



INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

KIT 7

By Ministry of Labour and Social
Policy (Poland)

POLAND

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Punctuality is appreciated by most Germans in official and in social situations. Germans are said to view punctuality as a great virtue. It is polite to be punctual for private appointments especial if your hosts invite you for dinner. Business meetings also start just in time and you have to be punctual. Nevertheless it ist important to apologise and explain your lateness by a telephone call especial for a fixed meeting.	31
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INTRODUCTION

"The key to the development of the sensitivity and the skills necessary for intercultural communications resides first in the vision (or perception) that each person has when faced with cultural difference".

Milton J. Benner, 1986¹

What contributes to labour and educational mobility is a good knowledge of living and working conditions in other countries. Therefore, a career counsellor should know as much as possible about another nation's culture in order to be able to help his/her clients to solve problems they encounter after moving to another country. Such knowledge is useful for the counsellors, as it helps them understand a foreigner from a country with different customs or values and also allows them to assist their compatriots intending to go abroad in fast adaptation to a different culture.

The data gathered in this report will facilitate the work of career counsellors from other countries. It will help to win the clients' friendly attitude, trust and openness and also reduce the risk of various problems and conflicts that may arise out of the lack of knowledge of cultural differences between nations.

I. CULTURAL HERITAGE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Most important facts in the history of the nation

FRANCE

Strong and long-established national unity and centralised decision making are characteristics that illustrate France well.

The first identifiable figure in France's history is undoubtedly Clovis, the first King of the Franks. He was the first to attempt to unify a territory under the name of the Kingdom of the Franks, which he made into a Christian Kingdom in the 6th-century. The 18th-century, in which Louis XVI reigned, marked the history of France by its magnificence, its absolute power and its influence over the whole of Europe. Louis XVI was the king to emulate.

Following this period, and after the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th-century, the major event was probably the French Revolution resulting in the declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the abolishment of the old Regime of Absolute Monarchy and the creation of the First Republic, even if elements of the old system re-emerged occasionally. Jacobin centralism appeared with the Revolution and was

¹ Milton J. Bennett, A developmental Approach to Training for Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Journal of Intercultural Relations, vol. 10, n° 2, New York, 1986.

reinforced under Napoleon. Paris became the centre of France: you need only to take a look at the French railway system to be convinced of this. So one of the important dates is undoubtedly the day of the storming of the Bastille fortress, emblem of royal absolutism. The 14th July, 1789 became the symbol of the revolution and its anniversary has become our National holiday. Apart from Napoleon's conquests keeping all of Europe under his yoke, he was also a great organizer and the administrator of a hyper-centralised state. France could boast a rich past where it influenced others through its language, culture and ideas. The First World War sealed the fate of the French Empire and marked the beginning of the modern era. With the 'Front Populaire', a certain number of solidarity-based welfare benefits enabled important progress to be made in the history of the working class. On the 7th May, 1936 the Matignon agreements introduced the right to strike, labour agreements and substantial wage increases. The working week was then limited to 40 hours and the first paid holidays were introduced. The two main dates of the Second World War were when De Gaulle appealed to French men and women to resist on the 18th June, 1940, and the D-day landings in Normandy by the Allied Forces on the 6th June, 1944.

The Second World War obviously ripped the country apart, as was the case all over Europe and throughout the world, and everything, or nearly everything, had to be reconstructed using all the lifeblood of the population, starting with women who obtained the right to vote in 1947. Strong political parties, such as the Gaullist and Communist parties, grew out of the resistance. The 5th Republic, beginning in 1958, established a presidential system of government which still exists today.

The following years saw the end of colonialism and the beginning of the making of Europe, with France being one of its founding countries. In spite of the uproar of May '68, which was a true cultural and societal revolution, France experienced a thirty-year boom period after the war (called 'les Trente Glorieuses'), which lasted up to the first oil crisis. After the 1973 and 1979 oil crises, France entered into a period of mass unemployment which still exists 30 years on. Since the Left's coming to power in 1981, France has alternated between left- and right-wing governments and has experienced periods of cohabitation. France is currently losing faith in the future and in Europe, and during national or regional elections the country has taken refuge in extreme left- or right-wing votes, with a high abstention rate and, therefore, a loss of faith in its political elite. France no longer has the prestigious reputation it once had on the international scene. It continues to try to preserve its advantages in terms of social welfare and labour rights, and many foreigners see it as the country of Human rights, a country full of history and culture, and, ultimately, a country with a great quality of life.

GERMANY

For most of its history, Germany was not a unified state but a loose association of territorial states that together made up the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation". It was a long time until the founding of the German Reich in 1871. Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, extended the Frankish Empire from 768 and was the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 800 to 814, which included what is now modern-day Germany. In 1871 Otto von Bismarck founded the German Empire and became its first chancellor. From 1815 Germany had been split into small individual states after the fall of the first German Empire. After the end of the First World War (1914-1918), the empire was followed by the Weimar Republic, the first German democracy.

Economic and political turmoil and, in the main part, the lack of any democratic will on the part of the elite class, led to the collapse of the Weimar Republic on the 30th January 1933 when Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany. The National Socialist (Nazi) dictatorship that followed was responsible for genocide, the holocaust and the Second World War (1939-1945). Germany surrendered on the 8th of May 1945 and the allied victors - the Soviet Union, USA, Great Britain and France - took control of Germany and divided the country into four zones of occupation.

Under the auspices of France, Britain and the USA, the Federal Republic of Germany was founded on the 23rd of May 1949 in the three western zones. The new FRG was a parliamentary democracy with a written constitution known as the Basic Law ("Grundgesetz"). As the first federal chancellor, Konrad Adenauer had an enormous influence on the founding years of the FRG.

In the Soviet zone to the East, the German Democratic Republic was founded on the 7th of October 1949. The constitution of the GDR was on paper a parliamentary democracy but the state was dominated by the monopoly of power held by the governing socialist/communist party - the SED.

The defining symbol of the East-West conflict during the 1950s and 1960s was the Berlin Wall, which was erected in 1961. Willy Brandt's and Walter Scheel's government policy of "Ostpolitik" (encouraging closer relations with East Germany) in the 1970s finally brought East and West Germany closer together. The Soviet Union with "Glasnost" and "Perestroika" brought about political change, signalled the end of the Iron Curtain and brought about the downfall of the political system in East Germany in the late 1980s.

A flood of East German refugees since August 1989 and the so-called "Monday Demonstrations" for democratic reform in East Germany culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall on the 9th of November 1989. The first free elections in the GDR took place in March 1990. Monetary, Economic and Social Union was established between East and West Germany on the 2nd of July 1990 and, on the 3rd of October 1990,

Germany was reunited. Chancellor Helmut Kohl played a substantial role in the reunification of Germany and the growing together of Europe.

Time table:

1830-1848: The Vormärz

1871: Founding of the German Reich

1914-1918: The First World War

1919-1933: The Weimar Republic

1933-1945: The era of National Socialism

1949-1990: The two German states

1990: Reunification

Additional information:

www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de

www.handbuch-deutschland.de

ITALY

The Italian history is very rich and full of interesting events.

The most known facts are related to the most recent history or to some particular anecdotes as for example the history of Romolo and Remo, who founded Rome, feeded by a female wolf or Nerone who put the fire on Rome, or Pompei that was destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvio.

Additional information:

www.esteri.it

www.arcaini.com/ITALY/ItalyHistory/ItalyHistory.html

www.italy1.com/history/

www.tricolore.net/cgi-bin/sections.html?subcat=2

www.italylink.com/woi/history/index.html

POLAND

996 - Baptism of Poland

1410 - Battle of Tannenberg, the power of Teutonic Knights crushed

1772, 1793, 1795 - subsequent partitions of Poland and loss of independence for approx. 150 years

1791 - enactment of the Constitution of May 3rd

1830, 1863 - national insurrections

1918 - Poland regains independence

1939-1945 - World War II, including Warsaw Uprising in 1944

1980 - Creation of the „Solidarność“ Independent Self-Governing Trade Union

1989 - first free elections in Poland after WWII

UNITED KINGDOM

Every school child learns about the Battle of Hastings and 1066 when William the Conqueror became King of England. During the reign of King Henry VIII in the first half of the 16th Century the course of history was forever altered as Henry broke ties with the Roman Catholic Church, installed himself as leader of the Church of England and carried out the dissolution of the monasteries. In 1605 the gunpowder plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament was foiled and in 1666 the Great Fire of London destroyed much of our capital. In 1805 British troops defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Trafalgar and more recently the 8th May 1945 is still celebrated as Victory in Europe (VE) day when the Allied Forces brought World War II to an end.

Additional information:

www.history.uk.com

www.great-britain.co.uk/history/history/htm

National homogeneity and national identity. National minorities. Ethnic conflicts.

FRANCE

Regional idiosyncrasies are strong and distinct (Brittany, Alsace, Auvergne,...) and in spite of a great intermixture of nationalities over the centuries, France has a relatively strong national identity, with only Corsica still resisting (it has a rather particular status). Outside metropolitan France, its overseas departments and territories have maintained a very strong identity with relative autonomy.

GERMANY

Germany is divided into 16 federal states (Länder), each responsible for the government of its own state, some of them have a long tradition.

The population in Germany is very unevenly distributed. One third of the inhabitants live in 82 large towns. Some 50.5 million people live in communities and towns that count between 2,000 and 100,000 inhabitants. Around 6.4 million have their homes in villages with up to 2,000 inhabitants. With a population density of 230 persons per square kilometre, Germany is overall one of the most densely populated country in Europe, although there are great differences between the former West Germany and what was once the GDR.

German society is considered to be a society of immigrants. For economic, demographic and humanitarian reasons immigration has become an important issue for German society over the past 50 years: over 14 million people with a migration background are living in Germany today. They are immigrants themselves or second generation immigrants. One out of five marriages is a binational one and one out of four children born in Germany has at least one foreign parent. Every third teenager in

West Germany has a migration background, while in some areas this rises to almost 40%, tendency increasing. Immigration has substantially changed the ways our society works - ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity have become a living reality for a long time already.

There are more than seven million foreigners, almost nine percent of the population, living in Germany. In addition there are also 1.5 million foreigners who have taken German citizenship, and some 4.5 million repatriates. (Repatriates of German descent, who for generations have been living in the states of the former Soviet Union, Romania and Poland, are a second major group of immigrants. Since the collapse of the communist systems they have been returning to Germany in increasing numbers.). Some 95 percent of foreigners live in Western Germany, primarily in big cities, where in some cases they make up more than 30 percent of the population.

Among the foreigners, 1.8 million persons with Turkish citizenship form the largest group. There is also a significant number of Italians (550,000), immigrants from Serbia- Montenegro (a good 500,000), Greeks (320,000) and Poles (almost 300,000), followed by Croats, Russians, Bosnians, Ukrainians, Portuguese and Spaniards. More than one million people are refugees. There are four national minorities in Germany: the Danish minority, the Friesian ethnic minority in Germany, the German Sinti and Roma and the Sorbs. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which Germany ratified in 1997 unites all four groups.

Additional informations:

www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/society/main-content-08/immigration-and-integration.html

www.zuwanderung.de/1_statistik.html

www.bmi.bund.de/

www.bamf.de

www.handbuch-deutschland.de

ITALY

Italy is divided into twenty regions, each being autonomous yet connected to the central government of Rome. This autonomy can be seen in the differences of local policies and taxes, and cultural and historical diversities. The early colonization of Italy by Greeks and Etruscans, then invasions by countries surrounding Italy helped to incorporate pieces of each culture into a rich tapestry of provincial centres and regional pride.

Ethnic groups:

(96.0% Italian, 0.9% Arab North African, 0.8% Italo-Albanian, 0.8% German, 1.5% French, others). Italy is largely homogeneous in language and religion but is diverse

culturally, economically, and politically. The country has the fifth-highest population density in Europe at 193 persons per square kilometre. Indigenous minority groups are small. For a country of 58.4 million people, Italy has a smaller number of migrants compared to France and Germany.

Since the beginning of Roman civilisation, important ethnic groups like Greek settlers, Germanic and Celtic invaders and plunderers, and Norman colonisers have all left important impressions on the people today. However, they have all been absorbed in a homogeneous Italian ethnic group.

The number of immigrants or foreign residents in Italy have steadily increased to reach 2,402,157, according to the latest figures (1/2005) of ISTAT. They currently make up a little more than 4 % of the official total population. According to these statistics, the largest foreign minorities are Albanians (316,659), Moroccan (294,945), Romanian (248,849¹), Chinese (111,712), and Ukrainian (93,441). Remaining groups include those who are Tunisian, Macedonians, Serbians, Filipinos, etc.

Additional information:

www.italylink.com/woi/people/index.html

POLAND

Poland is a country of significant homogeneity, however people living in different regions of Poland present language and custom particularities. National minorities make up about 3-4% (according to census of 2002). Poland is inhabited by representatives of 9 national minorities: Byelorussians, Czechs, Lithuanians, Germans, Armenians, Russians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Jews and 4 ethnic minorities: Karaims, Lemkos, Romanis and Tatars. In addition, the Pomorskie voivodship is inhabited by Kaszubs, a community using a regional language. The largest minorities are: Silesian and German (about 150 thousand people each), Byelorussian (50 thousand) and Ukrainian (30 thousand). In recent years, Poland is more often the country where foreigners interested in the Polish job market come to stay. It is possible to list among them the citizens of Armenia, Byelorussia, France, Germany, Russia, Ukraine, Vietnam. Ethnic conflicts are inexistent.

UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom is made up of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and each of these 4 countries (but perhaps the last 3 most notably) have a strong sense of their own national identity, heritage and culture. Regional assemblies have recently been set up in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in an attempt to take the power away from London and allow the assemblies some decision making that is perhaps more relevant to the idiosyncracies of their own country. Events such as football's World Cup bring to the fore some largely friendly rivalries between the 4 countries of the UK but generally speaking the relationships within the UK are good

and most people are proud to consider themselves as citizens of the same country. Most people consider themselves to be monarchists and are happy to have Queen Elizabeth II as our Head of State in preference to a President. Whilst people in the UK generally move around much more than their European counterparts for work and study and a relatively large proportion of Britons live somewhere other than where they were born and brought up there are still areas of the UK which have a strong and proud sense of regional identity. These include Cornwall, in the extreme Southwest tip of England which has its own Gaelic dialect; Yorkshire in England which still maintains a friendly rivalry with Lancashire with which the famous Wars of the Roses were fought and areas of Wales where Welsh remains the first language. It is fair to say that much of England is homogenous and it would be difficult for a foreign visitor to perceive much difference between many of our regions.

The UK is home to a huge number of ethnic groups. It is often said that people from everywhere in the world live in London but elsewhere in England there are large communities of ethnic groups in many of our cities. Many of the textile towns and cities of West Yorkshire are home to large Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities; Birmingham has thriving West Indian Afro-Caribbean and Indian Sikh communities as do Manchester and Leeds. These communities live largely harmoniously although tensions have risen recently in Bradford between the Asian Muslim and White communities and also in Birmingham between the ethnic groups living there.

Additional information:

www.eu-cu.com/uk/htm

www.statistics.gov.uk/about/ethnic_group_statistics

National language and official languages

FRANCE

French is the only official language, but regional languages exist and may be taught as a second language at school. Some of them are more enduring than others, such as Corsican, Catalan, Breton, Basque, Alsatian and Occitan.

GERMANY

German is the national and official language spoken by the majority of Germans. Germany is also rich of dialects in each federal state or almost each region. Usually, a person's dialect or accent shows where he or she comes from. For example: if one person from Mecklenburg would talk to somebody from Bavaria in their respective dialect, this would cause real difficulties in their understanding. Many Germans also speak English.

In the border regions, such as France and Germany e.g., people usually are brought up bilingual.

The minorities' languages - Danish, North and Sater Friesian, Romany, and Lower and Upper Sorbian - are promoted under the terms of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which Germany ratified in 1998.

Additional informations:

www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/federal-states/content/background-1/the-german-language.html?type=&no_cache=1&sword_list%5B0%5D=language

ITALY

Italian is the language spoken by the vast majority of Italians. Parts of the Trentino-Alto Adige region are predominantly German speaking with Ladin spoken by a minority. There is a small French-speaking minority in the Valle d'Aosta region and Slovene is spoken by a minority in the Trieste-Gorizia area.

English is spoken fairly commonly on the well-travelled path, but you'll want a good phrasebook for anything remote although even this may not help for the smaller towns and villages as many areas still speak dialects that you won't find in any phrasebooks.

It was not until the 1960s, when economic growth enabled widespread access to the television programmes of the state television broadcaster, RAI, that Italian truly became broadly-known and quite standardised.

Today, despite regional variations in the form of accents and vowel emphasis, Italian is fully comprehensible to all throughout the country. Nevertheless certain dialects have become cherished beacons of regional variation—the Neapolitan dialect which is extensively used for the singing of popular folk-songs, for instance—and in recent years many people have developed a particular pride in their dialects.

POLAND

The national and official language is Polish. Pursuant to the Act on national minorities of 2005, the national minorities have the right to cultivate their respective languages and cultures. In the regions inhabited by minorities, there are schools where the native language of the minority is taught: the Byelorussian, Lithuanian, Lemkos, German, Slovak and Ukrainian. There are also the so-called Romani classes, and it is possible to learn Hebrew (2 private schools - Warsaw and Wroclaw) and Yiddish (courses).

UNITED KINGDOM

The national language is English and whilst regional accents very much exist there is not much in the way of regional dialect except in so far as some regions (particularly Tyneside, Yorkshire and Lancashire in the North and Devon and Cornwall in the Southwest) have their own very distinctive words which would be quite

incomprehensible to an outsider. As previously mentioned, Welsh is still very much spoken in certain parts of Wales and some more remote areas of Scotland have their own language as well as some very strong dialects. Northern Ireland has a markedly different accent but much of England speak exactly the same language in a very similar manner.

Religion and religiousness. Religious tolerance. Tolerance to dissimilarity.

FRANCE

France was called the 'Eldest Daughter of the Catholic Church' for a long time. The Church and State have been separated since 1905 and France is now a non-religious State. All religions are represented, but it has remained Catholic by tradition (even though the number of practising Catholics is diminishing). The second most common religion is Islam due to high levels of North-African immigration in the 60's and 70's, but also Protestantism and Judaism....

French society is multiethnic, most people are open to others but for several years, and following economic difficulties, people have become less tolerant of others and tend to stay in their own community. We might say there's a latent racism.

Public authorities implement measures for the integration of disabled persons but they are still insufficient and these people's daily life isn't easy.

GERMANY

The most prevalent religions in Germany are the Protestantism and Catholicism, with respectively around 28 million members. Muslims make up the next largest group with around 3 million members. The vast majority of Muslims are Sunni. Shiites and Alevites form a much smaller group. Jews make up the third largest religious community in Germany. Other religious groups found in Germany are the Orthodox Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and Baha'i. There are more than 160 different religious communities in Germany. The holy days of Muslim, Jewish and other minority religious groups, such as the Islamic Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adha or the Jewish Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are no public holidays in Germany.

The Basic Law guarantees freedom of faith, conscience and religious or ideological belief, as well as the opportunity to practice one's faith unhindered. There is no established state church in Germany, i.e., no ties between state and church administration and therefore no control of the churches by the state. The relationship between the state and the churches is that of a partnership; in addition to the constitution it is founded on concordats and contracts. The state participates in the financing of certain establishments run by the church such as kindergartens and schools.

The churches are entitled to levy taxes from their members; these are normally collected by the state against reimbursement of the costs incurred. Prospective theologians are for the most part educated at state universities; the churches enjoy a say in appointments to chairs of theology that is guaranteed by charter. The social and charitable commitment of the churches is an integral part of public life. Their activities are indispensable in hospitals, senior citizens homes, care homes, in counselling and care in all situations, in schools and training establishments.

Additional informations:

www.handbuch-deutschland.de

www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de

ITALY

Italy is a deeply religious country, home to the Catholic Church and the Pope himself. Over 87 per cent of the population is Roman Catholic whereas around 13% identify with either other religions or none at all. According to many other books (Reference) surveys (from Gallup and others) Italy can claim above 40% weekly church attendance rate.

Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim minorities also coexist, but their presence, as the statistics suggest, is limited and often restricted to the more cosmopolitan areas of the country.

Around 30,000 Jews, and 30,000 Buddhists live in Italy.

The number of Muslims in Italy today probably surpasses the one-million mark, though only 30,000 or so Italian citizens are Muslim. They consist mostly of foreigners who have received Italian citizenship and native Italians who have converted to Islam.

Islam was almost entirely absent in Italy from the time of that country's unification in 1861 until the 70s, when the first trickle of North African immigrants began arriving. These North Africans, mostly of Berber or Arab origin, came mainly from heavily Islamic Marocco, though they have been followed in more recent years by Tunisians, Albanians and to a lesser extent, Libyans, Egyptians, Pakistanis, Middle Eastern Arabs and Kurds. Some estimate the number of Italian converts to be around 10,000.

Tolerance to dissimilarity is missing

POLAND

In Poland, over 20 Christian denomination churches are registered, about 10 non-Christian denominations and nearly 20 other religious associations. However, the dominating religion is the Catholic denomination of the Roman rite. Poles are a relatively religious people, 96% of Poles declare to be Catholic. Nevertheless, only

58% systematically participate in religious practices. Also here, one can note significant differences between regions. Poles participate most often in the Sunday holy mass, church services, for example in May, to worship Mary, in June to worship Jesus Heart, rosary in October, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, etc. 18% of Poles declare that they occasionally participate in religious practices, and 8% do not participate in them at all.

Poles are able to combine the dominating position of the Roman Church with the freedom of religion. Those of other faiths are accepted. However, Poles are used to stick to stereotypes, which is the reason why in some circles the religious dissimilarity is poorly tolerated. The situation is a bit different when it comes to tolerance of different sexual preferences. According to surveys by the Centre of Public Opinion Surveying of April 2001, 41% of the surveyed presented a negative attitude towards homosexuality.

Poland has one of the lowest levels of objection to a multicultural society and the lowest level in case of granting citizen rights to immigrants legally residing in Poland. Only one in every 15 Poles is against the granting of full citizen rights to immigrants. The greatest aversion to foreigners is experienced by people who are poorly educated, inhabitants of country regions and elderly.

Additional information:

www.cbos.com.pl, /http://paiz.gov.pl/nawosci?id_news376&lang_id=2

UNITED KINGDOM

The two main religions in the UK are Church of England which itself has many subdivisions (such as Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed) and Catholicism. Followers of these two main religions are on the decrease and church attendance is very much in decline. Due to the ethnic groups which live in the UK there are also many Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and large Jewish communities existing in many of our cities. Religious tolerance is generally good but places of worship often become targets during times of ethnic tension as mentioned in the previous section. Some church schools exist in the UK but many others are ensuring that they are inclusive to all religious groups and pupils are taught about many different world religions.

In many ways citizens of the UK are more open-minded and tolerant than they have ever been before and the younger generation especially pays much less attention to different sexuality, race, colour and religion than many of their parents did. There is also much more awareness of mental and physical disability and much has been done to ensure that all people have the same rights and opportunities. Employment laws protect people against discrimination and schools have to be totally inclusive institutions. Whilst most people are sickened by homophobia, racism and bullying of any minority groups, sadly, there are always people who continue to have very bigoted opinions although in many ways the UK can be very proud of the way it has eradicated much of these outdated attitudes.

Additional information:

www.eu-cu.com/uk.htm

www.statistics.gov.uk/about/ethnic_group_statistics/

Commonly known historical figures

FRANCE

Joan of Arc, Napoleon Bonaparte, Jean Jaurès, Jean Moulin, General de Gaulle, Louis Pasteur, Pierre and Marie Curie, great writers: Molière, La Fontaine, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Victor Hugo, Baudelaire, Alexandre Dumas, Balzac, Zola.

GERMANY

In 2003 Konrad Adenauer was voted as the "Best German" during a Television Show from the ZDF followed by Martin Luther, Karl Marx, Geschwister Scholl, Willy Brandt, Johann Sebastian Bach, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johannes Gutenberg, Otto von Bismarck and Albert Einstein.

Some other examples:

Ludwig van Beethoven, Richard Wagner as composers

Heinrich Heine, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Immanuel Kant, Friederich Schiller, Heinrich von Kleist, Bertolt Brecht, Heinrich Böll, Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Günter Grass and also the Gebrüder Grimm, Wilhelm Busch as great writers, philosophers or thinkers.

As researchers or inventors worldwide known: Daimler, Carl Friedrich Benz, Rudolf Diesel, Robert Koch, Max Planck, Werner von Siemens, Johannes Gutenberg, Alexander von Humboldt etc.

Some politicians known as historical figures like Ludwig Erhard

Member of the resistance during the second World War: Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Geschwister Scholl

Additional informations:

www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/inhalt/25/0,4070,2079865-6-10,00.html

http://www.muenchen-stadtteile.de/haidhausen-news/friedensreich-hundertwasser_100118_100586.html

ITALY

Europe's Renaissance period began in Italy during the 14th and 15th centuries. Literary achievements, such as the poetry of Dante Alighieri, Petrarca, Tasso, and Ariosto and the prose of Boccaccio and Machiavelli exerted a tremendous and lasting

influence on the subsequent development of Western culture, as did the painting, sculpture, and architecture contributed by giants such as Filippo Brunelleschi, Leonardo da Vinci, Raffaello, Botticelli, Beato Angelico, and Michelangelo.

The musical influence of Italian composers Palestrina, Monteverdi, Corelli and Vivaldi proved epochal; in the 19th century, Italian romantic opera flourished under composers Gioacchino Rossini, Giuseppe Verdi, and Giacomo Puccini.

Additional information:

www.daddezio.com/genealogy/italian/famous/index.html

www.answers.com/topic/italian

www.italylink.com/woi/famousitalians/index.html

www.tricolore.net/cgi-bin/display_celeb.html

POLAND

- Władysław Jagiełło - king, winner of the battle at Tannenberg
- Fryderyk Chopin - composer
- Mikołaj Kopernik - astronomer
- Tadeusz Kościuszko - general
- Maria Skłodowska-Curie - discovered radium and polonium, twice awarded with the Nobel prize
- Stanisław Moniuszko - composer
- Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Cyprian Kamil Norwid - writers of the Romanticism
- Józef Piłsudski - marshal, Commander of the State and twice the Prime Minister of Poland between the world wars
- Karol Wojtyła - the pope John Paul II
-

UNITED KINGDOM

A recent poll to find who the British people considered to be the Greatest Britons was won by Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister who brought us victorious out of World War II. Runners up included Isambard Kingdom Brunel, William Shakespeare, Charles Darwin, John Lennon, Diana, Princess of Wales, Isaac Newton, Horatio Nelson and Queen Elizabeth I.

II. CULTURALLY ESTABLISHED ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Attitude to one's family. Strength of family ties. Traditional family pattern.

FRANCE

The family has considerably evolved. If we believe one of the more recent studies by INSEE, (National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies) in 1999, Metropolitan France counts 23.8 million households. The way in which households and families are constructed is evolving and reflects behavioural changes. Households are

smaller and there are many more unmarried and childless couples as well as single-parent families. More than half of households include one or two members: one out of three people live alone and one in four couples are childless. The family is no longer the support base for society. It remains a place of refuge in the event of major setbacks or for young people who have trouble finding a job. The home is a safe haven you can come back to in the event of major difficulties.

The father is no longer the dominant authoritarian figure; he shares this role with the mother. Child-parent relations are more about discussing and exchanging ideas in relationships that are more egalitarian than authoritarian. Grand-parents are considered to be a source of stability and refuge and they sometimes have a very fulfilling relationship with their grand-children.

GERMANY

The demographic change not only means the aging of the population but also a change in the patterns of living together in a partnership. Marriage, as the social institution and family in its well-known form hasn't disappeared yet. The proportion of people getting married and having children however, is decreasing.

Nevertheless, family still represents the first and most important social group for people and therefore one of the most significant social institutions. Over the years its importance as the nucleus of life has rather increased than decreased. For almost 90 percent of the population family counts more than work concerning their personal priorities. Four out of every five people in Germany (81 percent) live in a family. Almost every second person (47 percent) lives in a traditional family consisting of a married couple with children. Young people are also convinced about this form of existence, assuring that they would like to have a family of their own with the right partner and the right point of time.

Yet, ideas about the pattern of families, as well as their structure have changed dramatically in the wake of social change. In the traditional family the roles of the gender were strictly divided: the father was the breadwinner and the mother the housewife. This "breadwinner" model is no longer the predominant way of life. A far wider range of forms of cohabitation has emerged. There is now far greater leeway in choosing between various family forms and even deciding not to have a family at all. This is in no small way connected to the altered role women play: Nowadays some 60 percent of mothers are in employment. Families have become smaller. There are more instances of single-child families than those with three or more children. Two-child families are typical. There are also increasing numbers of people living alone or as a childless couples.

Over the past few decades the relations within families themselves have also progressed. Generally speaking the relationship between parents and children is exceedingly good and mostly is no longer characterized by obedience, subordination and dependence but rather by involvement, equal rights, support, affection and being brought up to be independent.

It is a fact nowadays, that one family consisting of three generations living under the same roof, has become very rare. However, there are strong emotional bonds between grown-up children and their parents and between grandparents and their grandchildren.

Additional informations:

<http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/society/main-content-08/families.html>

www.destatis.de

www.handbuch-deutschland.de

ITALY

The families structures are changing according to the changing role of the woman.

Wedding are reducing, the number of divorces is growing and the couples who lives together without being married are rising.

In Italy is very common to find sons who lives with their own parents more over a long time span much that in the other western countries, often until the thirty/thirty five years. Before marrying itself and to begin one new family, in fact, is normal, for an Italian young person, to continue living in the same house of the parents and to depend economically on them.

However, the classic pattern of the family maden by a couple with sons, still resists and its represent 72,4% of the woman of thirty even if, within them, the 9,3% has settled down a couple without children.

It is used to marry always more later because of the needs of the women that can succeed in to renounce to the family for the professional career.

Central in Italians' lives is their families... and "Mama" is queen. Parents often live in their children's homes and care for the grandchildren. Aunts and uncles play a big part in the children's lives as well. The extended family is getting smaller, but is still the major source of security.

Additional information:

www.italica.rai.it/principali/lingua/culture/famiglia.htm

www.edscuola.it/archivio/statistiche/famiglia.html

www.forumfamiglie.org/forumroot/in_evidenza/GIFSchedaFAM.RTF

www.personal.psu.edu/staff/g/x/gxb2/Memories.html

POLAND

In the Polish family, the independence of members within the family increased, the possibility to decide of oneself, of one's fate became greater and as a result, the contact with the family decreases and the bonds between its members weaken. The scope of freedom and independence of children, especially teenagers, in the family is greater than a dozen or so years ago. It is possible to observe the limitation of the controlling role of the family over its members, especially in urban and agglomeration environments, which causes the growth of pathologies in family and in the society.

On the other hand, however, in case personal problems arise, the dominant part of the society may count on their relatives, friends or neighbours for help.

Quite recently, a rather traditional model of the family dominated in Poland: the father - the head of the family, working to support the family and the mother - taking care of the household and the children, but also very often working for money. This model has been significantly transformed in the recent years. Most women get education, start working right after graduation and want to participate in working life, regardless of whether they are bringing up children or not.

Therefore, the partnership model of the family is becoming more and more popular and desired by the Poles. In fact, it is not realised in full - the man usually "helps" the woman in the household, but the main responsibility for its functioning is still borne by the woman. If the father and the mother combine work and parental responsibilities, the division of tasks is not always perceived as fair, especially for the woman.

In a three-generation family, the grandparents still have an important role.

More remote members of the family (relatives) most often have no defined roles, only the kinship bonds are important. The contacts are maintained most often through family meetings (First Communions, weddings, funerals, etc.)

UNITED KINGDOM

Generally, in the UK, the typical family unit is said to have been eroding away over the last few decades. There is much talk of dysfunctional families and many social ills are blamed on the breakdown of cohesive family units. With a rising divorce rate (the highest in Western Europe) many children live with only one parent or in step-families. There is much talk of a lack of respect on the part of the younger generations towards their elders. That said, the majority of families in the UK remain solid and harmonious and for very many people family gatherings are an essential and cherished part of everyday life.

There can no longer be said to be a traditional family pattern in the UK and it is no longer the case that the head of the family is always male. It is no longer the norm that the fathers go out to work while the mothers look after the house as it was 30

or 40 years ago and in many families today both parents have careers and share the household chores and the parental responsibilities. Grandparents play an important role often looking after children when a mother needs to return to work but generally hierarchy in families has all but disappeared with an ethos of shared responsibility and partnership taking over.

Having children. Single parents. Formal and common-law marriage. Divorce.

FRANCE

The number of marriages has decreased from 319,900 in 1960 to 278,000 in 2005. Couples often marry after having their first child for the sake of legitimacy. France has one of the highest fertility rates in Europe. The number of births rose in 2005, almost reaching the record level of 2000. Families generally include two children.

The number of marriages is stable for the first time since the peak of 2000, and the number of PACS (Civil Solidarity Pact) is increasing. One out of three marriages ends in divorce; this rate is higher in urban areas and particularly in the Paris region.

GERMANY

Great importance continues to be placed on a firm relationship with a partner - in Germany 21.6 million couples live together, 89 percent of them with a traditional marriage certificate. For most couples, children make up a complete family. According to a representative poll (a mini-census) in April 2002, just 12 percent of 35 to 40-year old married women had no children. Around 2.4 million people, mostly women, lived as single parents. Of the total population in Germany, 17 percent live alone, significantly more women than men. Even if most people still favour the traditional form of marriage, living together without being married has become more pronounced over the past few years. Since 1996, the number of unmarried couples living together in the west German states rose by 25 percent to 1.7 million, in the east German states by 24 percent to 543,000. There are no reliable comparable figures for same-sex households, but the Federal Statistics Office puts the number in the region of 53,000 to 148,000. The Act Governing the Legal Rights of Unmarried Couples of 2002 accords partners of different or the same sex the same legal status as those applicable to members of a family.

Not only the ways of life but also basic moral attitudes are undergoing changes. Faithfulness to one's partner remains an important value, but the attitude of staying together for life has become more relaxed. The expectations associated of a partnership, on the other hand, have risen. This is one of the reasons for some 40 percent of marriages over the past few years ending in divorce. As a rule most people marry again or are looking for another partner.

There has also been a marked increase in the number of couples living out of wedlock. This form of cohabitation without actually being officially married is particularly popular with young people and those whose marriage has recently failed. As a result the number of illegitimate children has also risen: In West Germany a good fifth and in East Germany more than half of all children are born to unwed mothers. One result of this change is an increase in the number of step-parents and single-parent families: One fifth of all households with children have -single parents and as a rule these are single mothers.

Germany has one of the world's lowest birth rates. Too few children are being born too late. Most women are not having their first child until they are in their early thirties, and on average each woman only has 1.3 children. However, over the past years Germany's population has remained at a stable level. The deficit in births was compensated by some three million immigrants. However, this low birth rate is coupled with an increasing life expectancy - currently 74.4 for a new-born boy and 80.6 for a new-born girl - which affects the age distribution of the population.

Additional informations:

<http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/society/main-content-08/families.html>

www.destatis.de

www.handbuch-deutschland.de

ITALY

In the 2004 the esteem (Istat) of the medium number of sons for woman it is equal to 1,33: the recorded higher level in Italy in the lasts 15 years, the result of the trend constantly increasing during the lasts 10 years, a part from 1995, year in which the Italian fecundity it touched the minimum with a value of the fecundity rate total of 1,19 sons for woman. To international level Italy remains one of the less prolific countries.

In 2004 the decrease of the number of weddings continues as found in the previous year. It is passed in fact from nearly the 260.000 weddings of 2003 to the 250.000 of 2004 with a rate that cove from the 4,5 to the 4,3 for thousands. The number of single is growing too.

The principal source when it is spoken about family is the civil code. For the civil code the family is a stable union between a man and a woman, generally widened in consequence of the birth of the sons whom, at least until to the fulfilment of the greater age cohabits with the parents, all legacies from ties affective and of blood and in which the solidarity translate herself in behaviour norms, placed from the moral, the custom, the religion that the members observe spontaneously.

Our Constitution, instead, asserts that "the Republic recognizes the rights of the family like founded natural society on the wedding". Useless to perhaps emphasize as

the truth today goes away in part from these rigid definitions: the institute of the wedding is losing in part its enamel and grows instead the cohabitations and the homosexual pairs.

It is cohabited sometimes for choice, sometimes for necessity, other times for test. whatever is the reason, numerous pairs in Italy prefers this shape of life in common to the wedding. Draft of a new phenomenon for Italy, while in other Countries, above all those Scandinavians, is one truth by now consolidated.

At the moment in Italy the cohabitation is not disciplined from specific norms. In attended that this empty one comes overwhelmed, many are the rights deny to you to cohabiting. Also being a relationship from which duties to legal level do not derive straight, the cohabitation can affect the economic regulation between two spouses separates or divorced: who cohabits with a person and perceives a maintenance check can lose this right if the person with which she cohabits supplies to its maintenance.

With the aim of protecting the natural union, in some Common of Italy it has been instituted the registry of the civil unions. Up to now the Common ones that they are made bearers of this proposed small "of freedom" are not many. Between the others we remember: Empoli, the first one in absolute in 1993, Tarquinia, Milan, Pisa, Voghera.

Additional information::

www2.law.uu.nl/priv/cefl/Reports/pdf/Italy02.pdf

POLAND

The increasing activity of women caused an increase of their economic independence and the possibility for the woman to select different social roles. As a result, not only the significance of marriage as a form of economic safeguard decreased, but the perception of attractiveness of marriage and motherhood as a form of main life activity changed.

Currently, if the spouses or informal couples decide to have children, they are not numerous. Although it is still declared that the most desired model of the family is 2+2 (parents and two children), in fact the most common model today is 2+1. Even though it is possible to find families with many children, their number decreases each year. Families with a single child make up 46.9% of all families, with two children - 36.2% and the families with three or more children - 16.9%.

The percentage of married couples with children is higher in the country (60.8%) than in the cities. The percentage of married couples with numerous children is in the country more than twice (25.3%) of that percentage in cities.

The current situation of families in Poland is characterized by an increment of single-parent families. Single-parent families are mostly single mothers (90.6%). In 2002, 25.8% of them were divorcees, 17.5% unmarried persons and 15.6% - widows. The

largest group of single fathers are the widowers - 32.1%, mostly dominating in the country.

The decision on getting married and having children is made increasingly later in life. The average age of women getting married for the first time was in 2003 24.3 years and the average age of men - 26.6 years. More and more popularity is gained by informal relationships, based only and solely on emotional bonds, which are accompanied by a common household. This solution is especially popular among young people and referred to as the "trial marriage". Informal relationships, the number of which increasingly growing, are most often created by people between 28 and 32.

Currently, marriages end up in divorce more often than in the past. In 2004, family courts decided to dissolve 51 thousand marriages. In 2004, as compared to 2003, the number of divorce cases increased by 123% and separation cases - as much as four times. In over 2/3 of cases, the divorce suit was filed by the woman.

UNITED KINGDOM

The average number of children per family now stands at 1.7 and has decreased significantly from the average figure of 2.4 that everyone knew of some years ago. Smaller families are more usual now because of the increased numbers of women in long term careers who would find juggling jobs and childcare for more than one child too difficult. Many couples are having their families much later, again because of being on the career ladder so they often do not leave themselves with enough time to have more than one or two children. That said, there is a marked difference in family size between the less well educated poorer classes and the higher educated, affluent middle classes. Working class families are often larger than middle class families. Single parents are on the increase.

The proportion of people choosing to get married is at an all time low. Many people choose instead to live together and raise families together without the formality of a marriage certificate. The divorce rate of those actually getting married in the first place is higher than ever before and is the highest in Western Europe.

Additional information::

www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=951

www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nscl.asp?id=7475

Culturally established ways of celebrating events in private life and in working environment

FRANCE

All events are celebrated privately and so each person organises them to their liking. Birthdays are generally celebrated with family or friends. A person's Saints Day (or Name Day) is less celebrated than it used to be, except for practicing Catholics,

whose number is diminishing. Even if the country has considerably turned away from Christianity, christenings and First Communions are still celebrated and remain points of reference even in non-practising families. Funerals can be either religious or non-religious.

However, and in contrast to Anglo-Saxon countries, there is no particular award ceremony for degrees and diplomas. Weddings and wedding anniversaries continue to be celebrated in varying degrees.

Office parties for retirements, weddings, births, Christmas, birthdays...it all depends on the atmosphere at work and the relationship you have with your colleagues, but offices frequently give parties.

GERMANY

Almost all Germans like to celebrate their birthday, but only a small part of them celebrate their name day.

As to the birthdays some Germans like to "celebrate in" i.e. get the festivities underway on the night before the occasion. A lot of people celebrate their birthday in a private way with their family or with friends, inviting them to a delicious dinner. It is also popular to invite for coffee and self-made cake on your birthday. The celebration takes normally place in a private atmosphere at home or in a restaurant, all depending on your housing conditions and the number of guests.

Weddings and wedding anniversaries are celebrated in different ways. Usually a wedding consists of two parts - a ceremony in a civil registry office - the official part -and a ceremony in the church. Before the day of the great event people usually celebrate a party with friends and colleagues, a so-called Polterabend. After the ceremony in the church many people celebrate this special day with their families, their relatives and friends, some in private surroundings, others prefer a restaurant etc..

The birth of a child, the christening of a child, the first Communion or the protestantic confirmation are traditionally celebrated with the family at home or in a restaurant.

If you start a new job you most probably will invite your new colleagues to a kind of celebration what we call "Einstand". This party will be normally held at work after the official working hours ("nach Feierabend"). Many people also invite their colleagues on their birthday to have a drink and a snack with them. This always depends on the type of company you work for as well as on the normal procedure at your place of work.

ITALY

It is used to go to a restaurant with friends and enlarged family for celebrating important data. The ways of celebrating this significant events depends on the uses of the different families.

POLAND

Poles are still convinced that family celebrations are to be celebrated riotously. The youth celebrates name days and birthdays among themselves, most often in a pub, the older celebrate these occasions among closer and more relate family members and friends, at home. The celebrations such as giving birth to a child-christening or the First Communion are celebrated with many guests - family, friends, acquaintances are invited. It is an important event in the family, organised most often at home (depending on housing conditions) or at a restaurant. Traditionally, wedding is an important event. A grand and costly party is organised at a restaurant or club, less often at home.

The opportunity to celebrate is provided by different anniversaries, final school exams passed, successes or promotions. Poles celebrate them among the closest family members, at a pub, restaurant, or in the open air. Recently, barbecue parties have become very popular.

At work everything depends on the type of the company. The employees of state authorities, service companies, private companies and production facilities act all differently. In each of these places, the social bonds between the employees have different shapes. Also the attitude of the company management is important - they may be more or less favourable to such customs. Generally, we can observe the disappearance of the custom to celebrate private occasions at work.

UNITED KINGDOM

Nearly everyone celebrates their birthday but very few people in the UK celebrate their name day. Children nearly always have some kind of birthday party with a birthday tea, a cake with candles, balloons, games and party bags for the guests to take home. Adults often celebrate with a meal out or at home, a night in the pub or a party in a hired hall. Weddings range from the extremely lavish to the very simple. More and more couples getting married are now turning their back on church weddings in favour of a ceremony in a registry office or one of the many venues which now have a licence to marry people. Weddings generally take place on just one day and normally consist of the ceremony in which the couple exchange their vows followed by a meal (known as the wedding breakfast whatever time of day it takes place) and some kind of dancing in the evening. On the birth of a child it is usual to send cards and bring presents and this is also the case for christenings although as with

marriages fewer people are now choosing to have their children baptised. Holy Communion is normal within practising Catholic families and is usually followed by a gathering at the child's home. Big celebrations normally take place for Silver Wedding Anniversaries (25 years), Ruby (40 years), Golden (50 years) and Diamond (60 years).

Many offices have a tradition of bringing cakes in to share with colleagues if you have a birthday. Workers in towns and cities might choose to have a drink or meal together either at lunchtime or after work in a local bar or pub.

Many places of work have an annual Christmas Party but for other public and religious holidays workers are simply given the time off to celebrate them as they choose. Many large corporate companies, especially in our larger cities, regularly have nights out in order to strengthen team spirit and boost morale.

Traditional attitude to one's home. Willingness to invite guests and hospitality.

FRANCE

You shouldn't pop-in uninvited, not even to see a friend. Everyone respects each other's privacy. The week-end is a moment to be enjoyed with family and friends that we choose to invite. Apart from the odd exception, neighbours have very little contact with each other.

GERMANY

It is not customary to "drop in" on German acquaintances without an invitation. With closer friends judge for yourself whether they welcome spontaneous visits. It is always better to let them know in advance that you are coming.

If you are invited for dinner or for celebrations it is usual to take along a small gift, more of a gesture of appreciation, such as chocolates, a bottle of wine or flowers. Your host will certainly be pleased if you thank him briefly the following day, either in person or by telephone.

ITALY

If you are invited for supper to house of friends, is sign of politeness to introduce yourself with one bottle of good wine or of the flowers for the house landlady.

POLAND

The Polish nation is famous for its hospitality and despite changes that occurred in our mentality and lifestyle, this tradition is still valid. The older generation of Poles still lives by the principle "guest at home, God to home" (a Polish proverb) and many older people tend to run open homes, i.e. the company of guests is enjoyed at any time. The younger generation is not as open, treats their homes as a retreat and

believes that the visit should be announced earlier or the invitation for it received. Therefore, when we intend to visit someone, we should inform our host in advance. Visits paid late at night are not very welcome.

If someone is invited at one's home, it is good to consider giving a small gift - flowers or sweets for the lady of the house, a bottle of wine for the master of the house. The visit should not last longer than until 10 p.m., unless the hosts ask to stay longer. Business visits are organised outside the home, at work or some place neutral, e.g. at a restaurant.

UNITED KINGDOM

Most people have a relaxed attitude to inviting others into their home and this can often be just for a cup of morning coffee or afternoon tea and a chat. Many more people in the UK now have friends for dinner on a regular basis and it is said that young people nowadays enjoy cooking and eating together in their own homes more than going out. Dinner parties are generally informal and relaxed and it is usual to take something to drink (for example a bottle of wine) and maybe some flowers or chocolates for your host.

Formal and informal ways of welcoming and saying goodbye. Behaviour in eye-to-eye conversation.

FRANCE

Generally, you shake hands and say 'bonjour' when meeting somebody you know, and more informally you say 'salut', 'bonjour', or 'au revoir' or 'ciao', 'à demain', without necessarily shaking hands; at lunch time it's 'bon appétit', or more informally 'bonap' (short for bon-appetit). If you meet someone on Fridays, you wish each other a 'bon week end' (have a good week-end), and on Mondays 'bonne semaine' (have a good week). Otherwise, 'à demain' (see you tomorrow), 'à plus' (see you around), 'à bientôt' (see you soon), and 'à toute' for 'à tout à l'heure' (see you later). In certain departments of a company, the more informal 'tu' form is popular and you may also give each other a kiss on the cheek. It all depends on the degree of familiarity.

It's quite common for colleagues of a similar position to kiss each other on the cheek in the morning. Since we have a Mediterranean culture, it's also quite common to pat someone on the shoulder, touch the other person, comfort or encourage someone by holding them in your arms. This should be avoided with superiors with whom we shake hands, but it depends on the type of working environment. For example, in advertising, journalism and education, using the familiar 'tu', kissing each other on the cheek and embracing may be common, even with superiors.

GERMANY

"Guten Morgen" - "Good Morning" is the most common form of greeting until midday. "Guten Tag" - "Good Day" is used until roughly 6 pm. "Guten Abend" - "Good Evening" is said after 6 pm. Many people also just use the simple "Hallo". "Auf Wiedersehen" - "Good Bye" is said when leaving. The short form is "Wiederseh'n". The Italian word "Ciao", as well as "Tschüs", "Tschö" or "Tschüssi" can also be used to say goodbye. "Mahlzeit" is said to other colleagues at work at meal times. This combines a greeting and the wish that the respective colleagues enjoy their meal.

Kissing and bowing are not German customs, offering one's hand is. And at official functions or at first meetings, the handshake is all-important. A firm handshake communicates self-confidence and respect. Germans invariably shake hands when saying "hello" or "goodbye." But this has become rare among younger people in a relaxed environment. A kiss on the cheek is relatively rare and usually restricted to the younger generation.

Additional informations:

www.handbuch-deutschland.de

ITALY

Italians greet friends with two light kisses on the cheek, first the right and then the left. Even if you're merely acquaintances, this form of greeting is usual, both on arrival and departure. When groups are splitting up, expect big delays as everyone kisses everyone else. On first introduction a handshake is usual, although not necessarily the firm businesslike shake other nationalities may be used to.

The Italian gestures a lot while he speaks, and they use to touch other people but many Italians are more reserved and don't accept invasions of their personal affairs.

POLAND

Ways of greeting tend to change recently. However, some general rules can be demonstrated, concerning the principle on who greets whom and how. When meeting, a man greets a woman, a younger person - an older one, person lower in rank or position - a person higher placed, a student - the teacher, the host - his/her guests, a single person greets the group, a person entering the room greets the persons already present. The greeting is accompanied by a slight bow of the head. In Poland, there is no obligation to exchange handshakes and to say goodbye, but it is often practiced in official situation, and between men, also in unofficial situations. When we

deal with a larger group of people, we can omit the handshake with each of them separately, it is better to greet or say goodbye to all at once.

When shaking hands, it is worth remembering to hold the entire hand and to have a pleasant countenance, and most important, to look the greeted person in the eyes. It is not appropriate to hold the hand of the greeted person for too long or to shake it violently.

When acquainted men greet, apart from shaking hands, they tap their shoulders with the left hand, and acquainted women often kiss each others' cheeks.

A very characteristic for Poles and traditional way of greeting or saying goodbye is the custom requiring that a man kissed the hand of the woman he greets/says goodbye to. However, not every Polish man is used to greet women in that way, and not every Polish woman wants to be kissed in the hand.

Eye contact during a direct conversation is essential. The physical distance to be kept during a conversation depends on the kind of relations we have with our interlocutor. In Poland, in private contacts we can be as close to the interlocutor as to touch him/her, whispered conversation is also possible. When having conversation with an acquaintance, the physical distance that separates us is usually equal to the length of outstretched arms.

Often in Poland when we have a conversation with a person who is in a difficult situation, it is normal to tap him/her on the shoulder or pat him/her to comfort him/her. Everything depends however on the level of intimacy of the persons talking - the more intimate the relations, the more often we touch. Couples talking in a restaurant, for instance, rather sit face to face than next to each other.

During a conversation we should avoid chewing gum, eat and talk at the same time and use vocabulary not adapted to the situation.

UNITED KINGDOM

In the workplace it is common practice to shake hands when greeting someone and again when saying goodbye. When meeting someone for the first time it is usual to say "Nice to meet you" or "Pleased to meet you". Bowing is never necessary unless you happen to meet the Queen but it is still considered polite to stand and greet someone who enters the room after you. Handshaking is no longer common in social situations; if you are meeting someone for the first time it is usually sufficient to say "Hello. Nice to meet you" and if you already know someone very well you may kiss on the cheek. In these situations two men would probably shake hands. When leaving you would normally say "Goodbye" or more usually just "bye" and perhaps if it was the first time you met that person you would say "It was nice to meet you" and if you know you are going to you might also add "See you again" or "See you soon".

Apart from greeting or saying goodbye to someone it is not usual to touch another person at all and many people would feel uncomfortable with any physical contact unless they know each other extremely well. Men should be particularly careful to keep an acceptable distance from female acquaintances. You would normally be expected to maintain eye to eye contact during a conversation and looking away or downwards could be interpreted as a lack of interest.

Being punctual and attitude to time management

FRANCE

French people are generally punctual, but people will think quite well of you if you arrive late to an appointment - it shows how busy you are. Meetings often start late and go over schedule, including into the lunch hour or evening. Certain companies now fix the start and end time of meetings in addition to the agenda.

GERMANY

Punctuality is appreciated by most Germans in official and in social situations. Germans are said to view punctuality as a great virtue. It is polite to be punctual for private appointments especial if your hosts invite you for dinner. Business meetings also start just in time and you have to be punctual. Nevertheless it is important to apologise and explain your lateness by a telephone call especial for a fixed meeting.

ITALY

Information included in national report should be changed according to examples given by other partners.

Additional information:

www.lifeinitaly.com/potpourri/business.asp

POLAND

In Poland, we are experiencing a change of attitude toward work. The work has become the basic value. The employers attach significantly more and more importance to the quality of work and to the productivity of employees. These phenomena cause a change of attitude of the Poles to time. Time is increasingly a deficit value. The young generation lives by the calendar, planning both their professional and private lives.

Knowing that we will not make it on time to an appointed meeting, we should inform the person who will be waiting for us of that fact - modern technology is very helpful. Upon arrival, we should apologize and not getting into detail why we are late, we should focus on the persons who waited for us. If we are repeatedly late official contacts, others will perceive us as irresponsible and incompetent.

At universities and colleges, there is an implicit custom stating that the students wait for the lecturer for 15 minutes after the planned start of classes, it is the so-called academic quarter,

UNITED KINGDOM

Punctuality is expected in the UK both in formal and social situations and persistently poor timekeepers are often frowned upon. It is very much expected that if you are running late, especially for something like a meeting, that you will make every effort to phone ahead in order to explain and apologise for your lateness.

Most people are still shocked to hear swearing on the streets and it should certainly be avoided in most work settings although in certain blue collar workplaces such as factories, building sites, you would probably stand out if you were not swearing.

Useful intercultural communication tips:

1. Recognize that language proficiency does not mean (inter)cultural competences.
2. Seek feedback to confirm the other person understood what you were really communicating.
3. Paraphrase back to the sender what you understood them to have communicated.
4. Avoid expressions, jargon, acronyms and metaphors bound by your cultural references.
5. Confirm your understanding of a metaphor or analogy when hearing it from someone from another culture - particularly when it makes sense.
6. Listen to the silence - it means different things in different culture.
7. Observe before you react.
8. Seek out a cultural informant/interpreter.
9. Attempt to learn the logic inherent in another culture - the connection between appearance, behaviours, values.
10. Have fun, take calculated risks and learn from your experience.

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