

50 SHADES OF EUROPE

HUMAN RIGHTS

CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR LIVING ABROAD

Human Rights

Human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. They are universal because everyone is born with and possesses the same rights, regardless of their gender, race, their religious, cultural or ethnic background or where they live. Inalienable, because peoples' rights can never be taken away. Indivisible and interdependent because all rights – political, civil, social, cultural and economic – are equal in importance and none can be fully enjoyed without the others. They apply to each individual equally, and all have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. They are upheld by the rule of law and strengthened through legitimate claims for duty-bearers to be accountable to international standards.

When the Universal declaration of human rights was first introduced back in 1948, it was supposed to be the reminder for everybody after the second world war. But the map of the world has changed a lot since, as well as the human rights problem. Despite a lot of amendments were made to the declaration, today we have to tackle the problems, of which the solutions are not clear. To change this situation, first we have to know what are the human rights today.

Freedom from discrimination. *"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."* After the holocaust, this would probably be the first article many of us could think about.

Nowadays, however, we have to specify many different types of discrimination which have yet been unknown. A new type of problem has raised. People are aware of the everyone's equality, but refuse to respect it. Do they have the right to refuse to do so? If respecting the human rights is connected with dangerous threat, do people have the right to be afraid? For example, would it be acceptable to disrespect **the right to seek for asylum**? A lot of hatred is born if people are neglected

from showing their emotions. Even the long term EU inhabitants fall under discrimination who originate from the countries where refugees arrive. Manifesting hatred is prohibited in many countries, though.

Wouldn't it be better to let each individual express their own emotions, disregarding what they are?

Culture and traditions

Once the tribes living in the European area spreaded into different localities, the long journey of customization took its beginning. According to local conditions, the habits have developed in a different way. Here are some examples of the traditions that have survived through ages.

Czech Republic

Pomlázka

On Easter Monday in towns and villages all across the country, boys and men arm themselves with a *pomlázka* (a stick knitted from willow wattle) and join up with friends and relatives to pay



visits to as many houses in their area as possible. Girls stay at home, and when visitors arrive, they are happy to bend over and be whipped with this Easter stick. So happy, in fact, that they will reward their male visitors with a stiff drink before the group moves on to the next house. As the legend goes, if a woman is beaten by a *pomlázka*, she will remain both beautiful and fertile in the coming year, which explains why women are eager to be hit. Some, of course, make a game of it and allow themselves to be chased around the garden a few times before submitting.

Estonia

Estonian Song Festival

In Estonia, every 5 years, you can hear 18 000 voices singing at once! This happens during the Estonian Song Festival, which occurs in Tallinn. The number



of participants in the Song Festival can reach up to 25 or 30 thousand, but the greatest number of people is on stage during the performance of the joined choirs - there are usually 18 000 singers on stage at that moment, and their powerful song touches even the most frigid Nordic disposition. The tradition of the song festival was born along with Estonian national awakening. The first national song festival was held in Tartu in the summer of 1869. Starting from 1947, the Soviet authorities forced foreign songs into the repertoire.

Romania

Danube Race for the Cross

In Romania, there is one of the weirdest traditions from Europe, consisting of an orthodox priest throwing a cross into the river, a hundred or more people watching and young men swimming in the freezing cold water. This tradition



is celebrated all along the Romanian and Serbian side of the Danube and is supported by the Orthodox Church as a celebration of the baptizing of Jesus in the Jordan River. Because throwing a cross in the half-frozen Danube and baptizing someone in the desert are somehow equal in the

minds of Romanians. Probably the home-made vodka everybody drinks before the event helps make the connection between the two. The best part of this tradition is the prize: If you manage to get the cross back to safety first you are guaranteed good luck for a year, luck which will hopefully cure you of hypothermia.

Ukraine

Second New Year's Eve

Funny enough, Ukrainians have two New Year Eves. The first one follows the Gregorian calendar and falls on January 1st, while the second one follows the Julian calendar and thus falls on January 14th. For the second New Year's Eve, Ukrainian throw in a bit more of



their strange ancient customs, and hold the vibrant 'Malanka' celebrations on the 'Old New Year'. On this night, crowds of young people walk around people's houses, carol, play pranks and act out small Christmas-related plays. One of the bachelor guys is dressed up in women's clothes and leads the troop as the so-called 'grandma Malanka'. Participants can also try the roles of the Goat or the Grandpa. In any way, Old New Year's Eve is one of Ukrainian's last chances to go wild and have fun, before the 40-days long Lent comes along.

Malta

Ghana

Ghana is the term given to a specific type of traditional Maltese folk music. The word can have two literal meanings. The first is richness, wealth and prosperity; the second is associated with singing, verse, rhyme and even *kantaliena*, a type of singing with a slow rhythm. Għana can be broken up into formal and informal practices.

There are 3 main types of għana: **fil-Għoli**, **tal-Fatt** and **Spirtu Pront**. Għana fil-Għoli is also known as **Bormliza**,

taking its name from the city of Bormla where it was popular. Bormliza singing requires males to reach into extraordinarily high soprano ranges without breaking into falsetto. This style mimicked the early informal għana sung by women, but due to its extreme vocal demands, this style is very seldom practised.

Taking into consideration the differences as well as long-lasting popularity of exemplified customs, we can see people still respect and honor the legacy of their own predecessors. And they are proud of it.



Tips and tricks for living abroad

Living in a foreign country is hard enough as it is, with all the administrative issues you have to deal with. But if you don't want to get stuck in the expat bubble, you'll need to learn to adjust to life in a foreign country.



While living in a foreign country sounds exciting and romantic, it does have a catch. When expats tread on unfamiliar ground, they tend to stick to what is familiar. Thus, many expatriates never make the transition from expat to compatriot. After all, becoming a part of the local culture is probably the hardest part of life abroad.



It is tempting to share your experiences of living in a foreign country exclusively with other expats. Nobody else will understand your hesitation to try the local food, your problems with adjusting to the pace of life and your ambivalence towards social customs as well as those who are in the same boat.

However, in order to get the most out of your expat experience, you need to break out of your comfortable little cocoon after a while and try to immerse yourself in the local culture. If you let go of false impressions and stereotypes, then you have already taken the first major step. Living in a foreign country can then become a truly life-altering experience.

It is not as easy as it seems to adjust to life abroad. The process of making the transition from living like an expat to a more local life-style takes time. Culture shock is part and parcel of living abroad and hits all of us eventually. The trick is not to let it get the better of you. After all, it takes some time for all international travelers and expats to get used to their new environment.



For most people who live in a foreign country, many aspects of the local culture seem strange at best. This might appear exciting at first. The initial reason for moving abroad is after all often the wish to explore foreign cultures.

However, after living in a foreign country for a while, little things that you initially considered charming may begin to annoy you. You will remember how everything ran on schedule back home, how clean your former hometown was, or how much more relaxed and friendly everyone seemed.

Everybody who decides on living in a foreign country needs some time to adjust to their new environment. Until you get to this point, try to be respectful, patient, and humble. After all, you are a guest living in a foreign country, at least until you have made the transition from expat to compatriot.

Erasmus+

Key Action

The actions under KA2 make it possible for organisations from different participating countries to work together, to develop, share and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth.

The following actions are managed by the EACEA as part of the General call for proposals and described in detail in the Programme Guide:

- **Knowledge Alliances** cooperation between higher education institutions and enterprises;
- **Sector Skills Alliances** supporting the design and delivery of joint vocational training curricula, programmes and teaching and training methodologies;
- **Capacity Building in the field of youth** supporting cooperation with Partner Countries;
- **Capacity Building in the field of higher education** supporting cooperation with Partner Countries.

Additionally there will be a high number of Strategic Partnerships in the field of Education, Training and Youth supported through KA2. The selection and management of these takes place at national level. For further information contact the National Agency in your country.

European Voluntary Service

This activity allows young people aged 17-30 to express their personal commitment through unpaid and full-time voluntary service for up to 12 months in another country within or outside the European Union.

Young volunteers are given the opportunity to contribute to the daily work of organisations dealing with youth information and policies, young people's personal and socio-educational development, civic engagement, social care, inclusion of disadvantaged, environment, non-formal education programmes, ICTs and media literacy, culture and creativity, development cooperation, etc.

Youth Exchange

The EU funds youth exchanges which give young people the chance to experience another country and work together in a team. It's an opportunity to gain skills in areas such as project management and to improve your foreign language proficiency.

Youth exchanges take place outside the school environment and offer a structured programme (eg with a mix of workshops, exercises, debates and role play).

The exchanges are open to young people aged 13-30 and last from 5 to 21 days. They can be in another Member State or outside the EU.

Youth exchanges enable young people to discover new cultures and friends, develop new competences, and better appreciate values like solidarity and democracy.

The learning process is based on non-formal education and involves at least two organisations (sending and receiving) from different countries within or outside the EU.

To participate in a youth exchange project you need to link-up with a participating organisation. It can be a non-profit organisation, association, NGO, public body at local, regional or national level or a social enterprise. It applies for youth exchange funding via the Erasmus+

National Agency in the country in which it is established. The agency can help you find an organisation to sponsor your exchange.

Authors:

Tristan Tomilin

Simon Forster

Irina Hozit

Jakob Drahorad

Anthony Goncharuk

*"The mind is not a vessel to be filled
but a fire to be kindled"*



European Volunteering Service
Youth Exchange
Key Access
Erasmus Mundus

Ages 13-30