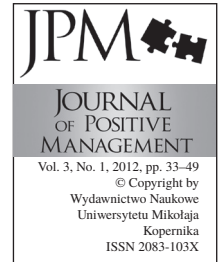


# TEAMWORK IN A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT. AUSTRIA, POLAND AND TURKEY COMPARISON

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## Abstract

This article gives insight into cultural differences and the way they affect business life. The focus of the paper is to present results of a study conducted among students from Austria, Poland and Turkey. Its aim is to provide comparison of cultural dimensions crucial at workplace and to identify trends in attitudes towards teamwork in populations of countries presented as well as to reveal similarities and differences in their team-related behaviour.

**Keywords:** Culture, cultural dimensions, teamwork, intercultural management

**Paper type:** Research paper

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## 1. Introduction

Teamwork plays increasingly more important role in business life. Both in big transnational corporations and small companies, people achieve synergy through group collaboration. Teams have become an inseparable part of organizational culture of many successful organizations and an unquestionable source of their competitive advantage.

Internationalization, globalization and development of a global society create many opportunities as well as challenges for the company. Businesses are encouraged to operate abroad in developing countries with good location, tax credits and low-cost and at the same time well-skilled workforce. Therefore cross-cultural teams are becoming common. In this era of globalization, companies are forced to learn how to deal with representatives of different cultures – their employees, customers and business partners. As a result, interpersonal skills turn out to be as important as technical qualifications in modern business world.

People often interpret other's behaviours looking at them from the perspective of their own values, attitudes as well as behaviours desired in the environment they grew up. However individuals differ in the way they perceive time and space. Various importance is paid to relations with others and with environment. People differently perceive issues such as: beauty, life, death, source and goal of living.

Beliefs concerning these and other issues determine people's behaviours not only in their daily life but also at work. They influence the way people communicate, treat their business partners, negotiate and make decisions. Basic assumptions and beliefs determine how contacts between manager and his subordinates look like. Moreover, they influence relations between co-workers, international business partners, communication between parent company and its subsidiaries as well as other people. A manager working in international environment has to be able to recognize, acknowledge and react to existing opportunities as well as threats the global economy creates.

The importance of cultural background for business was confirmed by the research conducted by G. Hofstede. The results show that national culture explains up to 50% of all the differences in attitudes and behaviours of people at work (Adler and Gundersen, 2008).

## 2. Theoretical background

Culture can be defined in many ways. According to G. Hofstede it is "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1991). Trompenaars describes it as "the way in which group of people solves problems" (Trompenaars, 1993). The most comprehensive definition of culture was presented by A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn which states – "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action" (Adler and Gundersen, 2008).

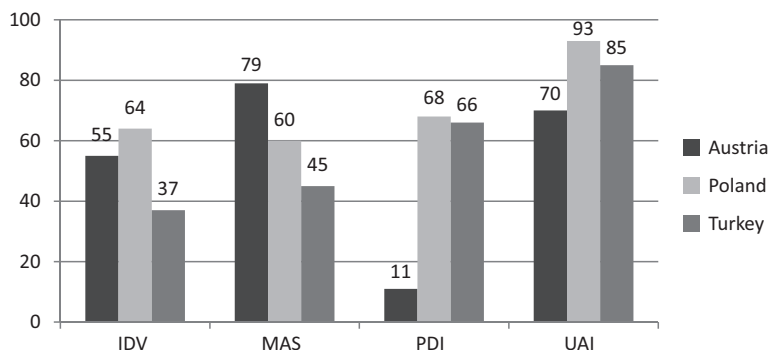
A team can be defined as a small group of people who have complementary skills and are dedicated to the realization of tasks they feel responsible for (Smoleński, 2002). R. Johnson highlights, that to speak about the team and not only a group, its members have to share common goals, be integrated and collaborate effectively. (Johnson, 1999) Therefore, team can be described as a "group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, job, or project. Team members operate with high degree of interdependence, share authority and responsibility for self-management, are accountable for the collective performance, and work toward a common goal and shared rewards. A team becomes more than just a collection of people when a strong sense of mutual commitment creates synergy, thus generating performance greater than the sum of the performance of its individual members" (BusinessDictionary.com, 2011).

People work in teams because they believe together they can achieve better results. As US President – L. Johnson, said: "There are no problems we cannot

solve together and very few that we can solve by ourselves” (Maddux and Wingfield, 2003). Group collaboration allows combining skills of different people in order to achieve common goals of the organization. It teaches to think not only from the view of someone’s own needs but most of all from the perspective of common interest (Robbins, 2004). Results of the teamwork are better than individual performance mainly in cases where: the task is complex, work requires creativity, there is no clear way of performing the work, it is necessary to learn fast and combine different areas of knowledge, collaboration of employees is all-important in the process of implementation (Scholtes et al., 2003).

It is hard to determine whether more diverse groups collaborate better than less diverse ones. Homogenous teams are less likely to fail, but also do not achieve extraordinary results (as their creativity is limited) (Kubik, 2007). Despite the difficulty of managing multinational groups, Brannen and Salk’s research shows that cross-cultural team does not have to perform worse than less diverse groups. Regardless of different beliefs and basic assumptions, members do not necessarily have higher tendency to disagreements and conflicts. Research indicates that heterogeneous groups achieve better results than homogenous ones. When individuals are aware of the source of existing differences and understand those, diversity turns out to enhance creativity and becomes a source of synergy (Bolesta-Kukułka 2001).

The author identified several cultural dimensions influencing teamwork: level of individualism and masculinity, power distance, task and relationship orientation, universalism and particularism, the level of uncertainty avoidance, attitude towards knowledge sharing and time as well as communication style. Figure 1 presents G. Hofstede’s levels of individualism, power distance, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance for the countries researched.



**Figure 1.**  
G. Hofstede’s  
cultural dimensions

The level of individualism (IDV) determines the interdependence between an individual and the group he belongs to. It influences power the society has over the individual and the degree to which the group rules are respected. It determines

whether group objectives or individual goals are more important as well as defines the extent to which an individual is responsible for other members of his society. Moreover, it has an impact on how conflicts are perceived (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

In individualistic cultures (with high level of IDV) motivational systems aim at encouraging competition. Employees are rewarded in accordance with their individual performance. They compete with each other in order to achieve their own goals and relationships with other people are instrumental. Employees willingly change their workplace if they see better career opportunities somewhere else. It is avoided to employ family members in one company. Managers take goal-oriented approach to management. Communication is direct and conflict is perceived as beneficial for the company. While working in a team it is important to acknowledge individual achievements and stimulate the presentation of each member's own ideas. Personal questions should not be asked. Countries with individualistic approach are for example: USA, Israel, Romania, Nigeria and Canada (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2005).

In collectivistic cultures the decision-making process lasts longer than in individualistic ones because maintaining good atmosphere and friendly relations within the team is very important. Conflict is perceived as harmful and destroying and is therefore avoided. Consequently people are afraid to deal with their negative emotions openly. An individual is treated as an essential part of a group and is willing to devote his own objectives for the common good. At the same time, members support each other and provide mutual care. Success is celebrated together. It is essential to honour wisdom and show respect for age and position. In order to work in harmony, traditions should be respected, emotions suppressed and change should be introduced slowly. Loyalty towards group is valued and rewarded. Turnout at work is minimal, it is usual to work for the same company during the lifespan. Moreover, people are every often employed due to their family bonds. The most collectivistic cultures are: Egypt, Nepal, Mexico, India and Japan (Bjerke, 2004).

The collectivistic approach to motivation is represented by S. Liu – vice president of Motorola and director of Legal Affairs for Asia and Pacific, who says that the key to success in managing people is awakening in employees pride of working for the company “to show them that what they do is good for China, and their actions contribute to the development of their country” (Money.pl, 2008).

According to the research conducted by A. F. Gabreny and W. R. Bayb people from collectivistic cultures are very cooperative and ready to collaborate with other members of their society. At the same time, they are very competitive while dealing with people from outside their social group. Therefore, often in new formed teams, people representing individualistic cultures co-operate much better with each other than those from collective societies (Triandis, 1990).

IDV has the biggest influence on to the approach to the teamwork. The lower IDV the more collectivistic society is and the stronger integration between

individual and the group. The most collectivistic culture (among the three researched) is Turkey with individualism index that amounts to 37. Since birth, individuals function in certain social groups and usually live in expanded families with members supporting each other and expecting loyalty. Goals and values of the group are therefore far more important than the individual's own values and aspirations. In Poland and Austria the IDV is higher with indexes of 64 and 55 respectively.

Orientation towards tasks or relationships affects the atmosphere at work. People from task – oriented cultures concentrate on goals and do not mix professional and private life. Relations with other employees are instrumental. Co-workers avoid small talk and get straight down to business. This attitude is especially characteristic for people from North America or Australia (Daft and Murphy, 2010).

For relations – oriented countries (Arab, Africa, Latin America and Asia) atmosphere at workplace is more important than achieving the goal. Building long-term relationships with business partners is very important and getting to know them before starting negotiations or collaboration is critical. Therefore it is crucial to do business face-to-face. Building trust is a long process and the partner should be first introduced by an intermediary or mediator. Paying attention to time is considered as a lack of respect and attempts to hasten the negotiations can result in breaking the agreement (Woytowicz-Neyman et al., 1996).

Universalism and particularism describe attitude towards rules and regulations. They determine whether truth or maintaining relationships is more important (Harzing and Ruysseveldt, 2004).

In universalistic countries everyone regardless of his status, age, situation or income has to respect the rules. Contracts are commonly used in business and they should not be changed. Rules and principles describe the proper behaviour. Attention is paid to respecting the law. Business contacts are rational, professional and characterized by non-personal attitude (Shaules, 2007).

Different approach to those issues have particularistic cultures where for the sake of friendship and to show loyalty people are willing to cancel the contract. It is believed every case should be evaluated separately in its context. It is the situation that determines whether certain behaviour is bad or ethically correct. Business is very often done among friends (Vance and Paik, 2006).

Austria and Poland are classified as universalistic countries (among other countries such as: USA, Switzerland, Canada) while Turkey is more particularistic (with China, Venezuela, South Korea, Russia) (Trompenaars and Hampden-Thurner, 2005).

Attitude towards time determines how punctuality is perceived, tasks coordinated, and the amount of attention paid to schedules as well as whether things are managed step by step or simultaneously (Woytowicz-Neyman et al., 1996).

Monochronic/sequential cultures (for example: German, Swiss, North America, Northern Europe, Japan) perceive time as a limited asset. Consequently, they are task oriented and pay attention to keeping deadlines as well as following agendas and schedules. Punctuality is crucial and it is a sign of respect. Only one thing is done at a time. For instance, answering phone calls during a meeting is unacceptable. Among monochronic populations are especially protestant cultures that cultivate the ethos of work and value effective use of time. Heroes who through their hard work went from rags to riches are glorified (Hall and Hall, 1990).

People from polychronic/synchronic countries represented by: Mediterranean, Latin America, Africa, Arab countries, do not pay attention to schedules and deadlines. Their plans are very general and punctuality is loosely defined. Different projects are handled simultaneously. There is no clear separation between personal and professional life (Hall and Hall, 1990).

For instance, in Arab countries looking at the watch during the meeting is considered as rude. Those cultures are concentrated on relations and different roles a person plays in his life and believe that during one unit of time somebody can play several various roles what comes at cost of punctuality (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003).

It should be noted that the perception of time does not depend only on the culture but also on the company's area of activity and its size. The bigger the company the more the monochronic attitude plays increasingly important role. While production companies are strictly sequential, universities tend to be synchronic (Hall and Hall, 1990).

Among the countries researched, Austria and Poland belong to the group of monochronic countries while Turkey is synchronic.

The level of masculinity (MAS) determines whether salary and promotion or collaboration and relations are more important for certain society.

Masculine cultures are competitive and task oriented. Job is perceived as a challenge and an opportunity to gain recognition and appreciation. Attention is paid to individual performance and power. Success is perceived in material terms, successful people are admired. The competition with others starts at early age not only at school and sport but also at home. A real leader rules with a firm hand. Communication is direct and assertive. Solutions are sought through confrontation. The most masculine cultures are: Japan, USA, Italy and Slovakia (Hofstede, 1998).

In feminine countries, which are relation-oriented, interpersonal skills are as important as technical competences. Being caring and sensitive is appreciated and conflicts are avoided. Decisions are made democratically. It is important that job gives satisfaction. Showing modesty is crucial and therefore privileges and manifestation of power are not accepted. Attention should be paid whether men and women are treated equally and practices in the team are not discriminatory

to either gender. A person proves he is competent by his actions, not by boasting about his previous achievements. The most feminine countries are: Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark (Browaeys and Prince, 2008).

The level of masculinity (MAS) has considerable impact on the teamwork. The country with the highest MAS among researched is Austria (79), then Poland (60) and the most feminine culture is Turkey, where MAS equals to 45. This indicates that in Poland and Austria the competitive approach should be more common than in Turkey (Hofstede, 1998). However research shows opposite.

Power distance (PDI – Power Distance Index) also can affect the teamwork to a great extent. It is defined as the degree to which group members expect and accept social inequality. It determines the attitude towards power and authority. It reflects the distance between different levels in the corporate hierarchy. It influences to what extent the authority is delegated and whether social status is achieved or ascribed (Hofstede, 2001).

In cultures with high PDI power is centralized and demonstrated by highly hierarchical organizational structure and physical attributes of power. Manifestation of status is commonly accepted. Employees agree with superiors' decisions without questioning. People show respect through the use of titles and honorifics. Countries with high PDI are for example: China, Venezuela, Mexico, Arab countries, India, Ghana, Brazil, Belgium and France (Harzing and Ruyseveldt, 2004).

For instance in Arab cultures, status is assigned at birth depending on the family background, gender or religion practiced. The primary role of the individual is to contribute to the good image, development and survival of the group he belongs to (Harzing and Ruyseveldt 2004).

On the other hand, in the societies where the power distance is low, the employees fearlessly communicate with their manager. Decisions are made democratically and subordinates can easily oppose the director. Manifestation of power and status is perceived as swaggering. Countries with low power distance are: United States, Holland, United Kingdom, Scandinavian countries. Teamwork plays essential role in those cultures and as many people as possible are involved in the decision making process. Low level of PDI fosters direct and open communication as well as encourages teamwork and makes it easier (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003).

In Poland and Turkey, PDI amounts respectively to 68 and 66. Therefore, those countries can be characterized as high power distance cultures. Austria is the country with the lowest power distance in the world with its PDI equals to 11 (Hofstede, 1998). In Turkey social status is usually ascribed. In Poland and Austria, on the other hand, somebody's position is mainly determined by his actions, competences and performance. He is respected as a result of his individual work and contribution to the success of the group.



The level of uncertainty avoidance (UAI – uncertainty avoidance index) determines attitude towards changes and unknown.

Populations with low level of UAI accept the fact that not everything is certain and that manager does not have the answers for all their questions. Differences are acknowledged and discussed in calm, not emotional way. Employees are involved in the decision-making process and authority is delegated. Rules are set only when necessary (Sitko-Lutek, 2004).

On the other hand, in countries with high UAI level, innovations and changes are avoided. Uncertain situations and atypical behaviour are not welcome. Formalization plays important role in the organization. Power is centralized and hierarchical. There are many bureaucratic procedures. Managers are expected to provide rules and certain solutions as well as give exact instructions to their employees. Leader should clearly state his expectations, in advance prepare concise and detailed plans and focus on tactical aspects of the project. High level of uncertainty can result in resistance to collaboration with people from cultures you do not know (Browaeys, 2008).

Differences in language codes and communication styles of co-workers can affect the results of work to a great extent.

Low context communication style is characterized by getting straight to the point, speaking directly and assertively, giving clear answers and concentrating on facts. Personal matters are separated from business. Direct face-to-face contact is important. The content and words are more crucial than the form and gestures. Improvisation takes place most of the time. It is desired to talk about one's achievements. People are often addressed by their first name. Non ceremonial, low context cultures are: USA, Australia, Canada, Scandinavian and German-speaking countries (Ferraro, 2006).

In cultures where high context communication takes place, people communicate using a lot of metaphors, stories and analogies. It is believed that an intelligent person is able to understand the statement based on its context. Therefore, form is more important than the content. As building and maintaining positive relationships is crucial, answers follow certain rules of the society and mediators are used. Attention is paid to respecting rituals. Use of titles and names of positions is necessary. Agreements are rather spoken than written. Saying 'no' is avoided, as it is considered to be rude. On the other hand, 'yes' does not mean the positive answer but is rather a sign that interlocutor has understood the question. Contracts are short and parties can demand further changes to be made what would be unacceptable in cultures with low context communication. Ceremonial, high context countries are Japan and China, Latin America, France and Italy (Jacob, 2003).

Turkey is a country where high context plays more important role than in Poland and Austria where communication is more direct and straightforward.



Collaboration of people using high-context and low-context communication style can cause many troubles. While low-context cultures will feel uneasy with not enough information given by high-context, the latter will feel they are provided by the former with too much information.

Moreover, the communication is influenced by the way emotions are expressed in the society. Emotional and neutral cultures can be distinguished.

In countries characterized by neutral behaviour such as: Finland, Ethiopia, Japan, Poland, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Austria people do not openly express their emotions. Being too enthusiastic is perceived as childish, unprofessional and means lack of self-control. Stoic attitude towards life is admired and discussing topics on which people do not agree on are avoided (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2005).

On the other hand, emotional countries, including Kuwait, Egypt, Oman, Spain, Cuba and Latin America, are spontaneous and express their positive and negative emotions with ease. Nonverbal communication is rich and eye-contact as well as touch plays important role in communication. While Poland and Austria belong to the group of rather neutral countries, Turkey is emotional. This will influence the atmosphere and the way problems are discussed within a group of co-workers (Browaeyns and Prince, 2008).

Communication patterns play crucial role while working in an international team. Alternating communication style, characteristic for USA, Poland and Austria takes place when a person speaking is not interrupted by his interlocutor who starts talking after the first person ends. In the communication style with periods of silence which is characteristic for countries such as: Japan and Finland, the talk is interspersed with silence what is a sign of deep mutual trust and respect and means that the other person is considering what was just said what in the other two cases would cause discomfort. Overlapping communication patten is characteristic for Brazilians, Italians Turks. The second person starts talking even though the first one has not ended yet, nobody waits for the pause (Bartosik-Purgat, 2006).

It is interesting to compare the meanings attached to the same words in three different countries as shown in Table 1.

| USA           | Japan           | France      |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Love          | Trust           | Love        |
| Understanding | Compromise      | Passion     |
| Partnership   | Restrictions    | Fulfilment  |
| Trust         | Obligations     | Sexuality   |
| Respect       | The end of life | Reciprocity |

**Table 1.**  
The meanings attached to the same words in three different countries  
Source: Lustig and Koester (1996).

Facial expressions can cause even more confusion. Table 2 presents the meanings of rising eyebrows in various countries.

| Culture        | Meaning                     |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| USA, Canadians | Interest, surprise          |
| British        | Scepticism                  |
| German         | You are clever! Great idea! |
| Filipinos      | Hi                          |
| Arabs          | No                          |
| Chinese        | Disagreement                |
| Tongans        | Yes, I agree                |
| Peru           | Money/pay me                |

**Table 2.**  
The meanings of  
rising eyebrows in  
various countries

Source: Axtel  
(2001).

The study explores those differences further.

### 3. Research methodology

This research was done in order to reveal the impact of national culture on attitudes and behaviours of people at work with focus on teamwork. It was conducted on a group of 289 representatives of three countries: 114 Austrians, 119 Poles and 56 Turks. The research sample included students of management and economics at following Universities: Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences, School of Management in Steyr (Austria), Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland) and Anadolu University, Yunus Emre Institute in Eskişehir (Turkey). It should be emphasized that there were only students researched therefore the results of the study cannot be generalized to the entire populations of these countries.

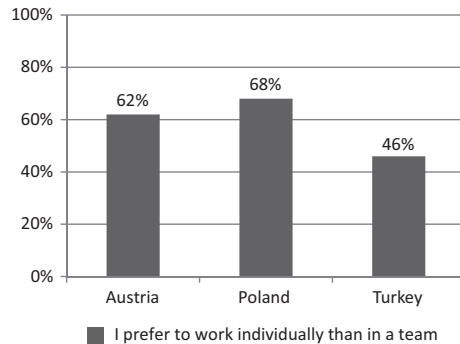
The data were collected by means of online questionnaire that was presented to respondents between February and March 2011. The set of 28 questions they answered is presented in the appendix. Respondents were asked to mark to what extent they agree with the statements according to the scale: 100- I strongly agree, 80- I agree, 60- I rather agree, 40- I rather disagree, 20- I disagree, 0 – I strongly disagree. The statistical indicators calculated for the use of the study included: average, median, dominant, quartiles.

The study's objective was to compare attitudes towards teamwork in these cultures and to acknowledge existing differences and similarities.

### 4. Research results

Individualistic approach of Poles and Austrians presented by G. Hofstede is confirmed by the research where 68% Poles and 62% Austrians claim they prefer to work individually than in teams. This can be seen in Figure 2. (Despite the preference towards individual work, majority of them feels good working in

the team.) Moreover, respondents like being perceived as unique and distinct. Consequently, more than half of the respondents from Turkey represent more collectivistic attitude and answer that they prefer teamwork over individual work. Despite the fact they like being perceived as somebody unique, 95% of them feel good working in a team.



**Figure 2.**  
Preference towards  
individual and team  
work

While working with the team, 95% Turks, 75% Austrians and 54% Poles determine for which part of the project they are responsible for and work on it individually. This would indicate more individualistic approach of Austrians and Turks than Poles.

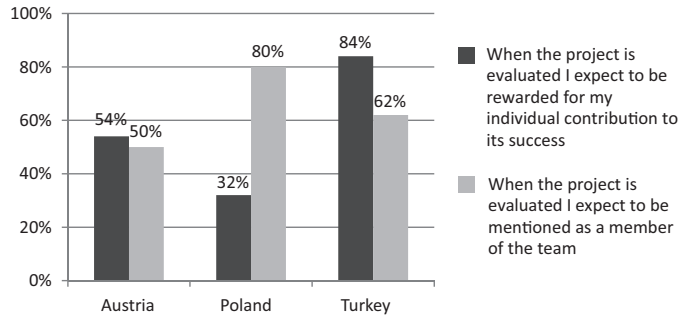
Moreover 63% Poles and 57% Austrians feel responsible when their family member commits a crime against someone. More – 69% Turks admit they feel guilty for their family members' misbehaviours. In the culture they grew up, a person dishonours his family by committing a trespass.

Regardless of origin, majority of respondents declares they would borrow their private things to the family members. 74% Poles and 68% Turks would help financially their family even if they had no guarantee of getting their money back. On the other hand, more than half Austrians would refuse helping in this situation. The answers for this question reflect lesser sense of belonging to the family and general community among Austrians than Poles and Turks.

Almost all respondents declare they would help a friend at 12 am even if they have to wake up early the next day. Only 16-20% of the respondents depending on the country would not do so. Therefore, it can be concluded that the significant majority of representatives of all three countries feel responsible for the other members of their team (more than 80% of Poles and Austrians and 100% Turkish).

Figure 3 presents the preferences towards rewarding individual versus team performance. While Austrians clearly want to be both rewarded for their individual performance and appreciated as a part of the team, 80% of Polish respondents want to be mentioned as a part of a group and only 34% expect to be rewarded for their individual performance. This attitude of solidarity is a result of Polish

history. Majority of Turks – 84%, despite the lowest IDV and MAS for this country want to be rewarded for their individual performance. This can be caused by the need of being recognized for their commitment to the group.

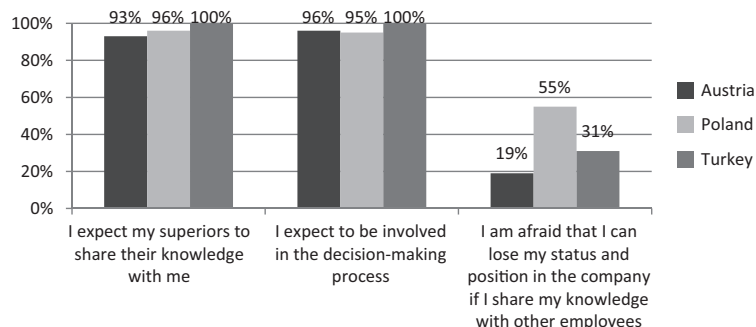


**Figure 3.**  
Individualism vs. collectivism

Among Austrians and Poles, there is no significant preference between relying on their own skills while solving problems and discussing them with family or friends. On the other hand, Turks represent more collectivistic approach as 74% of them consult their decisions with others.

Attitude towards knowledge sharing can affect effectiveness of teamwork to a great extent. Respondents regardless of country of origin clearly expect from their superiors to share their knowledge with them. (96% Poles, 93% Austrians and 100% Turks). They definitely want to be involved in the decision-making process.

As presented in Figure 4, both Austrians (72%) and Turks (74%) are not afraid to share their knowledge with others. On the other hand, more than half of Polish respondents (55%) is anxious of it, despite of expecting the same from their superiors. They believe it could result in losing an expert position in their company. It can be detected that Poland lacks appropriate organizational culture and as a consequence employees are not able to trust one another and do not believe it is worth and possible to learn from each other. In this regard the value of knowledge sharing for the success of organization is underestimated.



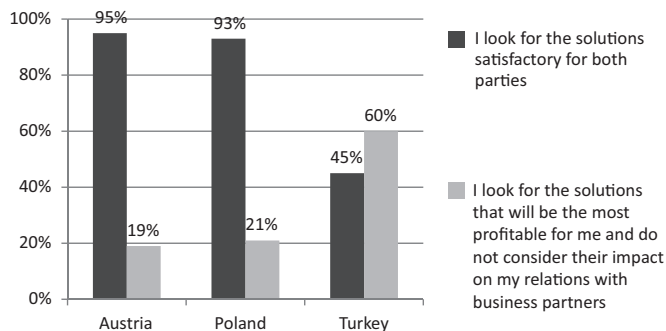
**Figure 4.**  
The attitude towards knowledge sharing

Significant numbers – 70% respondents from Poland and 95% from Turkey claim that what they do is more important than with whom they work. For Austrians (76%) the task is more important than their co-workers. It implies Austrians are more task oriented than concentrated on relations Poles and Turks.

In the context of the research, in all three countries honesty is more important than group solidarity. This attitude would place them among universalistic countries.

Whether somebody is a conformist or speaks independently about his own opinion also can affect the teamwork. There are only slight differences considering this dimension – 63% Poles and 64% Turks would tell off their neighbours if they make noise at night, among Austrians the percentage is slightly smaller and amounts to 59%.

Figure 5 presents the ability to compromise – the research reveals a significant difference between Austrians, Poles and Turks in their competitiveness. While the former (95% Austrians and 93% Poles) declare they look for the solutions satisfactory for both sides the latter (half of the Turks) admit supporting solutions better for themselves regardless of the impact they have on the team's results. This attitude is confirmed also by the answers for the following questions. In spite of high MAS index in Poland, advertising one's achievements is considered as boastful and showing competitive character is not desired as shown by further results of the research.



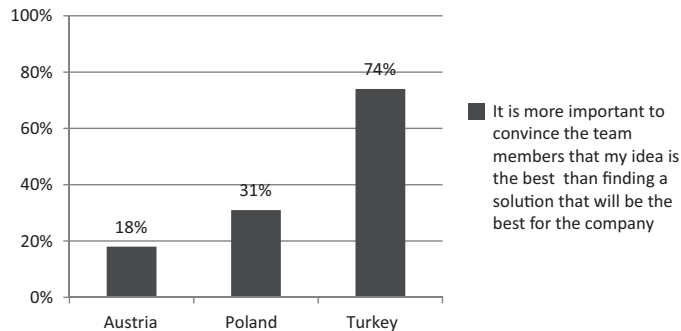
**Figure 5.**  
The ability to compromise

Majority of Poles and Austrians – respectively 79 and 69% claim they support their team members apart from taking care of their own career. More competitive approach again represent Turks who (46%) claim their own success and recognition is more important than the success of the team they work with.

While 94% Turks are proud of their competitive nature, only 50% Poles and 60% Austrians admit the same. Surprisingly similar percentages of Turks (95%) claim they have skills to collaborate. But 47% Turks admit having problems communicating with people not sharing their point of view. In Austria and Poland

respectively 83 and 77% respondents are proud of their collaborative skills. Moreover, only 26 and 32% admit problems working with people having different opinions.

Furthermore, as Figure 6 presents, 74% Turks admit that to convince the team to agree to their own point of view is more important than to take the decision that best fits their company. Only 18% and 31% Austrians and Poles respectively place more importance on their ego than on the company's interest.



**Figure 6.**  
Team-orientation vs.  
individualism

According to the research, 76% Austrians like to control every aspect of a situation. This confirms high level of UAI at 70. Despite the highest value of UAI in Poland (93) only 61% respondents claim they want to control everything. High UAI level is represented also by Turkey – 85.

## 5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that Turks show slightly bigger preference for the group work than their Polish and Austrian peers. The former represent collectivistic approach also when it comes to problem solving willingly involving others in the decision making process. Their collectivistic attitude is confirmed also by bigger sense of responsibility for others. However, they seem to be the most competitive among the three. They will force their idea at cost of not taking the decision best for the company. Austrians seem to be the most individualistic and their sense of belonging to their family and group is small in comparison to the other countries (and the biggest for Turkey). They are also more task-oriented than Poles and Turks that value relationships more. What is significant, while both Austrians and Turks appreciate the value of knowledge-sharing, Poles have problem in trusting one another at their workplace and are afraid of it. All expect their employers to share their knowledge with them.

While working in the international environment it is important to work towards mutual cross understanding, to build a collaborative workplace that enforces the strengths of each party. Respect for autonomy of each side and for

different views, customs and traditions are crucial as it enables synergy to take place. Good intercultural dialogue based on the atmosphere of trust will result in open attitude that enforces above-average results. Organizational culture that absorbs different elements from representatives of various countries contributes to eliminating cultural barriers, cohesion and enforcement of organization.

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## Appendix

1. I prefer to work individually than in a team.
2. I like to be considered as a unique person.
3. I feel good when I work in a team.
4. When I work in the team I try to find out which part of the project I am responsible for to work on it individually.
5. I feel guilty when one of my family members commits a crime.
6. I would not borrow my private things, for example: car, bicycle to my family members.
7. If my relative asks me for financial aid I will borrow him or her money even if he/she will not guarantee me the repayment.
8. If my friend asks me for help at midnight I will not help him if I have to wake up early the next morning.
9. I feel I am responsible for my team members.
10. When the project is evaluated I expect to be rewarded for my individual contribution to its success.
11. When the project is evaluated I expect to be mentioned as a member of the team
12. I prefer to rely on my own skills and abilities than on co-operation with other people.
13. Whenever I can I discuss my problems with my family or friends instead of dealing with them on my own.
14. I expect my superiors to share their knowledge with me.
15. I expect to be involved in the decision-making process.
16. I am afraid that I can lose my status and position in the company if I share my knowledge with other employees.
17. When I start a new project the most important for me is with whom I will work.

18. When I start a new project the most important for me are the tasks I will perform.
19. Honesty is more important than group solidarity.
20. If my neighbors make noise at night I will not react to avoid the confrontation with them.
21. I look for the solutions satisfactory for both parties.
22. I look for the solutions that will be the most profitable for me and do not consider their impact on my relations with business partners.
23. I am focused on my own career and do not support other members of corporation in order to achieve the common success.
24. It is difficult for me to communicate with people who do not share my point of view.
25. I am proud of my competitive nature.
26. I am proud of my communication skills.
27. It is more important to convince the team members that my idea is the best than finding a solution that will be the best for the company.
28. I like to have everything under my control.