Cross-cultural Differences and Stereotypes: a Challenge for European Project Success

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Abstract. Developing a research project that involves more countries and several scientific approaches requires a huge effort to find a common way to communicate and to get over stereotypes and schemas. The experience we are sharing through the QiS (Quality in school) project involves 7 countries in Europe and has given us the opportunity to analyse in which way our co-operation has been developing through mutual acquaintance (using meetings, videoconferencing and E-mails) and deconstruction of stereotypes. Thus, the paper is a case study of the development of one project culture of a multitude of background cultures – a story of both team development throughout different stages and of culture development. The data has been collected through direct observation of the modification in communication style and through a semi-structured questionnaire in which every participant of the project has described her / his perception of the foreigners before and after the deeper acquaintance and some situations in which they have noted cultural differences or misunderstandings due to cross-cultural communication. The findings are interpreted through the academic culture typologies of Becher and especially the national culture traits of Hofstede for eventual generalizability.