

## **Bridging Cultural Encounters with Etwinning**

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### **Abstract**

eTwinning action has as its main objectives fostering constructive and collaborative work among European schools in a virtual and safe educational environment, with the ambition of fulfilling Europe's dream in constructing a common European identity. Launched in 2005, as an initiative of the European Commission, soon became a serious case of successful inter-schools' partnerships and in 2007, with the Lifelong Learning Programme, eTwinning became part of the Comenius action.

As far as foreign language education is concerned, reinforcing language learning and intercultural dialogue, as much as collaborative work and ICT skills, seemed to be the key aspects for integrating eTwinning as part of language teachers' approach for a more authentic and meaningful way of promoting the intercultural communicative competence.

Researchers like Byram (1997) have suggested a change of language learning and teaching paradigm, switching from a 'native-speaker' approach to an 'intercultural speakers' proposition in order to provide students with the necessary tools to explore multiple cultural perspectives and negotiate differences and meanings. Kaikkonen (2001) adds that the use of ICT tools pave the way for these intercultural and interactive experiences, which with eTwinning take place among students from various levels of education across Europe.

With the aim of understanding how the eTwinning action develops processes of intercultural communication and mediation among individuals of multiple and diverse contexts and identities, a study was carried out. It sought to understand to what extent eTwinning action can bridge the gap between cultures and boost intercultural communicative competence and collaborative learning skills among students and teachers of different participating countries. The methodology involved the analysis of official documents, its online working environment ([www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net)) and a survey to foreign language teachers involved in eTwinning projects.