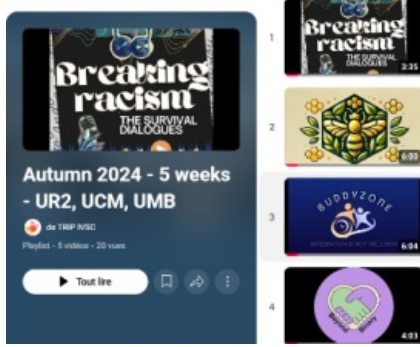


The Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge: A retrospective by Rennes 2 students



Last semester, students of the Rennes 2 Language Teaching Master's program participated in the Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge (IVSC) project, collaborating with peers from the University of Flensburg in Germany and the University of Matej Bel in Slovakia. This internationalization at home project aims to empower students to address societal challenges through challenge-based learning while improving their intercultural and digital skills. Students had four themes to choose from: the environment, race, inclusion and gender.

The project culminated on November 27, 2024, with an online event where students presented the outcomes of their semester-long efforts. Reflecting on their participation, they shared the skills they gained, the benefits and challenges of the project, and their recommendations for future versions.

When asked about the skills they acquired, participants highlighted personal growth and technical abilities. One student remarked: *"I believe I have learned a great deal about patience, as working in a group can be challenging. Additionally, I gained valuable skills in presenting information through video, which requires a different approach compared to writing an essay or report."* Another participant added: *"Thanks to the IVSC project I was able to acquire mainly digital skills [...] which will be really useful to me in my work in the future."*

Participants also reflected on other positive aspects of the project, particularly the collaborative and motivational environment. One student observed: *"Working in a team motivates and engages you in the work. It also provides opportunities for independent learning while being supervised."* Another participant noted the project's potential to inspire action: *"This project allowed us to meet new people and try to find solutions on our own scale. It's encouraging to know that while some may feel powerless to make a difference, our projects demonstrate that scale is often just an excuse for inaction."*

Despite the positive experiences, participants acknowledged certain difficulties. One student expressed: *"Total independence can be daunting at first and may lead to feeling overwhelmed. Additionally, the group size made it challenging to find a clear role and place within the team."* Another participant pointed to issues with time management and group dynamics, stating: *"Sometimes the difficulty of working with members who didn't seem very motivated was a significant challenge."*

To enhance the experience for future participants, students proposed several changes. One suggested: *"Smaller groups would ensure that everyone participates equally and facilitate smoother communication."* Another student recommended adjustments to the project timeline and meeting schedules: *"To improve the IVSC project, I would allocate more time for each phase and allow participants to vote on suitable meeting times."*

When asked whether they would recommend the project to others, most participants were enthusiastic. One student stated: *"Yes, I recommend it to those who have an idea or a vision to share and who wish to contribute to change. The IVSC project is an interesting and well-supervised opportunity for interaction. It allows everyone to be listened to, to express themselves, evolve, and achieve goals."* Another highlighted the practical benefits: *"Yes, because it is a unique opportunity to practice English in a real context and work on relevant topics with varied perspectives."*

The IVSC project provided participants with a valuable opportunity to collaborate across borders, tackle societal challenges, and develop both personal and professional skills. While the experience had its challenges, students overwhelmingly recognized the benefits of engaging in such an innovative and dynamic initiative. Their reflections demonstrate the project's ability to foster meaningful connections and practical learning."

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