

## DIV.ED: a Practical Approach to Diversity in Higher Education

**Olga Medvedeva**

Public Service Language Centre (Lithuania)

[olga@vikc.lt](mailto:olga@vikc.lt)

### Abstract

Due to the increased mobility and the boost in the ICT –supported communication, people's personal and professional lives are affected by unavoidable encounters with different languages and cultures, attitudes, ethnic or religious affiliations. The term *Diversity* is extensively used in the European political and socio-economic discourse to speak about various dimensions of differences between individuals, social groups, communities and nations. The ERASMUS Multilateral Project "Diversity in the Learning Experience in (Higher) Education" ([www.diversity-ed.eu](http://www.diversity-ed.eu)) addresses *Diversity* as an important feature of today's learning environment and also as a content to be acquired on the theoretical, knowledge - based level, and on a more practical one: reflecting on attitudes and developing skills for adequate performance in the situations where people from diverse cultural, ethnical or social groups study or work together. The project partners from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Lithuania and Portugal have pooled their varied expertise: experience in Erasmus exchanges at universities, distance and blended learning, visual arts and ICT-based pedagogy. The main project product – the 6- ECTS -Module on Diversity - is designed to develop competencies in the fields of social and cultural acceptance / tolerance through enhancing learners' intercultural and linguistic sensitivity and cultural understanding. The Module is based on the theory of Social Learning that highlights the exclusive role of a social group in the acquisition of social competences. Apart from group reflections and interactive tasks, the Module makes use of the Digital story-telling as a means to share and collect experience of various social exchanges and intercultural communication, which is often affected by the use of a foreign language. The created digital stories provide additional material for analyzing culture-specific features of verbal and non-verbal communication. The Module is available in the blended- and/or distance-learning format; it can be used in non-formal learning environment. The project partners will contribute to the creation of the documentary film on diversity (Screenplay by Patrick Spanbauer, On Screen OG, Vienna) that explores the using of one's abilities and singularities as opportunities for learning and teaching.