



# ***SUPPORTER***

**SecUring sPORTs Education thRough  
innovative and inclusive Gender Equality Plans**

**Embedding inclusivity in communication:  
the power of words and visuals**

**Session 2: Intercultural communication**

Ines Azaiez, SUPPORTER

[lazaiez@esf.org](mailto:lazaiez@esf.org)



# Summary

## 1. SUPPORTER overview

## 2. Understanding culture


- **Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory**
- **Edward T. Hall – High and Low context countries**

## 3. Understanding Intercultural Communication

- **Intercultural Competence**
- **Recommendations for improving Intercultural Communication**



# Project overview: The project in a nutshell



SUPPORTER is an EU-funded project aiming to support eight sports higher education institutions from Central and Eastern Europe in developing their own [intersectional, innovative, inclusive and impactful Gender Equality Plans \(4IGEPS\)](#) which explicitly address gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

SUPPORTER co-creates an innovative [capacity-building and mutual learning programme](#), delivering support and mentoring towards the development of the 4I-GEPs.

**Duration:** April 2023 - September 2025

Learn more about the project →



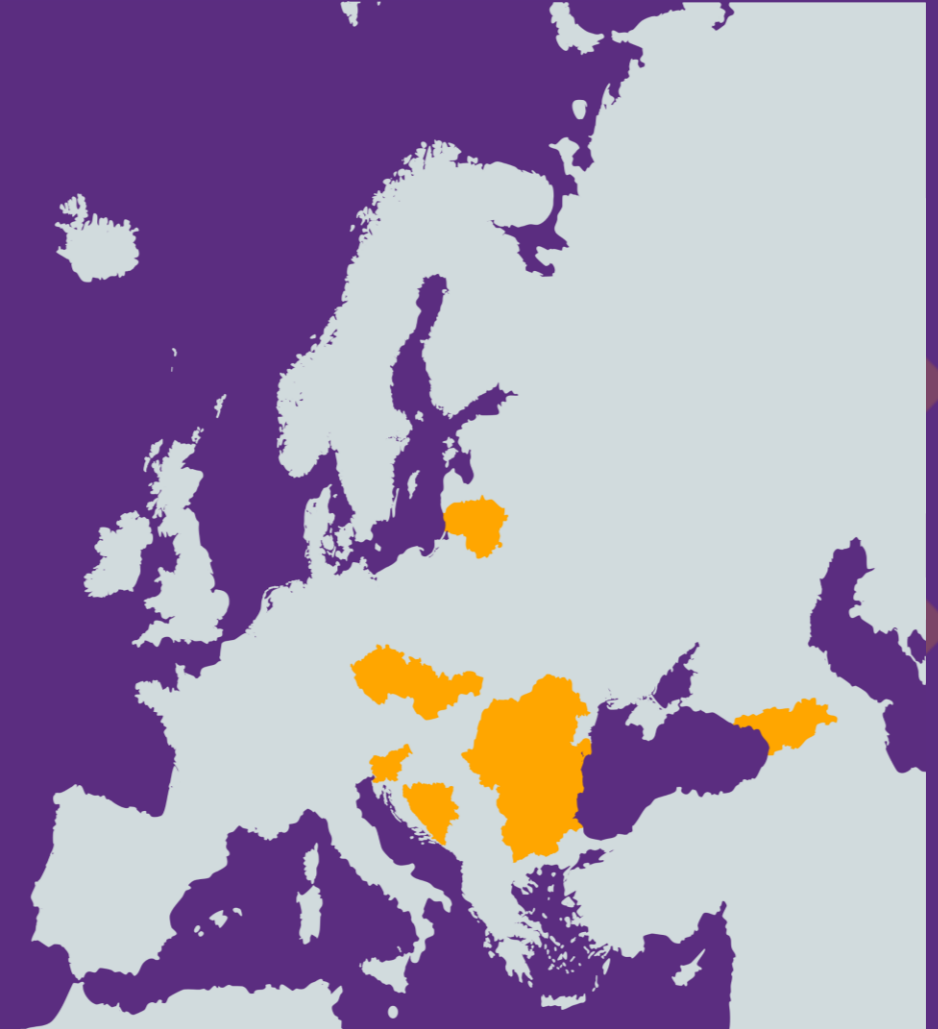
# Project overview: SUPPORTER partners



**SUPPORTER is comprised of a diverse 11 members consortium:**

- 8 sports higher education institutions located in Central and Eastern Europe
- Supported by 3 expert partners

**11 Partners in 11 countries**



Funded by  
the European Union

# Understanding culture

**Culture:** the ongoing negotiation of **learned and pattern** beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective (Minnesota, 2016)

- Culture influences how we see ourselves and others, and it's passed **down through generations.**

**“Your own culture is like the air you breathe, whereas another culture is like water, and you can survive in both, but you must learn to survive in the second one by using tools” - Geert Hofstede, cultural researcher**

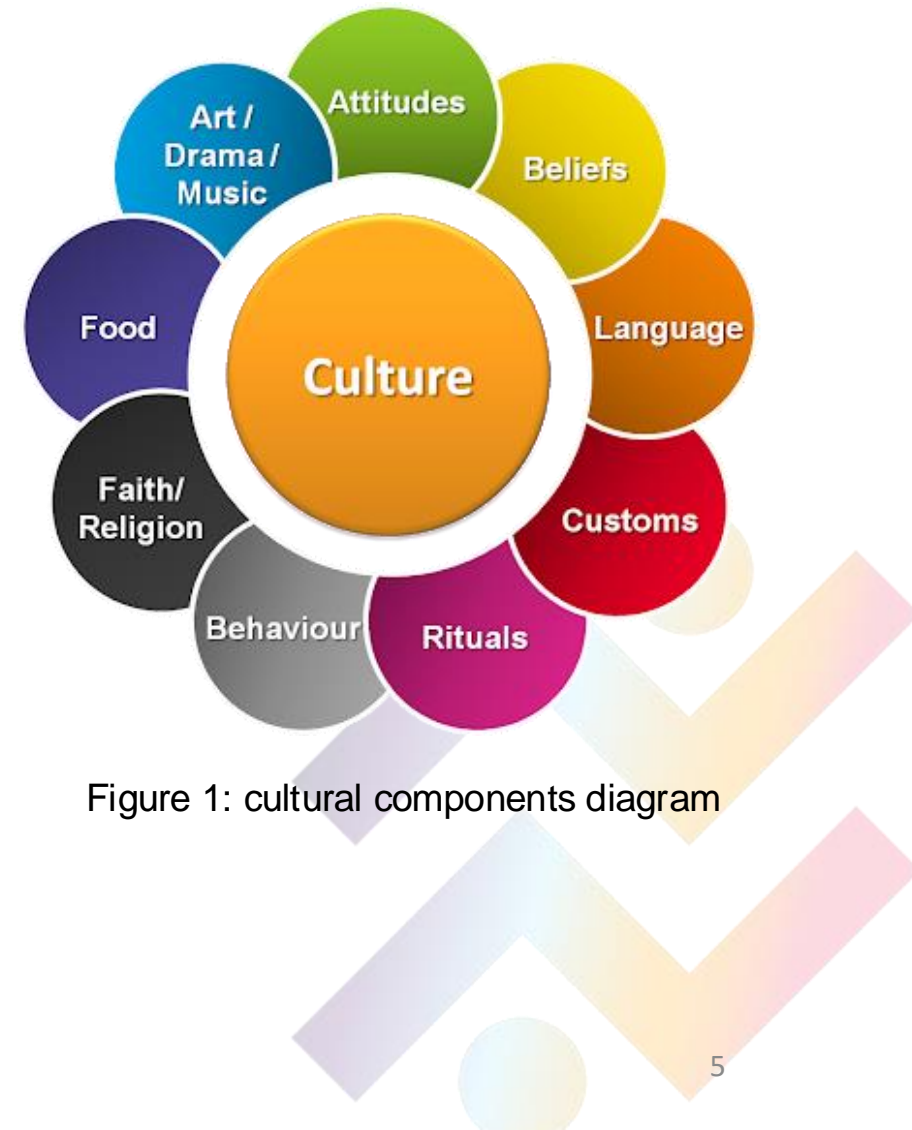
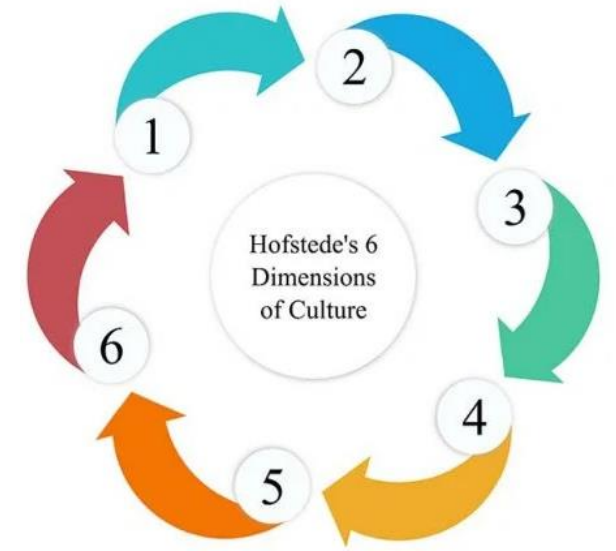


Figure 1: cultural components diagram

# Key theories for culture:

## Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory

- Between 1967 and 1973, Hofstede conducted a comprehensive survey on differences in national values across IBM's worldwide subsidiaries, comparing the responses of 117,000 IBM employees from different countries.
- It's a framework for **cross-cultural psychology**. It shows the effects of a **society's culture on the values of its members, and how these values relate to behaviour**.
- The theory has been widely used in several fields such as cross-cultural psychology, international management, and cross-cultural communication. It continues to be a major resource in cross-cultural fields.



1	Power Distance Index
2	Individualism Vs Collectivism
3	Masculinity Vs Femininity
4	Uncertainty Avoidance Index
5	Long Term Vs Short Term Normative Orientation
6	Indulgence Vs Restraint

Figure 2: Geert Hofstede D6 model of culture

# Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory: The Power Distance Index

**Definition:** Measures the extent to which less powerful members of an organization or society accept and expect unequal power distribution. It reflects societal attitudes toward hierarchy and authority.

## Low Power Distance

- Flatter structures with open dialogue, participation in decision-making, authority is more likely to be questioned, and power is more evenly distributed.

## High Power Distance

- Clear hierarchical structure with top-down decision-making, authority is rarely questioned, and hierarchy is accepted as the norm

Ward method	Cluster 1: low PDI	Cluster 2: high PDI
	Austria	Belgium
	Denmark	<b>Bulgaria</b>
	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>Croatia</b>
	Finland	<b>Czech Republic</b>
	Germany	France
	<b>Hungary</b>	Greece
	Ireland	<b>Poland</b>
	Italy	Portugal
	<b>Latvia</b>	<b>Romania</b>
	<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>Russian Federation</b>
	Luxembourg	Serbia
	Netherlands	<b>Slovak Republic</b>
	Sweden	<b>Slovenia</b>
	United Kingdom	Spain
PDI Mean	35.07	73.21

Figure 1: Countries according to the Power Distance Index, 2015

# Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory: Individualism and collectivism

**Definition:** The degree of social integration within a society.

## Individualistic societies:

- Loose social ties, typically limited to immediate family
- Emphasis on "I" over "we"
- Prioritizes personal achievements and individual goals
- Encourages independence and self-reliance

## Collectivist societies:

- Tightly integrated relationships with extended family and in-groups
- Emphasis on group harmony and team-oriented goals
- Focuses on group identity and collaboration

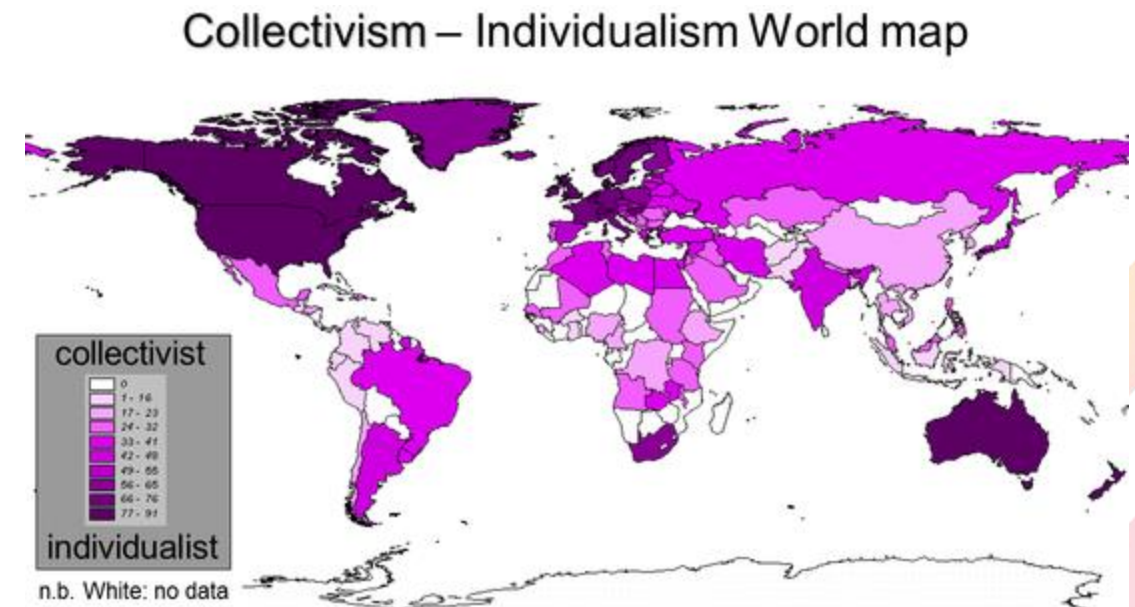


Figure 2: Collectivism – Individualism World Map



# Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory:

## Uncertainty Avoidance

**Definition:** Measures a society's tolerance for ambiguity, assessing how comfortable people are with the unexpected or unknown.

### High Uncertainty Avoidance:

- Preference for strict codes of behaviour, clear guidelines, and strong regulations.
- Truth and set of principles guides actions and beliefs.
- People generally feel less comfortable with change or unstructured situations.

### Low Uncertainty Avoidance:

- More acceptance of differing views and openness to new ideas.
- Fewer regulations and a more flexible approach to unexpected situations.
- People are more comfortable with ambiguity.



# Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory: Motivation towards Achievement and Success

**Definition:** Reflects societal preferences for achievement-oriented versus relationship-oriented values in the pursuit of success.

## **Achievement-Oriented Societies (formerly Masculine):**

- Emphasis on competition, and tangible rewards for success.
- Values individual achievement, heroism, and material success.
- Society places importance on personal accomplishments and ambition.

## **Quality of Life-Oriented Societies (formerly Feminine):**

- Preference for cooperation, modesty, and caring for others.
- Values social relationships, quality of life, and supporting the vulnerable.
- Society emphasizes well-being, balance, and a sense of community.



# Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory: Short-Term vs. Long-Term Orientation

**Definition:** Reflects how cultures relate to time, with a focus on either immediate outcomes or sustained efforts toward future rewards.

## Short-Term Orientation:

- Emphasis on quick results and immediate goals
- Focuses on fulfilling current needs and achieving fast results, sometimes at the expense of future stability.

## Long-Term Orientation:

- Values persistence, sustainability, and future planning.
- Emphasizes long-term relationships, resilience, and steady progress toward enduring goals.



# Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory: Restraint vs. Indulgence

**Definition:** Measures the extent to which societies permit or control the gratification of basic human desires and the pursuit of enjoyment.

## Indulgent societies:

- Emphasis on personal freedom, fun, and enjoyment of life.
- Allows relatively free expression and satisfaction of natural desires, with fewer social restrictions.

## Restrained societies:

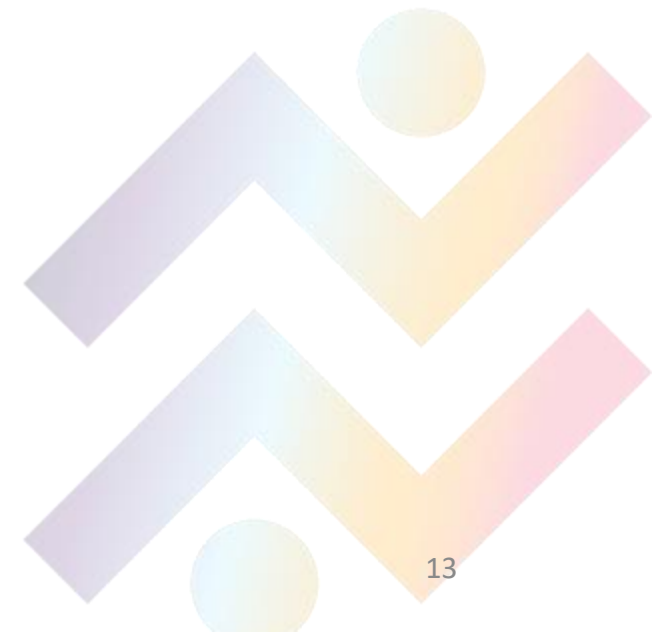
- Places importance on self-control and strict social norms.
- Limits personal gratification, often focusing on duty, structure, and discipline over enjoyment.



# Key theories for culture:

## Edward T. Hall

- Framework by Edward T. Hall in 1956 in his book “The Silent Languages”. It highlights the variations in spoken and non-spoken variations across cultures
- High-context vs. low-context cultures
- The continuum pictures how people communicate with others through their range of communication abilities: utilizing gestures, relations, body language, verbal messages, or non-verbal messages.



# Edward T. Hall:

## High context countries

- Messages highly coded, indirect and implicit
- Voice, timing, and facial expressions are important in conveying information
- Use of stares, glances, grunts and meaningful silences
- Relationship centred

Typical of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, some Asian, African and Latin American cultures

**High context preferences:** Personal stories, testimonials, and real-life examples are valued for conveying messages.

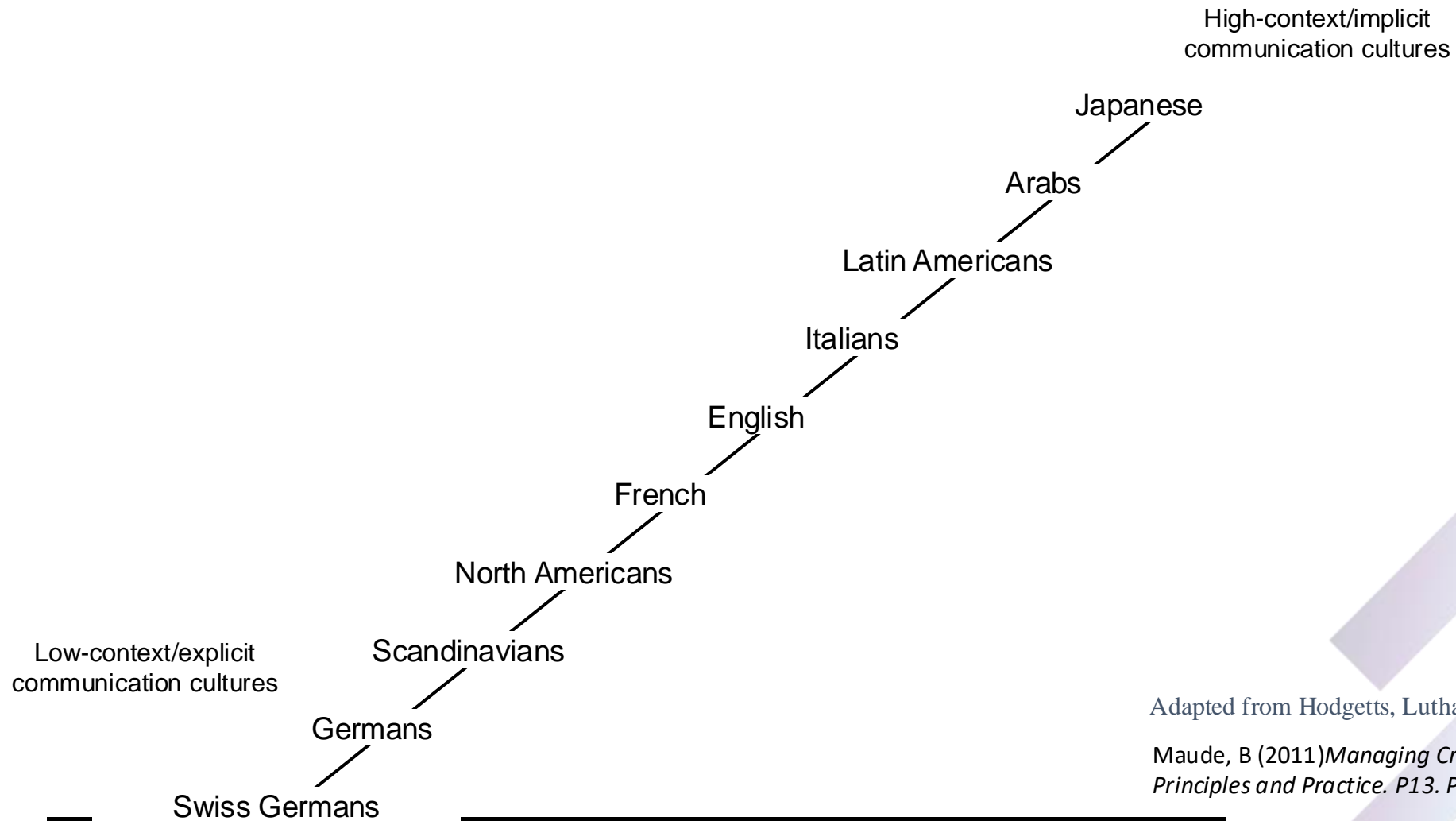
# Edward T. Hall:

## Low Context Countries

- The speaker says precisely what he or she means
- The message is explicit, mostly in words
- No assumed background knowledge and understanding
- Highly task-centred, not disposed to relationship-building
- **Low context preferences:** comprehensive information, precise agendas, and formal documentation



# Edward T. Hall – explicit and implicit communication



Adapted from Hodgetts, Luthans and Doh 2005

Maude, B (2011) *Managing Cross Cultural Communication, Principles and Practice*. P13. Palgrave. Basingstoke



# Intercultural Communication

**Intercultural Communication:** Symbolic exchange process where people from **different cultural communities negotiate shared meaning** (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

- Cultural differences in communication can make it challenging to find common ground unless both parties strive for understanding and **avoid ethnocentrism** - Judging others based on your cultural norms. This often leads to ethnocentrism, where one views their own culture as superior.



Source: Canva



# Developing Intercultural Competence

**Definition:** The ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds.

## Key components

- **Cognitive Skills:** awareness and understanding of cultural diversity.
- **Affective Skills:** emotional adaptability and openness to other cultures.
- **Behavioral Skills:** the ability to adjust actions and communication in diverse cultural contexts.



# Recommendations for improving intercultural communication with partners or coworkers

- **Invest time in learning about the different cultures and communication styles of your colleagues:** encourage your team to participate in cultural competency training
- **Practice active listening:** ask clarifying questions and provide thoughtful responses.
- **Be aware of non-verbal communication**
- **Adapt your communication style:** some cultures may value direct communication, while others might prefer a more indirect approach
- **Use clear and simple language:** avoid using jargon, idioms, or slang that might be unfamiliar to colleagues from different cultural backgrounds.



Source: Freepik.com

# Recommendations for authentic and inclusive representation in visuals

## Use authentic representation

- Illustrate diverse cultures accurately taking into account the settings and contexts.
- Include a variety of ethnicities, ages, genders, abilities, and social classes to showcase intersectionality.
- Avoid portraying cultures as stagnant or disconnected from modern trends and challenges.

## Emphasize empowering imagery

- Choose visuals that show people as active agents in their communities.
- Avoid portraying individuals in vulnerable or passive roles.
- Don't use images that reinforce stereotypes, such as always showing people in traditional attire or limited roles.



Source: RESISTRE project

# Recommendations for authentic and inclusive representation in visuals

## Consider cultural norms and sensitivities

- Research cultural norms, values, and traditions to ensure visual appropriateness (e.g., colours, symbols, gestures).
- Test the visual with the target audience

## Ensure consistent visual styles

- Avoid inconsistent or overly stylized graphics that may confuse the message.
- Choose an illustration style that aligns with the tone and message of the communication.
- Use diverse representation in both visuals and language to ensure consistency and inclusivity in messaging.



Source: RESISTRE project

# References

- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Doubleday.
- Kakabadse, N. K., & Kouzmin, A. (2001). Low and high context communication patterns: Towards mapping cross-cultural encounters. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 8(2), 3-24.
- Maude, B. (2011). *Managing cross-cultural communication: Principles and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Country Navigator. (n.d.). What are the differences between high-context and low-context cultures? Retrieved from <https://www.countrynavigator.com/blog/what-are-the-differences-between-high-context-and-low-context-cultures#:~:text=High%20context%20cultures%20have%20a,straightforward%20and%20explicit%20in%20communication>
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/orpc/vol2/iss1/8/Organizational Psychology Degrees>.
- (n.d.). What is power distance? Retrieved from <https://www.organizationalpsychologydegrees.com/faq/what-is-power-distance/>
- Bender Raio, C. (2022). 5 essential strategies for developing intercultural competence. LinkedIn. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-essential-strategies-developing-intercultural-competence-bender-raio/>
- Built In. (n.d.). Intercultural competence: Definition and skills. Retrieved from <https://builtin.com/articles/intercultural-competence>
- United Language Group. (n.d.). *Communicating in high-context vs. low-context cultures*. Retrieved from <https://www.unitedlanguagegroup.com/learn/communicating-high-context-vs-low-context-cultures>
- Geert Hofstede. (n.d.). *The 6D model of national culture*. Retrieved from <https://geerthofstede.com/culture-geert-hofstede-gert-jan-hofstede/6d-model-of-national-culture/>
- Wurtz, E. (2005). Intercultural communication on websites: A cross-cultural analysis of websites from high-context cultures and low-context cultures. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(1), 274–299. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.tb00313.x>
- LGBTIQ+ Health Australia. (n.d.). *Learning modules: Culture*. Retrieved from <https://www.lgbtiqintersect.org.au/learning-modules/culture/>

# Our platforms



**Twitter**

**@GEP\_SUPPORTER**



**LinkedIn**

**Company/gep-supporter-project/**



**Website**

**<https://supporter-project.eu/>**



**Facebook**

**<https://GepSupporterProject>**

