

Executive Summary Phase 1

To isolate relevant key variables which could indicate culturally differentiated perception the following areas have been identified for detailed investigation:

1. Local/national holiday calendar
2. Time management and local time habits
3. Personal factors:
 - Punctuality
 - Table manners
 - Greeting etiquette
4. Language as a barrier
5. Perceived influence of culture on service providers like
 - educational institutions
 - health care institutions
 - financial institutions
 - shops/retail stores
 - public transportation

Method: Structured interviews via mail, telephone and face-to-face interviews (standardised questionnaire). The population considered for the first pilot survey have been all foreign embassies, located in Vienna (n = 101). One non-Austrian, expatriate employee of each embassy was selected. Response rate 35%.

Findings:

Neither the national/local holiday calendar, local time habits in general nor personal factors like punctuality have been identified as factors that cause problems due to different perception/value from different cultures.

Table manners might relate to intercultural differences, however, lacking statistical significance (small number of respondents) the results hardly indicate a trend and the variable gender seems to be more influencing than culture.

Significant results could be derived in the category of greeting manners; the cross tabulation with age indicates that perception of greeting manners also depends on the age structure of respondents:

Respondents in the age categories 41-60 state that local greeting etiquette has a negative influence on their daily work, while respondents age 30 and younger perceive a positive influence. Respondents in the age category 31-40 are indifferent regarding greeting etiquette.

Within the category of service providers no significant intercultural aspects could be identified except for one significant result: the Viennese public transportation system has been evaluated extremely positive regarding its influence on daily work.

Factors causing problems in intercultural business relationships such as greeting etiquette, eventually table manners and public transportation systems could be identified in the course of this exploratory study. Further research on the relevance

of these problem areas in different business contexts will be conducted to develop strategies and methods to prepare expatriates for tasks in an intercultural environment.