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Master thesis - Résumé

# PREPARING AND RUNNING MULTINATIONAL COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

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## Key words

Cooperation; multiculturalism; project; team; intercultural communication; project management; qualitative research; preparation of a project; implementation of a project; cross-border cooperation; international cooperation; creation of a team;

## Introduction

We live in a world that goes through major changes since the last few decades. Globalization is a process of growing interconnectivity among all countries while sharing knowledge and technologies. There are many opportunities hidden in this process nevertheless there are also some challenges.

The present study aims to 1) provide a theoretical background for existing forms of cooperation, intercultural communication and project management and to 2) conduct a research, analyse data, evaluate experience of interviewees and provide with a guideline for creating an intercultural team.

First chapter provides with already mentioned existing forms of cooperation, their characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, ways of emerging and other specifics. Second chapter describes intercultural communication, problems emerging from multiculturalism and possible ways of solving them. The last theoretical chapter 3 focuses on project management (how to prepare and conduct a successful project) and on management of project team (how to create and lead a team).

Fourth chapter is the methodological part of our thesis. It explains the theory of research, the principles, techniques, aims, hypothesis, interviewees and analysis with link to our real research. Fifth chapter is the analysis of data and the last chapter is the guideline for creating an intercultural team.

We assume that one of the main problems in the team will be language – language politics of the team or different level of languages. Other problems can be caused by the culture itself. Every person is coming from different culture and therefore from different habits, customs, etc. and the clash of these habits can cause an issue. To successfully solve this type of issues, it is required to know the other culture we are dealing with, to be open-minded to other cultures and to have the will to look for common solution. We are interested in information about training of members and about the project itself.

## 1. International cooperation

In today's globalized world the pace of business transactions is constantly accelerating. This growth is caused by innovations but also by changes in socio-political order of the world. Main changes were the end of the Soviet Union, the evolution of economics of Latino American and Asian countries, or democratization of African ones. Companies are forced to enhance their competitiveness by adjusting strategies for particular markets. (Rosenhauer, 2007)

The term globalization was used for the first time in 1985 by economist Theodor Levit, when he described the processes going on in the world economy of that day. But the world is not influenced only from an economical perspective but from political, social, cultural and technological as well. The Czech Republic was mainly hit by this phenomenon by the candidature for European Union. (Hesková, Kooperace, 2005)

There are different reasons to enter into cooperation; one important factor is the territory (regional, national, international or global area). Cross-border cooperation is mainly suitable for small and medium enterprises with regard to their activity. We evaluate potential territory from two perspectives. First one refers to the territory in general (political, economic, demographical, geographical, and other parameters), and second is more specific and refers to the image of the product in the particular country.

There are different opinions on where the world's economy is heading. Some economists anticipate further deepening of globalization and some presume that there will still exist some major differences which won't be possible to overcome.

There might be cooperation without formalization; these are called ad-hoc projects, ad-hoc cooperation misses the conceptual frame for cooperation. This type of cooperation is important for European Union projects. Formalized cooperation has two categories. One is called concentration which is a grouping of subjects who afterwards lose their economic and legal autonomy. It means that this is not a real cooperation and therefore it is not important for our research. From the formalized forms of cooperation we have described strategic alliance, franchising, cluster, joint venture and cooperative of primary production.

## 2. Intercultural communication

People are at constant interaction with other people. The way, how they act during these interactions is influenced by several factors. Some are current (e.g. mood) and some are natural (e.g. upbringing). Tool for these interactions is communication. An important factor influencing communication is culture, because every man comes from different cultural background which means that every realized communication will be different. These differences can cause misunderstanding or even a problem. It is important to acquire soft skills that will help to overcome such issues. It can be for example avoiding stereotypization and prejudices, conducting a dialog, knowing oneself better, etc. (Nový & Schroll-Machl, *Interkulturní komunikace v řízení a podnikání česko-německá*, 2015)

Social perception consists of three parts. These are: subject of perception, object of perception and situation context. The perception goes through three different stages. First is observation of features of a subject, second is analysing these features while deducing conclusions and last but not least is assigning characteristics to observed features. These characteristics are assigned with strong influence of personal rules (implicit theory of personality and causal attribution) and habits which can cause fatal errors while deducing features of the subject of perception. It is not completely possible to avoid them but it helps to be at least aware of them. (Nový & Schroll-Machl, *Interkulturní komunikace v řízení a podnikání*, 2003)

It is logical that intercultural communication will appear in fields such as international business, international relations, education or even health care when there are frequent interactions between members of different cultures. When negotiating (for example in international business or international relations), the choice of common language is crucial. In the field of international business, new branches - intercultural management and intercultural marketing have emerged. (Průcha, 2010)

Multiculturalism affects the company in several ways and it should be dealt with accordingly. Firstly the company should take it into consideration when defining company policy or company culture. Secondly every member should thrive for improving his social competences; for example via intercultural trainings. (Kislingerová & Nový, 2005, str. 365)

English in today's globalized world occupies important role of lingua franca for diplomacy, politics, art, international business and other fields. However several risks can emerge - dominance of English when English natives have predominance over other language-speaking people; self-complacency when people speaking English neglect further education in other languages and finally death of minor languages. (Průcha, 2010)

Every existing difference between cultures can become an origin for misunderstanding which can lead into conflict or problem. It doesn't mean that the difference would cause the problem itself; it is more wrong interpretation or understanding of culture's demonstrations. To avoid these negative impacts, three basic rules are to be followed.

- 1) Know the unknown culture – realizing your own and the foreign cultural standards;
- 2) Respect the unknown culture – there is no better or worse culture, they are not to be judged;
- 3) Make responsive steps towards the unknown culture - it is the way to find common solution, but don't forget your own culture. Being obliging doesn't mean to give up of one's own identity.

(Nový & Schroll-Machl, Interkulturní komunikace v řízení a podnikání česko-německá, 2015)

Intercultural communication is more susceptible to misunderstanding therefore it is very important to stick to rules of comprehensive communication. Speak slowly, pronounce clearly, use short sentences and repeat important information. Use non-verbal communication as a back-up for the verbal one (gestures, sketches,...). Verify if you have been understood. Motivate to dialogue. (Nový & Schroll-Machl, Interkulturní komunikace v řízení a podnikání česko-německá, 2015)

Šroněk (2000) aptly summarize this problematic: *“Everyone, who is selling a product, providing a service, investing, or doing a different business in a different country, should besides technical, specialized, business, remittent and other knowledge master something more. That something is the culture of the country in which he intends to implement his activity. ... Good thing is to get familiar with cultural roots of other people. Knowledge about other cultures can have a significant impact on international business activity. Moreover they minimize the risk of unpleasant surprises.”* (Průcha, 2010)

### 3. Preparing and running a project

Project is defined as a unique process consisting of a set of coordinated actions with fixed deadlines for opening and finishing, conducted to achieve beforehand designated goals. This process meets the specific requirements including time restrictions, costs and resources (project management triangle). The date of the beginning and the end is defined as well as the final product, scope and budget and given resources. Project is a unique piece of work and it is managed in accordance with its size, complexity and importance. (Januška, 2016)

When preparing a project under European funds, we need to keep in mind that the project needs to be comprehensible, clear, convincing and above all viable. In EU funds, the project should contribute to achieve the objectives of the specific fund. Further, we need to respect the time frame, set the budget, define financing, and define partners of the project, its goals, results and intermediate steps. Before proposing a project, analysis should be conducted – problem tree analysis, SWOT analysis and PESTEL analysis (see below) to define the risks and to propose a response for them. Formulating a project is accompanied by developing a logical framework of the project which summarizes all named problems, aims and activities (see below). Throughout the project there is continuous monitoring for emerging problems, which should be reacted upon. (Potluka, Stulík, Kenny, Molina, Beranová, & Šumpíková, 2004)



Source: <http://www.ethosdebate.com/how-to-improve-swot-your-ballots/> (07.08.2018)



Source: <https://www.pinterest.at/pin/448811919110292959/> (07.08.2018)

Project Description		Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Goal	What is the overall broader impact to which the action will contribute?	What are the key indicators related to the overall goal?	What are the sources of information for these indicators?	What are the external factors necessary to sustain objectives in the long term?
Purpose	What is the immediate development outcome at the end of the project?	Which indicators clearly show that the objective of the action has been achieved?	What are the sources of information that exist or can be collected? What are the methods required to get this information?	Which factors and conditions are necessary to achieve that objective? (external conditions)
Outputs	What are the specifically deliverable results envisaged to achieve the specific objectives?	What are the indicators to measure whether and to what extent the action achieves the expected results?	What are the sources of information for these indicators?	What external conditions must be met to obtain the expected results on schedule?
Activities	What are the key activities to be carried out and in what sequence in order to produce the expected results?	<b>Means:</b>	What are the sources of information about action progress?	What pre-conditions are required before the action starts?
		What are the means required to implement these activities, e. g. personnel, equipment, supplies, etc.	<b>Costs</b>	
			What are the action costs?	

Source: <http://archive.sswm.info/category/step-rrr-business-development/module-6-business-development-part-ii-business-plan-develop-6> (07.08.2018)



Key document of the project is action plan which contains specific information about activities of the project, type and amount of resources for each activity, time needed for every action, deadlines and people or teams assigned for each activity. (Januška, 2016)

Project goes through a life cycle. Throughout this cycle, the project needs to be managed. It means regular control, interaction with all involved parties, actualizations of plans and checking of these actualizations. Successful management of project requires problem-solving, creativity, flexibility, adaptability to changes, good planning and negotiation (win-win vs. win-lose). (Januška, 2016)

In order to solve a problem we may use different existing techniques - The Cause and Effect Fishbone Diagram (Ishikava Diagram), Fundamental Cause Theory or Pareto Analysis. For every project, budget needs to be defined since it represents an efficient tool for measuring the project. Costs are divided into direct costs (labour, material, technologies, etc.); indirect costs (wages for management, marketing, running costs for buildings, etc.) and other costs (bonuses and commissions, cover for risks, etc.) (Januška, 2016)

The last phase of the project is its end which is defined by the date set up in project plan, by fulfilling of all aims or by decision of project manager. The ending must meet some conditions since aims and contributions have to have set up measurable criterions in order to be evaluated.

Strategic human resources management is a way of using human resources for achieving set up goals. It is tightly connected to strategies of a company. The main task it to provide all skills necessary for implementing strategies. (Januška, 2016)

There are four key competences suitable for human resource management. Culture management (realization of strategies and connecting the organization with external environment); quick change (encouraging to accepting needed changes and good decisions); strategic decision making (engaging in creation of strategies and adopting crucial decisions) and market-managed interconnection (working with information from customers). (Januška, 2016)

Human resource strategy creation contains five basic steps.

1. Observation and investigation of external environment;
2. Identification of strategic business plan;
3. Definition of management matters critical for the success of the business;
4. Creation of strategy with focus on relevant issues and defining suitable measurables for this strategy;
5. Communication of all information related to this strategy.

(Januška, 2016)

Management of a project is different from common organizational management. These differences are – uniqueness of task; success or failure of the project is strongly tight to project manager; project manager has to perform tasks even if he is not superior to them; manager should implement specific procedure of project management; key competence of project manager is leadership; main tool of project manager is the team and teamwork. There are also risks that are specific to a project – transfer of people into project team; lack of willingness to accept responsibilities; organizational chaos; psychological barriers; not respecting rules of effective communication and others. (Januška, 2016)

The success of intercultural team depends on several factors. Key factors are possible to improve and they are following: personal characteristics of members (e.g. intercultural competences); dynamics of the team (e.g. problem-solving skills); good organization of the team (e.g. defined tasks); maintaining of external contacts (e.g. with management) and conditions and supporting documents (e.g. principles of international cooperation incorporated into company politics). Moreover, an efficient way to increase the chance for a success is well focused training(s) – language, intercultural competences, communication skills and others. (Nový & Schroll-Machl, Spolupráce přes hranice kultur, 2005)

## 4. Methodology of research

There are two types of research – quantitative and qualitative, we choose the qualitative one since we will collect data which are not measurable by any statistical method; we will study the problematics into details and we will have less significant number of respondents. (Hendl, 1999)

Basic techniques of qualitative research are – observation, questioning, studying of documents and experiment. The technique is defined depending on the research problem. For the use of our research, we will use questioning, more specifically structured interview. The tool is questionnaire with open-ended question, and if needed closed format questions but every time with possibility to insert a comment. Questions need to be comprehensible. No answer should be imposed. The order of questions is not random. At the beginning, there are opening questions for establishing a contact; they are followed by easy questions and then, when the respondent is involved in the questionnaire, there is a part with the most complicated questions. After that, we ease it again and have a set of easier questions followed by socio-demographical questions for ending the whole interview. There are all together eight parts with 34 questions, 22 sub-questions 6 socio-demographical questions and one open question for voluntary commentary. We should in general not exceed 60 minute interview so the respondent would not be overwhelmed. Our questionnaire fits into 30 minutes. The risk of the written form is that the respondent will be too brief (we are not able to react immediately) and they wouldn't be stimulating for our research. Other risks are that we are not able to observe the interviewee and that they tend to reply not according to the truth but according their idea about the truth. We could avoid this last issue since our research is not focused on intimate or personal topics and we provide partial anonymity to the respondents. They have enough time to provide with answers nevertheless the risk of questionnaire is low rate of return. The whole questionnaire is attached in Appendix 1

The aim of the research is to analyse and evaluate experience of interviewees with the preparation and realization of multinational projects and to propose a guideline for creating such a team, all that by using the theoretical background.

We have defined five research questions and two hypotheses.

**Research question 1** – Will people with previous international experience less disconcerted from problems originating in multiculturalism?

**Research question 2** – What are the main advantages/disadvantages/benefits/risks of work in multinational team?

**Research question 3** – Do the members experience language discrimination?

**Research question 4** – Can better preparation (of the members) for work in multinational environment improve the functioning of the team?

**Research question 5** – Are projects sufficiently prepared or does the manager sometimes count with self-management of the project (“it will turn out well”)?

**Hypothesis 1** – There can’t be a project in an intercultural team without problems caused by multiculturalism.

**Hypothesis 2** – When preparing a project in intercultural environment, attention is paid mostly to preparation of the project than to preparation on a work in intercultural team (for example absence of intercultural trainings).

We decided to replace personal interview by its written form, from practical reasons. We don’t have the capacity to provide with personal interviews. Therefore we can get higher number of respondents. We will use Google Forms because it is easy to use and distribute.

Before collecting data, the questionnaire needs to go through test phase in order to eliminate all possible errors (factual or even regarding format or grammar). If there is the need, we can contact the respondent via email in order to provide with complementary information.

Regarding the character of the questionnaire, we supposed that approximately 10 respondents will be enough on condition that every respondent will provide stimulating answers. We have sent the questionnaire to 25 people with regard to the low rate of return. The collecting of responses should continue until we exhaust our list of respondents or until every new answer brings new information. The choice of respondent wasn’t restricted; the only condition was involvement (in presence or past) of the person in multinational project

team. We looked mostly in our surroundings. Other specifics of the project or team are not decisive, since the more diverse projects we will have, the more diverse and therefore interesting answers we will get. We have gathered respondents from private sector, university environment, European Institution, laboratory and from project financed by European funds.

The analysis of data is specific in one point which is that they are not analysed all together when we will have collected all answers but progressively, during their collection. Data are organized and classified. We need to look for common and repeated phenomenon and information. (Reichel, 2009)

## 5. Results of the research

We have received 10 responses which correspond to our assumption. All respondents were women with university degree. One interviewee has Hungarian nationality, all others are Czechs.

When processing the first four questionnaires it turned out that the chosen technique for gathering data was not ideal. Even though we repeatedly ask respondent to describe their experiences (“*please briefly describe/if yes, please describe, etc.*”), they were very brief and often limit their answers to one-word. Sometimes we had evasive answers such as N/A or three dots. It can be caused either by ignorance of facts or by reluctance to share the information.

We decided to analyse data in Excel file, since we have limited amount of answers and they are not excessively long. We will have all answers together; we will categorize them with use of different formatting of cells. We will leave out every piece of information which is not useful for replying on research questions and hypotheses and neither is interesting regardless the research questions and hypotheses (see overview below).

### **Research question 1**

Among our respondents, there is a consensus that every previous experience or preparation for work in multinational team was helpful for their present project. We used questions 19 – 21 to answer this research question. We will compare these questions to question 25.

Our interviewees have significant number of experience from different spheres. Current experience doesn't differ according to number of previous experience. The answer to our research question is: no, people without previous experience are no more disconcerted than their experienced colleagues. The emerging problems are also similar and moreover everybody finds similar advantages and disadvantages.

Preparation is not necessary but according to respondents helpful and therefore should precede the project.



## **Research question 2**

To answer the question, we will use questions 26 – 29.

Main repeated personal benefits are: knowing new cultures (or mentalities, languages, ways of working) and connected richer cultural environment; improving in foreign languages (benefit is either their improvement or simply their use); new point of view on problems and their solving. Important benefit sees respondent 8: “*personal enrichment, being open-minded, more tolerant to other cultures, be simply aware of particular cultural differences and to respect them*”. Working in multinational team brings the opportunity to self-growth, it enhance tolerance and mutual respect. Answer ten was: „*Learning about the way of thinking and about the value judgments of academics from different countries, learning about each other’s difficulties and ways of solving these difficulties, experiencing the way of life in another country, enjoying another country’s culture and geography, building friendships, practicing English.* “. She adds to our list the sensation from living in a foreign country, enjoying foreign culture and geography and from creating contacts and friendships. Respondent 7 also stated “*creating relations with foreigners, friendship*” as benefit; however it is interesting since she stated “division/fusion of personal and work life” as a problem on intercultural level. Apparently in this Czech-Latvian-Russian-Chinese-Spanish group some cultures behaved and some did not behave according to our respondents expectations. Given the opposite characteristic of cultures such as Chinese and Spanish, we assume that our respondent made connection with some members and with some she was surprised with their aloofness (caused by cultural standards).

Unanimous benefit for the team and the job is variety in opinions, ideas and in points of view. It is connected to the competence to be open-minded. Another benefit is the enrichment of the job which is never boring. Respondent 10 sees the opportunity in creating relations which might be useful in future projects.

On the other hand interviewees feel limited mainly on communication level (language barriers – respondent 6 feels unable to express herself because of insufficient language skills and respondent 2 stated: “*sometimes in mutual comprehension, who means*



*what and why*”). Another repeated problem was time lag in projects that are running long distance cooperation (mostly cases with partners from different continents).

There have been almost no cultural problems affecting the whole team and the project, only problems of different working time. Time in general is significant troublemaker – work in multinational team requires more time because of several reasons (time lag, different working time, more time needed for communication because of foreign languages). Respondent 6 told that “*sometimes there are senseless conflicts because of different mentalities which wouldn’t happen in mono-cultural team.*” The problem here is not in an aspect of culture but in different cultures in general. Answer 9 was “*the field that I am working in, is not affected by multicultural environment*”. According to our findings the field of activity is not relevant; multiculturalism can influence whichever – the team and the cooperation.

### **Research question 3**

To answer this question we asked their opinion about the politics and if there have appeared, in any way, language discrimination (question 30).

There was a risk that the respondent wouldn’t know what “language policy” is. We realized this issue with response “*I don’t consider it discrimination*” but there is no more information about “it” in question, there is problem in interpretation of the term.

Respondent 2 said “*one colleague was willing to speak only English but yet she was talked to in French (French native speakers).*” This is language discrimination. This project has English as main language but French was used as well. French native speakers committed the discrimination by non-respecting the main language.

Interesting information was in questionnaire 6. “*It wasn’t exactly language discrimination, more like disadvantage of me comparing to native speakers or people with higher level of French. But it didn’t cause any major problems. Sometimes it took more time, and it was exhausting but at least I was using the foreign language.*” This project was handled in French, English was possible as well. We interpret as follows. Respondent didn’t feel discriminated from the side of her colleagues but we can talk about discrimination case by chosen language policy. There were all together 5 members from

Czech Republic, Germany and France. The information followed that the politic was functioning well since the native speakers were helping others with language issues.

When there is English set as the main language and at the same time there are no English native speakers, we haven't come across to a problem or dissatisfaction. In a project with three minor languages, they needed the big language as English because they were aware of the fact that any other possibility would case discrimination. *“The general use of English seems to be the overall solution. We may opt for using national languages, but then one team would be in an advantageous position over the others, and, besides, as we are all from countries of small languages, all of us need the power of an international language.”*

If the project is in scientific field, it appears that there is no other possibility than English. *“English is world-wide language and there is no other possibility then English for science, when communicating with consumers the materials are translated into relevant languages.”*

#### **Research question 4**

This question can be answered by comparing set of questions about preparation (19 – 22) with the set of question about emerged problems (23 – 30).

As every team has regular possibility to discuss emerging problems, they are immediately handled. Common problem is language so it is only logical that language courses should be available for members, which is not always the case.

Time needed for work is extended due to multiculturalism because more time is needed to explain all tasks, its aspects, etc. This could be improved via intercultural training or also teambuilding could be helpful. It would create tighter relations and therefore smoother cooperation. The last recommendation is some kind of training for effective communication in general.

Even though we haven't identified any pattern which would let us say with certainty into which extent the preparation of the team influences it's functioning, we dare to confirm our hypothesis. Better preparation of the team can improve its functioning as one unit. Every project needs specific preparation and every member possesses or misses certain competences. Management should provide for all members the possibility of education

(hard and soft skills). Also every member should be proactive and identify his own strengths and weaknesses and act accordingly.

### **Research question 5**

We asked series of questions which were created to find out if the project was prepared in all crucial spheres. We were also wondering if they were familiar with external environment of the project (questions 8 – 18).

For analysing the external environment of the project PESTEL analysis is not used, unlike SWOT analysis. It is possible that the spheres from PESTEL are also considered in SWOT.

Preparation for the project will not ensure its success. Project 5 was perfectly arranged, corrective steps were taken, plan was updated, analysis was conducted and still there was a deviation of one year (it was supposed to take from one to two years) and likewise budget was exceeded (in significant sum).

Planning generally didn't exceeded few months also for the case of a project of more than 10 countries, from more continents, with more than 40 members. This project was planned in three months, only external environment wasn't analysed since there was no need for that because it is about well-established repetitive processes. This can explain why such a complicated project can be prepared in such a short time. If we compare it with project 6, which took 4 months and the preparation 2 and a half month, we see a high efficiency in the first case. Projects financed by European funds are different case. Project 9 lasted 5 years and planning took two years. Important document for such project is application file. This application requires filling of all key areas. It is important for preventing from misusing these sources.

Respondent 7 said that identified threat was the ignorance of the environment. It could be avoided by already mentioned analysis. But if we implement a project in foreign conditions even if we analyse the conditions, they can still be considered as a threat. The best solution is to find a person, who would know the given environment.

Preparation of projects is not generally neglected as well as the analysis of the external environment.

## **Hypothesis 1**

This hypothesis was confirmed. Every interviewee has come across a problem rising from culture. We asked question 25 to find out if there are such problems.

We could find a pattern of answers. The less important problem was the “willingness to help”. But all other issues were repeatedly chosen. We can only speculate if the problems were more individual or cultural in general. No other problems were stated. Working time is issue mostly for team consisting of countries from different continents. Respondent 9 working in a project financed by European fund states: *“Problems emerging from multiculturalism are not normally appearing; everybody understands the need to follow the plan; problems are more caused by lack of time to perform desired activities / submit report in time”*. It is remarkable that they are able to overcome their differences and focus on the plan since there are involved 17 countries from all around the world.

Czech-Hungarian-Serbian team don’t see any problems since they come from similar cultural backgrounds. *“As we are from 3 countries of rather similar cultural backgrounds these difficulties are of minor level and importance, hardly noticeable, and easy to handle.”*

Overall results are not surprising because the list of problems was created base on stable, long-term studied cultural differences occurring during cooperation.

## **Hypothesis 2**

This hypothesis can be confirmed or disproved thanks to questions about preparation of the project (8 – 18) and about preparation of the members (19 and 20).

We weren’t able neither to confirm or disprove the hypothesis. We observed all combinations of both categories. No project preparation but personal training; preparation of both project and members; preparation of people but no project preparation. The only thing we can say is that for every project there is some kind of preparation. Different forms of personal trainings and different content of project planning. Trainings are mostly focused on language skills, one respondent (8) went through intercultural training and also through training about one particular culture. Other cases are more about hard skills.

Team members take preparation seriously; they prepare themselves from their own initiative (reading of materials, of previous projects, etc.). Respondent 8 considers preparation for meetings highly important. *“Yes, the (note: individual preparation) is very important. Every team member must conscientiously prepare himself for each meeting”*. This preparation will ensure smooth course. Interviewee 9 proposes specific areas in which she would find education useful. *“Beneficial is training in field of project preparation, management and fulfilment of projects and if we would speak about participation in a project, then it would be communication, presentation skills, preparing of project proposals, language skills etc.”*

### **Other findings**

One interesting fact was that according to our interviewees, benefits of the work in multinational team predominate over its negatives. In every questionnaire there was at least one benefit which was not the same case with its negatives (for example *“I don’t see any”*). The negative were in general less frequent and often not related to multiculturalism (language barriers, time shift, etc.).

Positive discovery was that there have been no insurmountable language problems. It concerned mostly specific terminology or extra time and energy needed for communication. But the respondents were still satisfied with the possibility to use the foreign language. *“... Sometimes is slowed us down, sometimes it was exhausting but at least I used the foreign language.”*

Main language is English, followed by French and Spanish. In project four, they have 5 used languages (main language is English) in a team from 10 countries with 42 people. The only problem of the respondent is occasional ignorance of terminology in foreign language. We suppose that not all members master all languages and so the main language is English (meetings, official documents, etc.) and the others will be used more on individual level.

Respondent 6 describes issues while working with French. *“French members in our team tended to spend much more time with the tasks than we did (unnecessarily). Their way of thinking was more complicated than needed. It resulted only in delays in work. The Czechs were on the other hand looking for the simplest, quickest and most effective*

*solution. Sometimes it was hard to come to an agreement.*” We can see a nice example of cultural specifics. Every culture has a different style of working. Nový & Schroll-Machl (2015) describe the differences between German and Czech style of working. The Czechs prefer to have all information gathered before they start working but on the other hand the Germans prefer to work with simple tasks and to figure it all out by themselves. There is no good or bad in these cases it is just different. Respondent 6 which is Czech is apparently used to a very efficient way of working but the French part of the team prefers to think through all existing possibilities.

Respondent 2 points out: *“More complicated relation with head of the unit caused by more distant cultures, (he had significantly better relation with a trainee from the same country)”*. We can see that not all people are so open to new cultures and don’t use the benefits that the work in intercultural environment brings. It seems that he wasn’t willing to step out of his comfort zone or maybe he had previous negative experience with the Czech culture or even personal sympathies or antipathies could have played their part. We are not able to determine the cause of this problem but the fact remains that it is logically more comfortable and easier to create relations with people from our own culture.

## 6. Guideline for creating an intercultural project team

The key to a successful team is correct way of working with people; as individuals and as a team. The team is defined as follows.

*“A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.”* Katzenbach & Smith (1999)

To create a team there needs to be a competent leader. He (or she) should have strong communication skills, should be good at working with people, should be motivating for the team, and should have strong problem-solving capacity and other competences. One of the most important tasks is to choose the right team members (to recognize their competences and to assign them with the right tasks). For that personal test could be used. Every member has some competence, knowledge or skill which is unique in the team and which completes the team as a unit. Project should have defined strong and weak sides, as well as opportunities and threats; these can also have impact on the team itself.

Every member should have assigned its role with its tasks so it is crystal clear who is doing what, respectively who is responsible for what. The members should understand aims and purpose of the project if we want them to be enthusiastic about it.

Moreover the team members need to be involved in the development of the project, so they would feel involved in decision-making process. Communication among members needs to be maintained regularly.

Preparation not only of the project but also of the members is crucial. It is the responsibility of the management or even of individuals to educate themselves. It can contain language courses, soft skills, presentation skills, negotiation skills or even hard skills related to the project. Another important step is to motivate and reward the members as a way to increase their productivity.

In multinational team language policy should be selected carefully, the main communication language need to be picked and if needed also other used languages. The choice should be made while considering all team members (their mother tongue and level

of other languages) and also with regards to the project itself (internal and external environment).

Guideline for creating multinational team is summed up into following nine steps. The steps have been selected throughout the creation of the paper (from literature and from the research itself) and all of them are important.

1. Chose a competent team leader
2. Precisely and comprehensibly define purpose and aims of the project
3. Conduct analysis of the project – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
4. Chose the right team – right people with right roles
5. Define roles, assign responsibilities
6. Set the language policy
7. Prepare the team members – trainings, etc.
8. Motivate, give the merit
9. Communicate constantly
10. Involve members into decision-making process



## Conclusion

The aim of this piece of work was theoretical presentation of existing forms of cooperation; of intercultural communication including solving of intercultural-problem; of theory of project team management; creation of the questionnaire; analysis of gathered data and proposition of a guideline for creating an intercultural team. We have achieved this aim.

Theoretical part is longer than expected because of the extent of the topic. It is complicated and vast subject which interfere into several fields of research.

First chapter explained the forms of cooperation. Cooperation can be either formalised or non-formalised. The latter is different for each project; therefore it is hard to describe it in details. On the other hand, there exist a vast number of formalised forms; the basic division is into concentration (not important for our research) and collaboration. Collaboration is a way of voluntary grouping of autonomous entities. We described strategic alliance, franchising, cluster, joint venture and cooperative of primary production.

Second chapter was focused on intercultural communication; this topic is more than ever topical issue because of globalization. We explained the process of social perception and the influence of our own culture on any social interaction (with the risk of intercultural problem or conflict). We proceeded with basic rules for solving or even prevent these problems (knowing your own culture, respect foreign culture, taking responsive steps towards the second side and others). Another part of this chapter was dedicated to recommendations for effective communication and to possible ways of dealing with multiculturalism. At the end of this part, we focused on intercultural communication in professional fields, since we are interested in intercultural projects mainly in such areas.

Third chapter handled project management – the preparation of a project, possible analysis to be conducted and what not to forget. Also project team management was discussed – how to create and lead project team, its specific problems, factors influencing its good functioning or list of required competences.

Fourth chapter was a transition from the theoretical part to the practical one. While using literature, we described the principles, techniques, aims, research questions, hypothesis, forms, interviewed sample and data analysis in theory and in practice (our

questionnaire). We proposed the number of respondents as well as the number of people asked to fill it in. The way of distribution of the questionnaire, its structure, how long it takes to fill it and other details.

Fifth chapter worked with collected responses. Interesting fact was that 100 % of respondents were women with university degree. We answered research questions and we either confirmed or disproved hypothesis. The questionnaire was formed as a tool for answering these questions and responding to our hypothesis. One sub-chapter was added for interesting findings which didn't belong to any previous part.

Last chapter included the guideline for creating a multinational team. The result was a nine steps recommendation list.

The studied problematics is more important than ever. We came across to significant amount of interesting information which could be studied even more in depth and thus it is possible to proceed with the research and even study other aspects of multinational projects. The topic is still changing and developing; therefore any other research would bring new and stimulating outcomes.

# Appendix 1 – Questionnaire - Preparing and running multinational collaborative projects

## INTRODUCTION

My name is Pavla Šmidová and I am currently studying European and Regional Project Management on Faculty of Economics on South Bohemian University. As you are a member of an intercultural team, I would like to ask you to fill in the following questionnaire. I will ask you to evaluate the ongoing (or already finished) project and to share your experience with work in an intercultural/international environment. The questionnaire is divided into 7 parts = 34 questions + 23 sub-questions (+ general questions) and will take you approximately 25 minutes to fill it in. The results of the questionnaire will serve for purposes of my master thesis.



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## PART 1. DESCRIPTION OF YOUR TEAM

1. How many members does the team have?
2. What is your post in the team?
3. What nationalities are represented in the team?
4. What is the language policy in the team (main language, how many languages used and which,...)?
5. What is the field of activity of your team (subject of the project)?
6. For how long is the team set up (indefinitely, for the project – 1 year,...)?
7. How long are you a member of the team?

## PART 2. PREPARING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

8. How long did the planning of the project take (preparing of project plan, defining the inputs and outputs,...)?
9. Were risks of the project specified beforehand?
10. Were aims of the project defined beforehand?
11. Was the schedule set beforehand (milestones)?
12. Were activities of the project defined beforehand?
13. Were costs and budget including its division among activities defined beforehand?
14. Were members assigned with functions beforehand?
15. Is the project plan controlled?
  - a. How often?
  - b. When there is a problem, are there any corrective actions carried out? If yes, please specify the changes
  - c. Is the plan updated regularly? If yes, please specify the changes

### **PART 3. ENVIRONMENT OF THE PROJECT (EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL)**

16. Was the SWOT analyses conducted (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)?
  - a. How much time was dedicated to the analyses of the external environment?
  - b. Which opportunities and threats for the project were identified?
17. Was the PESTEL analyses conducted?
  - a. Were there defined problems in any of following spheres? If yes, please specify
    - i. Politics
    - ii. Economics
    - iii. Society
    - iv. Technology
    - v. Environment
    - vi. Legislation
18. Did you use these analyses throughout the project? If yes, please specify
  - a. Do you find these analyses beneficial to the project?

### **PART 4. YOUR PREPARATION BEFORE INVOLVING INTO THE PROJECT**

19. Do you have any previous experience with multicultural environment (work in international team, job abroad, studying abroad,...)? If yes, please briefly describe your experience – number of projects, type and length of stay(s)/job(s), etc.
  - a. Have you used these experiences in current project?
    - i. Have you proceeded to the problems in the same way as in your previous projects?
20. Have you had any type of preparation before the project – improving soft skills needed for the project?
  - a. If no, would you be interested in it (why and in which sphere)?
  - b. Individual training (personal initiative) – if yes, please describe
  - c. Guided training
    - i. In which form (workshop, booklet, lecture, travel abroad,...)?
    - ii. For how long (one time, repeatedly – e.g. once in a week for half a year,...)?
    - iii. Who carried out the training (superior, trainer, representative of a country,...)?
    - iv. For who was the training (all team members, management,...)?
    - v. Training about multiculturalism/work in intercultural environment? If yes, please describe
    - vi. Training about particular culture (cultural habits/ legislation/ business/ other specific field)? If yes, please describe
    - vii. Language learning? If yes, please describe
21. Do you find your experience or trainings useful?

### **PART 5. EMERGING PROBLEMS IN THE TEAM**

22. Is in your team enough place for settling doubts/unclarities/problems (where, how often, in which form,...)?
23. Do you have any problems with languages? If yes, please specify

- a. How are these problems solved (are there any lessons took for the future)?
- 24. Do you use the service of external coach (consultancy)?
- 25. What are the main problems on level of intercultural differences in following spheres?
  - a. Time perception (e.g. meeting deadlines)
  - b. Orientation on work/relationships
  - c. Division/fusion of personal and work life
  - d. Misunderstanding caused by different cultures
  - e. Working time
  - f. Willingness to help
  - g. other

## **PART 6. YOUR PERCEPTION OF WORK IN AN INTERCULTURAL TEAM**

- 26. What is for you the benefit of working in multicultural environment?
- 27. What are the benefits of working in multicultural work for the team/project?
- 28. What are the restrictions multiculturalism causes to you?
- 29. What are the disadvantages of multiculturalism for team/project?
- 30. How would you evaluate the language policy of the project (suggestions for improvements,...)?
  - a. Have you noticed language discrimination during the project (with you or with other team members – mother language/chosen communication language/your level of the communication language,...)?

## **Part 7. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT**

- 31. Where the defined goals of the project fulfilled? If not, please specify
- 32. Was the schedule kept (if not, what was the deviation)?
- 33. Did the expected risks emerge?
  - a. Did the corrective moves bring desired results?
- 34. Was the budget kept?

## **PART 8. GENERAL INFORMATION**

Age

Gender

- a. Man
- b. Woman

Nationality

Highest level of education achieved

Profession

Your email address

Remarks/additional information

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you sincerely for your time and cooperation. If you are interested in results of my study or if you have any kind of comment, please contact me via email: [smidova-pavla@seznam.cz](mailto:smidova-pavla@seznam.cz)

## Appendix 2 – View of the questionnaire

### Preparing and running multinational collaborative projects

My name is Pavla Šmidová and I am currently studying European and Regional Project Management on Faculty of Economics on South Bohemian University. As you are a member of an intercultural team, I would like to ask you to fill in the following questionnaire. I will ask you to evaluate the ongoing (or already finished) project and to share your experience with work in an intercultural/international environment. The questionnaire is divided into 7 parts = 34 questions + 22 sub-questions (+ general questions) and will take you approximately 25 minutes to fill it in. The results of the questionnaire will serve for purposes of my master thesis.



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# Preparing and running multinational collaborative projects

\*Povinné pole

## Part 1. Description of your team

1. How many members does the team have? \*

Vaše odpověď

2. What is your post in the team? \*

Vaše odpověď

3. What nationalities are represented in the team? \*

Vaše odpověď

4. What is the language policy in the team (main language, how many languages used and which,..)? \*

Vaše odpověď

5. What is the field of activity of your team (subject of the project)? \*

Vaše odpověď

6. For how long is the team set up (indefinitely, for the project – e.g. 1 year,...)? \*

Vaše odpověď

7. How long are you member of the team? \*

Vaše odpověď

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