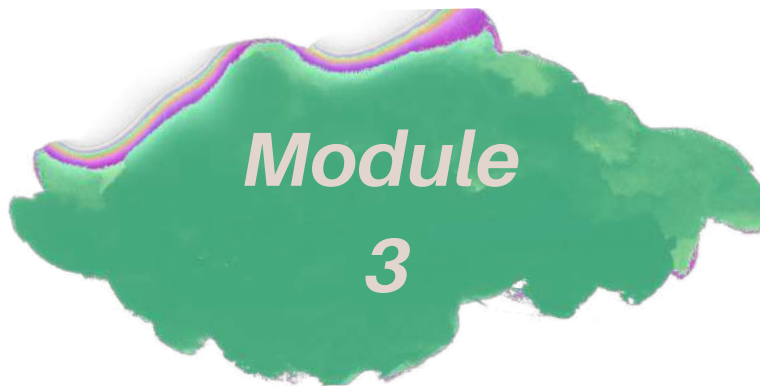
Just take a minute to reflect: On a Sunday, during a walk in town, you happen to meet a friend you know from your volunteer service. She is from some Mediterranean country, maybe Italy. You don't know each other very well, but when you meet you both enjoy the chats together. Your friend greets you warmly and offers – what you interpret as – a profusion of compliments about your new look.

How would you understand the compliments? A) as a nice way of initiating a conversation, although you know they might be a bit exaggerated? B) You think they are embarrassing and not true?

Depending on your cultural background you may decide for a) or b).

The challenges in intercultural communication may show on three different levels: a) on the verbal, b) non-verbal and c) value level. In the following we can only give an introduction to this interesting but complex field.

a. The verbal level:

The way people greet each other, engage in conversation, the topics they like to talk about and even how they structure the verbal approach to certain topics are influenced by culture. You have probably already heard of complex greeting rituals (with ritualized questions and answers about family, family members and their well-being) in African countries (Lüsebrink, 2016, 57). Cutting them short would imply an affront to politeness and may lead to a break-off in conversation.

Also to the opening of a conversation cultures have different approaches to. Some cultures like to start with a compliment "What a unique shirt you have today. The colour is just made for you." (Mediterranean cultures like Italy, see also the example above), well knowing that the compliment is only meant as start for an informal verbal exchange.

Also simple questions like "How are you doing today?" of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-American cultures and the French "ça va?" (Lüsebrink, 2016, 61) are culturally bound. An earnest answer to them is not expected and would lead to an awkward situation.

Maybe you have experienced how differently turn-taking and silence in conversation can be, depending on the cultural embedding of the members of the conversation. Speakers from Germanic cultures will prefer an orderly sequence of distinct turns, while those cultures like the Mediterranean ones will probably start the own turn earlier, which may seem impolite to partners from other cultures. More than thirty seconds of silence seem inacceptable in German, Mediterranean and Anglo-American cultures and may be interpreted as lack of interest, while this is not so in the Finnish and Chinese cultures (Lüsebrink, 2016, p. 57).

Depending on the cultural background, some topics are more suited than others for conversation. In Germanic cultures to talk about private family and financial matters like childlessness and wages seems less appropriate than in other cultures (see also Lüsebrink, 2016, p. 59).

b. The non-verbal level:

Just take a minute to reflect: Have you ever thought why conference tables are so large? Have you noticed differences in size between cultures?

Module 3
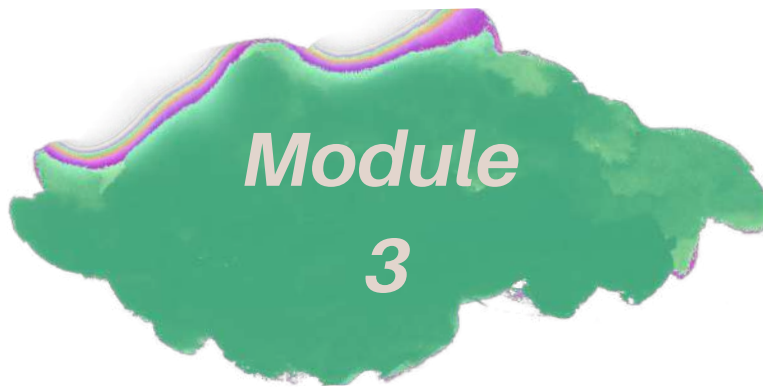
Body language (like gestures, mimic, eye-movement) and the **physical distance** of the own body kept during a conversation in relation to others (proximity) is a universal in all humans. All human beings, independent of cultural background are able to recognise emotions and states of mind like aggressiveness, ease, familiarity and so on. This is a universal faculty.

However, how these elements are displayed varies from culture to culture. For example, **gestures** can be misleading and may cause embarrassment, confusion or irritation. Think of the gesture symbolising the brief American statement "Ok!" In France the same gesture stands for "this is nothing" (see Pease, 2013, p. 108).

Depending on the cultural background, **gesticulating** during a conversation may also not be appreciated. Frequent gesticulation can be seen as a sign of engagement and interest in some cultures (Mediterranean), while the same frequency can be understood as heavy emotional participation and manifestation of aggressive behaviour by other cultures (Germanic).

The meaning of **facial expressions** like smiling can be very different in different cultures. In most European cultures it can be taken as an expression of happiness or ease, some Asian cultures however show this reaction in situations of embarrassment or uncertainty. In European cultures to establish **eye-contact** is a means to build up trust and openness in a relationship. In other cultures, like Asian and Muslim ones, it can be seen as impolite and aggressive. In Muslim understanding, to establish eye-contact with a woman can compromise her honour and her integrity.

How much **space** a body takes during a conversation is influenced by culture and can have a symbolic meaning. It is known for example, that in some Arab, Asian, South-European or Latin American cultures the acceptable distance between bodies in formal encounters is less than in North-American or North-European ones. Also the positioning of the bodies is different: In Arab countries, for example, people stand closer in front of each other than in the U.S.A. or European countries. (See Lüsebrink, 2016, p. 62).

c. The value level

Cultures have different values and attitudes that determine what members of a certain culture believe is important and how they interact with others [the culture dimensions see unit 1 LINK]. These values and attitudes naturally also show in communication. When communication partners differ strongly in their attitudes, their beliefs, their values, these differences can lead to misunderstandings and critical incidents in intercultural situations (Barmeyer, 2012, p. 84).

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Transnational communication skills

Why are other skills other than speaking foreign languages important?

When communicating with members from other cultures it is often good to know a common language. But even then there is a risk of getting across only a part of the message. The reason is that there are certain layers in language that are culture-specific.

Just take a minute to reflect: Do you think the concept of "friendship" or "family" is exactly the same in all cultures?

In fact the concepts differ depending on culture (for differences between northern Europe and southern Europe see (Lüsebrink, 2016, p. 53) and between European countries and Arab ones (Ghadban, 2020). This is why language competence is not the only tool to avoid intercultural communication challenges (Barmeyer, 2012, p. 85).

Sometimes it is even more effective to develop other skills for **effective transnational communication** that help to adapt and to react to the specific needs of the intercultural communication situation. It is not possible to discuss all skills that may be useful in such situations. In the following you will be introduced so some helpful skills for you as a volunteer working in an international project or wanting to start working internationally. Those skills focus on enhancing cultural awareness and on communication strategies.

Enhancing cultural awareness for transnational communication

When you, as a volunteer, encounter other internationally working volunteers, you will probably observe, interpret and judge what you see and experience on the basis of your cultural values. This approach is absolutely legitimate because it allows you to act and react intuitively and naturally to the circumstances given by that specific situation. Not having this internalized value system shared by all members your culture would be like driving without GPS. However, having this cultural orientation system carries the danger of taking it as universally granted. Intercultural encounters may be judged on the basis of the **value set of the own cultural background**.

Why can this be a risk for successful intercultural communication?

Here are some reasons:

- **Not realising** cultural differences may lead to misinterpretation of intercultural communication situations.
- **Not accepting** cultural differences may lead to reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices.

Underestimating cultural differences leads to assumptions of similarity. Assumptions of similarity can imply that the own cultural values and view of the world remain unquestioned, which may lead to respecting less the other culture.

These given reasons are the first three "ethnocentric" stages in Milton J. Bennett's understanding of the learning process towards more intercultural awareness (DMIS model by Bennett, 2017 and https://www.idrinstitute.org/dmis/). To bridge these ethnocentric stages helps to enhance transnational communication skills.

Try to figure out why by reflecting on the following intercultural communication situation.

Just take a minute to reflect: Imagine you are from a culture in which it is quite normal to express without hesitation your own opinion or to give and receive direct feedback. You have been working on a new international project for a few days with a new colleague from an Asian country. One day you have to give him or her some instructions. After checking back with your colleague if what you said was clear, your colleague nods the head and says yes. You expect that the task won't take longer than a few hours. But at the end of the day your colleague still hasn't come back to you. You enquire and notice that he or she has hardly started. You are quite furious because you relied on his or her input for the following stages of the project.

What went wrong?

Basis of the misunderstanding is the fact that both parts involved in the situation assumed to have the same verbal and non-verbal communication system. However, the nodding of the head and the verbal "yes" meant for one involved part "I understood", for the other "I have heard", which does not necessarily imply intellectually understanding the message.

What can be done to avoid the breakdown of communication?
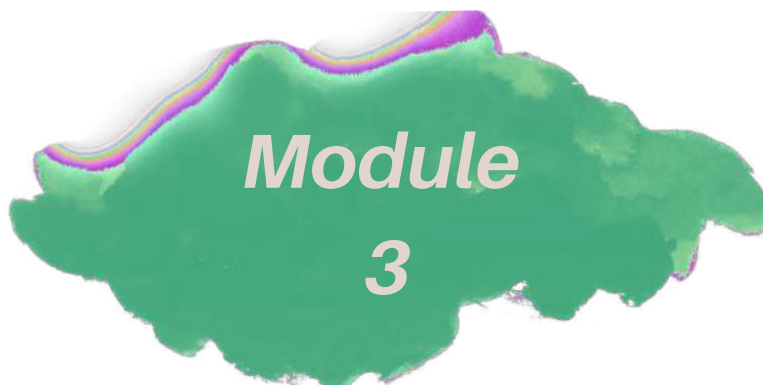
Probably a first step could be **accepting** that communication went wrong because there are cultural differences that lead to different understandings instead of blaming the other for having made a mistake. As a second step, both could **try to change their culturally given communication styles** for example by trying to read more between the lines on the one hand and trying to ask more for help (maybe by addressing other colleagues if preferred) on the other hand. The parties involved could also try to talk about the situation in a more informal setting, for example during a coffee break. This will help especially the partner from a low context culture to express an opinion.

After more practice and in the long run, maybe both parties of the example above may be able to switch from one communication style to another and **adapt and integrate** different communication strategies as varying intercultural situations require. This is what in the Milton J. Bennett model would be the highest stage of intercultural awareness. (See for the Model https://www.idrinstitute.org/dmis/; Barmeyer, 2012, p. 43)

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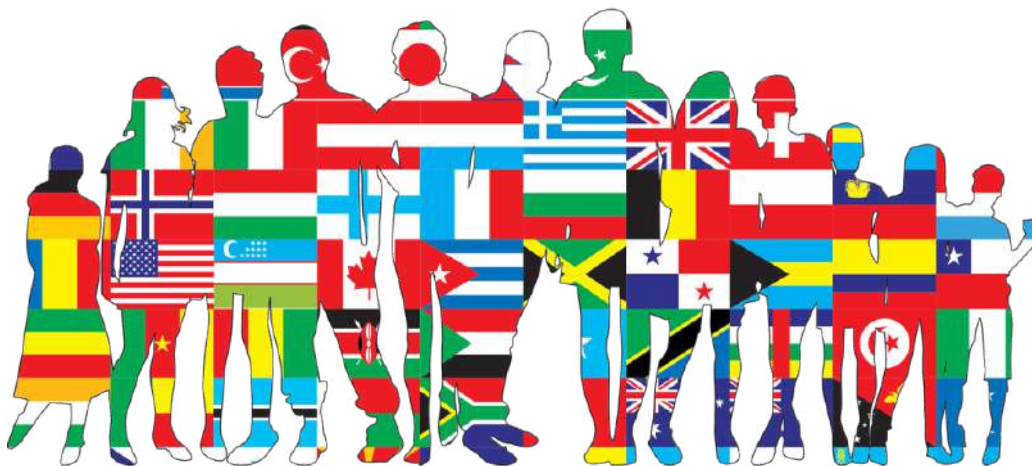
Tips for enhancing intercultural awareness in transnational communication

- Be open to new intercultural experiences.
- Expect to be surprised by new encounters.
- Reflect on your own cultural values.
- Be aware of your own personal attitude towards your cultural values.
- Detect behaviour and communication strategies in yourself and in others that are culturally bound.
- Question your behaviour and your communication strategies.
- Reflect on your own ways of thinking and on your opinions.
- Try to understand the cultural roots of time perception, display of status, family ties, friendship.
- In intercultural communication situations, try to take the perspective of your counterpart.
- Be interested in cultural norms and values of your culturally different counterpart.
- Listen carefully and give room to what your counterpart has to say even if this means taking a step back.
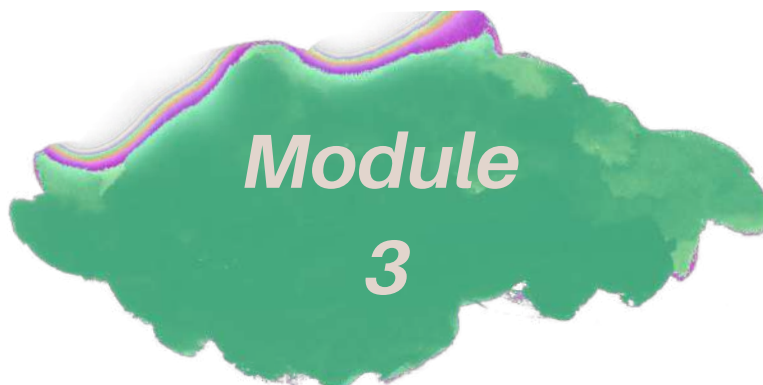
These tips may seem difficult to you to realise. The good news is that intercultural awareness is a learning process that can be trained.

Choosing adequate communication strategies

Just take a minute to reflect: Do you appreciate direct feedback and don't take it as criticism? Then you belong to the so called "low context cultures" preferring a direct communication style. Do you tend to elaborate constructions when requesting something from your counterpart? Then you may be a member of a culture that appreciates politeness strategies in order not to lose face.

To successfully communicate between cultures it is helpful to remember that there are cultural differences in the application of communication strategies. This can show, for example, in the way cultures express feedback and disagreement but also in the way they negotiate or deliver a presentation (Lüsebrink, 2016, p. 59), or even in different strategies of verbal politeness.
In the following you will learn about some communication skills that may be helpful in intercultural communication.
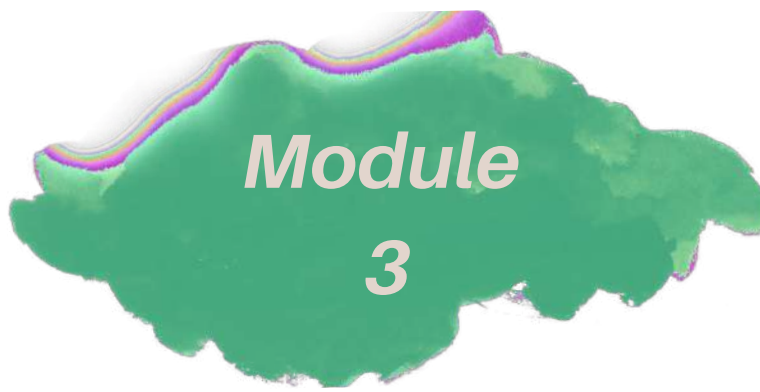
Adapt your communication style:
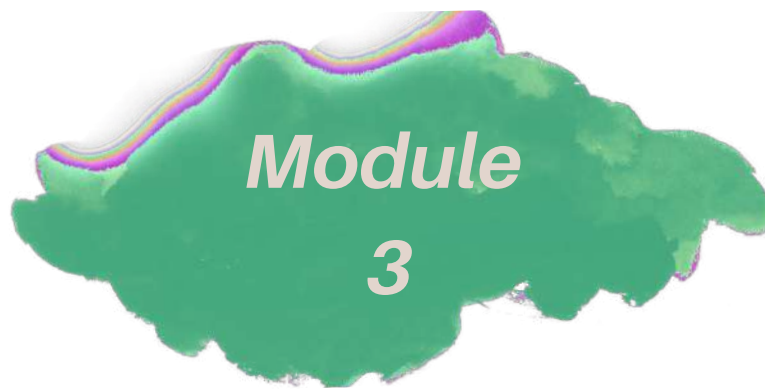
In transnational, intercultural communication misunderstandings may arise – independently of language competences – because counterparts may have different communication styles. How openly you tell your counterpart that you don't agree with him or her is a matter of culture. Some cultures allow their members to verbalise very openly their disagreement and members of these cultures feel comfortable and even appreciate receiving helpful feedback when they have made a mistake. Why is this so?

Cultures differ in the degree their members address specific topics in a more or less direct way. So called "**Low context cultures**" prefer a direct communication style. Members of these cultures rely on the literal meaning of word. "**High context cultures**" prefer an indirect communication style. In these cultures it is important to read between the lines and to observe non-verbal behaviour in order to grasp the entire meaning of the message.

Here are some characteristics of these communication styles:

High context cultures (by Edward T. Hall)	Low context cultures (by Edward T. Hall)
Covert, implicit messages – many contextual elements help people understand	Overt, explicit messages - little information has to be taken from the context
Much non-verbal communication	Less importance of non-verbal communication, more focus on verbal communication
Relationships more important than tasks	Task is more important than relationships

Here is a scale showing the relation of cultures between the poles "high context" and "low context", a concept developed by Edward T. Hall. The raking is not absolute, as depending on certain topic fields the same culture may have a more or less direct approach to it.

High context

Japan
Arab Countries
China
India
Turkey
UK
Australia
North America
Austria
German speaking countries

Low context

Tips for handling challenging situations in transnational communication

In transnational, intercultural communication it is helpful when you try to adapt your own communication style to that of your communication partners.

Especially when you are in a situation in which you make suggestions, communicate decisions, give instructions or feedback chose carefully your phrases and words.
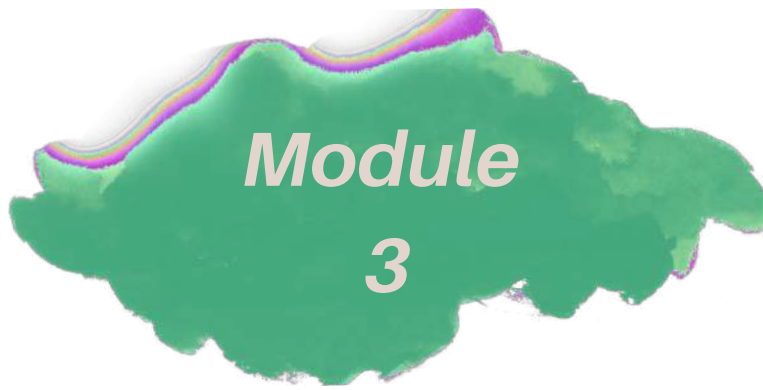
Try to adapt to the politeness strategies of your counterparts. As member of a low context culture you may be used to less "empty phrases" that have the primary goal of engaging your counterpart in a topic.

Listen actively:

In transnational, intercultural communication misunderstandings may arise – independently of language competences – because the counterparts simply assume they have understood what has been said.

Why don't they double-check the understanding?
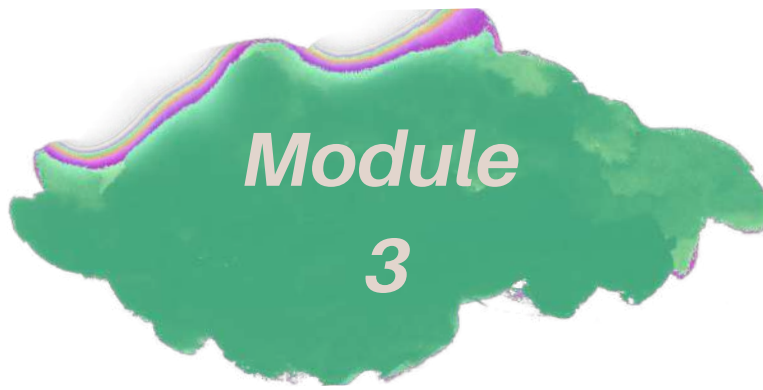
Here are some reasons:

- Trying to really understand the meaning of your counterpart's words can be hard work. Making assumptions about the meaning is less exhausting because **familiar schemes for interpretation** can be used.
- Trying to really understand the meaning of your counterpart's words can be quite time consuming. Making **assumptions** of the meaning is quicker.
- Trying to really understand the meaning of your counterpart's words can imply that you **may have to modify your opinions**. That may be disturbing.
- Trying to really understand the meaning of your counterpart's words can imply that you can't say your favourite sentence because it wouldn't fit to the context. This could mean that **you may have to step back and think anew.**

However, there may also be cultural reasons that lead to assuming a specific meaning. Depending on the cultural background, having to admit you haven't understood a statement can mean loss of face for both the recipient of the message and the sender. The recipient feels ashamed of him- or herself and for the counterpart, because he or she causes the inconvenience of making the other reframe the message. The sender may lose face because he or she wasn't able to be clear enough, causing the other to ask. Certainly this behaviour can be best observed in Asian cultures, like the Chinese. But also in some European cultures, in communication situations where the counterparts have a different status in terms of hierarchy, similar tendencies can be observed.

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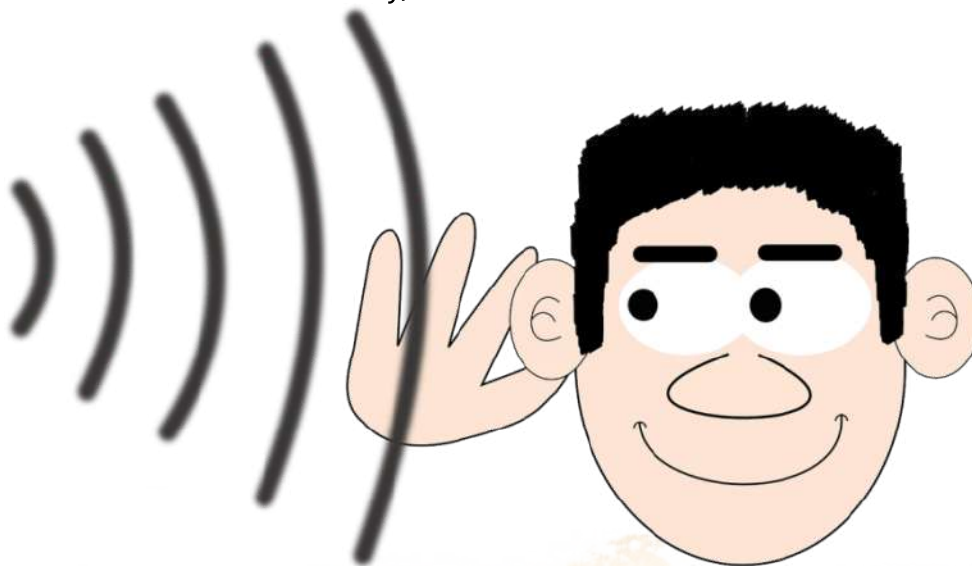
Tips for active listening in transnational communication

- Listen carefully without interrupting your counterpart.
- Observe yourself. Do you feel the need to say something while your counterpart is still speaking? Wait till your counterpart has finished.
- Try to rephrase with your own words what you have understood. If you are worried about making the other lose face, rephrasing may be a way of compromise.
- Try to adopt the perspective of the situation your counterpart has. This helps to understand his or her views.
- Even if your cultural background may not allow for it, try asking questions to understand on the content-level and on the emotional level.

Pay attention to hidden agents

In transnational, intercultural communication misunderstandings may arise – independently of language competences – because counterparts aren't used to reading hidden messages. These may be transferred by non-verbal elements like gestures, mimic and intonation (for the verbal part see the section above on high and low context cultures) or other meaningful symbols (see also "Challenges in Intercultural communication" [LINK to section above])

Why is it difficult to notice such hidden agents?

Here are some reasons:

- **Some cultures may be used more than others** to applying hidden agents. Consequently it is easier for them than for others to identify them.
- Even if cultures are used in applying hidden agents those agents may have **different meanings** (smiling in European and Asian cultures).

Sometimes it can be a **question of personal attitude**. There is always a risk to either under- or overestimate meaning in communication and over- or under interpret meaning in communication.

Tips for handling challenging situations in transcultural communication

- Be aware that the volume of voice and speed of speech rate can be culturally determined and can therefore lead to misunderstandings in transcultural communication. To avoid this, observe your communication partners and adapt to their volume and speaking habits.

- Be aware that gestures and gesticulating are also used differently in cultures. Gestures may have a precise meaning in one culture that may be different in another. Also, gesticulating can lead to intercultural misunderstandings. Some cultures which are not used to gesticulating may misunderstand it as a form of emotional display they are not used to.

- Observe if you recognize recurring verbal or non-verbal modes of interaction, like phrases and strategies of politeness, verbal (titles) or material attributes (medals) or any other kind of symbols.

Like learning a new language, transnational intercultural communication is a learning process during which you will notice your own progress by constantly practicing being aware of your own communication habits. This willingness towards enhancing your own potential will make it easier for you to open up for new challenging and interesting intercultural encounters. Try to keep in mind: Wanting to understand your counterpart is an attitude you can acquire.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES
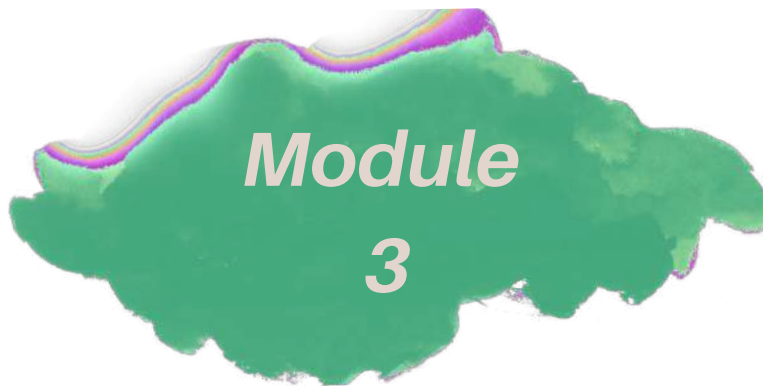
Barmeyer, C. (2012). *Taschenlexikon Interkulturalität*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Basic notions on Intercultural Communication

Bennett, M. (2017). Development model of intercultural sensitivity. In: Y. Kim, ed., *International encyclopedia of intercultural communication*. Wiley: Wiley Online Library. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318430742_Developmental_Model_of_Intercultural_S ensitivity/citation/download [Accessed 1.5.2020]
Model showing the steps towards more intercultural awareness and sensitivity

Ghadban, R. (2020). *Arabische Clans: die unterschätzte Gefahr*. Berlin: Ullstein.
Family structures in Arab culture

Hall, E. (1966). *The Hidden Dimension*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday
Discussion of cultural dimensions

Lüsebrink, H.-J. (2016). *Interkulturelle Kommunikation. Interaktion, Fremdwahrnehmung, Kulturtransfer*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler.
Basic notions on Intercultural Communication

Pease, A. and Pease, B. (2013). *Die kalte Schulter und der warme Händedruck: ganz natürliche Erklärungen für die geheime Sprache unserer Körper*. Berlin: Ullstein.

Thomas, A. (2005). Interkulturelle Wahrnehmung, Kommunikation und Kooperation. In: A. Thomas, E.-U. Kinast, S. Schroll-Machl, S., ed., *Handbuch Interkulturelle Kommunikation und Kooperation*, Bd. 1., 2. Aufl., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Contributions to intercultural communication and cooperation.

https://www.idrinstitute.org/dmis/ [Accessed 26.6.2020]
Model towards more cultural awareness and sensitivity

http://www.payer.de/kommkulturen/kultur043.htm [Accessed 10.7.2020]
Non-verbal communication – Proxemic – Intercultural Communication
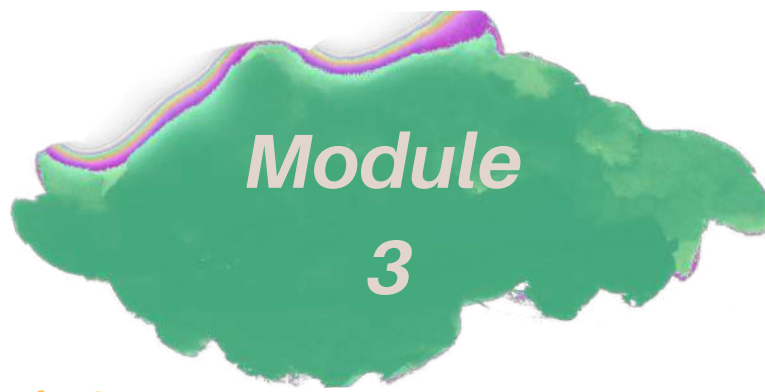
Learning Unit 3

CATEGORY

Intercultural communication in transnational work.

SHORT DESCRIPTION

TRAINING CONTENT

Intercultural Conflict Management

Introduction

Take just a minute to reflect: What do you think: are misunderstandings between people from different countries always a question of culture?
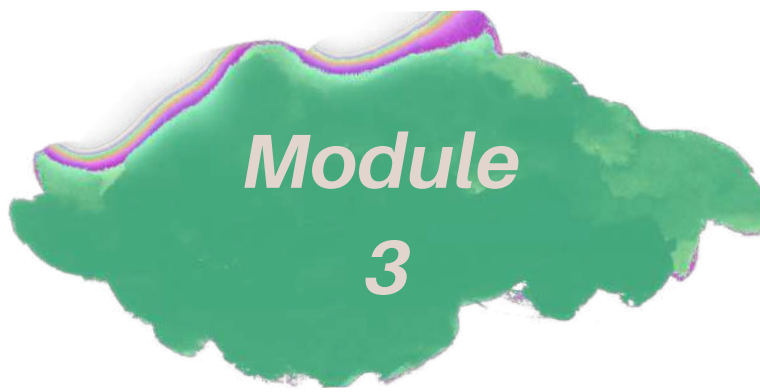
Each person has his or her own set of values, norms, beliefs and attitudes which are due to his or her cultural background. These elements are part of our orientation system and help us to understand the world we live in. They guide our perception of the world around us. So, depending on our own culture, we will interpret other people's visible behaviour differently. It is like having our own cultural glasses through which what we see becomes more or less strange, or more or less acceptable to us.

However, how we act and react is not always deducible from our cultural background only. Our actions are always influenced by

- individual,
- situational and
- cultural aspects.
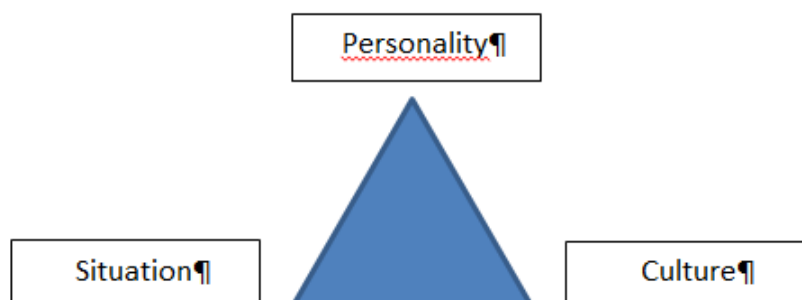
(see for the attribution triangle: Fachstelle für Internationale Jugendarbeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e.V., n.d.)

When we try to understand why a misunderstanding with somebody from another country happened, we should consider all three aspects by asking:

- Can I attribute the reason for the misunderstanding to the counterpart's different culture?
- Was the misunderstanding maybe influenced by the situation (stress, anxiety etc.)?
- Or was the misunderstanding rather due to the counterpart's personality?

Asking the questions helps to single out and focus on one aspect facilitating the understanding of its role in the whole situation (https://www.austausch-macht-schule.org/materialien/ikus).

Just take minute to reflect: Imagine you have your weekly project meeting. You are all working on the application for an international project. As usual the meeting starts and everybody is chatting about this and that, maybe also about some tasks lately done for the application. Suddenly your team member from a German speaking country, who entered the room only shortly before and who seems to be rather upset, becomes quite agitated and shouts: "So now we should really start talking about the application. These meetings are always a waste of time!"

To what aspect do you attribute the behaviour of the team member: cultural, individual or situational?

You could perhaps think that the behaviour is due to team member's culture. In German speaking countries, meetings are there to talk about the topics related to the agenda of the meeting. Time is precious and "wasting" time maybe with some introductory small talk can be a cause of dissatisfaction. In this case, however, the upset state of the team member when entering the room could also induce to another interpretation. The outburst could also be attributed to a stressful situation on a personal level.

Stumbling blocks in Intercultural Communication

When culture is the basis of the conflict, then it is the cultural behaviour of at least one of the counterparts which makes the other feel uncomfortable, irritated and even hurt, thereby causing emotional reactions (Barmeyer, 2012, 34).
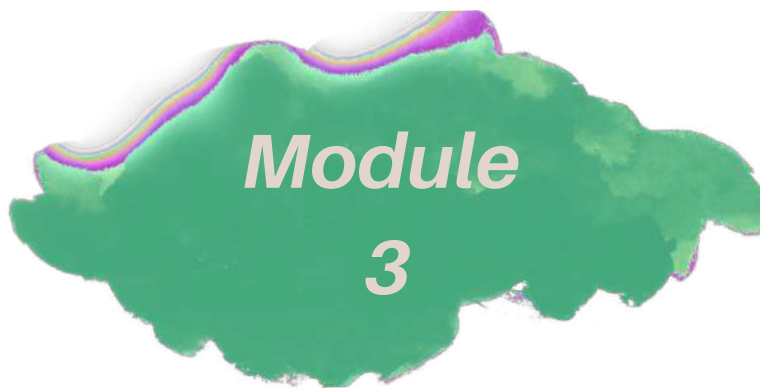
Intercultural conflict "is defined […] as the perceived and/or actual incompatibility of values, expectation, processes, or outcomes between two or more parties from two or more cultures over substantive and/or relational issues" (Ting-Toomey, 1994, 360). Not all situations of intercultural miscommunication lead necessarily to a conflict. However if misunderstandings remain unclarified in the long run they can evolve into an interpersonal conflict (Ting-Toomey, 1994, 360). According to Barmeyer (2012, 34), in contrast to intracultural conflicts, intercultural conflicts often are characterized (at least originally) by the will and readiness of the parties involved to communicate. This means that involved parties do not avoid communication. On the contrary, the involved parties often communicate, but this happens "intuitively", according to the own communicative habits and unaware of the elements that may lead to a conflict in an intercultural communication situation.
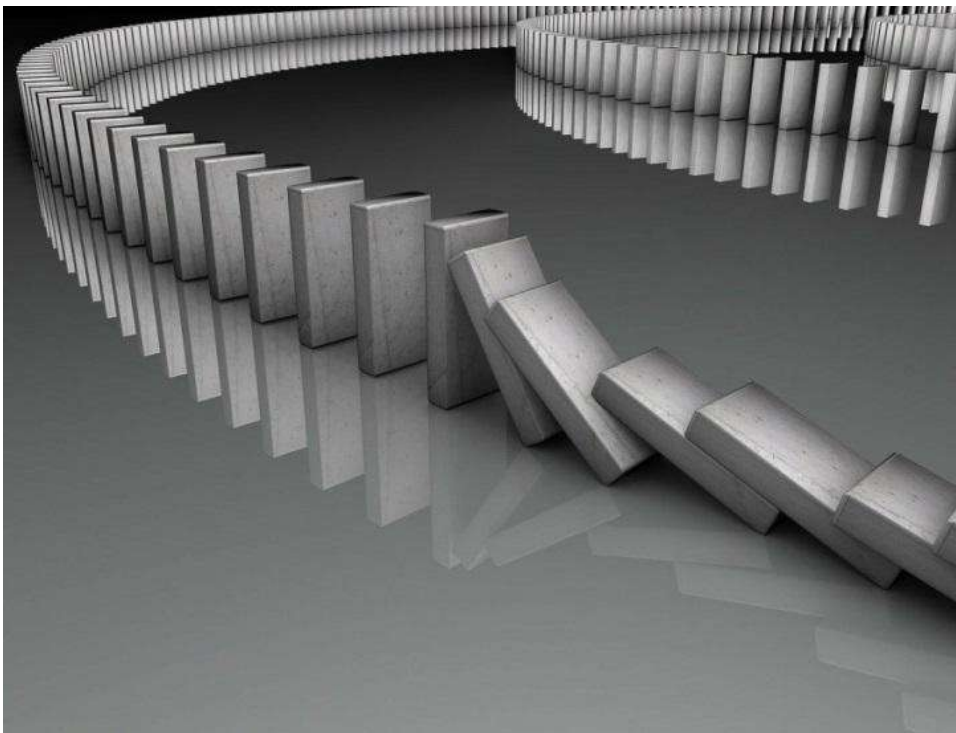
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Which are the elements that may lead to a conflict situation?

LaRay M. Barna (1991, pp. 345f.) identified six stumbling blocks that may lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings:

- Assumption of Similarities: The fact that humans have biological and social needs in common doesn't mean that we all share the same set of values and attitudes.
- Language Differences: Not to speak the "same" language can also refer to a different communication style, choice of words or attribution of meaning to the words. These language barriers may exist even when counterparts share one common language.
- Nonverbal Misinterpretations: Gestures and other body movements can be equally as meaningful as verbal language. Not being able to read them can lead to a communication barrier.
- Preconceptions and Stereotypes: Stereotypes reduce the complexity of our world and help us to orientate ourselves. But they also can lead to a biased view of the world around us.
- Tendency to Evaluate: It lies in human nature to approve and disapprove of opinions, values, behaviour or to judge about the righteousness of something.
- High Anxiety: stress often leads to defence mechanisms that hinder the appropriate interpretation of a certain situation.

Especially if one of the involved parties does not meet the expectations that exist due to the cultural values, beliefs, norms and communicative habits of the counterpart, a conflict can easily arise [see Iceberg Model Unit 1 LINK]. The root of a conflict can often be explained by considering the different culture-specific manifestations of cultural dimensions [see Dimensions Unit 1 LINK].

Conflict strategies

Just take a minute to reflect: Imagine you work on a project together with other members of your volunteer organization. Although you all agree on the fact that it is important for your organization to look for new international contacts, you strongly disagree on the strategy how to approach new international organisations. Do you think that going through a conflict can be a way of finding a suitable solution? Or is a conflict only endangering the social harmony of your peer-group?

How cultures approach a conflict situation depends very much on how conflicts are perceived and valued in that culture. There are more individualistic cultures (like Germanic cultures) that foster a "positive" attitude towards a conflict. That means that in the perception of those cultures a conflict can be beneficial to the development of the situation if appropriately tackled. These cultures may see the reasons of a conflict rather in misunderstandings about beliefs, topics, goals, matter of things etc. Other cultures, like collectivist Asian ones, experience a conflict as an interference in established relationships threatening the harmonious social coexistence. These cultures feel that the cause of a conflict lies more in a disturbed group atmosphere and relationship (Kammhuber, 2005, p. 298f.; Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 364)
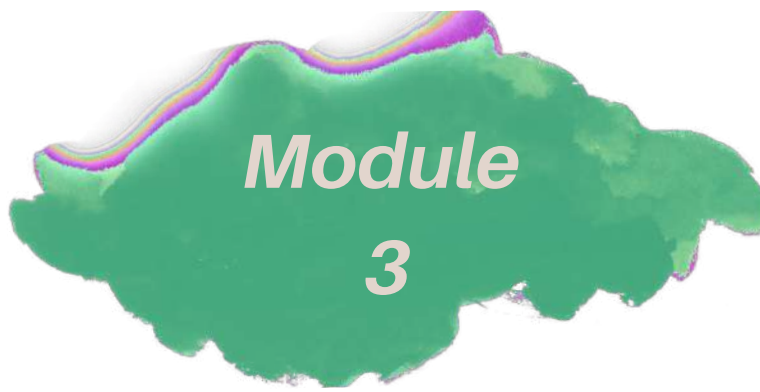
How a conflict is handled has also much to do with the understanding of the "self" that is construed and perceived differently according to the own cultural background. In some more individualistic cultures, individuals see themselves as agents, as the ones who decide over a situation and their own actions. In these cultures, the self is autonomous (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 361) - the individual ("I") stands over the group ("we"). In more collectivistic cultures individuals define themselves over group relationships. They build up their identity as a "connected self" (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 361). This means that they see each other as interrelated and focus on their common needs. In these cultures the group ("we") stands above the individual ("I").

Based on these conditions, individualistic cultures may rather pursue strategies of "verbal offence and defense, to justify one's position, to clarify one's opinion, to build up one's credibility, to articulate one's emotions, and to raise objections if one disagrees with someone else's proposal" (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 367). Those cultures are strongly solution oriented. Collectivist cultures, on the other hand, will rely more on indirect verbal messages (for example metaphors, changing topics), non-verbal signs and silence to show, for example, hesitation or uncertainty.

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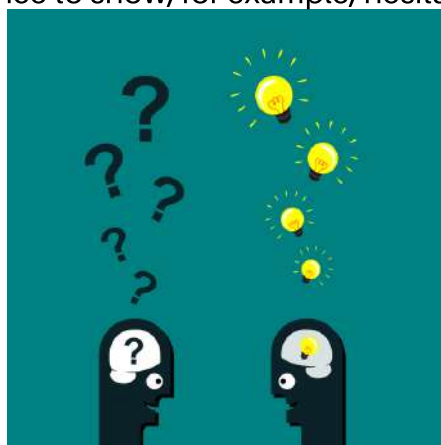
Conflict prevention

Just take a minute to reflect: Imagine this situation: You work with your team on the application for an international project. Your team consists of people from Austria, Italy, Spain and Greece. Submission is in a month's time. However you see the risk that the deadline will not be met. What can you do?

In order to identify conflicts in general, and intercultural conflicts especially, the challenge is to recognize early the conditions and situations in which conflicts can arise. As already mentioned, conflicts often arise because expectations are not fulfilled. You know that because of their cultural background your team has different understandings about time management and the importance of personal relationships. In this situation it will be helpful to have a meeting with all project partners. During this meeting try to establish trust and rapport to Italian, Spanish and Greek partners. Strengthening the personal relationship will help them to commit to the partnership and give you more assurance that the partners deliver on time. Prepare clear material to hand out. It should contain information about timelines, goals, project administration. This will give your German and Austrian partner enough assurance about the project schedule and content in order to being able to focus on the tasks.
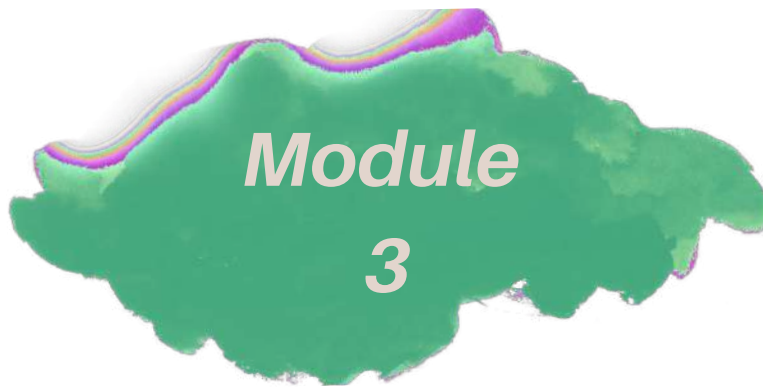
Perhaps you ask yourself, what are the signs of a latent intercultural conflict?

They probably aren't very much different from those between members of the same culture. So this could be lack of reliability, smaller "mishaps", hostilities towards colleagues and the like (see also https://www.umsetzungsberatung.de/konflikte/konfliktpraevention.php).

Here are some tips about what you personally can do to avoid intercultural conflict
- Actively observe the situation
- Try to remember that different cultures may interpret the same situation quite differently
- Don't judge the observed behaviour but try to understand it
- Listen actively and try to be culturally neutral
- Try to understand the values, beliefs and attitudes of other cultures by changing perspectives
- Establish rapport by finding out commonalities
- Save face – Respect others and make yourself respected
- Develop WIN-WIN solutions

(For this section see also Ting-Toomey, 2001, who describes it in a similar way).

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In summary: Like in conflict situations with members of your culture, it is also best to take a communicative approach when dealing with intercultural conflict. Be open, address the matter before the issue reaches the deeper layers and solidifies. Accept that when it comes to discussing values there is no real "right" or "wrong" – it is in most cases a question of culturally based perspective and judgement that may be different from your own.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Barmeyer, C. (2012). *Taschenlexikon Interkulturalität*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Basic notions on Intercultural Communication

Barna, L. M. (1991). Stumbling blocks in Intercultural Communication. In: L.A. Samovar, and E. Porter, ed., *Intercultural Communication*. *A Reader*, 6th ed., Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, pp. 345-353.
The author lists a number of challenges in intercultural communication and explains their reasons.

Kammbuber, S. (2005). Interkulturelles Konfliktmanagement und Mediation. In: A. Thomas, E.-U. Kinast, S. Schroll-Machl, *Handbuch interkulturelle Kommunikation und Kooperation*, Vol. 1, 2nd ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, pp. 297-306.
This article gives some information about how the involved parties assess, perceive and manage intercultural conflicts according to their cultural background.

Ting-Toomey, S. (1994). Managing Intercultural Conflicts Effectively. In: L. Samovar and R. Porter, ed., *Intercultural Communication. A Reader*. 7th ed., Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 360-372.
This article shows the importance of the cultural dimension "Individualism – Collectivism" when it comes to finding reasons for different approaches to conflict solution.

Ting-Toomey, S. (2001). *Managing intercultural conflict effectively*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
This book helps to understand the cultural basis of intercultural conflicts by applying theory to practical examples.
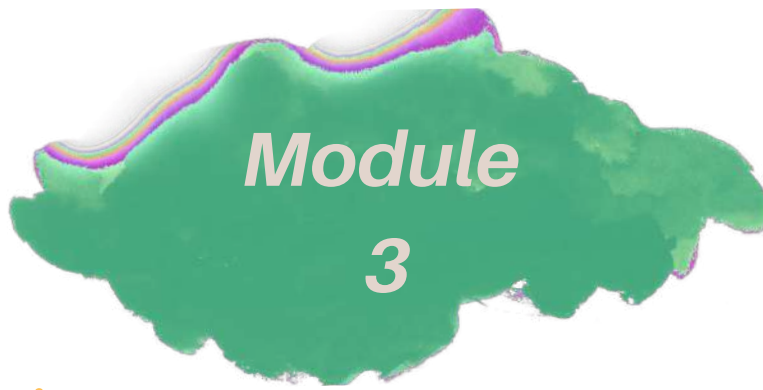
https://www.austausch-macht-schule.org/materialien/ikus
[Accessed 10.7.2020] [Link to pdf, but how????]
This pdf contains helpful topics about intercultural learning and its challenges

https://www.umsetzungsberatung.de/konflikte/konfliktpraevention.php [Accessed 10.7.2020]
Interesting website on conflict prevention written from somebody coming from the business field.

Learning Unit 4

CATEGORY

Intercultural Communication in Transnational Work

SHORT DESCRIPTION

TRAINING CONTENT

Working on the intercultural image of the organisation

Why should you as a volunteer organisation work on the image of your organisation?

A positive image is important to be successful. As a volunteer organisation you don't need to "sell" a product, but you will have to make yourself known as an organisation and in this role present your ideas, your values and goals. There may be other volunteer organisations with a similar mission from which it is important to differentiate to become more visible. You might want to get more members, bind existing ones, raise more funding, increase the amount of donations and have more active partners. Maybe you even look for other organisations to work with. With a positive image it will be easier to reach these goals. [Link Unit 1] (See also Missoni and Alesani, 2014, pp. 365 and 368f.)

Information, facts and emotions circulating in various on-line and off-line media channels and connected to the image of a certain organisation are often perceived intuitively. Organisations feel that they may not have control over how their organisational image is perceived by others. This is why they naturally wish to channel their own public perception and why they put quite some effort in strategies to lead the perception in a wished direction.

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What is the "image" of an organisation?

Just take a minute to reflect: What do you associate with WWF, Greenpeace or UNICEF? What kind of emotions come up when you hear the names of these associations? Can you remember their logo? Do you associate particular tag lines, symbols or colours?

All the elements you may have associated with these organisations are part of their image. In the following we will discuss some helpful items for the work on the image of your organisation.

According to some the organisational image is "The perception people have of your business when they hear your company name. A business's image is composed of an infinite variety of facts, events, personal histories, advertising and goals that work together to make an impression on the public." https://www.entrepreneur.com/encyclopedia/image

The image, in other words, is what others associate with a company's name. Companies actively work on their image in order to model it according to their vision to be more successful by better meeting the expectations of the target group.

In many cases it seems probably more natural to think of an organisational image referred to a company and its marketing strategies (Missoni, 2014, 368f.). But also non-profit organisations have an "image". Randomly asked people would probably easily be able to answer the question "What do you associate with WWF, Greenpeace or UNICEF?" thus giving an idea of what they intuitively think of these well-known non-profit organisations.

One of the most well known public images is that of the "International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies", which is the umbrella organisation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies. The colours red and white are the same for all organisations, but the symbols differ according to the cultural background of the localised organisations. Colours and symbols together have a high recognition value.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

https://www.drk.de/en/the-grc/partners-of-the-grc/the-international-red-cross/

Grafik / IFRC

Why should you adapt the image of your organisation to cultural premises?

Just take a minute to reflect: Imagine you would like to start an information campaign for your new volunteer project. You personally like the colours orange and green. Green because it remembers you of the colours of nature, and orange because you associate it with positive energy. Most probably most Western Europeans would have the same associations with these colours. But then your colleague tells you, that for him being of Muslim religion green is a religious colour. Would you still want to use this colour for your campaign?

Colours have a cultural background and they are one of the speaking elements in many communication strategies of organisations. When creating the image of your organisation you should be aware of cultural signals like in the example.

When it comes to establishing long-term relationships in business, it is said that trust "is a key variable when structuring and developing any relational exchange" (Usunier and Lee, 2005, p. 495). According to Usunier and Lee (2005, p. 481), credibility is the basis for trustworthiness in business relations.

However, trust can be withdrawn. In an international context, one of the reasons for this is that cultural differences lead to mistrust (Usunier and Lee, 2005, p. 495).

In fact, from an intercultural point of view, trust has much to do with finding similarities in people from other cultures. Just think of this quote "when people are like each other, they tend to like each other" (Tony Robbins). When we discover sameness in views, beliefs, values etc. – when we seem to share a common culture - we naturally trust because we do not perceive elements of otherness. [LINK Unit 3 Module 1]

https://pixabay.com/de/images/download/railway-1758208_1920.jpg?attachment&modal (16.7.2020)

Interestingly, the importance of trust as a value in the business world builds a link to your work.

For you as a volunteer or non-profit organisation wanting to internationalise it is highly important to be perceived from the outside as trustworthy and coherent in values in order to be able to reach, for example, stakeholders, partners, volunteers and donors. This is why you should be clear about which elements contribute to a positive image of your organisation.

It may be interesting for you as an organisation wanting to establish international contacts to reflect in which way you could mold your intercultural image enhancing at the same time your credibility and trustworthiness of your work. Although you may be hesitant in applying to your organisation similar strategies as profit-organisations, because you may see them as a contradiction to you social ideals and humanitarian values, it may be helpful to cast a glance at those approaches.

How can you work on your intercultural image?

How to build a public image, is a vast topic which cannot be treated here in its due completeness. What we do here is to give some tips and starting points for further reflection.

1. **Enhance Trust**: "If actions are inconsistent with the declared values and mission, this will result in a negative image in the long run" (Missoni and Alesani, 2014, p. 370).

   So work on the definition of your values and work on your mission as a volunteer organisation. Ask yourself the questions Missoni and Alesani (2014, p. 370) suggest:

   - "What are the essential characteristics of the organisation and its mission?
   - What are its values, social positioning, expertise and qualities?
   - What are the internal and external representations of the organisation?
   - Which are the elements that make the organisation and its expertise unique?
   - Does the organisation's identity correspond to the externally perceived image?"

   In relation to your intercultural image ask yourself:
   - Which elements relevant to the image are culturally especially important?
   - Are culturally relevant messages communicated clearly enough to be perceived also by partners from other cultures?
   - Do our messages signal respect and appreciation of diversity?
   - How accessible is our organisation for those with physical and mental handicaps?

2. Be transparent, be accountable (Missoni and Alesani, 2014, pp. 228f. and p. 374): To see what this implies check the International Non-Governmental Organisations Accountability Charter https://s3.amazonaws.com/webprofile-ngos/Files/22/INGO-Accountability-Charter_en.pdf (accessed 20.7.2020).

There you will also see which elements are important to comply to when you want your organisation to answer for the values of transparency and accountability.

3. **Be visible**: Visibility is "the visual identity of an organisation" (Missoni and Alesani, 2014, p. 371). Elements of the visual identity should be:

- Recognisable
- Symbolic
- Coherent
- Unique
- Applied systematically to all element of the visual identity.
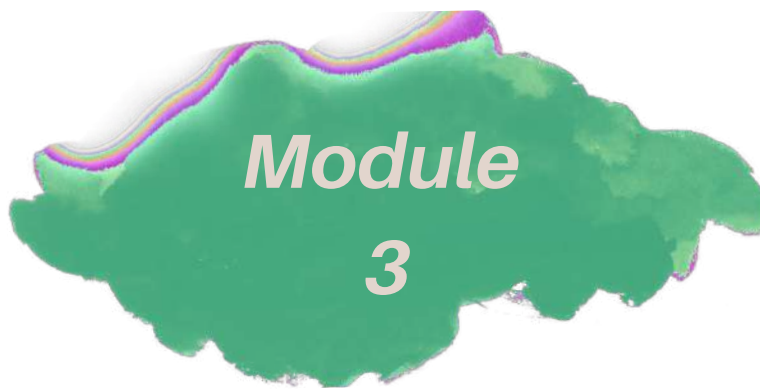
A logo, social colours and a font system are elements that contribute to the creation of a visible identity (Missoni and Alesani, 2014, p. 371).

From an intercultural point of view, please remember that the elements contributing to the visible identity of your organisation can be interpreted differently according to the culture-specific perception.

Which elements should be handled with care from an intercultural point of view?

- Colours: colours may have different meanings in different cultures. Here are some examples (Usunier and Lee, 2013, p. 265)

Colour	Country /Culture	Meaning
White	Western cultures	Purity
	Asian cultures	Death
Red	African culture	Mourning
	Chinese Culture	Luck
Violet	Some Western and South American Catholic Cultures	Mourning
	United states	Honour

- ○ Sounds and naming: When choosing the name of your organisation, take into account that not all sound combinations are equally pronounceable for speakers from other countries. If your organisation already has a name, be prepared to hear an unusual pronunciation.

If you look for a name for your organisation which should work internationally, here are some tips (Usunier and Lee, 2013, p. 350f.; Luthe, 1994, p.88f.):

- ▪ Be careful to choose sound combinations easy to articulate for most speakers.
- ▪ Choose rather short words which are easy to remember.
- ▪ If you opt for an acronym, make sure it is one that works also for speakers from other cultures.
- ▪ Check double meanings in other languages.
- ▪ Consider that not all speakers are used to the same reading direction. Speakers used to the Latin alphabet read from left to right, Arabic cultures, for example, are used from right to left. The same is true for the interpretation of images or symbols.

4. **Create your network**: Networking is important for enhancing your visibility and making you known as volunteer organisation (Missoni and Alesani, 2014, p. 373). How can you let your international network grow?

- ○ Look for organisations working internationally either in your country or abroad with similar interests and values.
- ○ Think of the best way to contact interesting organisations. Different cultures have preferred ways of communication. Some, for example some Mediterranean countries, may prefer personal, verbal communication more than others.
- ○ Look for public events where you can meet stakeholders.
- ○ Organise an event where you can meet people with similar interests.

For more tips please look here https://www.fundsforngos.org/featured-articles/7-steps-for-ngos-to-build-a-network/ and https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-591/COMMUNICATION%20AND%20NETWORKING%20FOR%20NGOs.htm

In summary: Working on the intercultural image is a process you can shape. Once the image circulates in the world your influence on it is restricted. So be mindful of how you shape it. The elements discussed above will help you to find your way to internationalisation.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Luthe, D. (1994). *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit für Nonprofit-Organisationen. Eine Arbeitshilfe.* Augsburg: MaroVerlag.
Older, but still valid guide on public relations in the non-profit field.

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A comprehensive overview over culture related topics in marketing theory.

Usunier, J.-C. and Lee, J.A. (2013). *Marketing across cultures.* 6th ed., Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.
A comprehensive overview over culture related topics in marketing theory.

https://s3.amazonaws.com/webprofile-ngos/Files/22/INGO-Accountability-Charter_en.pdf

[Accessed 20.7.2020]

Charter developed and signed by the members of Accountable Now (www.accountablenow.org) , a membership helping other non-profit organisations in being transparent and accountable.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/encyclopedia/image

[Accessed 23.7.2020]

Online encyclopedia for business

https://www.drk.de/en/the-grc/partners-of-the-grc/the-international-red-cross/

[Accessed 23.7.2020]

Homepage of the German Red Cross Society.

https://www.fundsforngos.org/featured-articles/7-steps-for-ngos-to-build-a-network/

[Accessed 23.7.2020]

A platform for gathering information about possible fundraising. It offers also tools how to write proposals, network etc.

https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-591/COMMUNICATION%20AND%20NETWORKING%20FOR%20NGOs.htm

[Accessed 23.7.2020]

Homepage of Salto Youth, a project by the European Union - working within the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes offering support, advanced learning and training opportunities for the younger generations.

Learning Unit 1

CATEGORY

CTV – Quality in Eu projects

SHORT DESCRIPTION

This section will explain to you what is quality in European project and why it's important to perform it. The motto of the module is: MAKE A QUALITATIVE LEAP

TRAINING CONTENT

Quality is something that is quite clear to everyone as a general concept but is hard to define as a principle and as an operative tool to design good projects. In this chapter, we will study the concept of quality and we will learn how it can be applied to European projects.

Enrico Genovesi© Progetto FIAF-CSVnet "Tanti per tutti. Viaggio nel volontariato italiano"

Before starting it's important to define how we use the term quality in daily life, according to a google definition quality is a noun that indicates:

1. The standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something.

2. A distinctive attribute or characteristic possessed by someone or something.

Already from those two definitions, we can underline two important elements of quality: **The measurement, the concept of excellence, a distinctive attribute.**

In a project, quality can be defined as:

"a product or service that can **perform satisfactorily** and **is suitable** for its intended purpose."

So, starting with this definition, we see that to define quality we need a clear understanding of what we want to do. We need to know the **goals** we have to reach, **the results** we want to produce and the **target** we need to affect by our project. Two other important variables must be considered: The amount of **time** we have and the number of **resources** we can use. It's not possible to define the quality of a project if these elements are not clear, and at the same time, we can say there is no quality without a good project plan and structure.

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

A few assumptions before starting

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Before starting to describe quality, we have to address two important assumptions.

First assumption: A European project is first of all a project

This means that all the elements that are important for a local project are still valid for the international context. Needs analysis, definition of goals, results, work packages, actions, tasks, risk analysis, and other steps are important for a local project as well as for international collaborations.

Second assumption: you perform quality for "a better world", people must benefit from the quality of your project.

Starting from the idea that every project is designed to add a positive change in our world we can analyze who the main players. n each project funded by the European Union we have two important players, three if we include you as a "partnership". **The sponso**r is normally the European Commission or any of these executive agencies, such as the EACEA or a National Agency for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. The sponsor is who is paying for your project, acts, in certain ways, as the client. **The targets** are the people or the groups toward which the project aims to create a positive change.

- The sponsor will check the quality of your project.

- The target will benefit from the quality of your project.

What is quality?

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It is necessary to define quality at this point. In projects, the role of **project quality management** is to define and refine the concept of quality for a product.

The quality triangle

The project management triangle (also called the triple constraint, iron triangle and project triangle) is a model of the constraints of project management which can help us to understand what quality is.

It contends that:

1. The quality of work is constrained by the project's budget, deadlines and scope (features).
2. The project manager can trade between constraints.
3. Changes in one constraint necessitate changes in others to compensate or quality will suffer.

For example, a project can be completed faster by increasing the budget or cutting scope. Similarly, increasing scope may require equivalent increases in budget and schedule. Cutting budget without adjusting schedule or scope will lead to lower quality.

SCOPE

Anyway, even if it helps us to understand quality as the balance between constraints. The Project Management Triangle is considered insufficient as a model of project success because it omits crucial dimensions of success including impact on stakeholders, learning and user satisfaction.

COST

TIME

Module 4

In this unit, we will see several instruments, theories and approaches to quality but it is also important to clarify that **quality** is also a dynamic concept that includes creativity, adaptability, context analysis and monitoring. Quality can also mean that you need to adapt the project as you go along due to changing circumstances. You also need to constantly monitor and adapt as necessary what you are measuring.

The quality infrastructure

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Once you have an idea of the different concepts and pillars of your project it's time to implement a **project quality management plan**, which is a document and a tool.

To do so you have to consider three tools.

Quality plan

First, identify the requirements for the quality of each deliverable and how the project needs to be managed to reach those requirements.

It's really important to describe the quality standards of your deliverables and to do that with your team and your target group if possible. To properly analyze and ensure the quality expectations of the project are met, it is necessary to set concrete objectives that the project should meet. You have to set up a series of indicators to accomplish during the project period.

Indicators and targets

An indicator is a **variable** that is normally used as a benchmark for measuring program or project outputs. It is "that thing" that we have to look to evaluate if our project is going in the right direction and if it having the right impact. It is based on indicators that evidence can be built on the impact of any undertaking.

> **You can also find this KPI – Who are they**
>
> **Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Definition**
>
> A Key Performance Indicator is a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively a company is achieving key business objectives. Organizations use KPIs at multiple levels to evaluate their success at reaching targets. High-level KPIs may focus on the overall performance of the business, while low-level KPIs may focus on processes in departments such as sales, marketing, HR, support and others.

There could be two different types of indicators: qualitative and quantitative.

On the one hand, quantitative indicators are those measurable inputs that will allow you to analyze the quality of the project. These indicators will be accomplished during the whole duration of the project implementation. On the other hand, we can find qualitative indicators, which cannot be measured quantitatively but also reflect the quality levels of the project activities and products.

The plan will include these specifics as well as metrics for measuring the quality while managing the project. This should include a quality checklist to collect and organize the marks you need to hit during the project.

The quality plan includes all the processes which are important to ensure you deliver appropriate products. The contents of the quality plan need to be **documented**, **agreed**, and **understood**. The plan should include the following information:

- your quality goals and objectives,
- the approach and quality processes to be followed,
- quality standards by which the project will be measured,
- the quality-related activities to be performed,
- the quality tools you will use,
- the quality roles and responsibilities you will deploy.

This quality plan becomes the road map for how the quality standards will be achieved.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance can be defined as "part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled." We have to assure the quality of our project with the different public, internally and externally.

Internally is the project team, externally refers to stakeholders, users and third parties.

Use quality assurance to make sure your processes are working towards making the project deliverables meet quality requirements. Two ways to accomplish this is by using a **process checklist** and a **project audit**.

Quality Control

To be sure and aware of the ongoing project is important to have control procedures, to speak, to share, to make sure that the rules are being followed and that the expected quality is being met. Some ways to ensure that the required quality of the deliverables is being achieved is through peer reviews and testing.

In a project, it is important to nominate someone responsible for this. The partner or the person reasonable for Quality control must keep track of the achievements and the possible delays. To perform the quality control quality plan and quality assurance are fundamental.
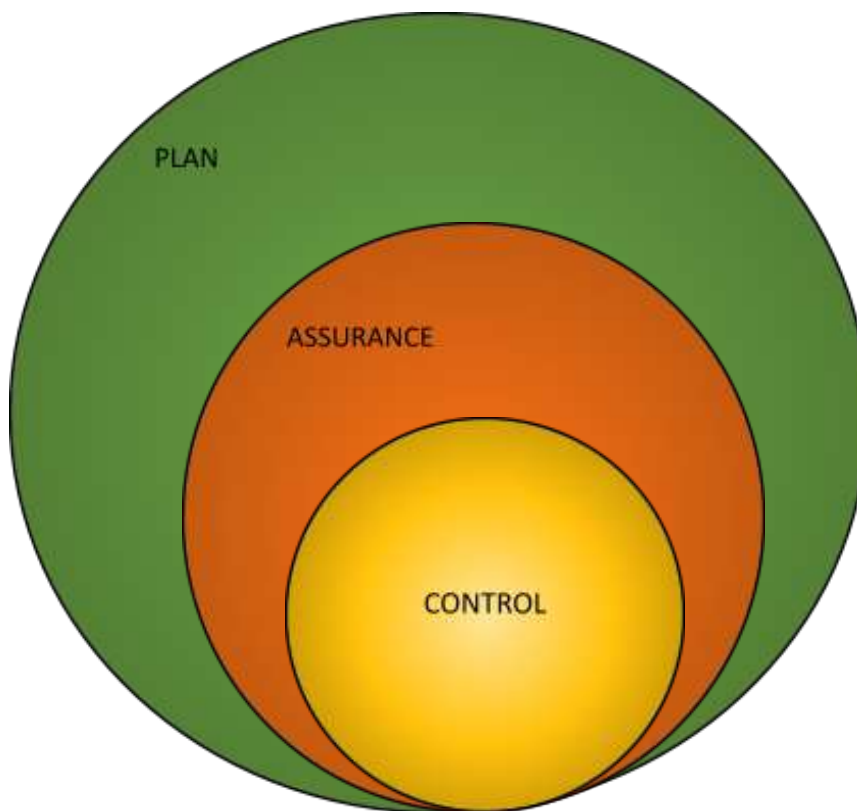
Quality is a goal but it's also a process. It's essential to check the quality of the deliverables during the project management process in order to adjust the deliverables if they're not meeting the standards that have been set. This can be done at the end of the project, but it's not as efficient to redo rather than to readjust.

Quality plan includes assurance that includes control.

Quality in project planning

Gianmaria Capuano© Progetto FIAF-CSVnet "Tanti per tutti. Viaggio nel volontariato italiano

Quality is not something that begins when the proposal gets approved, it's the balance of all your project activity. It starts in the ideation of the project and it ends with the follow-up.

Here are some tips about the things you should or should not do when it comes to creating a good quality European project:

1. Check your idea with the target group

The idea needs to be a solution to a problem, not just a theory. How did you find the problem and prepare?
 the solution? Checking with a small group of users if your idea could be an added value for your project implementation.

2. Keep the program guide always with you

One of the first quality criteria in your proposal is to be compliant with the grant requirements or the program guidelines.

3. Selecting the right partners

Partner selection is really important. Each partner must be essential. How did you choose them and why? That needs to be transparent and detailed in the proposal.

4. Consider expected outcomes in term of indicators

In the planning phase, it's important to design each outcome and to describe it using indicators. Those indicators will be useful to evaluate the achievement of the goals and the quality of the project.

5. Analyze the tasks

Each partner is going to have specific tasks. What will those tasks be and why are they given to each partner? How will you communicate? Do the partners have the knowledge, the skills and the attitude needed to implement the project?

6. Focus on communication and dissemination

Thorough communication is the key to a successful partnership. Your proposal must include every detail regarding communications between partners, trainers, and trainees as well as users in general. Dissemination of the results must also be considered and explained.

7. Explain your implementation strategy

A clear strategy about everything that will be happening during the implementation process of the project. This will be the most important point of the quality plan as it will show how the quality will be achieved.

8. Plan and manage the time properly

Knowing every step of the way, every hour that will be spent to implement your projects. Every little detail. Planning ahead will help you save a lot of time and of course, avoid any missteps or unexpected and unpleasant situations.

9. Assess and manage the Risk

A good quality assurance plan needs to be able to deal with the risks that might occur. Preparation is everything so make sure that your quality plan will analyze any possible risk and give solutions to every single one of those risks.

10. Do not spare any details

Even if you think that a specific detail might not be as important as others, include them anyway. Every detail counts. Do not make the mistake of thinking that excluding details might not hurt your quality assurance plan.

11. Do not forget to double-check

It is a common mistake to not double or even triple check the quality assurance plan. Yes, you spent long hours writing it and yes you made sure that all the details are correct but that does not mean that you should not check again and again.

Time management

Massimo Alfano© Progetto FIAF-CSVnet "Tanti per tutti. Viaggio nel volontariato italiano

As we know, a project is a series of actions in a limited amount of time. Accurate management of time is a key aspect of the quality of your project. We can describe time management as "the process of planning and exercising conscious control of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency or productivity."

In order to have good time management you need to:

In the **project planning** phase:

- plan in advance how much time you need for each task
- always assigns the maximum time possible for each task, be generous in allocation time better to be in advance than late
- use a Gantt chart to see all your actions in the project

> „A Gantt chart, or harmonogram, is a type of bar chart that illustrates a project schedule. This chart lists the tasks to be performed on the vertical axis, and time intervals on the horizontal axis. The width of the horizontal bars in the graph shows the duration of each activity. Gantt charts illustrate the start and finish dates of the terminal elements and summary elements of a project."
>
> From Wikipedia

In the **project management** phase:

- use your Gantt chart to track the schedule of the project but be aware that things change and you will surely have to set new internal deadlines, keep to milestone and be flexible in the internal organization of the work
- despite the uncertainty and changes, be clear with your partners and your users or target group that meeting deadlines is part of reliability
- the project manager and the quality group must track the compliance with deadlines and goals

In the **reporting** phase:

- if you alter your schedule during the project lifetime you will probably have to explain it to your donors. You will have to demonstrate why you had to change your plan and how you kept goals and quality standards.

Evaluation

Laura Mosso© Progetto FIAF-CSVnet "Tanti per tutti. Viaggio nel volontariato italiano

Evaluation is strictly related to quality. You can determine quality if you don't evaluate on a regular base your project. To ensure that all the quality priorities and indicators are met, an evaluation process must be carried out internally during the project duration. This process has to be detailed and to be evaluated and modified if required during the project lifetime.

More concretely, evaluation focuses on:

- Analyzing the different aspects included in this quality plan to ensure all indicators of achievement are accomplished.
- Production of specific tools to assess the project development, including internal questionnaires and tools to assess events and pilots. Some examples of questionnaires can be found in the toolbox.
- Drawing conclusions and making recommendations based on the indicators and the feedback collected from the evaluation.
- Implement any changes if deemed necessary.

Quality monitoring group

Roberto Testini© Progetto FIAF-CSVnet "Tanti per tutti. Viaggio nel volontariato italiano

To ensure all the monitoring actions are met by all partners in the consortium, one representative per partner organization will be included in the Quality Monitoring Team, composed by a Quality leader, outcome leaders (people in charge of specific deliverables) and other partners.

The Quality Leader is responsible to:
- Conduct the final evaluation questionnaire of deliverables.
- Ensure the deliverables are submitted within the deadlines.

Outcomes leaders are responsible to:
- Define the methodology to be implemented within the outcome.
- Lead and guide the other partners to perform the activities.
- Review inputs received from partners.
- Conduct the final review and proofread of deliverables.
- Ensure to deliver the document within the deadline.

Partners are responsible to:

- Perform activities on time and with specified quality.
- Review the final draft of the deliverables.

TOOLS

Mario Furlan© Progetto FIAF-CSVnet "Tanti per tutti. Viaggio nel volontariato italiano

Module 4

Now you have a general framework of what is quality and why it is important. As you have seen, quality is connected with all the aspects of your project and with all the subjects involved. It's a dynamic concept that needs to be tracked and evaluated constantly. For that reason, we suggest you some tools and instruments to assure quality in your project. We can find those tools in our CTV – Toolbox.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- https://www.klipfolio.com/resources/articles/what-is-a-key-performance-indicator

- https://www.projectmanager.com/blog/project-quality-management-quick-guide

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_management_triangle

-https://intercom.help/volunteerworld/en/articles/376437-how-to-guarantee-the-high-quality-of-volunteer-organizations

Learning Unit 1

CATEGORY

ICT tools for the implementation and management of European projects

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Projects, co-financed by the European Union, have become a sustainable element that supports economic and social development.

There is a variety of European programmes and project. It is really important to choose the right planning method and management of these undertakings.

TRAINING CONTENT

The range of available IT tools supporting project management is very large. Practically for each of the management areas there are at least a dozen or so alternatives available. These tools differ for example in functionality, the way they are shared (desktop programs installed on a personal computer) or license (various types of freeware, shareware, open-source, commercial).

Introduction to projects management systems

A project management system is a way to manage a project. Project management is planning, organizing and managing the various aspects required. Depending on the sophistication of the project management system, it can include: estimation activities, quality management, change control, resource allocation, scheduling, cost control, decision-making managing and budget management.

There are two categories of project management system: project management software applications (Monday, SLACK, AdminProject, Wrike, Trello etc.) and general software applications (spreadsheets, databases, graphic editing and word processing)

Benefits of project management:

- greater efficiency in service delivery,
- improvement, growth and greater customer satisfaction,
- greater efficiency in service delivery,
- improving growth and development among project participants,
- achieving a high market position; competitive advantage,
- the possibility of expanding and developing services,
- greater flexibility,
- better communication between individual project team members,
- increased quality,
- the application of project management standards allows people involved in project work to think creatively.

Planning project structure, methodology and resources

Project management is a process in which the project leader conducts targeted planning and control of project tasks and allocates the resources available to the project using appropriate techniques and methods in order to achieve the imposed requirements within a specified period and at a specified cost.

The Project Management Cycle Model (PMLC) is a set of processes that consists of:

- **Project Initiation** - The aim of the Initiation phase is to decide on the implementation of the project and to allocate the necessary resources for this purpose. In this stage you need to develop a business case, identify stakeholders, establish the project charter, review the project for the next phase etc.,
- **Project Planning** - Define detailed objectives, scope and implementation plan for the project. In this stage, you need to set goals and objectives, create a project schedule and milestones, define a project scope, identify and meet stakeholders for approval, etc.,
- **Project Execution** - In the implementation phase, the most important thing is to effectively manage the project team. In this stage, you need to develop the product, service or results and present the final version to the customer.
- **Project Monitoring and Control** - Project Monitoring and Control is essential for a successful project, in this stage you can track, review and regulate the progress of your project.
- **Project Closure** – In this phase, you need to ensure that all the required work has been carried out and completed and that the objectives have been achieved, and collect the conclusions and comments from the project in order to use them for subsequent work. The final project in this stage needs to be delivered and accepted by the customers.

Initation → Planning → Execution → Control → Closure

Project Lifecycle
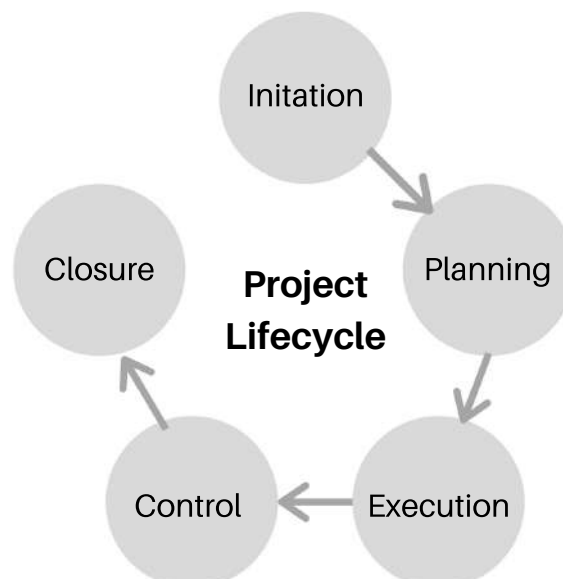
Online tools to support project management

The basic tools are planning support tools (setting milestones, creating a list of tasks divided into detailed tasks), Gantt charts helpful both at the stage of planning and implementation, tools helpful in the team exchange of ideas (activity stream, forum, chat, feed), knowledge management tools (wikis, documents, forum), tools for time and productivity control, tools for error management in IT projects (reporting, tracking, repairing) and tools for presenting project effects.

Some of the examples of online tools which support project management:

- **AdminProject - is a project management platform that has been designed with the specific requirements of EU-funded projects in mind. It is a collaboration platform that puts all the tools you need to replicate your project in an on-line workspace,**
- **Basecamp - A platform where we can implement certain, more or less extensive projects together with our team. This solution offers extensive possibilities of planning, delegating tasks, as well as monitoring their implementation.**
- **Microsoft Project - Application supporting the management of projects, resources, time and project finances. It is an advanced and popular tool offering reporting functions, extended interfaces to manage important aspects of the project,**
- **Monday - Monday.com is a platform for managing projects and daily tasks, which improves the way the team works. This very intuitive tool allows its users to manage their work, have insight into deadlines and build a work culture based on transparency. On the platform you can see the progress of your work and what steps you should take to get your project moving.**
- **SLACK - A free Internet service based on the cloud containing a set of tools and services for teamwork created based on the Electron programming platform. The application acts as an internet communicator enabling text and voice communication with the possibility of sending multimedia,**
- **Trello - Trello boards, lists and charts allow you to organize and rank projects in an accessible, flexible and practical way,**

Source: https://www.pexels.com/pl-pl/zdjecie/ankieta-biurko-dane-diagram-669615/

Functionalities of available tools

<u>**Admin Project**</u>

AdminProject allows you to:

- **Delegate, plan and control work** - Each user using AdminProject can assign a task in the project to another person or group of people. You can define a term, connect files, choose to which WP or IO the task belongs. Task management allows you to **track progress and control the quality** of the work performed.

- **Share files and put security concerns aside** - You can create an unlimited number of folders to help organize your work. Filter and search files based on several criteria, as well as a versioning option that gives you access to previous versions of files. **All files are protected**, and you can even safely undelete lost files.

Show deleted elements | Search

Sort by: Name | Last modification date | File type | Size | Uploaded by

All files /

📁 📣 **Dissemination** system folder

📁 📣 **Galleries** system folder

📁 📣 **Travel** system folder

📁 Application - documents

📁 Interim report

📁 O1 - Building Learning Environment

📁 Reports

- **Mirror your project proposal in no time** - You can use tools like Intellectual Outputs or Work Packages to have all your project activities and responsibilities in one place. Here you can fill in all details such as activities, languages, etc. By providing list of Intellectual Outputs for example, you have the possibility to link specific tasks to given IOs.

🏠 » ACME » Tools

📄 Project's summary   ▦ Tools   ⑤ Finances   📣 Dissemination   ✎ Evaluation   ⚲ Settings

| Intellectual outputs | LTT Activities | Multiplier events | Tasks | Files | Discussion |

| Calendar | Gantt | Meeting planners | Galleries |

- **Discuss, comment and provide feedback** - The "Discussions" section allows you to freely discuss everything within the project. The most important topics can be pinned, so that they will always appear at the top of all the other discussion threads. Unread messages are highlighted, so you immediately know in which topics there are new replies since your last visit!

- **Pick commonly agreed dates for events** - Meeting planners - a section where partners can fill their availability for various events. All you need to do is to provide dates suitable for you, and then ask your project team members to mark their availability within specific range of days. One quick view on the results and you immediately know which dates are suitable.

- **Manage your staff expenses without extra effort** - As coordinator, in the Timesheets function you have to define project partners and their daily rates and ask others to fill in their own timesheets. When reporting time comes, you can simply hit a green button to get a nice report. As a bonus, if you have more than one project in the system, you can automatically check if you did not put by mistake the same date in two or more projects.

📧 Timesheet for Susanne Tonny

Period		09.2016	

📋 Activities

Date	IO	Activities	Days
01.09.2016	01	Working on the Research Plan	0.25
02.09.2016	01	Preparing research questionnaire (draft)	0.25
05.09.2016	01	Implementing partners' feedback to the questionnaire	0.5
			Total days: 1

Add a new activity

- **Organise your dissemination activities** - The dissemination function allows you to report your dissemination activities, add proofs (like photos or scans) and describe what was done. At any time, you can generate a report, which will contain all actions per partner, presented in one Word file.

🧳 Activity name: Distribution of leaflets and brochures in Centras Madrid

Who?	B&P	Level?	Regional
How?	Event	Where?	Madrid
When?	02.09.2016	# of people?	94

Activity description (please include activity URL if relevant)
The file attached is a list of people present and reached by this dissemination action.

Target groups
Beneficiaries of other projects

Impact of the activity
Impact of this activity was quite big, as Centras Madrid is an umbrella organisation and will pass the information about the project on to its members.

Feedback received
Feedback received was very positive with collaboration ideas for the future.

Evidence
B&P_Participants1.txt

Upload evidence

- **Instant updates on the project's timeline** - Calendar gives you the possibility to add various events, milestones or deadlines for deliverables. As a bonus, you can overlay calendars from several projects you manage, so any conflicts will be visible immediately.
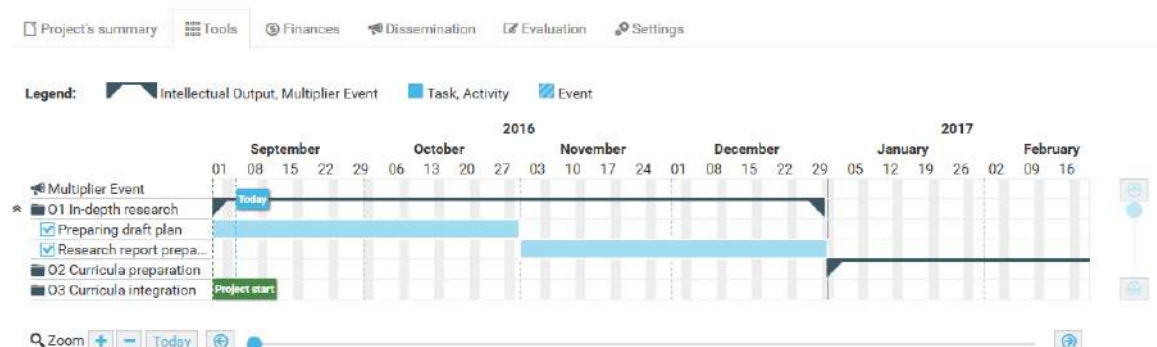
- **Get feedback from other people in one place** - Evaluation module is helpful in every project. This module allows you to create surveys, with several types of questions and then invite your users to fill it in (both internal and external). Repetitive surveys, e.g. meeting evaluation questionnaires can be easily duplicated and adopted, without filling in everything.
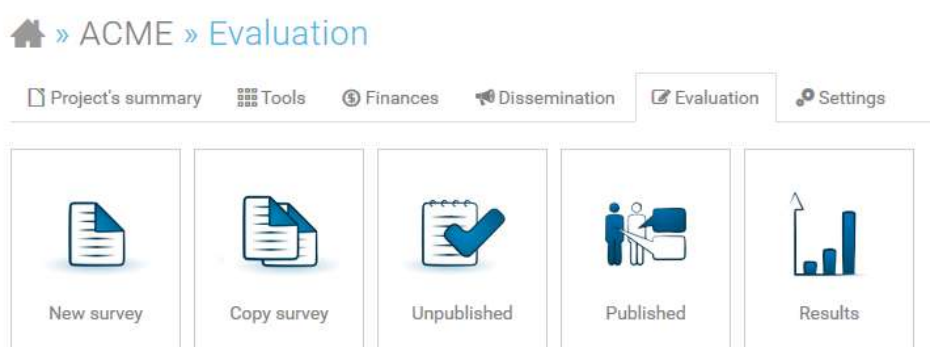
- **Discover endless customisation possibilities** - AdminProject workspace can be heavily customised. If you have an Erasmus+ KA2 project – you will need Intellectual Outputs, but you can also have a project with Work Packages. You can have LTTAs and Multiplier events – it is all up to you. Every single project is different, so you might want to adjust specific modules/functions that are needed by your project. It's not a one-time deal, you can turn functions on and off anytime you want!

- **Use AdminProject without your web browser** - E-mail integration module allows you to accomplish several tasks using only your email, also from a smartphone, tablet or whatever other device you are using. You can add a comment or take part in discussions simply by replying through e-mail. You can receive your tasks via email and even upload a file by sending it as an attachment. However, if you don't like it, you can switch it off at any time.

Basecamp

- **Documents & File Storage** - Space to share documents, files, and images. Every user can connect google docs and discuss them in Basecamp, each file contains the full version history. It is possible to change the order of the files.
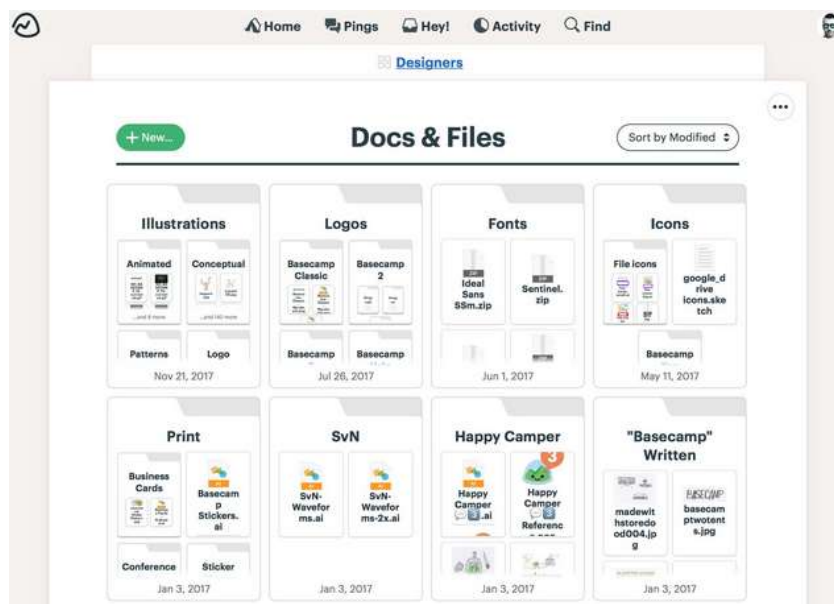
- **Check-in Questions** - Ability to ask questions for the team in one thread.
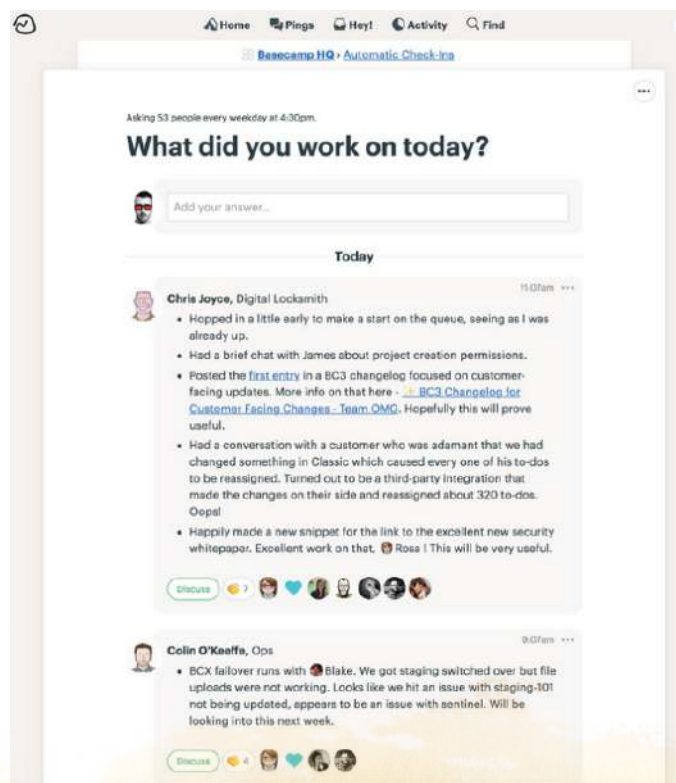
- **Real-time Group Chat** - Chat helps you ask quick questions and get quick answers. Each project includes its own chat room, you can attach files, quotes, video and emotions to it.
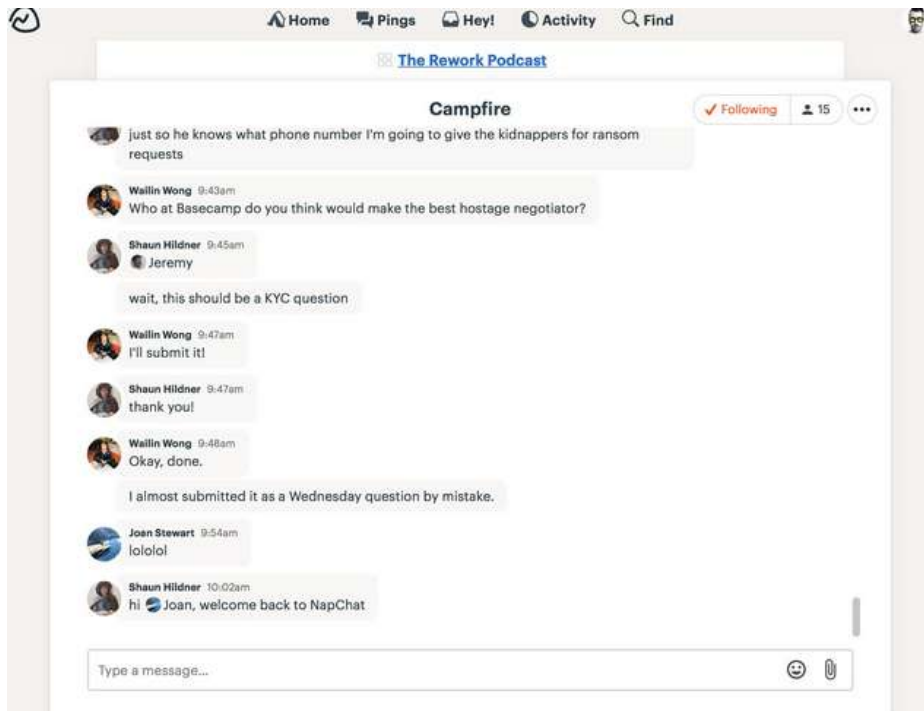
- **Schedules** - Each project contains a schedule that displays all dated to-dos and events related to the project. Every participant in the project can see it, so everyone is up to date.
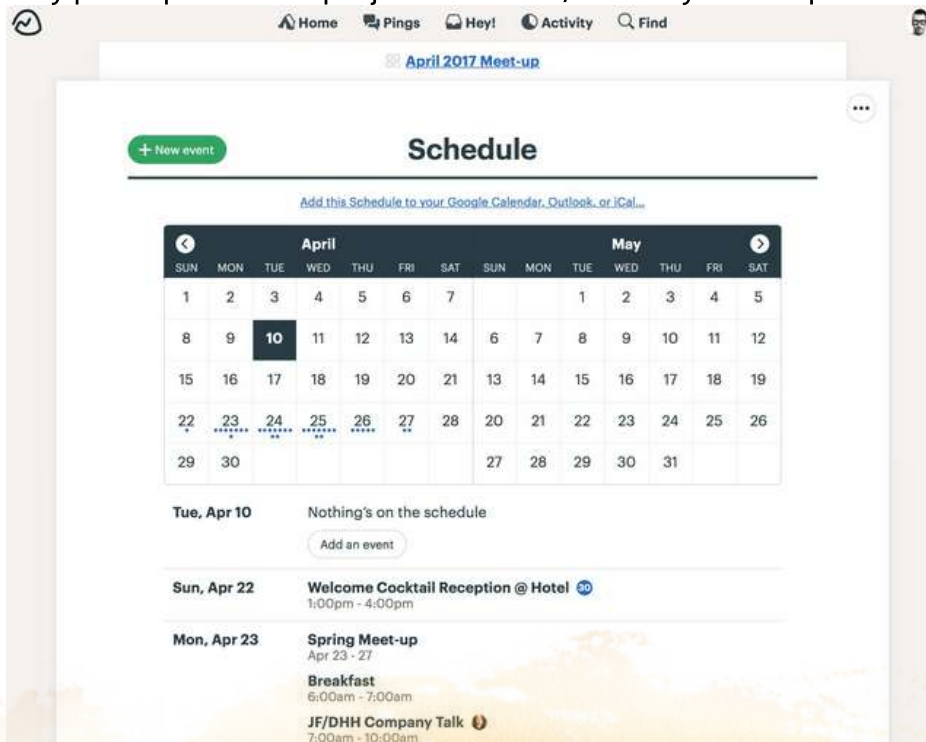
- **Hill Charts** - This feature allows you to track the update and follow the progress of the project
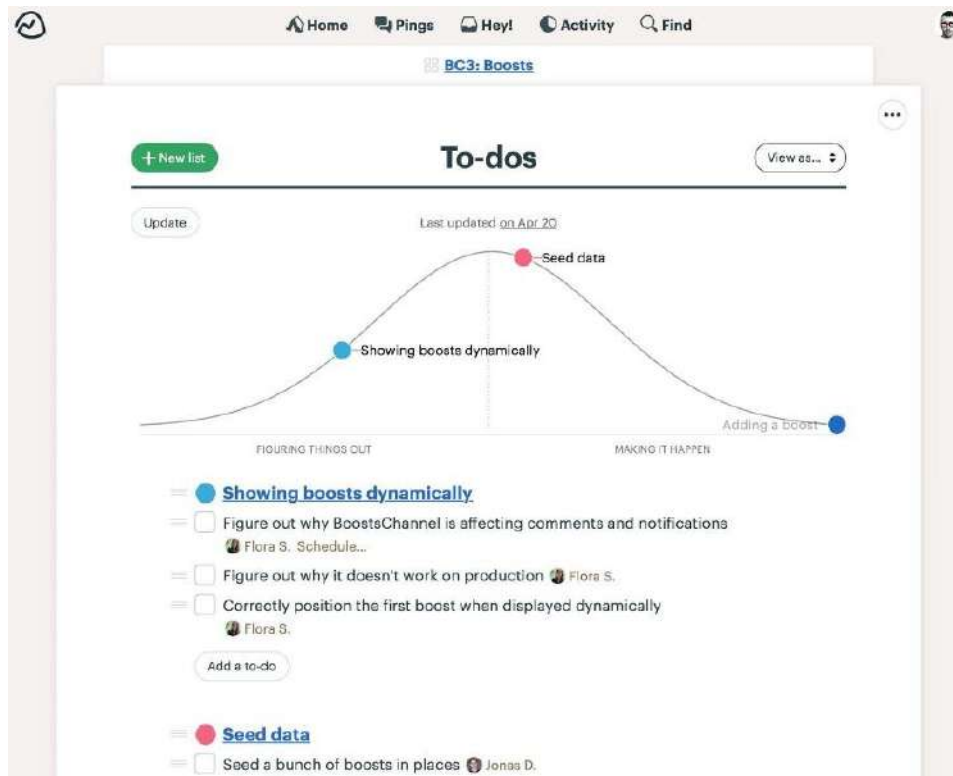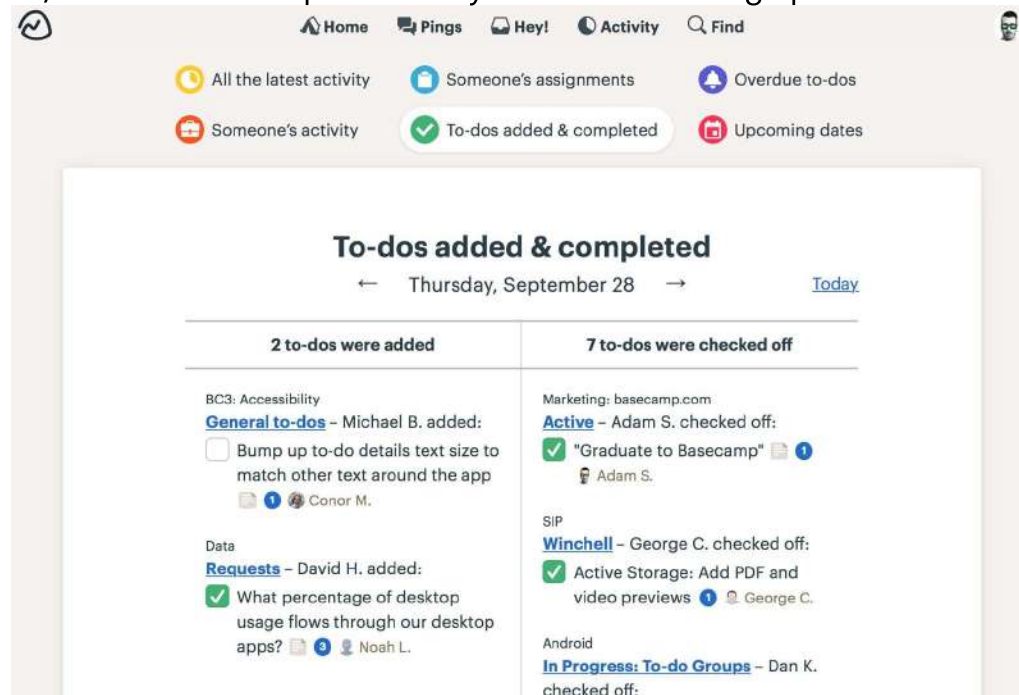
- **Direct Messages** - Ability to talk privately with a colleague in real time, add files, videos, etc. There is also a conversation history available
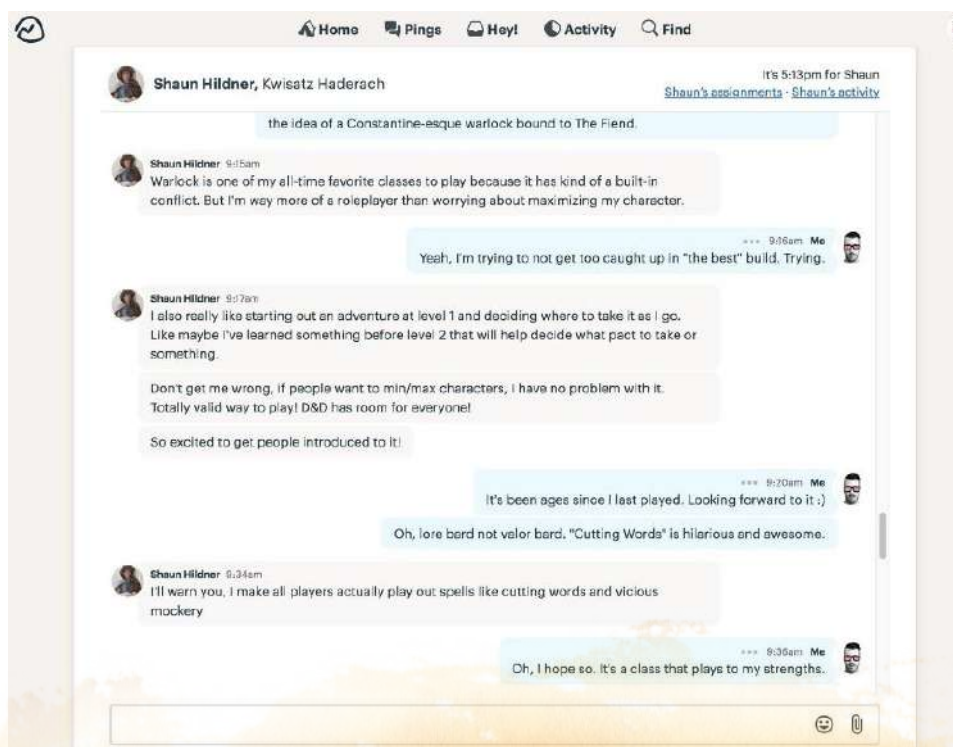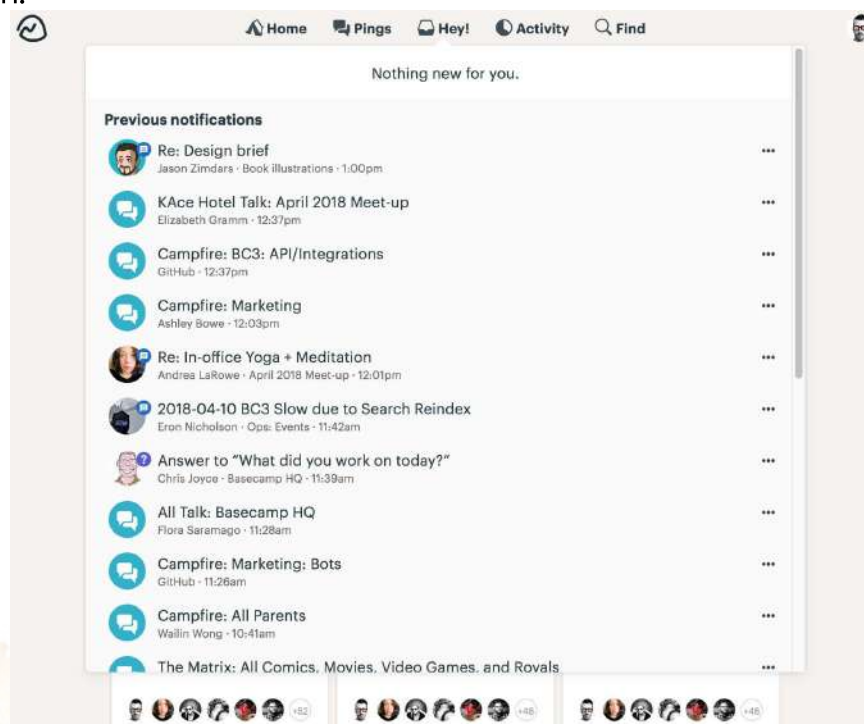
- **Reports** – You can generate a report to see what's overdue or due soon, all the tasks assigned to someone, what's been completed today and what's coming up.

- **Notifications** - You can manage notifications - optionally get notified by email, temporarily disable notifications, set the hours that you can be notified within, mention anyone to send them a notification.

Microsoft Project

The Microsoft project allows you to:

- **Create, edit and control the schedules** - Define the project activities and assign them to different members.
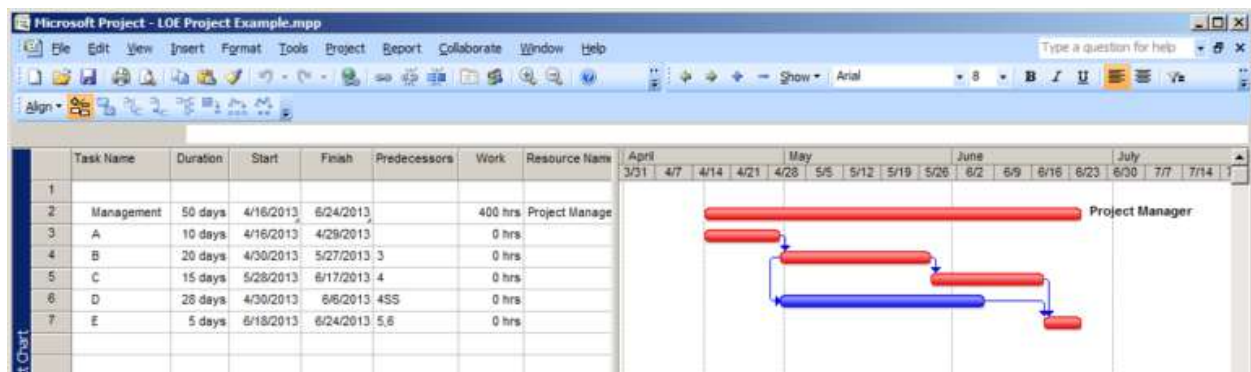
- **Project Timeline View** - The project timeline gives an overview of the project
- **Collaboration** - The ability to share files with other team members.
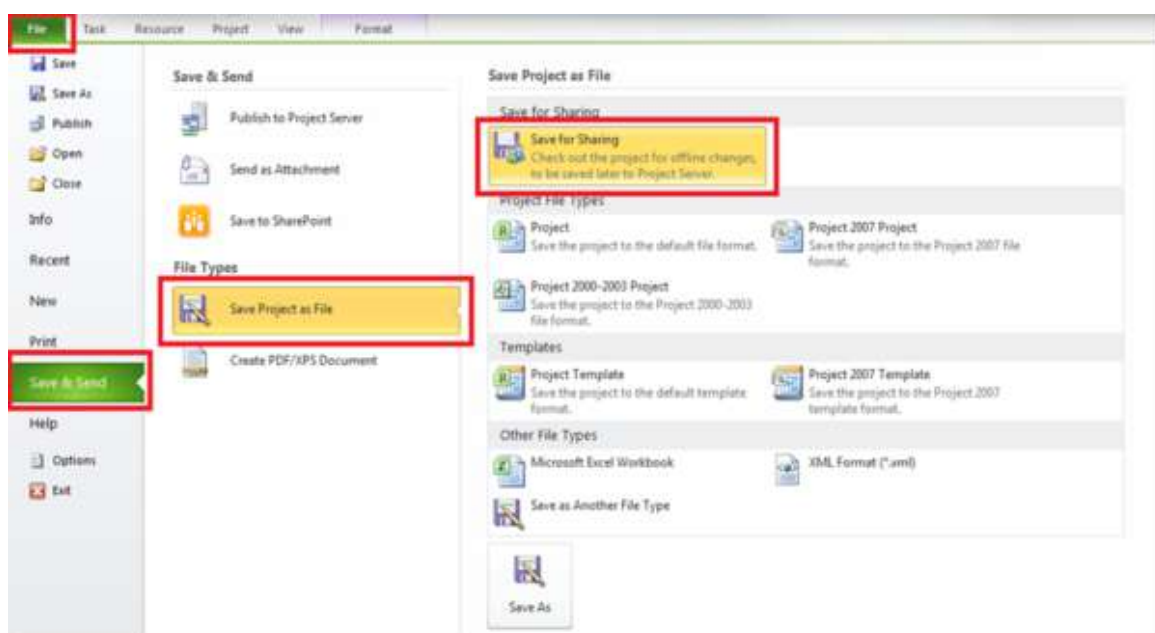
- **Reporting** - Ability to generate reports with little effort and to customize data and structure to your requirements

Monday

- **Intuitive User Interface** - The monday.com user interface contains a very comprehensive set of helpful top application features. What's more, you can customize the whiteboard and save a "view" for each individual member.
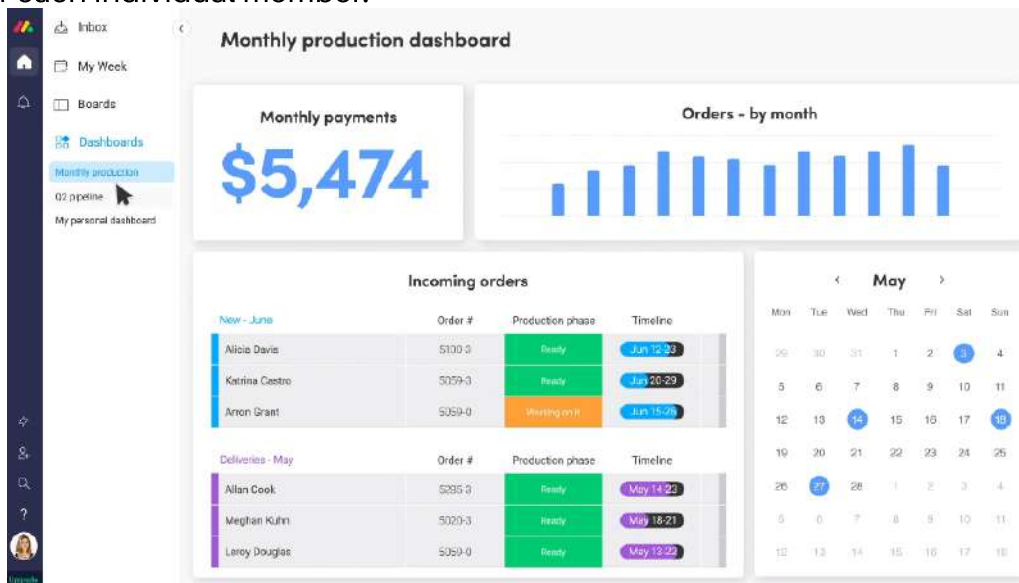
- **Easily Management Workloads** - Creating and organizing tasks in groups. Possibility of assigning a task to a person or group of persons. You can see in real time who's able to take on more work and who's not. There is a possibility of making adjustments to prevent missed deadlines and burnout.
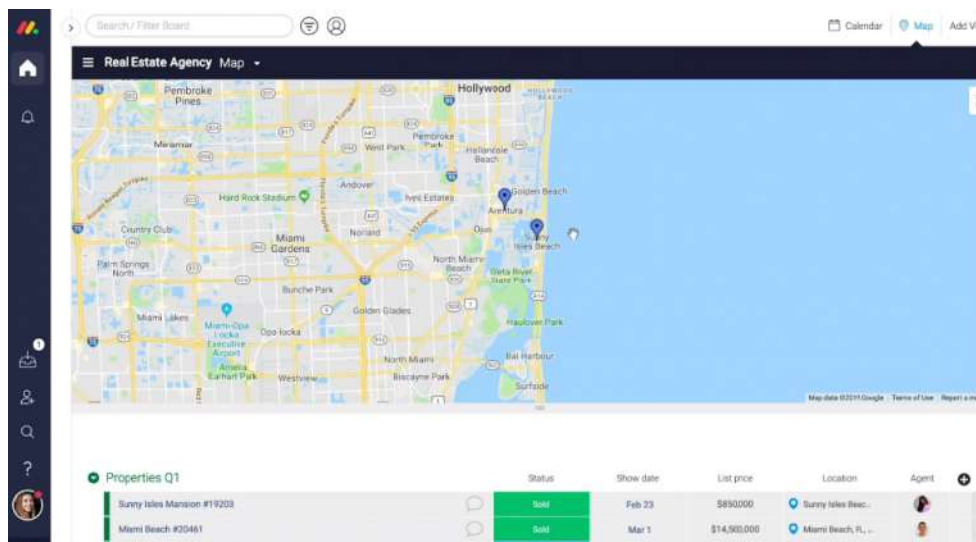
- **Collaboration** - Ability to update and comment on tasks, create Q&A. This feature increases communication between team members.
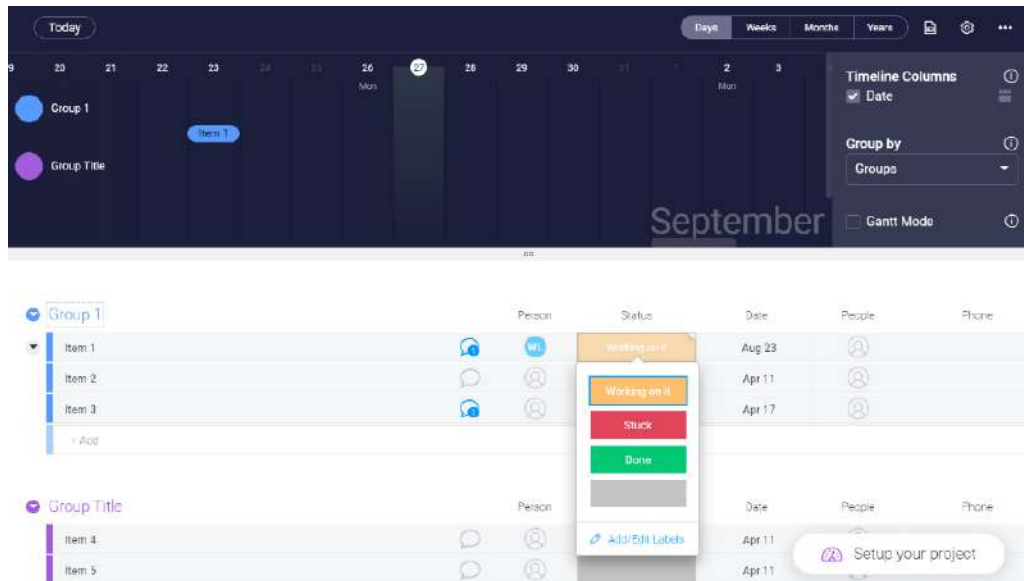

- **Reporting & Analytics** - Generating visually stimulating and easily understandable reports is very simple. Review and share the outcomes of your team's efforts. Easily consolidate data from multiple projects to visualize what's most important in one place.
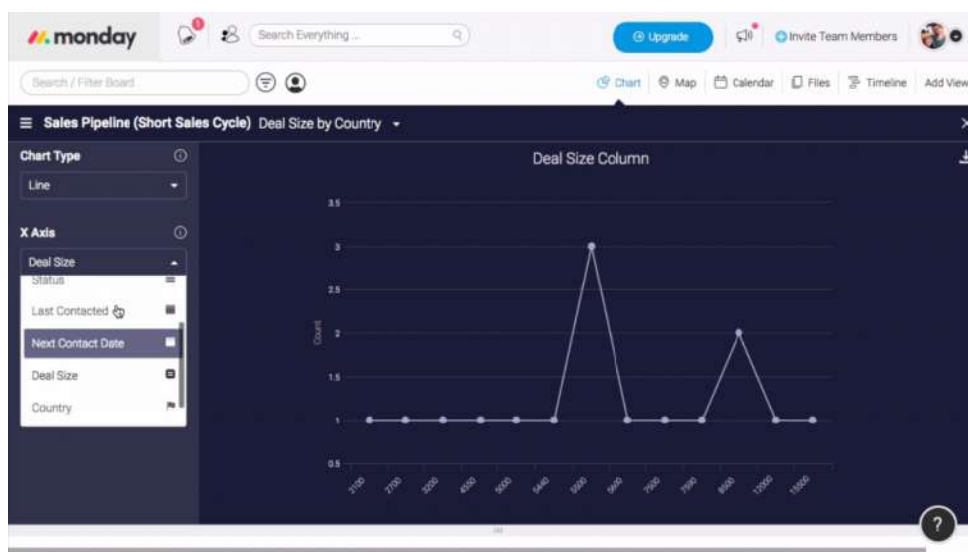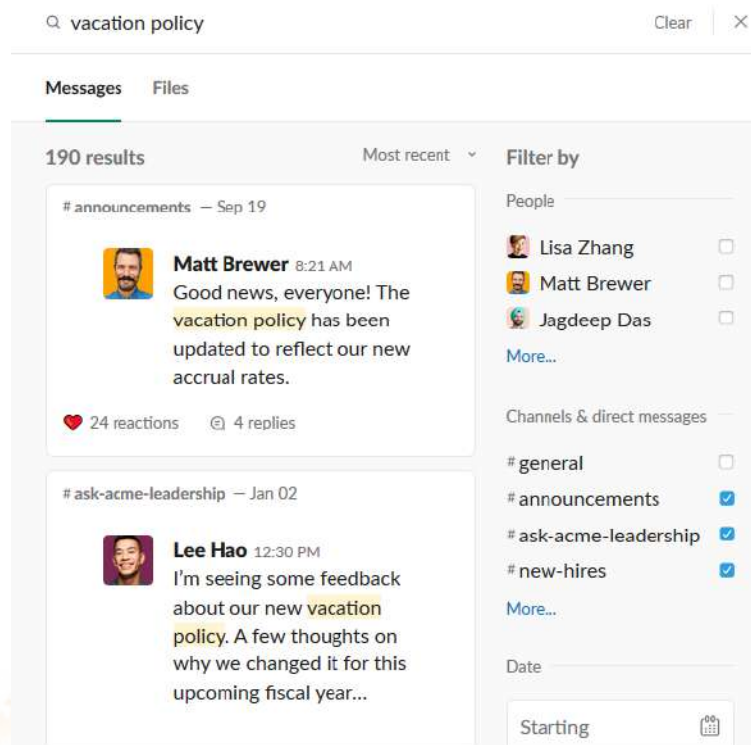
SLACK

- **Organized conversations** - You can create channels and divide them by team, project or client. Team members can join and leave channels as needed. Threads avoid derailment of a topic or project.
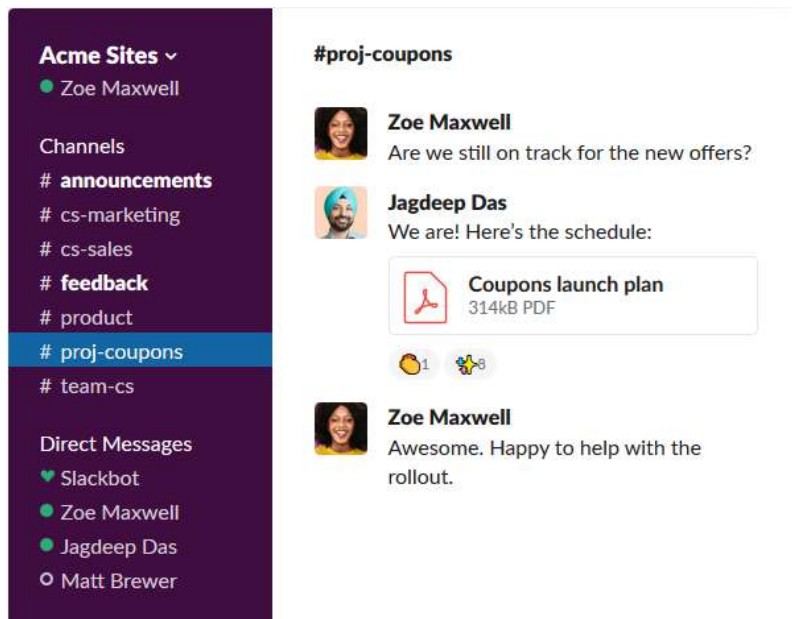
- **Searchable history** - The ability to search previous information on channels or in messages, even after archiving or leaving the channel.
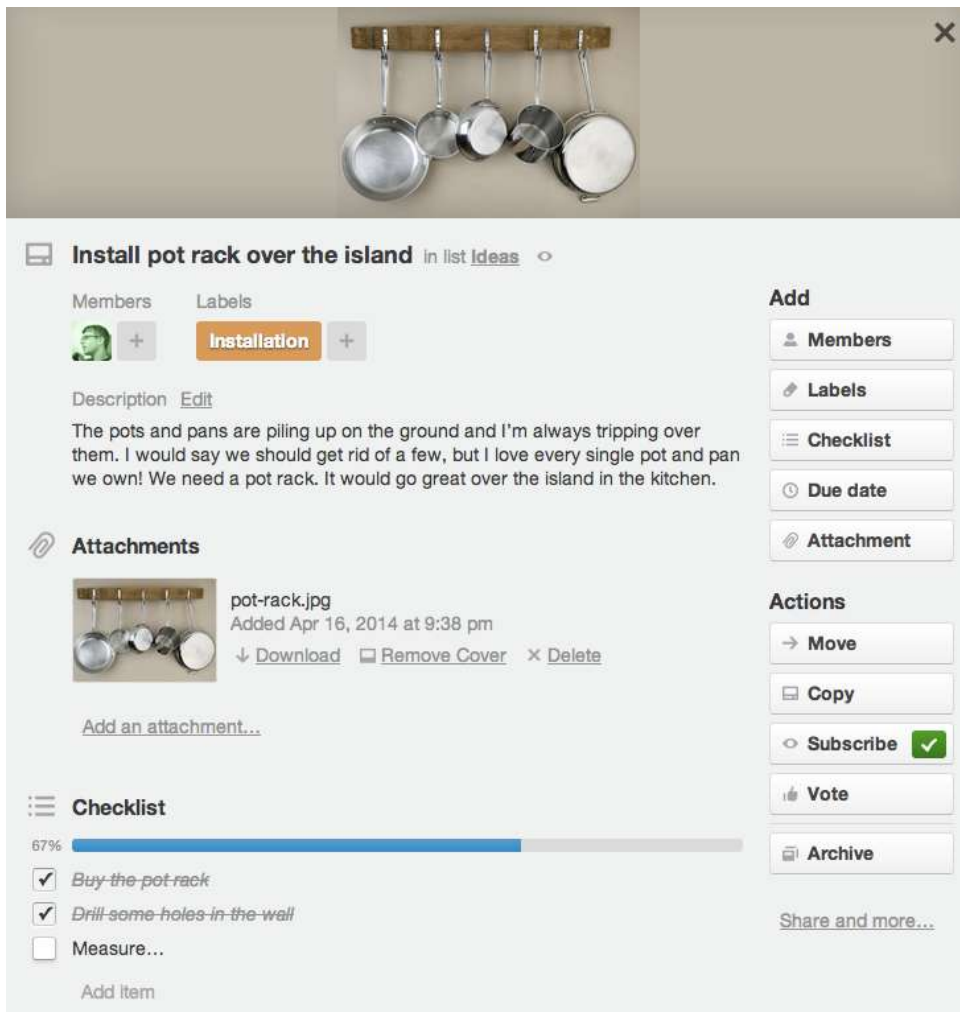
- **Streamline communication** – Saves time – all the work can be done in one place. Keep your messages up to date and avoid going back and forth between external emails and internal conversations.

- **Face-to-face and -screen** – Voice or video calls via SLACK, if you want to show others your work, you can also make your screen available.

- **Channel-connected tools** – you can add meaningful context to conversations and perform simple tasks directly with Slack.

Trello

- **Trello board** - Open the tab to add comments, upload attachment files, create task lists, add labels, appointments, and more.

- **Invite people, assign the task** - You can invite as many people to your boards as you want for free. To assign tasks, move people to cards using drag and drop. All people see the same table at once.

- **Discussion** - Start a discussion through the comments and attachments. Add a quick or more detailed note. Mention the member in the comment to make sure he or she is notified. Add files from your computer or using Google Drive, Dropbox, Box or OneDrive. Liven up the discussion with emotion.

- **Notifications** - Notification system keeps you up to date when something important is happening. No matter where you are, you'll get alerts: in the app, by email, on your desktop via your browser or mobile push notifications because they are synchronized with your devices.

- **Checklist** - With task lists and appointments you won't miss any important tasks, events or news. The Power-Up Calendar app allows you to view your calendar in Trello. Or use iCal data in your calendar app.

Strong and weak points of these tools

Depending on what you are looking for, the strong and weak points will be different. All of the systems have basic functions, their functionalities were presented in the previous subchapter. Some of them have a 30-day / 14-day trial period in which you can test the system for free. Each program has a version available in English.

Please see the picture below, where we summarized these online tools that supports project management in terms of three categories: available in English, Free version and Price per month.

Tool	Available in English	Free	Price per month
AdminProject	Yes	30-day free trial	15-150€
Basecamp	Yes	30-day free trial	$99 per team
Microsoft Project	Yes	No	8.40€-46.40€ per user
Monday	Yes	14-day free trial	$39-$79 per user
SLACK	Yes	Yes	6.25€-11.75€ per user
Trello	Yes	Yes	From $12.50 per user

Source: based on own research.

In SLACK and Trello, we can use a basic version of the platform for free. If we want to have access to more functionalities we need to buy a subscription for a month to a year.

Some of these prices depend on the version we want to use and how many users will use this tool in our company.

EU tools and platforms: Erasmus+ Project Results Platform, EPALE, etc.

EU tools and platforms:

- **Europass** - is a set of five documents that enables skills and qualifications to be presented in a clear and understandable way across Europe. Its aim is to help citizens to present their skills and qualifications in a way that makes it possible to find a course or a job effectively, to help employers understand the skills and qualifications of their employees and to help education and training institutions to develop and communicate the content of education programmes.

Source: https://europass.org.pl/

- **EPALE** (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe) - EPALE aims to create a European community of adult learning professionals. The platform gives them the opportunity to make contacts, exchange experiences, plan joint activities and publish and comment on content. The platform also provides access to information about events important for adult education staff and trends in the sector, as well as to the latest documents, materials and research results. The use of EPALE is free of charge. The EPALE platform is financed by the Erasmus+ programme. It is part of the European Union's strategy to promote learning opportunities for all adults.

Source: https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl

- **Erasmus+ Project Results Platform** – This database will give you access to descriptions, results and contact information of all projects funded under the Erasmus+ programme and some of the projects funded under its predecessor programmes in the field of education, training, youth and sports.

Source: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/erasmus-project-results-platform-gateway-inspiring-vet-projects

- **OpenPM²** - is a project management methodology designed by the European Commission. OpenPM² is available for free and offers templates, online resources, guides and project support network.

Source: https://www.pm2alliance.eu/the-openpm2-initiative/

- **Youthpass** – "is a tool to document and recognise learning outcomes from youth work and solidarity activities. It is available for projects funded by Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps Programmes. The Youthpass certificate helps to document the development of competences, as well as to confirm participation and describe the respective project. An essential part of the initiative is attention to the planning of the learning process and reflection upon the participants' personal learning outcomes. As a strategy, it aims at fostering the recognition of non-formal learning and youth work."

Source: http://erasmusplus.eupa.org.mt/2019/08/06/launch-revised-key-competences-framework-youthpass/youthpass/

- **Mobility tool** - This is a web application available at https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/eac/mobility. It is intended for Erasmus+ programme beneficiaries. Thanks to it, we can easily manage data concerning implemented projects and submit final reports. Contracts for the implementation of projects oblige Erasmus+ beneficiaries to supplement data in Mobility Tool+ on a regular/monthly basis.

Source: http://www.sp.zawidz.pl/praca-szkoly/plany-programy/erasmus

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Please provide from 5 to 10 external resources (exact number to be agreed on and followed by all partners) in the following way:

https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Zarz%C4%85dzanie_projektem - Project management - definition, Project Management Cycle Model.

http://bblog.pl/top-10/10-narzedzi-do-zarzadzania-projektami/ - Basic planning support tools.

http://bblog.pl/top-10/10-narzedzi-do-zarzadzania-projektami/ - Project management tools.

https://study.com/academy/lesson/project-management-system-definition-example.html - Introduction to Project Management System.

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects_en - Erasmus+ Project Results Platform.

http://goprojekt.pl/baza_wiedzy/strona/korzysci_z_zarzadzania_projektami/ - Benefits of project management.

Complex Toolbox for VOLUNTEERS

Project number: 2019-1-IT02-KA204-063430

Learn more about the Project Partners:

Inno Hub Valencia

assist | International HR |

Centre for European Volunteering

CSVnet
associazione centri
di servizio per il volontariato

Centrum Wspierania Edukacji i Przedsiębiorczości

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SOLIDARITY