



## **TIPS: T-learning to Improve professional Skills for Intercultural dialogue**

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

Project acronym:	TIPS
Project title:	T-learning to Improve Professional Skills for intercultural dialogue
Project number:	134119-LLP-2007-IT-LMP
Sub-programme or KA:	Leonardo da Vinci
Project website:	<a href="http://www.forcom.it/tipsproject">www.forcom.it/tipsproject</a>
Reporting period:	From 01/11/07 To 31/10/09
Report version:	1
Date of preparation:	01/12/09
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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

## Executive Summary

This report addresses readers who are involved in education, academic and training institutions, International Organizations, NGOs, governmental authorities and services concerning the field of immigration and cultural mediation.

The TIPS project “T-learning to Improve Professional Skills for intercultural dialogue” realized a training course for social workers and people interested in working in the field of cultural mediation in order to learn valuable skills and competences for working and interacting with migrants and immigrants in their country. In recent years, intercultural dialogue has greatly impacted the professional role and responsibilities of social workers and professionals working with migrants and immigrants in various sectors and consequently has become a transversal priority of European Union policies. In light of EU initiatives and a growing demand for professional cultural mediators in society, the TIPS project’s main objective was to design and develop a distance training course addressing social workers and potential cultural mediators through the T-learning methodology; integrating E-learning, mobile learning and TV learning in order to enhance professional skills and knowledge related to this field.

The European countries involved in the TIPS multi-actor partnership (France, Italy, Poland, Greece and Austria) were selected according to territorial criteria, each representing and reflecting different migration flows and integration practices in Europe. Specific tasks were assigned to partners based on their expertise in order to ensure the successful achievement of project results. The Consortium is composed of experts in diverse fields comprising the development of new learning methodologies and technologies in distance education, working with immigrants in the volunteering sector, the development of quality digital educational material and new digital media and the implementation of quality management and evaluation. The TIPS T-learning methodology was developed for the TIPS course “Practicing and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe” which promotes continuous, on-the-job training and provides the opportunity for users to join the TIPS Virtual Community Network where trainees can exchange and discuss practices and information through an online forum and chat. The TIPS didactic methodology was developed based on exploiting benefits fostered by the integrated use of distance and digital devices. Each learning platform allows users to customize their own training paths based on their own specific availability, learning styles and training needs. Trainees can learn directly in their working environment and receive “on-the-job” training, thanks to the portable feature of the e-learning and mobile platforms, creating a “learning-by- doing” approach integrated with a “work based learning” method. The TIPS course is divided into 5 modules exploring topics such as the profile of the cultural mediator, the psychology of cultural mediation, legal frameworks in the EU and partner countries, and cultural mediation: fields of application. The TIPS course includes 104 different types of Learning Objects such as, audio lessons, lecture notes, quizzes, mobile learning pills, and IPTV videos featuring case studies and interviews with cultural mediators. Moreover, the course offers a collaborative learning approach through forum, chat and tools to help trainees during their work related activities such as the TIPS mobile phrasebook, a repository of important sentences and verbal expressions translated into 13 common partner country migrant languages, the TIPS Glossary of technical terms relating to the field and the TIPS e-book providing information about different migrant countries’ culture and traditions.

The future plans for the TIPS project are to commercialization the course, apply the T-learning methodology to other professional training programmes and sectors, set up a network of best practices with other similar European projects and professional cultural mediators and to contribute to the recognition of the cultural mediator as a professional role in Europe. Moreover, the TIPS course has become part of an institutional offer which could be referred to as Level 4 in the future European Qualifications Framework (EQF). For more information on the TIPS project and course please visit the TIPS official website: [www.forcom.tips/tipsproject.it](http://www.forcom.tips/tipsproject.it).

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# 1. Project Objectives

The **main objective** of the TIPS project is to **realize and test a training course** using the T-learning methodology, integrating E-learning, M-learning and TV-learning, **for cultural mediators** and social workers in order to improve skills and competences needed to work and interact with immigrants.

The TIPS course “Practicing and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe”, thanks its pragmatic approach, aims at supporting mediators on-the-job by providing theory and practical training. Cultural mediator training programmes are often delivered through specialized courses based on specific professional skills and qualifications essential for potential cultural mediators and are supported by ESF funding and organized by agencies authorized by Regional authorities and Universities.

The TIPS distance training course offers practical, on-the-job training, allowing professionals to work and study simultaneously, which is one of the project’s feature benefits. The TIPS project assumes that cultural mediators’ competences and skills are “client driven”; referring to the fact that most of the cultural mediators’ skills and competences are developed primarily through work experience. This is why the TIPS project aims at emphasising and improving **on-the-job training and at creating a virtual learning community** where work experiences and suggestions can be shared by all participants.

The TIPS project **specific objectives** are to:

- ❖ Conduct a comparative research on professional cultural mediators and social workers in order to identify their specific training needs
- ❖ Offer social workers and potential cultural mediators customised training through the T-learning platforms (E-learning, M-learning, TV-learning) featuring different Learning Objects and tools to fit diverse learning styles
- ❖ Promote on-the-job training thanks to interactive tools such as the TIPS mobile phrasebook containing a repository of the most important sentences and verbal expressions translated into 13 common languages of migrants who are living in partner countries, TIPS Glossary of technical terms relating to the cultural mediation and the TIPS e-book providing information about different migrant countries’ culture and traditions
- ❖ Share knowledge and experiences relating to the cultural mediation field at a European level through virtual training seminars, social software hosted by the T-learning system and the most popular social software network groups

## **Benefits to the TIPS target user group**

The TIPS project benefits social workers and potential cultural mediators from five different European countries: Italy, Greece, Poland, Austria and France. Social workers and professionals interested in cultural mediation were directly involved in the research phase to identify their specific training needs and the experimentation of the TIPS training course. The TIPS course “Practicing and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe”, impacts the target group by providing them with professional training to help develop and enhance skills relating to cultural mediation and working with immigrants. The TIPS course is a distance learning training course allowing participants to improve their knowledge and skills by accessing the course anytime, anywhere without limits of time or space. The target user group (potential and professional Cultural Mediators, and Social Workers), thanks to the TIPS course, not only acquires essential knowledge and new professional skills relating to the field of cultural mediation, but also acquires fundamental ICT skills through the use of social software, tools and navigating the platforms on the T-learning system. All skills and knowledge acquired concerning both cultural mediation and ICT skills are valuable

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transferable skills that can be applied to a vast number of different professional sectors and positions that require basic interpersonal, communicative (i.e. mediation) skills and computer competences independent of the context. An additional direct benefit to the user group is the TIPS Certificate of Attendance, which can attribute to acquired professional experience and skills. In Italy this certificate is recognized by the Programma Integra <http://www.programmaintegra.it/> allowing TIPS trainees who received the certificate of attendance to enroll in the Region of Lazio's Official Register of Intercultural Mediators.

Another advantage to the TIPS target user group is the fact that the course methodology is based on the flexible concept of distance learning. Not only were trainees able to study selecting their own time and place during the course delivery, but they also received all the Learning Objects and Documents from the E-Learning platform copied onto a CD ROM which allows them to continuously refer back or review the course content when needed in the future.

Furthermore, the user group benefited greatly from the Virtual Community Network featured on the e-learning and m-learning platforms through forum and chat and through TIPS Cultural Mediation network groups on the most popular social software programmes: Facebook, Yahoo groups, Google Groups, LinkedIn, Del.icio.us, Goldenline, Twitter, MySpace and Flickr. The Virtual Community network provided users with the opportunity to share experiences, best practices, discuss course contents and issues relating to cultural meditation and immigration. This network will continue to grow and add new members long after the end of the project.

## 2. Project Approach

The TIPS project is based on a comparative research and the development and delivery of the TIPS training course “Practicing and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe”. TIPS course participants were selected among an identified “European Target Group” comprising of social workers and people interested in working in cultural mediation for the six month training course of 98 hours that took place from February 2009 to August 2009. All partners conducted the selection process for eligible participants in their country based a standard requirement criteria and a ranking list. The course participants selected for the training course consisted of 100 total participants from the partner countries.

In order for the TIPS partnership to develop a training programme that effectively addresses professional cultural mediators’ training needs, a **comparative research** was conducted on cultural mediators and professionals working in cultural mediation: “an analysis to identify the professional role of the mediator and his/her training needs through the examination and assessment of different situations” in all five European countries involved in the project. The research team conducted a desk research (analysis of relevant reviews, press articles and statistical data) completed by focus groups and interviews with cultural mediators that helped provided a basis for the training course curriculum. The research was conducted during a consultation among cultural mediators in France and Italy and through the collection of significant case studies from all partner countries (16 in France, 10 in Italy, 10 in Poland, 3 in Greece and 2 in Austria). The research pointed out the differences among legislative and educational frameworks in Europe and therefore, was the key element to help the TIPS pedagogical team define the final version of the training programme in terms of modules and contents.

Based on the research results, the TIPS T-learning system, triple platforms were designed and developed by the project technical working team. TIPS course is modular and divided into 5 modules where each module hosts various learning objects. The same modular structure was reproduced within each platform whilst different types of learning objects are available through the three systems. This ensures a true integration that combines theory and practice, rather than a sum of contents delivered in a triple modality. The TIPS T-learning system hosts various tools to encourage both interactivity (e.g. self-assessment quizzes) and interaction (social software). TIPS trainees benefit from an on-line course supported by a mixed methodology where E-learning is supported by M-learning and TV-learning. The triple system exploits the benefits of distance learning tools and specific learning objects were developed for each tool offering a solution to compensate for any weaknesses that might be present in the other methodologies. Thus ensuring high quality interaction, portability, multimediality, simulations and no limits of space and time. These intrinsic qualities of the TIPS system positively impact cultural mediators’ learning process by promoting customised training able to fit different learning styles. The intention behind mixing the three systems is to continually support cultural mediators’ activities, deliver up-to-date information and ensure continuity between work and training.

The E-Learning platform, available through the personal computer, has the following features:

- ❖ Generally located in a place designated for studying or working
- ❖ Promotes various possibilities of interaction using a mouse, keyboard, handset, video camera, microphone, etc.

Therefore, the E-learning platform is suitable for studying and addressing course contents in-depth, adequate for developing a highly interactive milieu and relevant for using synchronous and asynchronous social software tools.

The M-Learning platform has been created to fully exploit the potentiality of mobile devices and at the same time recognizing its potential limitations such as, a reduced screen size and that fact that mobiles are often used outdoors where learners often risk losing concentration due to background noise and other distractions. The most interesting feature of a mobile,

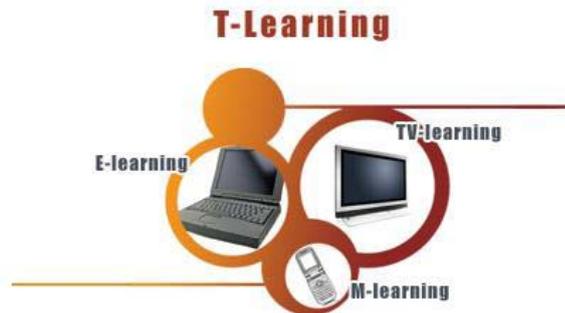
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however, is its portability, giving trainees the option to learn anytime, anywhere. Considering these aspects, specific learning objects were produced for the m-learning platform that were quite different from those created for the E-Learning platform such as mobile learning pills (mini audio-video lessons), TIPS interactive glossary, multilingual phrasebook, and e-book.

The TV-Learning platform, available through the television, is characterized by the following:

- ❖ A large screen allowing the possibility to watch high quality videos
- ❖ Simple interaction through a remote control i.e. just a few buttons and no mouse

The TV-learning platform is best used for providing audio-video clips and high quality graphics, as well as avoiding too much interactivity



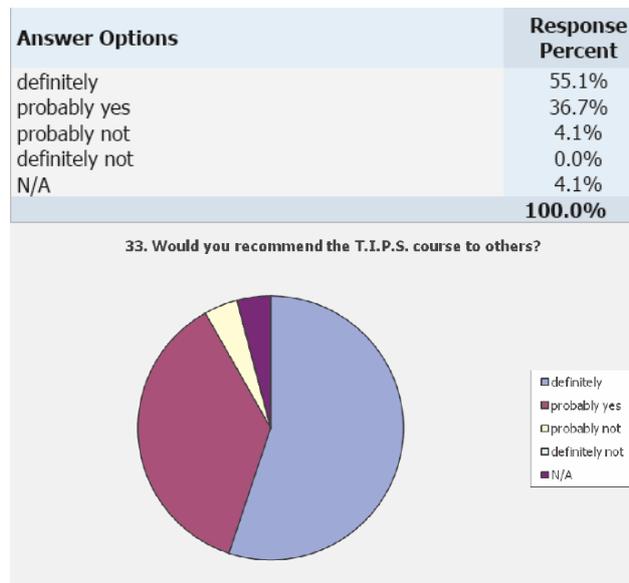
The added value of the TIPS project is its concept of integration which can be considered as a leitmotiv concerning the social context, course subjects, methodology and technology. The following components of the added value are implemented and guaranteed through the development of the TIPS **T-learning methodology** and the TIPS **didactic methodology**:

- ❖ the social component regarding this concept is the theoretical and practical contents to be used at the workplace allowing cultural mediators to support and assist immigrants' integration process in their host country
- ❖ the pedagogical component is the promotion of different learning styles such as visual, auditory and kinaesthetic through the access diverse Learning Objects and tutoring support;
- ❖ the didactic component offers cross-references encouraging users during a session to access other Learning Objects, featuring the same course topic, through different didactic tools. For example during an audio lesson the system indicates a film on the same topic available through the TV-learning platform;
- ❖ the technological component allows teachers and tutors to track learners' training paths through a comprehensive database in order to make statistical analysis on each users' progress

In order to ensure the high quality of procedures and products of the TIPS project that consequently benefits the target group, the partnership decided to devise a Quality and Evaluation Plan. The activities carried out pertaining to the Quality and Evaluation Plan (QEP) for the TIPS project encompass specific tools and instruments in order to conduct effective monitoring and evaluation of all project activities and outcomes. AUXILIUM, the Austrian partner specialised in the Criteria Based Evaluation methodology, applied a qualitative approach to the evaluation of the project focusing on both processes (identification of criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of the project management and meetings) and products (T-learning system and contents). Set criteria for the respective products of the project were cooperatively established and provided a basis for evaluating the didactic effectiveness, methodology and content quality of the educational products. The monitoring and evaluation of the project was implemented throughout the project life-cycle including grids and questionnaires for evaluation purposes (e.g. management of the project and plenary meetings), indicators map and an evaluation report.

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The main product of the evaluation process was the Final Quality Report which presented a detailed assessment of the TIP Experimentation according to the feedback from TIPS trainees, teachers and tutors. The report provided an extensive analysis of the quality and effectiveness of the course (T-learning platform, contents and tutoring). One of the most important results of the report was the trainees answer to the question asking them if they would recommend the course to others. The following imagines state the response percentage to this question. About 90% of the trainees responded yes to this question proving the important value of the TIPS course.



The TIPS partnership carried strategically planned dissemination and exploitation activities to promote the results of TIPS project to the target group and to a wide range of existing and potential stakeholders. In order to guarantee effective promotion and exploitation of the project, four strategies (i.e. Internet, Paper, Media, Events) were implemented and different tools were designed for each strategy.

The main objectives of the dissemination and exploitation activities proposed by the TIPS project are to:

- ❖ present and convey the TIPS project to the target group comprising of professionals working with immigration and in the field of cultural mediation who can help contribute to the successful achievement of results;
- ❖ deliver the project results to political institutions and organizations who determine social inclusion strategies at a national and European level.

In order to achieve these aims, the TIPS partnership implemented different dissemination and exploitation activities to promote the innovative features of the T-learning methodology and positive results of the TIPS course. The following list of activities were carried out by the partnership to contribute to the sustainability of the project results:

- ❖ 16 total local meetings were organized in partner countries before, during and after the course participant selection phase to promote the project and TIPS course to the short-term target group of an estimated number of 1,000 people;
- ❖ All partners attended 17 national and international conferences involving an estimated total audience of 1,000 people who participated in the presentations of the project and an estimated total number of 16,000 people who attended the conferences and received informative materials on the project. These conferences provided an opportunity to promote the project through the publication of full papers and showing PowerPoint presentations at the events, networking and distributing all

- or some of the following informative materials to the target groups: TIPS project and course brochures, the TIPS poster, course demo and video promo;
- ❖ TIPS quarterly newsletters in English and all partner languages highlighting the aims, activities and main outcomes of the project were distributed to a multinational direct e-mailing list by all partners reaching over 871 people including social workers, potential cultural mediators, professionals in similar fields, immigrant organizations, governmental agencies etc. In addition, there was an estimated total of over 10,000 visitors per month on all partner organization's websites promoting the TIPS project. Moreover, the direct e-mailing list included the Italian organization Programma Integra which forwarded this information to its list of over 450 registered intercultural cultural mediators currently working in Italy;
  - ❖ Articles on the TIPS project were published in newspapers and scientific journals (i.e. *The Parliament; Politics, Policy and People - Magazine*, Issue 264, *Science & Technology – Magazine*, Issue 01. *Anagnostis Press Issue* 9.10.08 and 16.07.09, and *Formamente Anno IV, N. 1-2* ) which addressed an estimated audience of 30,000 people in Europe.

Another essential dissemination and exploitation strategy of the TIPS project was to establish a contact list database of relevant long-term targets throughout the project that would strategically represent future opportunities for after the end of the project. A detailed list of **250** total contacts and potential stakeholders from Austria, France, Greece, Italy and Poland that comprise the long term target groups for the project. **104** out of the 250 contacts were identified as promising stakeholders that the partners contacted directly to set up exploitation meetings in their country.

Another key strategy to expand the project's long-term target group was to further develop the TIPS European Virtual Community Network that initially began with the forum, chat and Virtual Classroom on the e-learning platform during the TIPS training course "Practicing and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe". In order to reach the long-term target group, potential stakeholders and the general public, TIPS Cultural Mediation network groups on different social software programmes were founded, namely: Facebook, Yahoo groups, Google Groups, LinkedIn, Del.icio.us, Goldenline, Twitter, MySpace and Flickr (see Annex EXP 3 TIPS social software groups on Cultural Mediation). These types of groups were the first ever established for the field of Cultural Mediation on the Internet and both short-term and long-term target groups were invited to join through the project emailing list and referred to the direct link to the group sites in the Communication section of the TIPS website. At the moment there are currently **150** members within the 9 groups. This Internet strategy is an effective way to reach and maintain relations with the different target groups, as well as promote the project on a wide scale that will exponentially continue to grow in the future.

Moreover, one of the major strategies to promote the project and reach the long-term target group was the TIPS Final workshop in Patras, Greece. The programme was designed especially to promote the project results, involve experts on cultural mediation and distance learning as keynote speakers and target potential stakeholders. This event also provided an opportunity for other similar European projects to present their activities and created an forum for open discussion on cultural mediation, immigration/migrant issues and policies and an exchange of best practices. Over **126** people attended the conference including short-term and long term target groups, stakeholders, TIPS course participants, keynote speakers on cultural mediation, distance learning experts and members of the Greek municipality.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

In order to successfully achieve the main project objectives, the partnership realized specific activities and outputs throughout the project in order to obtain important outcomes and results.

The most important project outcomes and results are as follows:

With the aim to analyze the training needs of cultural mediators, the partnership realized a comparative research at European level:

#### **Final Comparative research report on cultural mediators training needs**

The realization of comparative research on professional socio cultural mediators pointed out the exiting differences among legislative and educational frameworks in Europe. The researchers conducted a desk research (analysis of relevant reviews, press articles and statistical data) completed by focus groups and interviews to cultural mediators to be later involved in the training activities. The research was the key element to help the TIPS pedagogical team define the final version of the training programme (modules, topics and contents) in order to better address the target group. This report (DE, EN, EL, FR, IT, PL) can be download from the TIPS website *under ACTIVITIES, Workpackage 2 section*.

With the objective to deliver an effective distance training course on Cultural Mediation the partnership designed and developed the T-learning platform (E-learning, M-learning, TV-learning) and different Learning Objects for the TIPS Course:

#### **The triple platform merging, e-platform, m-platform and TV-platform**

The three platforms allows the user target group to access certain training contents according to their personal needs and preferences during the experimentation period. These instruments exploit the potentials of digital devices promoted almost everywhere in Europe. The platforms can be accessed though the following address using a personalized UserID and password

E-learning platform: <http://77.238.3.46/claroing/>

M-learning platform: <http://77.238.3.46/claroing/mobile>

TV-learning platform: <http://77.238.3.46/claroing/IPTV>

#### **T-learning platform User Guide for trainers and administrators**

The T-learning platform User's Guide is a technical report concerning the T-learning platforms, which is a useful tool for technicians and platform administrators in order to:

- ❖ manage the open source e-learning platform;
- ❖ administer the interface between the open source e-learning platform and the server;
- ❖ set up the TIPS course through the dedicated connection server.

The document is available in the TIPS website, *TIPS Course Restricted Area*.

#### **Guidelines for the realization of the Learning Objects**

TIPS trainers were provided with specific Guidelines for the realization of suitable Learning Objects. The objective of the document is to guarantee the production and realization of high quality, homogeneous contents, in order to facilitate participants' access to the course. The guidelines explain how to produce the following learning objects:

- ❖ Audio lessons for E-learning
- ❖ Quizzes for E-learning

- ❖ Lecture notes for E-learning
- ❖ Mobile Learning Pills
- ❖ Videos for IpTv
- ❖ Quizzes for IpTV

In order to ensure that the criteria defined in the guidelines are respected, the teachers completed a check grid for each learning object realised. The check grid guide teachers to self-evaluate the specific features of their learning objects, especially regarding the format of their products.

The report is available in the TIPS website, *Private Area*.

### **TIPS Learning Objects and communication tools available on the Triple Platform**

104 Learning Objects and different tools were developed for the 98 hour TIPS Course on the three platforms:

- ❖ The E-learning platform delivers the core curriculum or main Learning Objects of the course featuring audio lessons, slides, quizzes and lecture notes, as well as social software tools such as Chat, Virtual Classroom, Forum, Agenda and Announcements. The Virtual Classroom, a synchronous teaching tool, allows trainees and teachers to interact and conduct lessons in a virtual learning environment.
- ❖ The M-Learning platform, consenting trainees to learn anytime, anywhere, features learning objects and tools such as: “Mobile Learning Pills” - mini audio-videos highlighting the main topics of course contents, glossary - a collection of useful terms with their respective definitions relating to cultural mediation, phrasebook - a repository of the most important phrases and expressions translated into thirteen languages in order to help the mediator better communicate with immigrants in their native language and e-book - providing information about the cultural and traditions of seven major countries that immigrate to Europe.
- ❖ The TV-Learning platform is accessible through the television allowing users to benefit from high quality images, movies and audio. Course participants browse the TV-platform using a remote control to access different IPTV videos featuring interviews with professional cultural mediators and relevant case studies.

With the objective to promote the project and the TIPS course, disseminate the project results and to contribute to the sustainability of the project’s main results, the partnership realized the following outputs:

#### **TIPS Web Portal [www.forcom.it/tipsproject](http://www.forcom.it/tipsproject)**

The TIPS Portal, a multilingual tool available in English and all partner languages (Italian, French, German, Polish and Greek), features information about the project, its aims, objectives activities and main results. The website also contributes to raising the awareness of local communities, for example at municipality level, regarding immigrant social insertion issues and increasing the visibility of the field of Cultural Mediation. Moreover the private area of the website serves as a repository to share documents and files among the project partners.

#### **TIPS social software groups on Cultural Mediation**

In order to reach the long-term target group, potential stakeholders and the general public, TIPS Cultural Mediation network groups on different social software programmes were founded: Facebook, Yahoo groups, Google Groups, LinkedIn, Del.icio.us, Goldenline, Twitter, MySpace and Flickr. These types of groups were the first ever established for the field of Cultural Mediation on the Internet and both short-term and long-term target groups were invited to join through the project emailing list and referred to the direct link to the group sites in the Communication section of the TIPS website. At the moment there are currently **150** members within the 9 groups.

### **Quarterly newsletters**

Six quarterly newsletters were written and uploaded on the TIPS website. Each newsletter features information about the project's progress and news and is published into English and all partners' languages. The Newsletters were distributed through the following means:

- ❖ Direct e-mailing list from each partner to stakeholders and key actors in the cultural mediation field;
- ❖ TIPS Website.

Moreover, a Special Edition newsletter and video interview with a TIPS trainee was published in order to promote the TIPS course results and the personal experiences of TIPS trainees

All newsletters are available in the TIPS web portal, *Communication, Newsletter section*.

### **Informative materials**

The following informative materials have been realized:

- ❖ The project brochure: available in English and all partner languages, was distributed at 16 local meetings and 17 international and national conferences. The project brochure is available on the project web site, *Communication, Brochure section*.
- ❖ TIPS poster: displayed at six national and international conferences (IADIS International Conference Mobile Learning 2008, Algarve, Portugal, 11-13 April, 2008; EDEN Annual Conference, 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, 11-14 June 2008, Education Fair Schwerin (Bildungsmesse Schwerin) Schwerin, Germany -21-22/11/08 and 1st Transnational Meeting for E-Educated Prague, CZ, - 29/11/08)
- ❖ Press articles: publication of articles on the TIPS project in newspapers and scientific journals (i.e. *The Parliament; Politics, Policy and People - Magazine, Issue 264, Science & Technology – Magazine, Issue 01. Anagnostis Press Issue 9.10.08 and 16.07.09, and Formamente Anno IV, N. 1-2* ) which addressed an estimated audience of 30,000 people in Europe.
- ❖ Course Brochure: available in English and all partner languages, promotes the TIPS course “Practicing and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe” and was distributed to potential participants at 16 local meetings with the target group and at 17 international and national conferences. The project brochure is available on the project web site *Communication, Brochure section*.
- ❖ TIPS Video Promo: is a video presentation of the TIPS course results produced in English, German, French, Italian and Greek. The video is available on DVD and on the project website, *homepage*.
- ❖ TIPS Course Demo: a video presentation of the TIPS Course to show the target group the main contents and information about the course. The Video is produced in English, German, French, Italian and is available on DVD and on the project web site, *TIPS Course*.

## 4. Partnerships

The TIPS project activities and aims are coherent with meeting European member states' needs arising from growing immigration flows and with the EU objective of implementing effective inclusive policies. In particular, the European Commission has pointed out the lack of qualified professionals (i.e. cultural mediators) who can act as a “bridge” facilitating communication and mutual understanding among European citizens and foreigners. The added value of the multi-country partnership involved in the TIPS project therefore, resides in each country's contribution to both the definition and **identification of cultural mediators' training needs** and the **exchange of experiences** among final beneficiaries through the virtual community.

In order to ensure the added value of the TIPS project, the countries involved in the partnership were selected according to territorial criteria, each representing and reflecting different migration flows and integration practices in Europe. The Mediterranean partners, Italy, Greece and France, represent countries where migrant flows, often illegal and primarily from Africa, are frequent and relevant. The Austrian partner exemplifies a country where the majority of immigrants are completely integrated into the workforce. The Polish partner, one of the new member States, illustrates a country currently facing the challenges of migration mainly asylum seekers and refugees. Moreover some of the TIPS partners are members of the Guide Association, an international network of higher education institutions and have already cooperated in the framework of previous European projects. In addition, TIPS partners established a list of over **24** related European projects to expand the exchange of best practices, knowledge and skills in the fields of cultural mediation and distance education.

The exchange and sharing of experiences and knowledge regarding the cultural mediation field among different countries provides an opportunity for different States to come together and define and designate the role the professional cultural mediator in Europe. The comparative research concerning migratory flows, legislation, and the professional needs of workers involved in mediation, conducted within the five partner countries, provides a fundamental basis for developing and designing the TIPS training course which inherently contributes to the recognition and support of the profession of cultural mediator in Europe.

The enrichment in terms of knowledge and skills guaranteed to TIPS beneficiaries was established not only through a common training path, but more significantly through the comparison and exchange among professional social workers and cultural mediators from different countries. The social software on the T-learning system allowed professionals from different nationalities and backgrounds to work together and discuss and exchange opinions, experiences and knowledge regarding cultural mediation and immigration issues in Europe. European social workers were able to discuss possible solutions for immigrants' integration, especially concerning welcoming services, or examine the management of complex cases relating to immigrants' native countries and cultures. TIPS partners offering multi-actor perspectives from five European countries are:

- ❖ FOR.COM( [www.forcom.it](http://www.forcom.it)) the Inter-university Consortium, based in Rome, Italy, is the TIPS Project Coordinator who manages the design and production of the T-learning solutions and is in charge of promotion and dissemination of the project.
  - ❖ AUXILIUM ([www.auxilium.co.at](http://www.auxilium.co.at)), a non-profit association, based in Graz, Austria, is in charge of project evaluation and quality management.
  - ❖ IRIV -the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering ([www.iriv.net](http://www.iriv.net)), based in Paris, France, is a non profit private institution working with immigration and culture issues in the volunteering sector. IRIV coordinated the comparative research identifying cultural mediators' training needs.
  - ❖ The Hellenic Open University ([www.eap.gr](http://www.eap.gr)) based in Patras, Greece, is an open university producing training content for the Learning Objects for each platform.
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- ❖ Gruppo Pragma ([www.gruppopragma.it](http://www.gruppopragma.it)) based in Rome, Italy, is a multimedia consultancy firm specializing in new digital media, is in charge of the delivery of the course.
- ❖ The Tischner European University ([www.wse.krakow.pl](http://www.wse.krakow.pl)) based in Kraków, Poland, is responsible for the dissemination and future exploitation of the project's results.

## 5. Plans for the Future

In order to continue to promote and use the TIPS project outcomes and results beyond its lifetime, different actions were carried out by the partnership to further exploit the project and commercialization of the TIPS Course “Practicing and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe”.

### **Accreditation Strategy**

All TIPS course contents were developed based on the SCORM general standards of distance education that ensures the value and possibility to transfer the contents from the T-learning platform to other distance learning platforms. The TIPS course contents in terms of Learning Objects, topics, skills acquired, learning outcomes and duration in hours can be applied to the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, promoting workers' and learners' mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning. The TIPS partnership agreed that ECVET is an important tool for the TIPS course concerning the accumulation and transfer of credits of vocational education and training in Europe. Although the system is designed to operate at European level, interfacing with all the National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs), at the moment all TIPS partner countries do not officially have NQF systems established.

During the project, the partnership designed the TIPS course according to academic and vocational education and training systems (formal or informal) so the course could be accredited using tools such as Europass (for the transparency of qualifications), the ECTS (European Credits Transfer System) and the validation of informal and non-formal learning following the EQF (European Qualification Framework) requirements. The TIPS course can be referred to **Level 4 of the EQF system**.

### **Commercialization of the TIPS Course**

A crucial aspect for the future exploitation of the project and commercialisation of the TIPS course products and services was the constitution and accordance among the partnership of the **Intellectual property rights** and the Commercialisation bilateral Agreement for the TIPS course “Practising and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe”.

The IPR affirms that FOR.COM, as prime contractor, owns the results of the project, including industrial and intellectual property rights. Free use of project results is available to the National Agency of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme in Brussels and third parties authorised by the European Commission (for non-commercial use and in case of no opposition from the side of contractor). In regards to future commercial use of the project products, the partnership agreed that the prime contractor and each partner can use the project products for free within their own organization to train their employed staff. For any commercial use outside the partnership, partners are responsible for commercializing the product exclusively in their country adhering to the terms of the commercialization Agreement.

The agreement provides basic guidelines for the commercialisation process and all partners agreed that each commercialisation opportunity will be treated on a case to case basis depending on the explicit situation and requirements. The prime contractor will be responsible for maintaining the T-learning server and services, customizing the platforms according to different users' training needs and providing technical assistance. Partners will be responsible for promoting the course in their country, selecting course participants, conducting evaluation activities, customizing and updating course contents and providing tutoring services.

### **The TIPS project in the future**

TIPS project deliverables, website, networks will be available for at least a few years after the end of the project allowing future users to freely access and learn from them according to their own needs. Future users will also be able to adapt and update the TIPS course content in case of a commercialization agreement with the partnership. One of the essential tools to sustain the project is the Virtual Community Network and the TIPS Cultural Mediation network groups on the most popular social software programmes: Facebook, Yahoo groups, Google Groups, LinkedIn, Del.icio.us, Goldenline, Twitter, MySpace and Flickr. These types of groups were the first ever established for the field of Cultural Mediation on the Internet and play an essential role in the future development of the field and the profession. These groups provide an array of valuable opportunities to the user group such as; placing cultural mediators and professionals in contact on a global scale, allowing different experiences, ideas and case studies to be shared publicly, promoting job opportunities, creating a community of best practices, advertising International and national conferences and events relating to the field, cultural and immigration topics, posting current news and relevant information relating to immigration issues, migrant rights, integration, culture, etc. Moreover, they provide the opportunity to ensure that the TIPS course contents remain constantly updated due to the fact that Internet social software network groups function in real time where information is exchanged on a daily to hourly basis, thus keeping up with current events which influence cultural mediators' profession and consequently their training needs. These online communities represent an effective medium and powerful resource to reach and maintain relations with the user group, potential target groups and help develop the visibility of not only the project, but more importantly, culture mediators as a professional role and the field of cultural mediation. These online forums and sites will help exemplify cultural mediation as a vital tool with an elaborate range of skills and purposes that can be applied to all aspects of society especially in response to the ever growing concept of globalisation and international integration. Furthermore, the advantage of these network groups lies in the fact that they will inevitably continue to grow and evolve in the future long after the end of the project and can be stepping stone to the creation of more groups and communities in the future.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

Europe is changing and becoming increasingly more diversified due to the effects of the European Union's enlargement process, the presence of old and new migratory flows and the impact of globalisation on relations between European citizens and the rest of the world. Increasingly more individuals are living in a multicultural society characterised by cultural diversity which represents an opportunity for growth and a challenge against fear and rejection. Intercultural dialogue is a transversal priority of the European Union and is encouraged through its programmes and initiatives.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union designated the **year 2008 as the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue"** in order to recognise Europe's great cultural diversity as a unique advantage. It encourages people living in Europe to explore the benefits of the rich cultural heritage and offers the opportunity to learn from different cultural traditions. Coherently with this initiative, promoting intercultural dialogue as a process to deal with complex cultural environments and to benefit from a diverse and dynamic society, **the TIPS project addresses cultural mediators' training needs** and helps enhance their knowledge and expertise to guide immigrants during their integration process in their host country.

It is important to underline that the TIPS project addresses immigration issues which is one of the key elements in almost all European policies. European Commission fosters the adoption of effective inclusive and integrated policies at a European level. Therefore, the **TIPS project**, providing a specific training course for cultural mediators, **directly meets EU aims and objectives**. The TIPS project is also coherent with the priorities and objectives identified by the Lifelong Learning Programme and Lisbon strategy expressed by its aim of experimenting with new **ICT based content**, related to cultural mediators' skills and competences, and ICT based services. In addition, the results of the TIPS project could be used and employed by different European Institutions and national and supranational legislative bodies in order to:

- ❖ define management policies regarding migration flows, integration, social inclusion and welcoming services for immigrants, thanks to the results of the TIPS comparative research
- ❖ determine a mutual legislation (e.g. regulatory, contractual, etc.) for the recognition of social workers involved in cultural mediation, also in view of research results
- ❖ delineate institutional training courses capable of contributing to the increase of professional social workers involved in cultural mediation

Moreover, according to the LLP objectives and priorities, the TIPS training course allows participants to **learn on-the-job** in their working environment that promotes learning by doing and work based learning and develops problem solving skills and collaborative learning through access to the virtual learning community featuring forum, blog and chat.

