D6.2 Report on learning outcomes in regard to intercultural competences

We know all about the social profit sector

We know all about engineering

Community Service CSE Engineering

Lifelong Learning Programme

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This report will describe the evolution of learning outcomes in regard to international competences from the students that took the 'socially ingenious' course at Thomas More (P1). To draw conclusions the ICOM assessment tool is used to measure competences at the beginning and at the end of the curriculum. A difference is made between students that have been virtually mobile and students that have had a physical exchange experience. Results will be compared.

1. THE ICOM ASSESSMENT TOOL

International competencies and learning outcomes (ICOMs) is the name of a project of the 'Education Development Fund' of the Catholic University of Leuven Association (B) (2011-2012). The project aimed to contribute to the development of internationalisation of higher education learning environments. It wanted to define 'international competences' in the typical context of higher education and to develop a set of international competences. ICOMs identified and investigated 5 fields or clouds of international competences:

1. Personal Growth
2. Intercultural Competence
3. Language Skills
4. Global Engagement
5. International Disciplinary Learning

In the context of the CSE project, partners decided to focus on the intercultural competences. As mentioned in D6.1, partners used the ICOM tool in a wider context as internationalisation. Partners defined that CSE students also cope with intercultural encounters when they have contacts with other disciplines, with organisations in which one does not work as an employee, with other countries (niche markets), with the superdivers society,… as well as with stakeholders from other countries.

What exactly is intercultural competence? It is referred to as the skill to communicate with people from other cultures and/or other ethnic backgrounds in order to enter into a relationship with them (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Lustig & Koester, 1993). Although the term intercultural competence has become very prevalent, there still is no consensus on the definition of what intercultural competence entails (Deardorff, 2006 and 2009, for an overview, Fantini, 2009). An exploration of the current literature on intercultural competence shows a wide range of different concepts related to or associated with intercultural competence, and provides a picture of the attitudes and skills that are supposed to be part of the intercultural competence.

ICOM has pictured intercultural competence according to the figure below.

Intercultural competence	General definition	"The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2006).
		"Intercultural competence is the proper and effective interaction management between people, who, to some extent, represent the different or divergent affective, cognitive or behavioural orientations of the world." (Spitzberg, 1989)
	Cultural self-knowledge	The student knows and understands his own frame of reference and worldview and he is able to link these to other view points.
	Cultural flexibility	If necessary the student adapts his behaviour and communication style in an intercultural context, and explores alternative behaviour patterns.
	Cultural resilience	The student will deal with the difficulties and negative feelings that may arise in intercultural encounters in a constructive way.
	Cultural responsiveness	The student listens to the vision and expertise of others and also accepts the relativity of one's own vision and ideas.
	Cultural knowledge	The student acquires knowledge about other cultures and employs this knowledge in an appropriate manner with respect for the uniqueness of each individual human being.
	Cultural connectivity competence	In an intercultural context, the student develops a working relationship with colleagues, clients and other stakeholders and contributes to an atmosphere of trust.
	Cultural communicative competence	The student examines the specific features of his own communication style, allows for a remedial approach if necessary and explores the communication style of the other.
	Cultural conflict management	The student regards intercultural conflicts as learning opportunities and he is aware of the own conflict management style.

Fig. 1 Intercultural competence - ICOMs

To acquire a better understanding of the learning effects of intercultural experiences, students have been queried before and after their international study experience. This deliverable reports on the findings of a survey among students at the beginning and the of the 'socially ingenious' course. 12 students have enrolled in the course among which 10 Flemish students and 2 Russian students. The Flemish students had a virtual mobility experience when participating in the series of webinars. The Russian students had a physical mobility experience. All students had intercultural encounters with other disciplines, other organisations,… as described above.

For this report the students' answers have been anonymised.

2. ICOMS TEST AT THE BEGINNING

2.1 ASSIGNMENT

In your weekly programmes you will find assignment 2.

Assignment 2 (due by March 20th):
Please complete the questionnaire (in Dutch) on intercultural competences, make a screenshot of your result and comment on it. Do you recognise some strengths or weaknesses (eg. Communicative skills, conflict management skills,…)? How can us use your strengths in the design process? How could you improve your weaker points?

The study guide tells you I would e-mail you **a personal login and password**.

Here it is!

Your 'gebruikersnaam' is:
Your 'paswoord' is:

I will send you a new login and password at the end of the course. Via this second login you could check whether you have evolved in your intercultural competence and complete assignment 5.

Thank you for completing this assignment by March 20th and introducing your result into your personal website based on https://sites.google.com/site/sociallyingenioustm2016/ (cf. references on this page: https://sites.google.com/site/sociallyingenioustm2016/1-discovery/1-4-readings)

2.2 ANSWERS OF STUDENTS

2.2.1   STUDENT 1
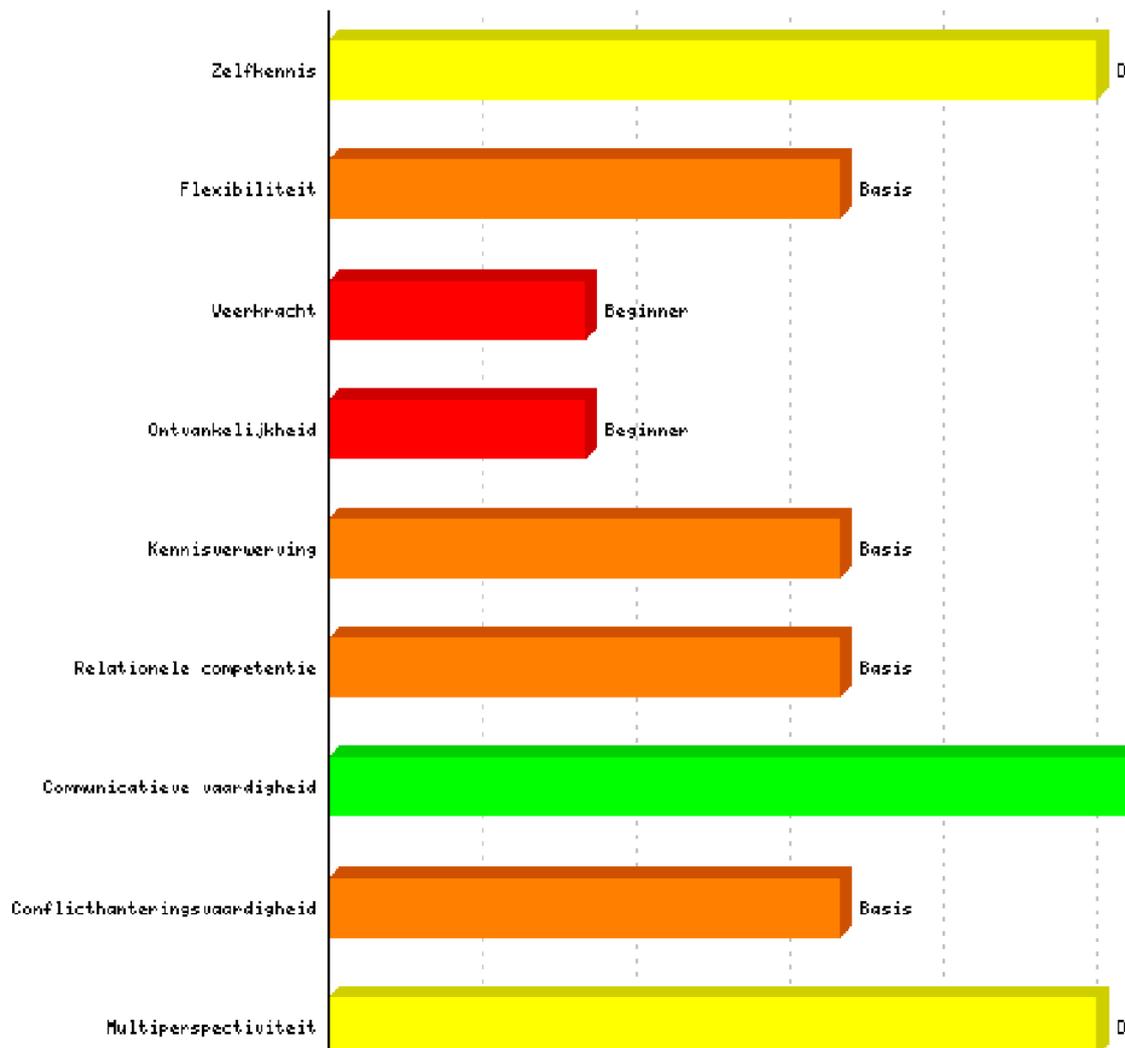
Do you recognise some strengths or weaknesses (eg. Communicative skills, conflict management skills,…)?

I do recognise my strengths and weaknesses. I know about myself that my communicative skills are good and that I can change my conversation to 'who' I am talking to. But I also know about myself that my interests don't lie by the person/colleague his or her culture.

How can you use your strenghts in the design process? How could you improve your weaker points?

I think I can use my communication skills pretty well in the design process by communicating to other people and gathering inspiration. And I think to improve the weak points is to have a little background about other people or ask for it, to learn to know them better.

2.2.2 STUDENT 2
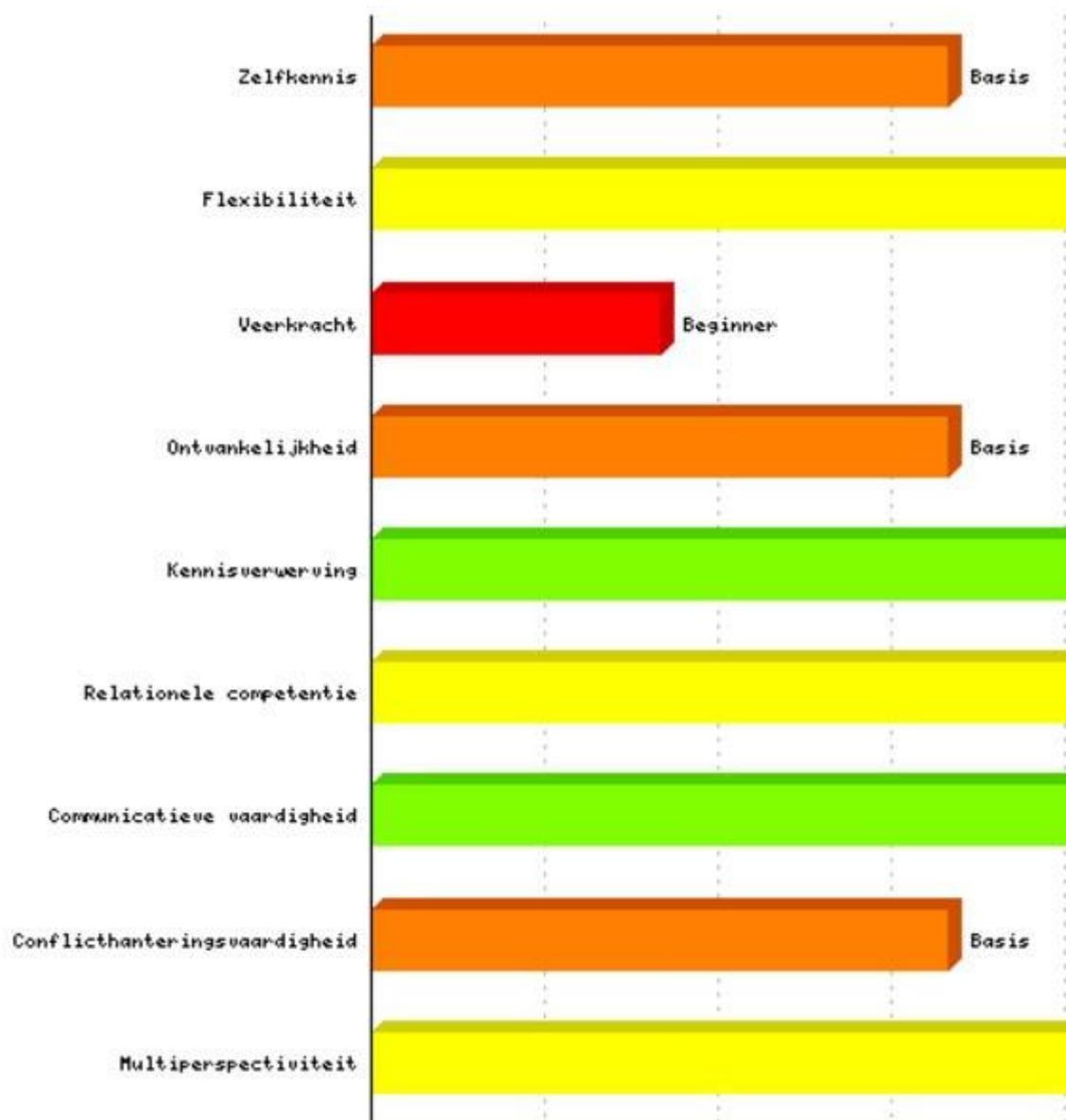
Do you recognise some strengths or weaknesses (eg. Communicative skills, conflict management skills,…)?

I recognises my strenghts in the graph. I know I like to learn about different stuff, and I know that I'm a social person. I also recognise my weaknesses but I knew that before I started it.

How can you use your strenghts in the design process? How could you improve your weaker points?

I think my strengths are useful in in the design process because I'm social so it's easy for me to talk to person what their needs are. I think I could Improve my weaknesses by putting more effort in to it and really try my best.


2.2.3 STUDENT 3

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Do you recognise some strengths or weaknesses (eg. Communicative skills, conflict management skills,…)?

2.2.4 STUDENT 4
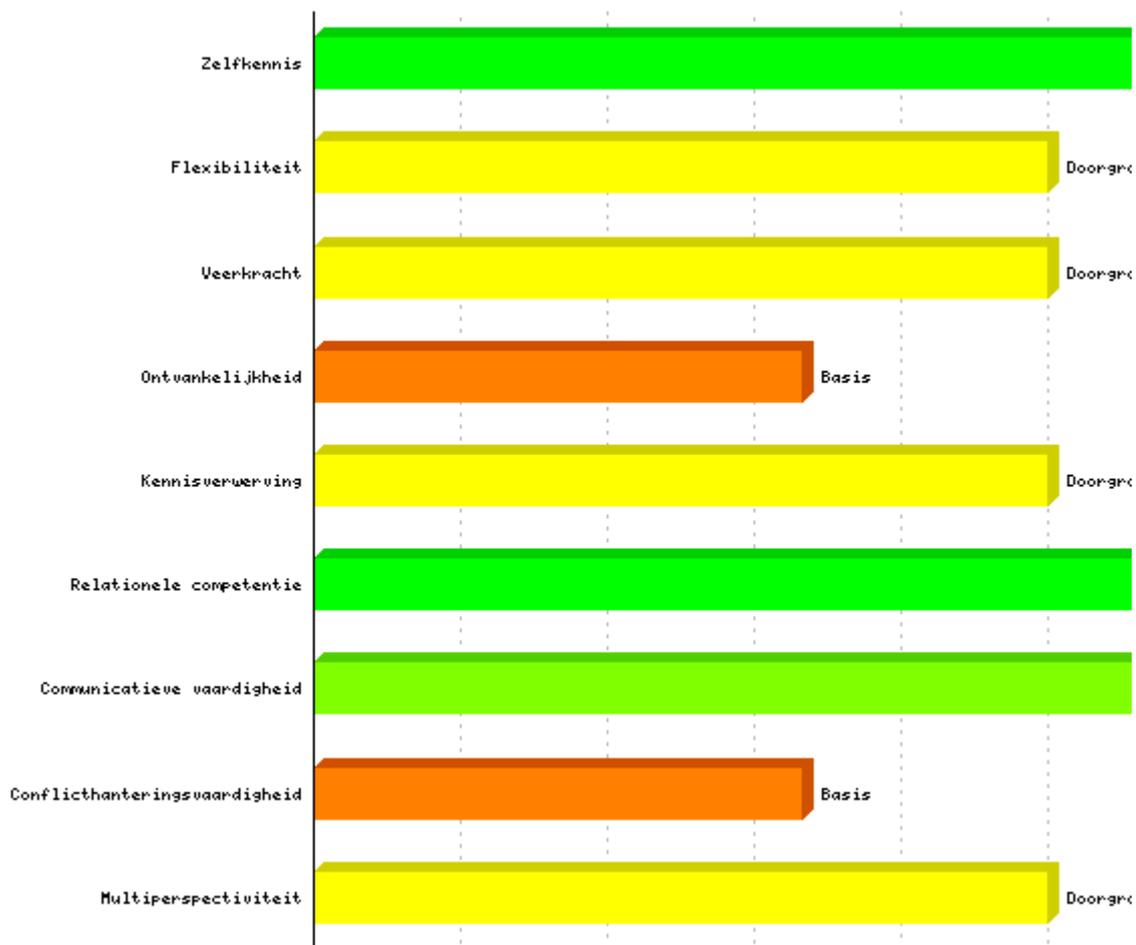
Do you recognise some strengths or weaknesses (eg. Communicative skills, conflict management skills,...)?

I think this is a good overview about me. But I think that this can also change with passage of time. But overall i have a good vision over my abilities as you can see on the chart.

How can you use your strenghts in the design process? How could you improve your weaker points?

Because I now myself very well I can see my own boundaries and limitations.

2.2.5 STUDENT 5
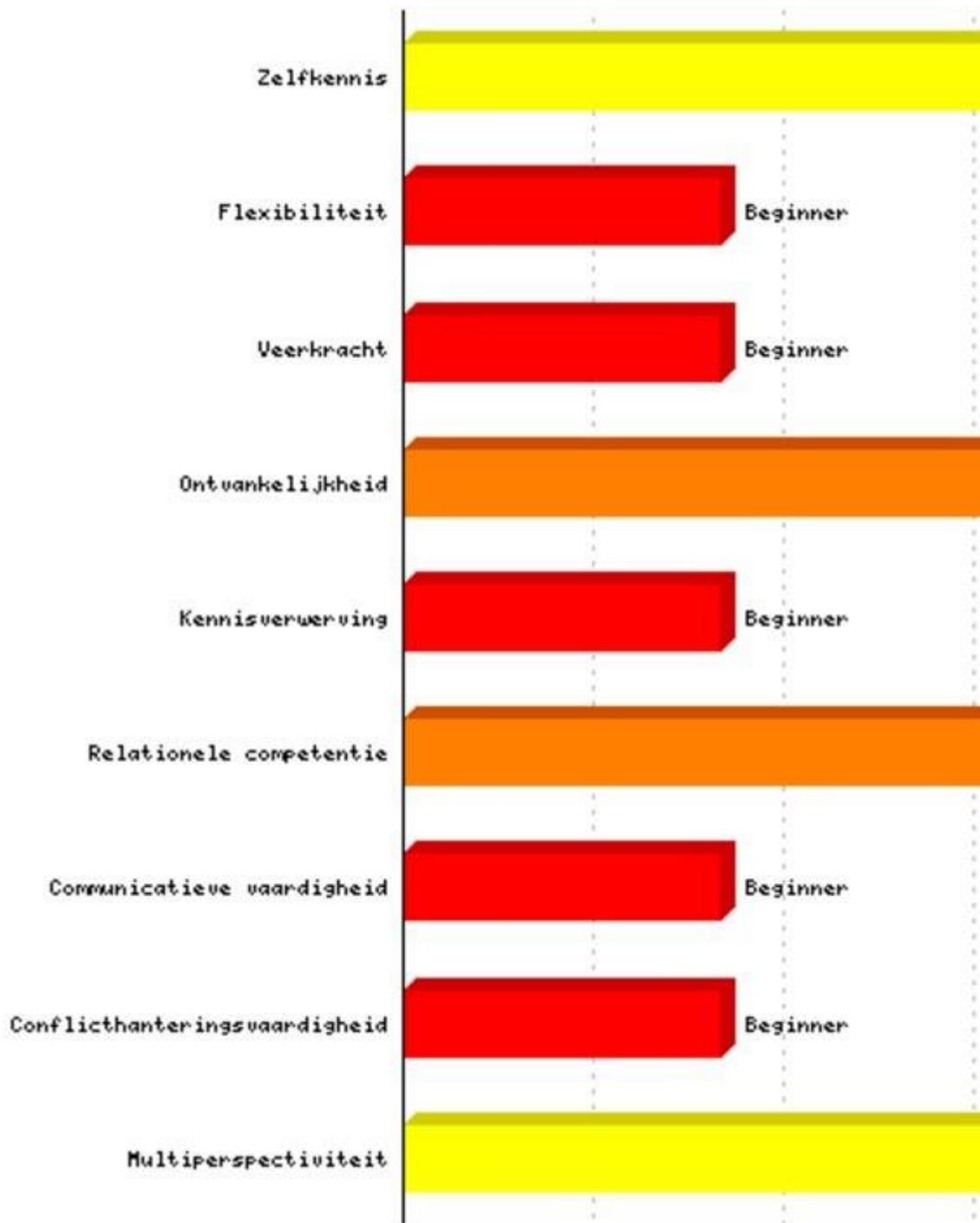
**Do you recognise some strengths or weaknesses (eg. Communicative skills, conflict management skills,…)?**

I know for myself that I'm not good at getting to know new things or people, especially people with another religion. Mostly I'll not even try to adapt myself, for example my behaviour. I'll also try to avoid people from another country or religion because I'm not comfortable with it.

2.2.6 STUDENT 6
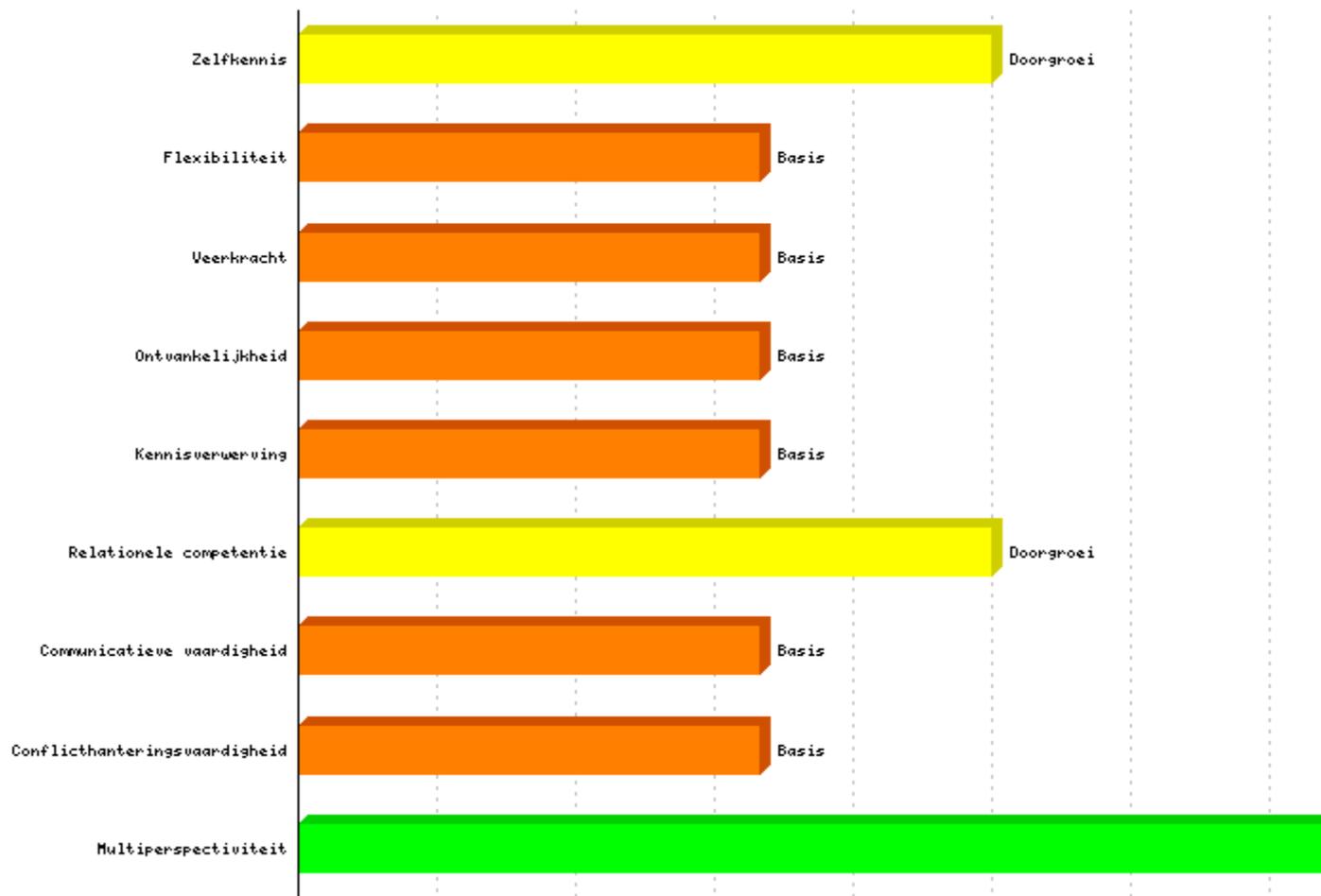
Do you recognise some strengths or weaknesses (eg. Communicative skills, conflict management skills,…)?

I don't really have contact with people from another religion, but normally I threat them just like another person. But sometimes I adapt myself to the person you're talking to. E.g. when you are trying to find information to improve your product, I'm trying to make sure the person feels comfortable.

2.2.7 STUDENT 7

Zelfkennis				
Flexibiliteit				
Veerkracht			Doorgro...	
Ontvankelijkheid	Basis			
Kennisverwerving			Doorgro...	
Relationele competentie				
Communicatieve vaardigheid				
Conflicthanteringsvaardigheid			Doorgro...	
Multiperspectiviteit				
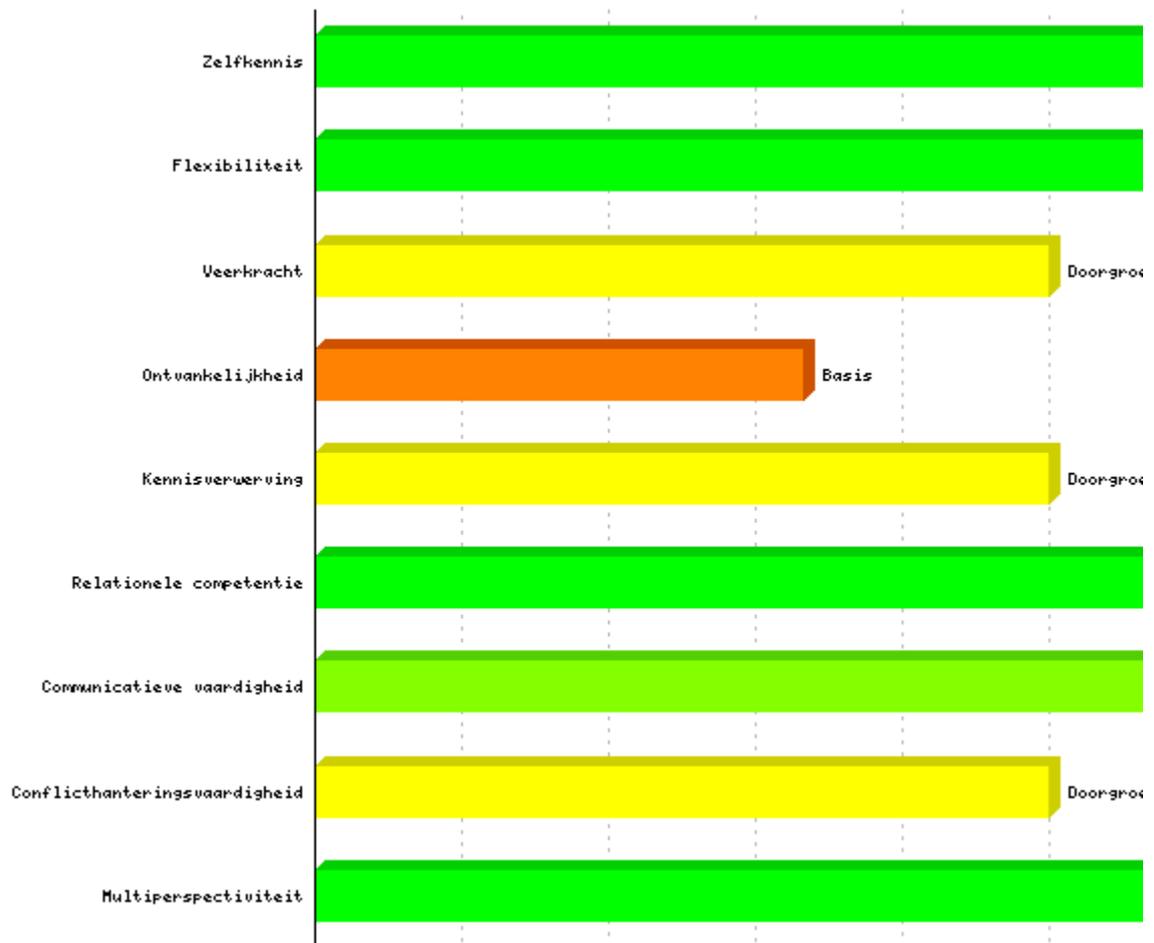
If I am in contact with people from an another religion I will adapt my behaviour bit I expect the people who I am talking to, to do the same so we both are trying our best to make the other person feel comfortable.

2.2.8 STUDENT 8

Do you recognise some strengths or weaknesses?

Overall I don't experience many problems when collaborating with people with different cultures. According to the test results I have difficulties dealing with conflicts or problems related to culture. I think in reality I try to prevent (or maybe avoid) those conflicts. Some people might think that this is not a good strategy, but for me it is the most natural thing to do as long as the cultural differences (that potentially could lead to a problem) don't interfere with collaboration. In teams that share the same culture I behave similarly.

How can us use your strengths in the design process?

My view on culture corresponds best with 'pluralism' (lecture: Inge Vervoort). When working in intercultural teams I think the most important is to respect each other and be open towards one another. As long as you show respect for other (and their cultures) I don't think you have to know much about other cultures to be able cooperate with your team members. In my experience when you show respect almost any topic is open for debate. As long as cultural values don't interfere with universal values (e.g. human rights) I experience little difficulties accepting other cultural values. Moreover I think it is important to focus on persons instead of cultures, as probably the values that we share are more significant than our differences. Usually when working in a team I try to involve and connect all team members and take the role that I feel is 'vacant'. Sometimes that could be group leader, but another team member is clearly a leader I don't necessarily want to be the leader.

2.2.9 STUDENT 9 (RUSSIAN STUDENT)

This student did not send in a graph although translations had been provided.

I had an experience in this field when I was working on a game project. We were using some part of design thinking template with orientation on target users, co-creation with users. The main idea was to create only main part of our products and give some rights to our users for including them in game-development process(e.g. our community gave us really good graphics, ideas and,of course, feedback about our progress). Current task was more complicated because of some thing: our users can't help us with development, but they were trying to do as much as they can with getting requerements and maximum feedback every time. In game

development our community help us with many things and from time to time some important questions were discussed without our participating - we implemented the final solution. When we deal with people with disabilities, we have to be really careful and attentive to details and even for small problems to make our products really easy-to-use for such people.

2.2.10 STUDENT 10 (RUSSIAN STUDENT)

This student did not send in a graph although translations had been provided.

I also think that envolement of users is useful, but not always. It's important to know, that you cant regard on every user. So, you need to keep in mind that, opinion of user can be bad for project. The hardest part of developer is to spend right amount of time on user-tests and choose opinions which will only good for a majority of core users, but not for the couple. But it depends on main goal of project:

if project is for science(like neural network, some physics calculations etc) you dont need real-user tests at all.

If project is oriented on a big group of people you need to choose right focus-group and test prototypes on them.

But if project is oriented on small group (like people with special disabilities) the best way to create great product is to test prototypes directly with users.

3. ICOMS TEST AT THE END OF THE COURSE

3.1 ASSIGNMENT

In your weekly programmes you will find assignment 5.

Assignment 5:
Please retake the questionnaire (in Dutch) on intercultural competences, make a screenshot of your result and comment on it. Is there an evolution in your cultural skills?

The study guide tells you I would e-mail you **a personal login and password**.

Here it is once more!

Your 'gebruikersnaam' is:
Your 'paswoord' is:

Thank you for completing this assignment before you have your final presentation (on Tuesday May 31th for face-to-face or online by June 24th) and introducing your result into your personal website based on the template https://sites.google.com/site/sociallyingenioustm2016/.

Have you also completed assignment 4? The deadline was May 10th.

Hope to see you also for the last webinar on May 25th (20:00 pm – 21:00 pm).

3.2 STUDENTS' ANSWERS

3.2.1   STUDENT 1
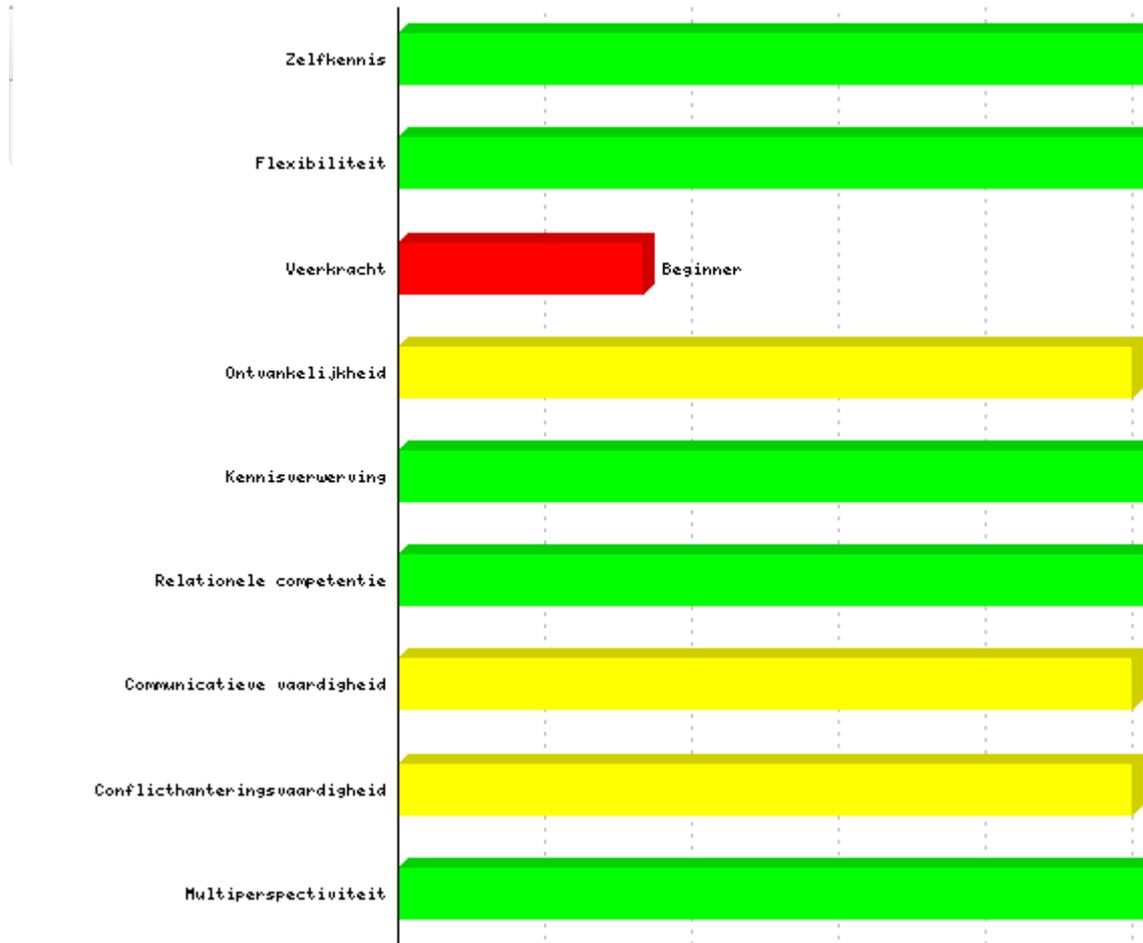
Is there an evolution in your intercultural skills?

As I can see my intercultural skills improved a lot. Only one thing is still not so good ´´veerkracht´´ but I don't know how to change it or make it better??

3.2.2   STUDENT 2
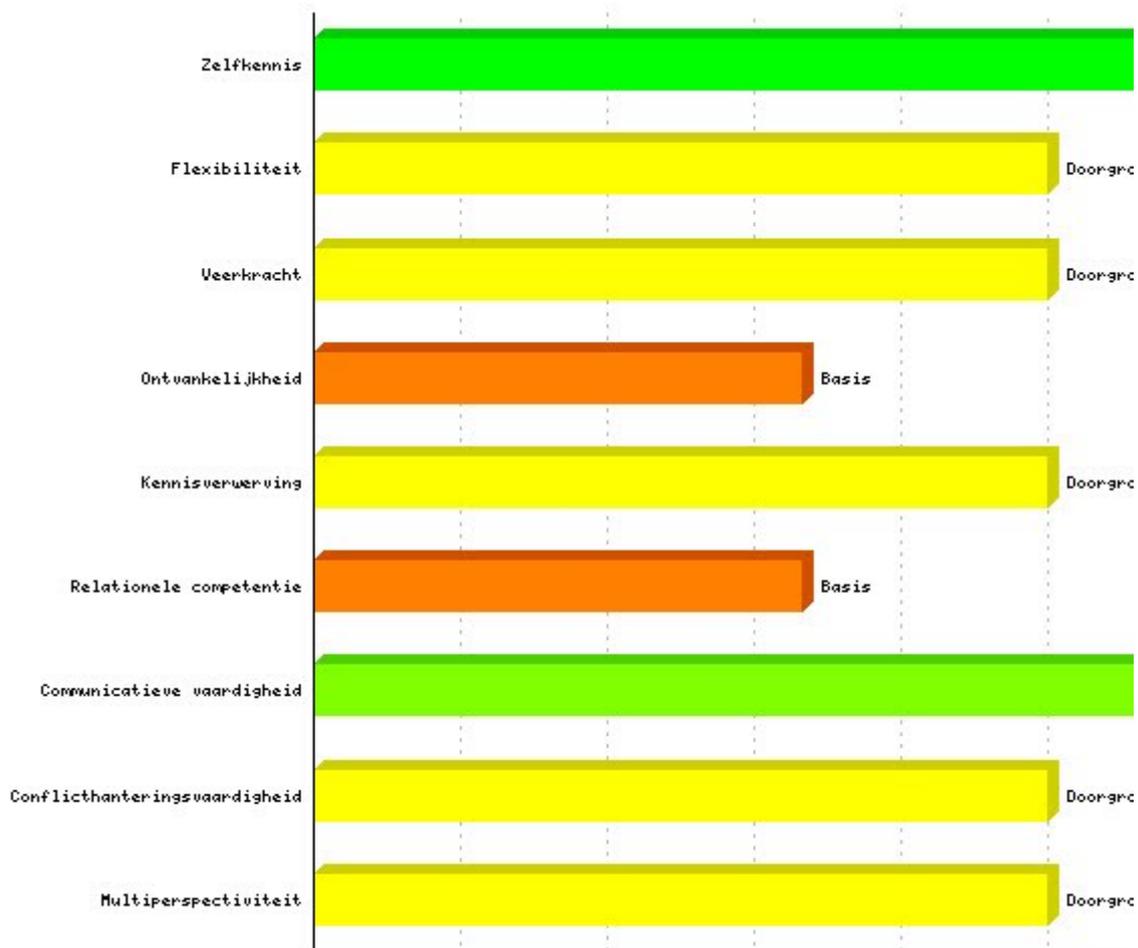
Is there an evolution in your intercultural skills?

I can see that my overall skills have improved and especially my self knowledge.

3.2.3   STUDENT 3

No response to the second test.

3.2.4   STUDENT 4

No response to the second test.

3.2.5   STUDENT 5

No response to the second test.

3.2.6   STUDENT 6

No response to the second test.

3.2.7   STUDENT 7

I Don't have the feeling that much has changed. During the course I didn't met with people of another culure or another etnic base. So the way I feel and handle didn't change.

3.2.8   STUDENT 8
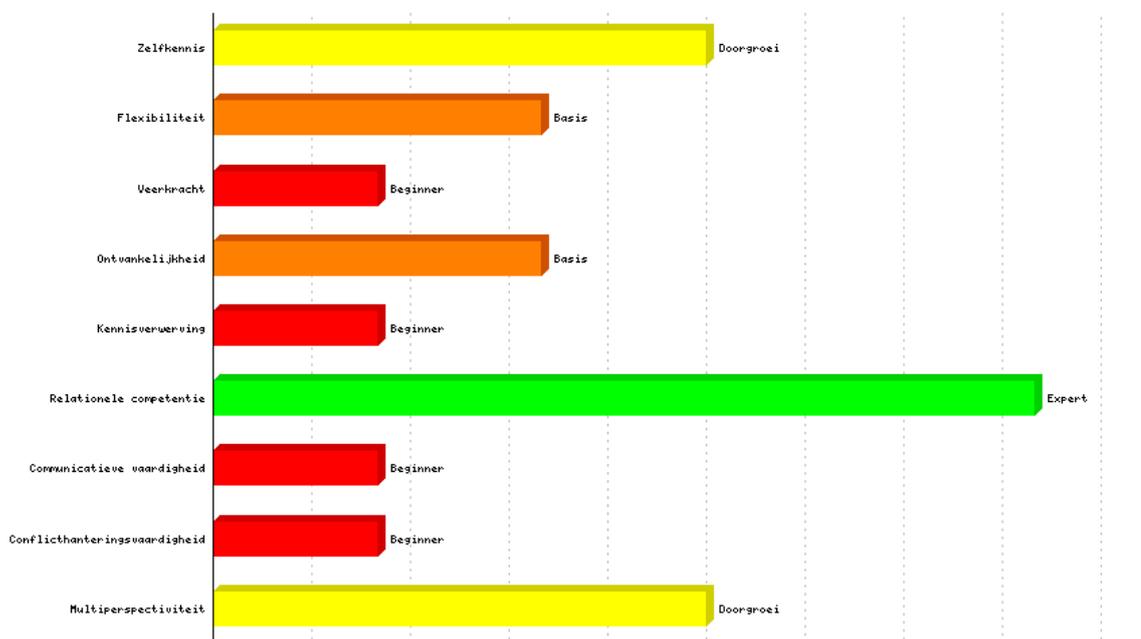
Is there an evolution in your cultural skills?

According to the test results my intercultural competencies would have decreased during the course of the social ingenious project. I think I might have interpreted some statements differently and maybe I was more moderate in my answers (e.g. choosing 'agree' instead of 'totally agree') In reality I believe they didn't change much. During this project I worked together with a Russian student and this reminded me that working in intercultural groups requires additional attention to communication, because people from other cultures might have different expectations and habits. However, this was only a minor intercultural experience compared to other projects I participated in. Therefore I don't believe 'social ingenious' could have influenced my intercultural competencies to a large extent.

3.2.9   STUDENT 9 (RUSSIAN STUDENT)

No response to the second test.

3.2.10 STUDENT 10 (RUSSIAN STUDENT)

No response to the second test.

4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS OF THE ICOM TESTS WITH STUDENTS AT THE END AND THE BEGINNING OF THE COURSE.

More students (8) completed the assignment at the beginning than at the end (4).

Students reported that taking the test was good as a reflection exercise that often proved what they knew about themselves.

Students 1 and 2 report that their intercultural competences grew over the course. Students 7 and 8 report not to have seen a big change in their intercultural competence.