

steps

The multi-cultural newspaper for
neighbourly togetherness in the Idstein area

Issue No. 6, December 2023

English translation / Summary



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(page numbers refer to the German print edition)

► steps online:

The German print issue, this English translation as well as content summaries in Arabic and Ukrainian will be available on our website as usual at: steps-fhi-ev.de

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Imprint

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Multicultural magazine for neighbourly togetherness
for immigrants and all of us in Idsteiner Land and the surrounding area

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- ▶ ...to the victims of the unbelievably cruel attacks and mass murder of civilians by Hamas in Israel and to all the innocent men, women and children on both sides who were killed or injured in the ensuing hostilities,
- ▶ the many other victims of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and its brave defenders
- ▶ the victims of all the ongoing wars in Yemen, northern Syria, northern Iraq and Africa
- ▶ the victims of the earthquakes in Libya, Morocco and Afghanistan and
- ▶ all the victims of the famines caused by drought, heat and climate change.

Our thoughts are with them and their families.

How do you get used to the horror?

Everyday life in times of war - a situation report from Kiev

Veronica Alistratova

Veronica is 20 years old and lives in Kiev. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, she and her mother found refuge in Idstein in March 2022. Despite the ongoing Russian missile attacks, she returned to her home country after the Russians withdrew from the Kiev region to continue her education. She describes to us very impressively what it means to lead a normal life in times of war and how courageously, confidently and with solidarity the people in Ukraine cope with the constant threat – also by motivating themselves and others with dancing.

A "completely normal day" in Kiev at this time:

There are lots of people in the streets of Kiev, lots of military personnel, lots of young people. The theatres in Kiev are full, the restaurants are full, the markets are open, the parks are full of people – and there is a curfew from midnight to 5 am. Sirens sound from time to time, sometimes explosions can be heard, but the population is used to everything and does not panic.

Reconstruction work is going on all over Kiev, roads are being asphalted, pavements are being re-tiled... In times of war, this seems confusing, but it is probably all necessary.

What is going on at Kiev railway station is impressive. In the main hall there are luggage storage machines and luggage racks like at the airport. You can't help it, there is order everywhere.

The arrival of a train from eastern Ukraine is very depressing. Dozens of ambulances are lined up at platform 1. I don't see the wounded being loaded, but I do see one ambulance after another speeding off across the station forecourt, blue lights flashing, towards the nearest hospital...

How do you live under constant threat?

1. My life is more or less peaceful at this time of year. Of course, it can also be hard. Sometimes because of the noises you hear at night, sometimes just because life isn't easy (well, these are all jokes). I've been dancing and working a lot lately, and I'm starting university soon, so everyday life has taken on new colours.

2. One restriction we all suffer from in Kiev is the curfew. But it has been reduced to a minimum and now it is only forbidden to go out from 00:00 to 05:00. I used to be able to go for a walk on the street or go shopping, but now I have to sleep.
3. The electricity is no longer being cut off because Kiev's defence has reached a new level. Perhaps the attacks on the infrastructure will increase again in the autumn, but nobody is afraid of that anymore.
4. The supply is good! We have a lot of imported goods, but we also have enough of our own. Although prices have risen sharply, of course. But what can you do?3. the electricity is no longer cut off because Kiev's defense has reached a new level. Maybe the attacks on the infrastructure will increase again in the fall, but nobody is afraid of that anymore.
5. I probably just need the support of my relatives. It's important for me to be with someone close to me, because it can be very difficult to be alone. And of course I need peace, because even when I'm abroad, the feeling of war doesn't go away for me.
6. Air raids: never predictable. Sometimes it can be seven times a day, and sometimes there are no sirens for a week. It all depends on what happens at sea or at another country's airfields.
7. What saves me is that I'm not on my own. And also the thought that this is not forever, because sooner or later we will win and never feel this fear again. I also always try to go into the cellar or underground – I feel completely safe there. On the subject of "getting used to the horror": It's all very individual. One person has no fear at all and another can't sleep until the fear has passed. You get used to the sounds you hear and at some point you can understand what's going on in the sky when you're underground. That helps a lot. I would even say that the fear comes before you hear anything, and after that comes the calm. So it's just the anticipation that's scary.
8. I always try to go to a safe place because you can't sleep with fear.
9. The children live well because most parents try to protect them at least psychologically from what is happening in the country. The children know that there is war outside, but they continue to live with a smile on their faces. I would even say that they are much braver than most adults in Kiev.
10. people help each other with almost everything. Of course, not everyone has become friendlier, because people are people. But we all help our army together, collect food in separate baskets in shops and make donations. During alarms and explosions, most people comfort each other, share water and so on.
11. At the moment I'm dancing and preparing for university. These are by and large my only projects at the moment.

Finally, I would like to make a small request.

Please don't forget us. Don't forget that a bloody war is raging in the centre of Europe. Don't forget that we are not only defending ourselves, but also other countries. Because nobody knows who the "Russian world" will come for next time. Enjoy life and look forward to every single day, no matter what happens!



Defying the terror of war by dancing: Veronica and her colleagues dance in public places in Kiev. These videos are also dedicated to the soldiers fighting on the front line. (Screenshot from YouTube: [KPOP IN PUBLIC UKRAINE] P1Harmony 'JUMP' | dance cover by Girls On Top)

The Syrian war and the tragedy of the displaced population

Ahmad Aldahik

"The eldest son has sought refuge in Austria, the middle son is in Germany, while the youngest is waiting in Turkey. From the middle to the youngest, I lost two in the war and the third is missing in Bashar al-Assad's prisons. As for my daughters, they have settled with their husbands in the camps on the Turkish border." You hear these and similar answers from many Syrian families when you ask them about their family members. These words summarise the tragedy the Syrian civilian population has been living through since the outbreak of the war in 2011. Families are scattered and spread across different continents. The hope of reuniting dwindles with each passing day. Limited phone calls, few memories and the remnants of pictures with a smile are all that still connect them to their past.

The United Nations report that more than half of the Syrian population have become refugees in various countries around the world or have been displaced within their own country. Some 12 million people in Syria are in urgent need of assistance, including more than 5 million children. The tragedy is compounded by the fact that this war is an urban war in which civilians are just as vulnerable as everyone else. There are no safe zones, no humanitarian slogans or laws that are respected. These circumstances have accelerated the pace of flight in recent months, especially after Syrians lost hope of a quick solution or early peace.

Ironically, the suffering of Syrians does not end with their arrival in the country of asylum or their place of displacement. The challenges and problems during their flight continue and persist even when they reach their desired destination. According to the UNHCR, around 7 million Syrians have been displaced within Syria. Due to the limited number of "relatively" safe places they can flee to, fleeing no longer makes sense. Many have lived through the experience of displacement several times as they are forced to flee to different places, often at risk and the target of attacks. Financial resources dwindle and the fear of further displacement to dangerous places grows, while the journey itself is often restricted or in some cases even prevented.

The possibility of asylum is becoming increasingly unattainable for many, as neighbouring countries are no longer able to bear the burden and costs. These countries have closed their borders several times or introduced stricter asylum regulations to stem the continuing flow of refugees. Many Syrian refugees have attempted to reach European countries by undertaking difficult and dangerous journeys for work. The cost of these journeys varies between three and nine thousand dollars, depending on the "luxury" and security. Smugglers operate openly in Turkey and some North African countries and organise flights to European countries of asylum. Many refugees fall into the hands of unscrupulous human traffickers who exploit their suffering and cheat them without sending them on, or only under extremely dangerous conditions.

The suffering of refugees continues even after they have crossed the sea. They have to cross several European countries, often in extreme conditions and in the presence of children and women. Thousands of them gather at the borders of European countries, some of which close their borders to stem the flow of refugees and limit their country as a transit country. Nevertheless, some European countries, such as Germany, have a good reputation for welcoming refugees and providing them with the conditions for a decent life.

The reports of Syrian refugees in recent years reveal the atrocities and tragedies of war. Many left their homeland without identity documents and had difficulties finding their way in their new countries of asylum. They sold everything they owned to cover the expensive costs of their asylum journey. Some died in camps in neighbouring countries due to extreme weather conditions or inadequate accommodation. Others drowned in the sea without their bodies being recovered. These horrific facts show the inability of international organisations to respond adequately to the worsening humanitarian crisis and highlight the difficulties in implementing and respecting the laws of war and asylum.

Even after settling in new countries, Syrian refugees face further challenges such as learning the language, social integration, having their academic qualifications recognised and finding suitable employment opportunities. These challenges make it clear that their suffering does not end with the fulfilment of the "European dream", but has possibly only just begun. The Syrian refugee tragedy clearly shows that war can not only destroy a country's past and present, but also threaten its future. This is our greatest challenge.

Statement and appeal on the occasion of the Gaza war

We, the steps editorial team and the board of the FHI e.V., see with dismay and disgust how inhumanity, misinformation and hatred are spreading in the world and also in our country. Manipulated and false "narratives" and opinions are beginning to burrow deep into Christian, Jewish and Muslim mindsets, taking on a life of their own as myths and are consolidating from within.

Camps are forming in which it is no longer possible to think and talk in a differentiated way and which are irreconcilably opposed to each other. All of these developments are highly dangerous for our democracy and highly dangerous for our ability to establish or maintain peace and freedom.

It is time to take a clear and vocal stand.

- ▶ On 7 October 2023, on the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, the festival of the Torah, Hamas insidiously attacked Israel in the planned operation "al-Aqsa Flood", raiding and killing thousands of people, downright slaughtering, abusing and kidnapping them. The images of the massacre in Kibbutz Kfar Aza are concealed in the Islamic media.
- ▶ This has nothing whatsoever to do with a struggle for freedom. Hamas is a pure terrorist organisation. It exploits the religious sentiments of Muslims in order to fanatise and unite them in a global movement with the help of religious indoctrination via social media. Their "religious goal" is to destroy Israel. Everyone must be aware of this.
- ▶ We can see that the spark has long since spread to Germany and that it is being made impossible for Muslims and also Palestinians living here to express an opinion that differs from that of the opinion manipulators.
- ▶ We call on all Muslims living here and the Islamic communities to distance themselves clearly from this terrorist movement. There is no room for ambiguity nor for half-heartedness now. They must show us all that they stand on the ground of our constitution, integrate here and recognise Israel's right to exist.
- ▶ We also call on the politicians of our country and our local politicians not to leave it at pro-Israeli words, but to actively work towards ensuring that all sides adhere to human rights, that no Israeli is in danger from terrorists, that the civilian population of Israel is protected and that the Palestinian population is given air to live. Israel's illegal settlement policy must be politically addressed. Even if Israel has to solve this problem itself, we feel it is our duty to independently gain clarity on such critical issues and to be able to express this.
- ▶ Restrictions on the independence of the judiciary and free reporting must not be tolerated, because it is clear to everyone living here that we have a freedom to defend that enables us to address political failures and undesirable developments, to practise our religion freely and to demand justice. Refugees and migrants must also respect this. No one is allowed to spread slogans in favour of religious intolerance and Sharia law on German soil.
- ▶ We owe it to ourselves and our history to stand up for this with vigour. We also owe it to the refugees and asylum seekers living in our country and especially to our Jewish fellow citizens, who must be able to live here in safety.

We as Flüchtlingshilfe in Idstein (FHI e.V.) help with the integration of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants – with a clear limit: Wherever ideas are spread that oppose integration and threaten our peace and freedom, and where fanatical actions are planned and carried out, our goodwill and any willingness to help will cease.

Idstein Bleibt Bunt (IBB) calls for discussion:

Shaping democracy in diversity and a future in cohesion: We are all called upon here.

Christine Lipp-Peetz und Rolf Byron

Idstein bleibt bunt (IBB) is calling for a discussion:

How can we shape democracy in diversity and a future in cohesion?

"Valuing diversity – promoting cohesion" is the motto of the "Idstein bleibt bunt" network. The town of Idstein is growing for a variety of reasons: Young families are securing houses with gardens; older people are moving in with their children's families; people have come because they had to flee their homeland to escape war and hunger; people with disabilities live here and all of them meet locals who are the third or fourth generation to live here.

A colourful mix that comes together in different groups: In sports clubs, social organisations, political parties, church communities or refugee aid. Twenty-five of these groups have joined together in the "Idstein bleibt bunt" (IBB) network with the aim of contributing to an atmosphere of mutual respect and recognition and promoting communication between the groups involved. Tolerance towards different lifestyles, religions or world views does not come about by itself, but requires positive experiences of togetherness. That is why promoting the participation of all people living in Idstein in social life is one of our central concerns. The "Intercultural Week" and the "Festival of Associations" with a wide range of events; the "Idstein Talk", where social issues are discussed in depth, and "Idstein is(s)t bunt", the outdoor dining event with typical dishes from all over the world, are established activities of the IBB network.

IBB opposes all forms of racism. Together with pupils from the Limeschule school, for example, we organised a campaign in the middle of the city that was met with great interest. IBB stands up when injustice happens, when people threaten other people, and shows solidarity with victims of natural disasters, such as recently in Turkey and Syria. In recent years, IBB has repeatedly had to respond to xenophobic, racist and anti-democratic issues: The attack in Hanau, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine with its effects on life in Germany and, most recently, the pogrom against people in Israel and the riots against Jews in Germany as well as the catastrophic consequences in the Middle East. The 'Idstein bleibt bunt' network, which was founded in 2017, is currently working together with the city of Idstein to develop a municipal integration and diversity strategy (KIV). Two topics have taken centre stage: 'Civic engagement and volunteering' and 'Urban culture and diversity'. In this context, we want to enter into dialogue with all citizens of the town about the values of living together:

What connects us in Idstein and what we want to connect.

How can we shape democracy in diversity and a future in cooperation?

- ▶ Which fundamental rules of interaction should be emphasised?
- ▶ What specific behaviours would enrich our life together here in Idstein?

What do you think about these two questions?

We hope that as many people as possible will take part in this debate, and we will report on it in the next issue of steps.

Information on 'Idstein bleibt bunt' can be found on the IBB website: <https://www.idstein-bleibt-bunt.de>
The IBB newsletter can be ordered from Wolfgang Cremer: wolfgang.cremer@idstein-bleibt-bunt.de

Getting to the root of the problem:

What to do about the increasing polarisation of our society?

Steffi Bobrowski

Angry citizens and populists

Why are so many people in Germany and Europe turning to the populists? It's not just about the rejection of refugees and migrants, but in general there is a growing lack of understanding for other cultures, people who think and live differently: This concerns religion (Islamophobia, anti-Semitism), other cultures (xenophobia), and also people of other sexual orientations. And then there is the protest against everything the government decides – after the strict corona rules, it is now the regulations on which heating can or cannot be installed that are driving citizens onto the streets. Finally, the energy transition, which

has been more or less cancelled due to the war in Ukraine, is literally keeping concerned young protesters on the streets. Party political categorisations such as "right" and "left" are becoming blurred and are only valid to a limited extent. Loyal voters of the two formerly largest parties are migrating in droves to new political groups or are no longer voting at all out of frustration. The group of swing and protest voters is growing ever larger, the rift between East and West ever deeper.

Opinion bubbles are created between which there is no longer any dialogue and in which unpleasant truths are suppressed because they are not considered "politically correct". Criticism of Islam is often equated with Islamophobia, criticism of Israel is interpreted as anti-Semitism. Within the parties or groups, opinions that do not conform to the programme are all too quickly labelled as radical and unacceptable instead of being discussed objectively.

(Un)social media: the abolition of civilised interaction

Many people think they are the only ones who have the wisdom. But discourse thrives on mutual listening, understanding and tolerance. The basic prerequisite for such discourse is civilised interaction. How difficult this is even for the professionals can be seen every day on TV political talk shows – especially when they argue with guests from the fringes of the political spectrum until everyone has reached a dead end without a turning point and is just shouting their own arguments into each other's ears like a prayer wheel.

On the internet, which has to make do without a moderator or supervisory authority, anyone can let off steam without restraint and anonymously. Dissenters or politicians are mobbed, virtually pelted with faeces and sometimes even threatened with death. In real life, this behaviour would inevitably lead to criminal charges of insult, coercion, incitement to hatred or incitement to commit a capital offence. Overcoming the major problems of our time is only possible if society as a whole stands together. This also requires a constructive culture of debate. We must learn to argue politely with each other again. Above all, however, we must also set an example and teach this to our children. Silke Müller's book "Wir verlieren unsere Kinder" (We are losing our children) shows what disinhibition on the internet can do to even the youngest children.

Clueless politicians

Politicians have not yet been able to find any really effective answers to the increasing polarisation of society over the years, or to the fears of citizens. This is reflected not only in the election results, but also in the increasing frustration of people in the centre of society.

Description of the graphs:

Proportion of foreign population by federal state

Source: Federal Statistical Office, GENESIS-Online Database: Population (as of 08/2021) Licence: cc by-nc-nd/3.0/en/, Link: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/en>

The parties with the highest share of second votes in the federal states in the 2021 federal election. It is striking that the AfD's share of the vote is particularly high where the proportion of migrants is particularly low. Since then, the trend has intensified - the established parties are losing their broad base almost everywhere.

How we can improve our culture of debate

- ▶ Make dealing with social media a compulsory subject in primary school. Practise and establish a respectful culture of debate as part of regular lessons.
- ▶ With the help of AI, delete hate posts with legally relevant content more consistently in future, identify the perpetrators and prosecute them.
- ▶ Listening, letting people finish speaking and asking questions instead of interrupting and only arguing with counter-speech: Why are you afraid of strangers? What personal experiences do you have with migrants? What would you do if there was a war in your country and your children had nothing to eat? What are you yourself prepared to do for climate protection? What do you think you would do differently as a politician (in this matter)? What constructive counter-proposal would you make?
- ▶ Check whether you have understood the other person, ask: If I understand you correctly, you think that... Can you explain this in more detail?
- ▶ Present arguments objectively and back them up with facts.
- ▶ If everyone insists on their point of view and there is no consensus in the end: Politely end the discussion and agree that you have different opinions and that no one can convince the other.

Germany - on a roll?

Refugee crisis, climate change and war in Ukraine - talk and act together instead of complaining!

Steffi Bobrowski

By no means all those who vote right-wing or criticise migrants are also right-wing extremists, and not every devout Muslim is an Islamist. Young people who glue themselves to the streets out of fear for the future of the world may be breaking the law, but they are not criminals. Anyone who takes to the streets against the delivery of weapons to a war zone is not necessarily a Putin supporter or against Ukraine.

I take part in demonstrations against terror, hate speech, violence and intolerance. I don't take part in demonstrations against the AfD, even though this party (including its staff) is unelectable for me. Their representatives always know exactly what they are against and what the "old parties" are doing wrong and like to present themselves as victims of a supposed smear campaign. (This can be read, for example, in the election campaign interview of their state parliament candidate with the Wiesbadener Kurier on 18 September). A constructive programme looks different!

However, as long as it is not banned and not labelled as anti-constitutional as a whole by our highest court, we simply have to put up with it and deal with it according to the rules of our democratic constitution. Even if – as happened this summer – AfD members are elected district administrator or mayor for the first time. Well, guys: that's democracy, that's how it works!

Instead of immediately talking about breaking a taboo and ranting about the stupid electorate running after the demagogic pied pipers, everyone should ask themselves what went wrong here and what needs to be done to bring society back together. It is also somewhat bizarre when all other parties refuse to bring about resolutions in parliament together with the AfD, as this would be – unwanted – cooperation. In plain language, does this mean that the AfD must vote differently to the other parties in order to prevent a resolution from being passed without AfD votes? Hello?!

No matter which party you lean towards – if you check your convictions with the "Wahl-O-Mat" on the Internet, you will be surprised at the overlaps with the parties of the political spectrum – after all, you cannot forbid any party from pursuing goals that other political movements have written on their banner too.

We need to work on the causes of the current mess and ask, for example:

- ▶ How does the anger of so many citizens towards the state arise?
- ▶ What needs to change?
- ▶ Why is there so much xenophobia in areas where the proportion of immigrants tends to be low?
- ▶ How can politicians explain their decisions to us citizens so that we understand them? How can they better involve us in their decision-making processes?

A striking example: In a village of 500 people (Upahl in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania), a container village is to be built for 400 refugees. You don't need a degree in sociology to describe this as – pardon the pun – completely insane. From the point of view of both the residents and the refugees. Despite fierce protests from the population, it is being built anyway, albeit "only for 250 refugees and for a limited period of one year". The first 150 asylum seekers moved in in October.

I'm not going to talk about the birth pangs of the heating law here, that's been sufficiently discussed up and down the country and on all the talk shows. But here's an example from our region: if – as happened with the issue of the Ultranet link – a constructive joint compromise proposal is rejected by the decision-makers after many discussions in a lengthy citizens' dialogue and with the approval of local politicians, it should come as no surprise if even committed citizens lose their motivation in frustration. And a little more real communication (in normal German if possible!) would also be good for some of our politicians.

The refugee crisis, coronavirus, the war in Ukraine – one crisis follows the next and our government can no longer get out of emergency regulation mode. On top of that, there are no longer any clear political majorities, so in the eyes of most people, the end result is nothing but lazy compromises that nobody likes (presumably not even the politicians involved themselves). As a result, the army of angry citizens or political rebels (who then no longer vote at all) is growing ever larger.

As a serious side effect, the number of people who are willing to get involved for the common good is decreasing, especially at local level. Why become an honorary local councillor or mayor and then possibly get beaten up with anonymous hate mail or angry posts on social media?

We have a representative democracy and for this we need people who are willing and courageous enough to be elected by us (with the risk of defeat) and then take a close look at the tasks to be performed. After all, complex decisions cannot be made by grassroots democracy.

To all angry citizens on the right or left and all populists:

It is much easier to be *against* something than *for* something.

It is much easier to anonymously insult someone else or "those at the top" on the internet than to openly participate actively and constructively in democratic processes.

But: We elected "those at the top" and as long as they do their job on the basis of our constitution, we as well as all those who disagree with them have to respect them.

It is not our differences of opinion that divide us, but our increasing inability to treat each other and our elected representatives in a civilised manner. In the long run, this is destroying our democracy.

Admittedly: It is much harder to be in favour of something and to actively participate in it.

But at least each and every one of us can take part. So let's start today. Let's stop complaining, talk to each other again and work together to find solutions!

The Wahl-o-Mat:

Here you can test which political party you agree with the most:

www.bpb.de/themen/wahl-o-mat/

Culture and cultural differences

We think we know what culture is. But do we really know? Doesn't everyone mean something different? Here we draw spotlights on important aspects.

Hans-Peter Buscher

What does culture mean, and what is cultural imprint?

The dazzling term culture includes everything we have internalised during our lives that helps us find our way in the world and feel comfortable in it. Mostly, however, we mean only certain aspects of it. Here we take particular angles.

- ▶ **Every human being, as unique as he or she is**, is subject to the formative influence of the culture of his or her parents and people from childhood onwards.
- ▶ **The cultural imprints** of East and West and North and South differ, sometimes considerably. People who trade with each other have long described this. Now this is also increasingly becoming a topic in research.
- ▶ **The cultural differences** we see among our migrants concern their way of celebrating festivals, their music and their rites. That is what we see on the surface. The differences also concern, much more deeply, their sense of „we“. Here lies one of the keys to understanding some of the incomprehensible things in their speech and behaviour. It is not only about the fact that they are not used to some things in our country, such as the separation of waste. We should know more about the deep-seated cultural differences if we want to help them integrate better.
- ▶ **We should absolutely prevent a cultural uprooting** of our migrants, because it would mean a loss of their inner orientation. We cannot fill the gap with our culture right away. Because our individualistic way of life is not always comprehensible to them.
- ▶ **But let's ask ourselves:** Can't we make our culture attractive in parts for those who stay with us in the long run? For example, our concept of equality and justice? Let's make a special effort for the children.

What do we mean by culture?

We usually see in foreign cultures what we enthusiastically bring back from a trip around the world or from holidays in Thailand, Turkey, Namibia or Brazil, all the impressions of hospitality and the mobile phone pictures of exotic celebrations, colouring, traditional costumes, images of cheerfulness and light-heartedness. In contrast, the image of foreigners living here in Germany tends to be characterised in some media by problematic macho behaviour, violent crimes and gang fights.

Culture – actually a comprehensive term

In the broadest sense, culture can be summarised as everything that has forged people into social communities since their early days and helped them to progress.

Culture includes the sharing of experiences, the planning of common food security and defence, rules of coexistence, such as those for settling disputes, for the distribution of resources and of tasks and roles in the community. From the very beginning, this also included all technical, scientific and artistic activities that make life easier and more beautiful, as well as philosophy and religion, which help us to understand nature and ourselves. Everything for the all-important social cohesion, inner peace, food security

and protection from danger. Because social issues play such an important role in everything, we often speak of a person's "socio-cultural" background.

I-culture and we-culture

Research tells us that roughly two cultural principles have emerged in human history: a Western, more individualistic one and an Eastern and African, more collectivist one. They can also be boldly labelled "I-culture" and "we-culture". China, Korea and Japan often serve as prime examples of the more collectivist "we" culture. In the we-culture, individuals experience themselves as fundamentally connected and related to each other through their group membership.

What are the differences?

Studies show that members of a we-culture on average...

- ▶ base their decisions more on the expectations of their group or take into account the effects on them,
- ▶ take offence longer,
- ▶ are less able to forgive themselves for a mistake, and often less able to forgive others,
- ▶ are more prone to self-criticism,
- ▶ have a lower average self-esteem (Chinese students) than Westerners (American students),
- ▶ speak less confrontationally,
- ▶ do not criticise directly,
- ▶ are more likely to seek a compromise,
- ▶ perceive faces, images and situations more holistically, while Westerners tend to be more analytical,
- ▶ favour tasks that focus on interdependent circumstances.

Different thinking

As a result, people from a "we" culture, like many of our migrants, think "holistically". People from an "I" culture, on the other hand, have a more individualistic, liberal approach.

Belonging to a group means that if someone from a "we" group falls in esteem, perhaps because we criticise them or treat them rudely or dismissively, this easily reflects on the entire group - the group under whose unspoken pressure of expectation they feel. From an early age, everyone learns to fulfil these expectations as well as possible.

There are more than enough examples in the media: if a young person from a "we" group feels offended, the "humiliated" person quickly calls in their whole family, friends and group via WhatsApp, because suddenly it's all about their honour. The only thing to do is play it cool.

Let's try to see through this! We know from reports in the press and also from a femicide in our local area a few years ago what a wounded and uncontrolled sense of honour, which quickly becomes overpowering through the group, can do.

Different types of communication

People from a "we" society are very sensitive to the atmosphere within their group. This ability is only possible when people live much closer together than we are used to. In East Asian countries, there is not such a strict separation between work and private life. People often sit together with their work colleagues in the evening and get to know them much better than we do our own.

You know, for example, that if someone does NOT say something that you expect them to comment on, that they have not agreed to it – without having to be reprimanded. We know too little about this. How often do we insult someone without meaning to, simply out of ignorance of the other culture?

Group formation and parallel societies

Isn't it natural for people from other cultures to come together again? They understand each other with their way of communicating, whereas they often misunderstand us and are misunderstood by us.

When larger groups form, however, this harbours a risk for dissenters. We read about mind control and religious watchdogs. Let us remain vigilant! But let us also remain vigilant against threat scenarios from the right-wing fringes of our society, because they encourage us to move closer together, even to the point of excessive compartmentalisation and the emergence of parallel societies.

Clash of cultures?

What would someone who has been uprooted from their culture do with our freedom? It can be so seductive and so dangerous.

What happens to young people who have lost their homeland? Who don't feel welcome here, seek cohesion, gang up and are no longer protected from excesses by cultural guardrails? Don't we have bad memories of the mass brawl in Görlitz on 10 July 2023? It was triggered by a gang of young migrants and used by the far right to create even more uprootedness and anger on all sides and to drive the escalation spiral forward.

Perhaps we are beginning to realise how important it is to be safe in a culture that does not allow such excesses and how important it is to have cultural rules to which we feel committed.

What can we offer?

But can we give them, who are experiencing uprooting, a foothold? People from foreign cultures look puzzled:

We want property, freedom and independent jurisdiction. We want to retain the opportunity to actively take care of our own future; we want to be able to say where the shoe pinches and to be able to join together freely, we want to freely elect our political representatives and we don't want to be regulated by the state.

These are important exclamation marks in our individualistic culture. Our refugees are suddenly confronted with them when they arrive here: Everything is different, a culture shock!

Our system produces more egotists, fanatics and conspiracy theorists, but also people with civil courage, new ideas, commitment and vision. Can we explain this to someone from a collectivist "we" society in such a way that they can perceive our culture as attractive? That will probably only work with children who grow up here. Let's make a special effort for them!

Our culture self-critical

When we were confronted with foreign cultures in Germany in 2015 and many of us began to take a broader look at our culture for the first time, shameful admissions of our own shortcomings emerged. Some people and some media took pleasure in dramatising them: the brothels, the promiscuity, the addiction problems, the child abuse, the often frightening selfishness, the social coldness of some, the inconsistencies with regard to human rights, the hatred of Jews that was evident in some places and the agitation from the right against foreigners, the unchallenged fake news, the hesitant legal and political consequences for obvious transgressions of decency and even laws.

Is this supposed to be attractive to newcomers? Or even a role model?

Courage to defend our culture!

Let us realise that we have a free basic order, a strong constitution and recognised human rights, including the Geneva Convention on Refugees. And we have media, artists, politicians, church people and other groups and many individual upstanding people who value and uphold this.

Let's defend our culture! It also guarantees that humanity has a chance in our country and that we can grant asylum.

Cultural no man's land?

We cannot immediately fill the gap with our culture that the loss of our homeland has torn among our refugees and migrants. But we must not allow any gaps.

So what should we do?

- ▶ We must not culturally uproot our new fellow citizens.
- ▶ We must make our own culture understandable and, above all, attractive to our new fellow citizens.
- ▶ Our politicians must take note of all this. Their right decisions today will bring us internal security tomorrow. Right-wing defensive slogans are already having the opposite effect.

What does this mean for us?

- ▶ We should take a critical look at our culture, but consciously uphold its core values.
- ▶ We should not overemphasise individualism. It is also important to look at society as a whole.
- ▶ We should scrutinise provocative theses and statements that express a lack of respect for people of other views, religions and world views, or even deliberately offend them, before prematurely claiming that they are covered by freedom of speech and freedom of the press.
- ▶ We should promote our basic social consensus and not weaken it. This is the task of all of us, including politicians and the media.

Anyone who would like to become active in our refugee and integration aid programme can find contact details on the FHI website. (<https://fluechtlingshilfe-idstein-ev.de/>)

Cultural Differences in the world of Economics

Hans-Peter Buscher

Finance and business people have known it for a long time: if you don't take into account the fundamental differences between cultures, you won't get any good contracts and will be shipwrecked in international trade. What are the sticking points?

Criteria for cultural characteristics

"The Culture Map" summarises: Eight criteria represent the most important distinguishing features (see table) that need to be taken into account. They are not always to be answered with yes/no, but rather entered on an arbitrary scale somewhere between 1 and 10, for example. Each country is thus given a fingerprint.

	Mostly industrialised countries	Mostly non-industrialised countries
Communicate	Low context: Everything is said and agreed exactly so that no misunderstandings arise. Ambiguity and friendly consideration are inappropriate when in doubt.	Rich in context: There is a lot between the lines here. Personal trust is a prerequisite. However, you need to know each other and be familiar with this type of communication.
Assess	If something is okay, I say so. If something doesn't suit me, I address it directly so that the other person understands it the way I mean it.	I tell my counterpart the good news first. If I don't like something, I gloss over the negative or leave it out. She/he will interpret the gap correctly.
Convince	I first explain the principle from which something can be derived and which should then also apply to similar cases.	I give a simple application example; the other person will realise that it applies to their case, make sense of it and draw the right conclusions.
Lead	Egalitarian: I am "primus inter pares" (first among equals). I may be the boss, but I don't flaunt it. I make it a point to make decisions together. You can also use my first name.	Hierarchical: I am the boss, my employees expect me to make decisions; this is not contested (even if my decisions can be flawed). I represent the team and can rely on loyalty, but I know that the team also relies on me.
Decide	Consensus: My explanations should be so convincing that all employees pull in the same direction.	Hierarchical (top down): I decide; that's what the employees expect.
Trust	Trust increases by cooperating in the professional life	Trust increases through personal experiences with each other
Contradict	I go for confrontation: a clear message. I want to be understood the way I mean it.	I avoid open conflict and confrontation. I point out "between the lines" that I think differently. Open conflict harms the team.
Agree on schedules	I expect punctuality. Appointments are binding. Except for force majeure, no excuses apply.	An appointment is only valid in principle. My counterpart takes into account that something more important or unforeseen may come up. Where public transport is unreliable or unavailable, there is no other option anyway. Not even where personal (e.g. family) commitments take priority.

Let's try to categorise ourselves according to these criteria, then close relatives and acquaintances and finally people from other countries that we have met. We will have to leave some blank spots in our fingerprints, simply because we know too little about them. If they were our trading partners, we should perhaps sit down with them again privately in the evening ...

Culture belongs to humans, right from the start

Hans-Peter Buscher

Evolutionary researchers now tell us unequivocally: humans and their culture have developed together. Culture is part of being human.

Culture: the beginning of being human

Let's take a cue from the archaeologists. They categorise everything that humans have produced and used in a planned way as culture. It begins with hand axes, early tools, cave paintings, musical instruments and burial artefacts. These are the most valuable signs that humans have evolved from the animal kingdom. The first primitive stone tools are estimated to be around 3 million years old, the presumably oldest cave paintings, in Indonesia, are 45,500 years old, and the oldest stone axe, in Australia, is 35,000 years old. The oldest musical instrument, a leg flute, was found in a cave in the Swabian Alb and is estimated to be around 40,000 years old.

Cultural differences developed early on

Around 60,000 years ago, our ancestors began to emigrate from Africa. It is obvious: cultures have developed differently. This inevitably follows from the different conditions with which the various groups were confronted. The challenges were different in Europe than in Asia, Africa, Australia or America. In East Asia, it was obviously particularly advantageous to move closer together in order to be better able to withstand dangers collectively. This explains why the sense of unity developed so strongly there and why lasting collectivist structures emerged, while in Europe the binding tribal structure developed less strongly and a more individualistic way of life was able to spread. Now, however, in our age of globalisation, cultures are coming together. We are confronted with this in particular through increasing migration.

If you are interested in our human history, we recommend the URMU in Blaubeuren (Urgeschichtliches Museum; <https://www.urmu.de/de/Museum-Steinzeithoehlen>) with its globally unique exhibits and the book "Die Reise unserer Gene" by Johannes Krause and Thomas Trappe (Ullstein, 2020).

Misjudged?

Hans-Peter Buscher

What we are used to characterises us. In Africa, people usually live at ground level; they don't realise the dangers for their children that threaten them through a third-floor window.

What has to come then comes with a vengeance. A small boy is curious, climbs up in an unobserved moment, manages to open the window and falls out. Fortunately, he survives and can be rescued.

What remains is neurological damage, which is only gradually beginning to develop, with a lot of physiotherapy and commitment from the parents.

But now the process is underway. A youth welfare office says that the parents have failed in their duty of supervision and that these are not parents to whom the child can be returned. It wants to take custody away from them. The parents are horrified and upset. The godmother does everything she can to make it clear to the authorities that their decision would not be the best, but the worst for all sides - for the child, for the parents, for the whole family with the sibling.

Where is the truth? What does the youth welfare office actually know about the situation in which this happened? Was there any neglect involved? The result says YES! But isn't the parents' misjudgement of the danger involved?

Can the youth welfare office understand the parents' difficulty in correctly assessing the local living conditions? What does it know about the parents' closeness and love for their children? Does it take into account that they bring up their children differently in their home country than here, at ground level, rather in an extended family setting, and that such a setting is lacking here? Who has ever said to the parents on the 3rd floor: Watch out! The child could fall out of the window.

We helpers see the parents' care for their children every day. We see that they do everything they can to teach their child to walk and laugh again. We see the mother's voluntary work at integration events organised by our association and know how socially committed she is.

Does the public pressure on youth welfare offices to not overlook child abuse and neglect play a role? The youth welfare offices have become the focus of public attention and are taking a closer look. Certainly indispensable. But this also includes taking appropriate account of the fact that the completely unfamiliar new living conditions do not quickly lead to new routines in thinking and behaviour.

Culture in Idstein – urban culture

History, culture and education in the „city of schools“

Hans-Peter Röther

We are surrounded by culture everywhere in our city, whereby "culture" is understood in the broadest sense. Together with our fellow citizens, we encounter active sportspeople, elected officials, choir singers, teachers, students and schoolchildren, and we see cultural interests and activities everywhere in our city. As users or creative actors, we are all part of the vibrant culture in the city, for example sporting culture, social culture or musical culture. The activities, including the consumption of external productions, are constantly developing and changing in the urban community. Communities, associations or individuals experience constant forms of cultural expression through intellectual or physical activity together or alone in play, nature, song and sport, which we can call urban culture. This urban culture has a broad horizontal and vertical expansion, which is constantly being re-presented by predetermined, traditional or newly developed framework conditions, new zeitgeist or also by immigration and migration.

As active or passive members of the urban community, we are part of this cultural movement and constant development of culture in the urban community. Athletes move according to rules that they have adopted and continue to develop. They meet for sporting events and organise them themselves. Councillors on municipal committees talk to each other and to their fellow citizens. Choir singers prepare a concert and teachers talk about their lessons and how they work together as a teaching staff. Through its work, the Refugee Aid Association has influenced and promoted the awareness of the city's citizens on the subject of migration in recent years.

An important part of the cultural life of a town is the pre-school and university education on offer. Not entirely immodestly, but quite rightly, we also call Idstein the "town of schools". As the residence of the Counts of Nassau and a centre of the Protestant church, there was a grammar school from the middle of the 16th century, which developed from the medieval school of St. Martin's Abbey and had the task of training young people for the church service and the count's administration with a focus on Latin and Greek in addition to the usual subjects and preparing them for university studies. Pupils came from the town and the surrounding area as far as the other side of the Rhine. From 1707, up to 210 pupils attended the school and it was given the name "Gymnasium Augusteum". (The former building of the historic grammar school is still standing in Obergasse, opposite the Grandpierre printing works). In 1779, a teachers' seminar was established, in 1818 an agricultural institute with an additional specialisation in veterinary medicine and later an agricultural school and an animal hospital. The grammar school was closed in 1817. In 1834 and 1851, the institute and seminary were moved to Wiesbaden. Until the school reform of the early 1970s, Idstein was the only town far and wide to offer a grammar school, initially from 1946 in the newly founded grammar school with boarding from Year 7 and later a full grammar school. (The historical references are taken from the book "Idstein, Geschichte und Gegenwart", published by the Idstein town council in 1987 and the book "Pestalozzischule Idstein" published by the school itself in 1992).

With today's two grammar schools, the comprehensive school, the comprehensive range of schools, the Fresenius University of Applied Sciences (formerly also the site of the "Bauschule") and the schools of the state welfare association, the town can rightly call itself a "town of schools".

Co-operation in the urban community develops an independent culture in the most diverse cultural areas. Individual creativity alone or in community creates social events or handicraft and artistic products; other people's activities are utilised as spectators or participants. The numerous interests of every citizen of the town in pursuing a hobby such as choral singing, fishing, games, pigeon breeding, nature, history, music, home, theatre and much more can be practised and enjoyed in clubs, groups or individually.

Three examples illustrate the constant development, change and renewal of this cultural network in the town community. According to the town, there are 42 sports clubs in Idstein with around 13,000 organised members. It is a pleasure to read the list of clubs involved in sport on the Idstein town website.

Changes in the interests of sports enthusiasts, new types of sport, personnel or financial issues have led to the current range of sports clubs compared to previous years. It is the result of the peaceful co-operation and coexistence of the clubs and the shared experience and coordination in the atmosphere of a healthy sports culture.

A good example of sports culture in the centre of Idstein and at the same time of peaceful and sensible cooperation is the merger of the then still independent sports clubs TV-Idstein and TSG Idstein. Around 17 years ago, the managers of the two clubs realised that they would be better able to cope with the wide range of sporting activities and at the same time the personnel and financial costs involved if they

worked together. They got together and laid the foundations for today's efficient TV 1844 Idstein with its approx. 4,300 members. That was a lively and strong sports culture. Another example of culture in our town is the emergence, development and demise of the Kulturring in Idstein, which unfortunately no longer exists. In 1974 and 1975, a group of Idstein citizens came together to activate and enrich the artistic life of the town in many areas, including music, literature, theatre, painting and sculpture. The association very quickly gained a large number of citizens in Idstein as members and supporters who were interested in creating or consuming art themselves. Many events such as exhibitions, author readings, theatre and travel offers had become part of the town's culture. There are also numerous groups and associations in our town that are dedicated to social and political issues. Interests, experience and commitment can be contributed to the fire brigade, the Red Cross, THW, the Workers' Welfare Association (AWO) and VDK, the Association for the Disabled (Aide), numerous support organisations for social activities, refugee aid and nature conservation. The association "Idstein bleibt bunt e.V" (Idstein remains colourful) represents a more recent form of comprehensive pooling of interests in social and political issues. According to its statutes, the association aims to "create a network in order to strengthen mutual respect and tolerance in a liveable, culturally diverse and democratic urban society". According to its own understanding, it wants to create "... framework for an association of groups, organisations and individuals" who "feel committed to common values and convictions".

With the numerous cultural offerings mentioned here, which have been developed in the peaceful community of the town's citizens, a wide space for culture has been created: Idstein's town culture, which is open to all and is a dynamic, constantly changing and enriching reality of life for us all.

Afghanistan

An Afghan woman gives an insight into the culture of her homeland

Z. (Name known to the editors)

Afghanistan is a beautiful and diverse country with a terrible and chequered history; it is my home. It is bordered to the south and east by Pakistan, to the north by Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and to the west by Iran. The religion is almost 100% Islam. I come from Herat in the west of the country. It is a large trading centre on a plateau over 900 metres above sea level. I have my roots there. What the Taliban have done there in the last two years is no longer my country and my culture.

The name

Throughout history, my country has been given various names, including Ariana, Iriana, Bakhtar, Khorasan and now Afghanistan. "Ariana" is considered the historical name. The name "Afghanistan" was only introduced as a state name in 1919 and goes back to the Pashtuns. The other tribes do not have such a close relationship with the name of the country. They have even distanced themselves from it since the Taliban, who belong to the Pashtuns, have been pushing back official Persian everywhere.

Tribal groups and languages

There are many different ethnic groups in Afghanistan and between 40 and 60 languages spoken there. Dari/Farsi and Pashto are the official and most widely spoken and are spoken by 77% and 48% of the population respectively; they are the common official languages. All forms are bilingual. Dari and Farsi are variants of Persian; the two do not differ in script, only in pronunciation. Other languages include Turkmen (3 %), Urdu (3 %), Pashai (1 %), Nuristani (1 %), Arabic (1 %), Balochi (1 %) and many more. English is only spoken by those who work for foreign companies or international organisations (6%).

Persian is being displaced

Dari is an elevated language and in earlier times was mainly spoken at court in Iran and Afghanistan. Dari and Farsi are predominantly spoken in central and northern Afghanistan and in neighbouring Tajikistan to the north, while Pashto is spoken in the southern half of the country. However, more and more Pashtuns are settling in the northern part of the country, where their language is displacing the Persian languages Dari and Farsi. This resettlement is gradually changing the culture in central and northern Afghanistan (it is called "Pashtunisation"). The Taliban are now drastically accelerating the cultural change by removing Persian names from signs and buildings as well as from universities and official forms.

Suppression, prohibition and rule

The many tribal groups in Afghanistan mostly live together peacefully. However, throughout history, some people have repeatedly managed to provoke group feuds, which have also degenerated into

wars. Now this is the case again because the Taliban, who belong to the Pashtuns, are suppressing the Persian language. They want to rule by suppressing other tribes and the Persian language. They also rule by oppressing women in particular. The women are used as a guarantee for the obedience of the men. Every girl and woman fears the Taliban's restrictive rules. Examples include being forced to wear a veil and restrictions on education: Girls are only allowed to go to school up to 6th grade and are not allowed to study. Female teachers are no longer allowed to teach. The education system is collapsing, especially for women. Women have to wear veils; this now even applies in maternity clinics.

The thing with a mahram

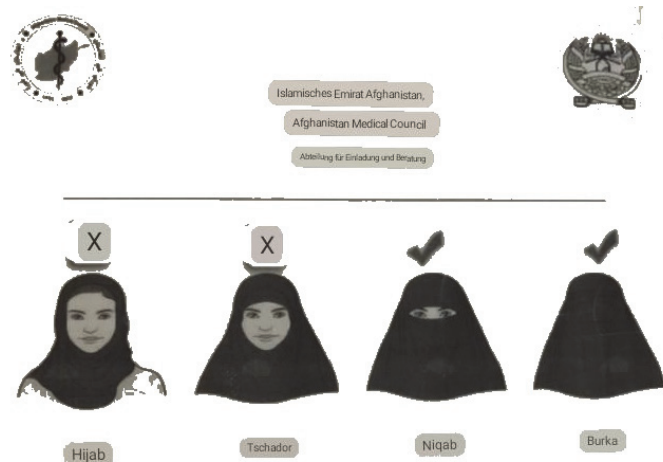
My mother wanted to apply for a passport. The Taliban told her that a mahram (a male family guardian) had to accompany her. My mum first went to the office with a nephew, but they said the nephew was not acceptable. "Go and bring your husband or brother or son." But she has no close male relative there. My mum went to Kabul and took the husband of her daughter, my sister, to the passport office, but there the officials did not accept the son-in-law as a mahram either. One solution proposed by the Taliban is to marry a Taliban, who can then be Maram. But this is completely unacceptable. A mahram is now mandatory for every woman who goes out in public. It has now become a requirement even for pregnant women to be treated in a maternity clinic.

Being under the supervision of a mahram or otherwise having to marry a Taliban in order to go out in public and run errands at government offices is humiliating.

You have to keep hope

These are all terrible developments back in the Middle Ages. But I would like to preserve my memories of the beautiful aspects of my country and my culture and talk about them. This also includes the many large and small festivals that were colourful and cheerful. I hope that these traditions will not disappear and that we can breathe a sigh of relief at some point. But first I hope that my mother and sisters can get to safety.

The Taliban's regulations should also be understandable for the many illiterate people. They are therefore conveyed as images. This is how women in Afghanistan have to veil themselves.



Experiences from the everyday life of a refugee assistant

(hpb) When you help new arrivals get on their feet here, you can experience some thought-provoking, bizarre, dark, endearing or even funny things. Brigitte Heidebrecht has a gift for putting this into short stories that portray some problems and circumstances in a wonderfully entertaining way. She has allowed us to reproduce 2 of them. They could just as easily come from our everyday lives. One of them ("Fear") makes you shudder. If you want to read more, you can order the book from any bookshop or buy it directly:

Brigitte Heidebrecht, *Fernreise daheim. Of refugees, cultures, identities and other inconsistencies. 5th ed. 2021, Verlag Große Sprünge, ISBN 978-3-9821383-2-9, paperback, 234 pages, 15,- €*

Brigitte Heidebrecht, from „Fernreise daheim“

Fear

Mokhtar has difficulties with his asylum procedure: the BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) refuses to believe him. His uncle and he worked for the US army, but the Taliban killed his uncle and Mokhtar was able to escape. The BAMF would prefer to consider this unlikely.

The lawyer advises him to get witness statements from Afghanistan. Mokhtar phones his brother. He goes to the imam of the village who buried his uncle and asks him to write a letter.

The imam repeatedly rebuffs Mokhtar's brother. Because the imam is afraid. Finally he takes heart. He asks Mokhtar's brother to keep an eye on the entrance to the house while he writes: That his uncle had been slaughtered like an animal and that he, the imam, had said the prayer at his grave. Stamp, signature and fingerprint. Mokhtar's brother sends a mobile phone photo of the letter to Germany. He hides the letter under his mattress. There is no post office in the village, the nearest post office is far away in the city. The lawyer would rather have the original. It's not that easy, Mokhtar's brother tells him.

Some time later, police officers arrive in the village. They go to Iman's house and he drinks tea with them.

The following day, a troop of Taliban on motorbikes rattles loudly through the village. They storm into the imam's house. They tie his hands behind his back. They say: Why are you drinking tea with the policemen?

They blindfold him.

One of them pulls out a long knife.

Then the leader said that he would not be killed today after all, Mokhtar's brother says on the phone.

The next day, the imam knocked on his door. He wanted to know where the letter was and that he wanted to burn it. He had sent the letter to Germany, Mokhtar's brother lied. The imam was very relieved.

And what do the police say? The police are very afraid of the Taliban. Mokhtar makes a big movement with his hand. And what's more, there are many who are policemen by day and Taliban by night. The lawyer in Germany is waiting for the letter. The letter is under the mattress. Mokhtar's brother considers hiding the letter under his clothes and travelling to the city. However, the Taliban often set up roadblocks and check passers-by.

As I fall asleep, I think about the murdered uncle, the imam and the long knife, the letter under the mattress and the roadblocks. I sleep badly that night.

Planning for the future

Aziz now knows the phrase "make a plan". I've already said to him a few times: We need to make a plan for how to proceed with you.

But he can't make a plan yet. And nobody knows what will happen to him and all the other young Afghans anyway, especially not since the new Minister of the Interior came into office.

But we need a plan, Aziz. Your German course only runs until July.

So we sit together and look at the possibilities. They're not rosy.

What do you want to do, Aziz?

Oh my God, I don't know, sighs Aziz and tears his hair out.

The ifs and thens are unmanageable for him. A jungle of paragraphs (do you know what a "paragraph" is, Aziz?), age restrictions, admission requirements, application deadlines as well as legal and political uncertainties.

Aziz always wants to do the most obvious thing. But is that strategically wise?

Do you understand "strategic", Aziz?

No, he doesn't understand.

Again we look it up on Google Translate. But there's no Afghan Dari, only the related Farsi, and he doesn't know the Persian word that appears. Okay, what good are words like "plan" and "strategy" in your country, where there is nothing but arbitrariness?

When Aziz has left, we still didn't have a plan, but at least we had a few next tiny little steps. I am exhausted.

I pour myself the last sip of tea and imagine: I have fled as a refugee to a country where there is peace called Afghanistan. I have found a nice older gentleman as a volunteer carer. I sit with him cross-legged on the carpet, we drink tea and he asks me: Brigitte, what kind of family would you like to marry into? And how high should we set your bride price?

Wallah, I have no idea! I say and I tear my hair.

An Afghan woman with her daughters in search of education

(hpb) A middle-aged Afghan woman, who fled the Taliban with her daughters, can neither read nor write. Who notices her, and who looks after her in the shared accommodation of a remote village? But whoever does, learns that as a young girl she was prevented from going to school by the Taliban, who

were already in power at the time. Her daughters had it better at first, until now the Taliban came to power again and banned the daughters from further school attendance and studies. She had vowed that her daughters would get an education, the education she herself had always wanted.

So she fled with them. The sons had to stay because our immigration authorities argued that they were not affected by the Taliban ban. What does this have to do with our topic of "cultural differences"? The woman's reluctance stems from an acquired custom of not imposing herself. We only got to know her story through an Afghan friend who came to trust my wife and me. The polite reserve is a cultural idiosyncrasy that does not necessarily help us to pay enough attention to the current situation and all the reasons for asylum. The woman and her daughters are dependent on people in our country who can understand their concerns, translate them correctly, express them explicitly and help them to make the legally possible decisions.

Urgently wanted: Voluntary German Teachers

Nicola Lisy

Who is interested in languages, enjoys working with people and would like to help teach German to refugees and migrants? Support us in this important task!

We, the teachers of the voluntary German courses in Idstein, have been offering German lessons for refugees and migrants since 2014. We are currently looking for course instructors and learning assistants to strengthen our team.

If you have experience in teaching or are simply enthusiastic about languages and would like to get involved in this important task, you are welcome to join us. Please contact us - we look forward to hearing from you!

Contact: N.Lisy@web.de

New temporary refugee accommodation in Idstein

Excerpt from the TV 1844 Idstein (TVI) press release dated 15 November 2023 on the Rheingau-Taunus district's last-minute decision to use the Taubenbergsschule gymnasium as temporary refugee accommodation. This made it necessary to free up TVI hall time for school sports.

"All people in this country, especially those in need, are entitled to fair and appropriate treatment. TV Idstein is intensively involved in this. 34 nations are members of the club and there are a number of integrative and inclusive sports groups. (...)

We have largely reorganised our sport for the benefit of Idstein's citizens from the affected sports halls.

However, we do not understand the timing. At 5.00 p.m. we received information by telephone from the district office, and at 5.06 p.m. we were informed that the halls were officially closed with instructions from the district to remove the materials from the halls within four days and to reorganise the sports activities.

At a time when there is constant talk of volunteering, community involvement, cooperation and appreciation, this is an inappropriate way to treat these volunteers and we very much hope that this will not happen again.

This will exacerbate the problems of recruiting people for voluntary work; and certificates and other "hero" proclamations will hardly help."

Article chaos, gender anarchy and chopped verbs

On the adversities of the German language

Steffi Bobrowski

We have already reported several times on the tricky nature of the German language for unsuspecting foreigners who want to learn it. Samer Tammous, a Syrian lecturer and author, has been living in Germany since 2015 and, together with Gert Hachmöller, has described the differences between German and Arabic culture in a very entertaining way. Some of his comments on the German language served as inspiration for this article.

Native speakers who have tried to communicate our really difficult language to people from other language areas occasionally come up against grammatical stumbling blocks themselves. They are surprised that, despite the German obsession with rules, there is sometimes total anarchy or an obvious

absence of logic in our language. There is, for example, the distribution of articles between the three genders, which is reminiscent of a lottery. "Tapeworm words", compound verbs that are separated again, capitalisation and now also "gendering" drive German learners to despair.

Pronunciation is not so easy either!

Even pronunciation causes difficulties for foreigners. Italians and French struggle with the pronunciation of our "h" or "ch", and our umlauts are also a phonetic challenge. An Irish friend, for example, refused to use the word "schwül" (sultry) after several failed attempts to pronounce the Umlaut correctly caused much laughter, since it then meant something entirely different (namely gay). Instead, to be on the safe side, she preferred to say: "feucht-warm" (warm and humid). Arabs often have difficulty telling the O and U apart, as Samer Tannous notes. There are only three vowels in Arabic, A, O (actually U) and I. When speaking, there is often no distinction between U and O. So if a Syrian comes to the bakery and wants "Kochen", (cook), he certainly means "Kuchen" (cake), and is certainly not looking for a job in the kitchen.

A nightmare: verbs with a prefix

For all foreigners, the many compound verbs whose prefixes are separated from their stem in the sentence and mercilessly moved to the end are also a nightmare. Mark Twain once summarised this in a legendary long sentence example. But it's enough that someone who has just learnt the verb "anrufen" (to call) also has to learn that they can't say "Ich anrufe dich", but have to break up the verb, so to speak ("I'll call you"). And it doesn't get any better in the perfect tense: "geanrufen", unfortunately, doesn't work at all! But oops - when is a prefix a prefix? "Anbieten" - "Ich biete dir an..." (I offer you), but "verbieten" becomes "Ich verbiete dir..." (I forbid you)! A verb can have dozens of different prefixes that fundamentally change its meaning: vor-, um-, zurück-, nach-, ver-, an-, aus-, hoch-, unter- or aufgehen, to name just a few for the root verb "gehen"! In connection with compound verbs, Samer Tannous quotes Merkel as a fine example of the subtleties of the German language: „Wir grenzen uns ab, ohne uns auszugrenzen" ("We set ourselves apart without excluding ourselves" - if only everyone would stick to that!).

Together or apart?

Even the question of whether something should be written together or compiled ("zusammen schreiben" or "zusammenschreiben") causes a lot of confusion: a space or a missing space can change the meaning of an entire sentence, and when speaking, the different emphasis replaces the space. There are many other rules about what you have to write together or apart. Since the last major spelling reform in 1996 changed some of these rules, even native speakers aren't always sure what is correct.

Upper or lower case?

Do we want "in unserem Zuhause zuhause sein" (to be at home in our home) or "zu unserem Zuhause nach Hause gehen" (go home to our home)? That would probably require a separate article... Or we could just write everything in lower case until then. In any case, the "All-CAPS" writing of a former American president is no alternative.

...and again and again the articles

Seriously: I know a Bavarian who says "das Monat" (the month, goes in German with the male article *der*). Well, in Saarland they also say "s'Annegret" when they mean a certain female person. That's a completely new article and sounds more neuter than feminine. (In the Rhineland they would say "et Annegret" which is a neuter article in the local dialect too). You first have to define what you mean by mother tongue. Language is always an expression of culture and thought. Different languages, for example, often have different ways of looking at basic terms to determine whether something is masculine or feminine (or neuter): *das Fräulein* - a neuter noun for a female person? While in French it is "*le soleil*" (the sun, male article) and "*la lune*" (the moon, female article), in German our mother star has the feminine article ("*die Sonne*"). Our nocturnal celestial lantern, on the other hand, is and remains male ("*der Mond*"). Our planet, "*die Erde*" (the Earth), has the feminine article in French too ("*la terre*"), but "*die Welt*" (the world) is masculine for our neighbours in the West ("*le monde*"). Samer Tannous wonders, in view of the different gender assignment of the sun and moon, whether this might be an indication of the stronger gender in Germany...

Which gender?

We're not talking about gendering this time, and we're certainly not talking about what to say about people of diverse gender. Just this much: there are no official rules because the "German Rat für Deutsche Rechtschreibung" (Council for German Orthography) has so far steadfastly refused to issue a recommendation. So you can only do it wrong. Our opinion on this can be found in the imprint! Lucky are the people whose language has no articles at all, e.g. in Ukrainian and Russian or in Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian - the latter three even manage without a plural. Those who only use a single article for all genders, singular and plural, are also in a good position. These are, for example, the Arabs, who get by with "al", or all native Anglo-Saxon speakers, who have their "the" for everything. (However, they then unnecessarily complicate their language with a rather absurd incompatibility of spelling and

pronunciation). Unfortunately, the idea of being happy only applies as long as all these people don't want or need to learn German. They first have to understand why you need articles in the first place (at worst three of them), and how you also have to decline them, in the singular and plural! "Wegen des blöden Wetters bin ich zu spät gekommen" (Because of the stupid weather, I'm late) – which nobody actually says any more. So would it be better to say „Wegen *dem* blöden Wetter...“? ("Man gewöhnt sich an *allem*, auch *am* Dativ! – you get used to everything, even to the dative case! (Sorry, dear German teachers!) I'm going to boldly claim that no native German speaker can explain the rules for articles. If they do, they are welcome to send a letter to the editor. It is to be feared, however, that this will exceed the capacity of our newspaper, as the list of exceptions alone is likely to take up quite a bit of space. After all, it is fair to say that all nouns ending in "-heit" or "-keit" are feminine. We're being consistent here for once, because this even applies to "*die Männlichkeit*" (masculinity), which – sorry, guys! – is female!

The way out: language is changing

Language is a living organism and is constantly evolving. Read a primary school book for German lessons from the 1970s and compare it with a textbook from today – you'll be amazed! Old words disappear (there is even a whole "lexicon of disappearing words!"), new ones appear, and grammar rules change. Perhaps "*der*", "*die*", "*das*" and the plural "*die*" will become simply "*die*" or even "*de*" (without declension) after all. Hope dies last!

The Idstein Strawberry Festival – next year again

Save the date: June 15, 2024 again on the Kalmenhof lawn in Idstein

Monika Wolff

Our strawberry festival in June 2023 was extremely well attended. We didn't expect such a great response. Perhaps it was due to the fantastic poster – the background was donated to us by the artist Inka Kellermann. We will keep this poster in the future, as many people would like to see a second Strawberry Festival. The great weather certainly played a big part.

For 2024, the well-known Idstein artist Angelika Schlautmann promised us a painting for auction.

Why a strawberry festival? The strawberry as a fruit is found in many countries around the world, so there is something in common. It's also a good time and, as far as we know, no strawberry festival has ever been held in Idstein. What's more, alongside the Inclusion Festival, it was the first festival organised by an Idstein association on the Kalmenhof lawn with its wonderful atmosphere of chestnut trees. Next year, we will be planning again with other organisations, e.g. Vitos Teilhabe, and above all we will be prepared for more visitors. We would like to thank the management of Kalmenhof for agreeing to organise the event and the friends of Kalmenhof who also supported us in the background. Rudy Namtel, who entertained us musically, and the youth sports group with Shehide Selmani and Renate Stübing from TV Idstein have already confirmed their participation. Rana Tarab will once again come up with a surprise. In addition, Young vendors also reported on their success selling on the blankets they had brought with them. The children's flea market should become a permanent fixture and can already be booked by interested parties.

Reporting on the activities of the sport coaches team

Renate Stübing

The sports coaches for the town of Idstein are Shehide Selmani and Renate Stübing.

Shehide came to Germany as a refugee herself and knows what it means to find your feet in a foreign country. She didn't have as much help as she does today and is happy to be able to help with her knowledge.

I, the other half of the team, am also a sports coach, know Idstein sport very well and would like to help open the doors to the clubs for everyone. My motto: sport speaks all languages and overcomes barriers. The sports coaches have organised a sports session for all women and a sports session for mothers with children. A sports day in winter and another outdoor sports day in September with our women's sports group, who also like to lend a hand and were also represented at the festival of clubs. Come along at any time, talk to the sports coaches, we look forward to seeing you!

Contact:

Renate Stübing: Tel. 0151 11 51 58 73

Shehide Selmani: Tel. 0157 58 97 96 36

Irreplaceable: Our department store

Our FHI department store in the railway station building (last entrance) is always busy

(hpb)

There are so many people who need help!

The food bank helps the most needy with food, we can do the same with clothes and household items. Fortunately, we always receive supplies. We publish what is currently needed on the FHI website www.fluechtlingshilfe-idstein-ev.de.

We would like to show our politicians how necessary such an offer of help is. We hope that the city will keep this on the agenda.

Our clothing store is very busy. We keep the rooms tidy, accept new goods that are brought in during opening hours, sort them and organise them on the shelves. Snizhana has taken on a tidying role here.

We are particularly pleased to have such help.

Parents from Theistalschule in Niedernhausen spontaneously came up with the idea of donating leftover items from a flea market to the refugee organisation. Several trolley loads were collected, which we took straight to the FHI department stores' and sorted. Many thanks to the parents of the Niedernhausen school!

Ethics lessons made vivid

Under the guidance of their teacher, Mrs Stutz, participants in an ethics class at Pestalozzi-Gymnasium Idstein visited the warehouse of our FHI e.V. in the railway station building. We collect items there that refugees urgently need and make them available to them free of charge. This is where worlds meet that you would otherwise hardly have any idea about. Two of the young people told us about their impressions.

Amira

In ethics lessons, we dealt with the topic of images of humanity and explored the subject of "Man as a moral being". We decided to put moral behaviour into practice and got in touch with the refugee aid organisation. We split into groups of six students so that each week part of the class was assigned to help.

After Mrs Wolff had given us a brief introduction to the history of the FHI, she explained our tasks to us and we were then able to start straight away. Lilli and I started sorting toys in the children's department. While we were making order out of chaos, we saw two mums choosing toys for their children. This gave us new motivation, although time seemed to pass slowly. The smiles on the children's faces were worth the rather slow time for me. We moved on to the children's clothing department. We sorted the clothes thrown into different piles by size and category, which took a lot of nerve.

The rooms were all quite small and cramped and everything looked very disorganised. It needs to be renovated. Mrs Wolff and her team are doing the best they can with the resources they have, but this is where local politics should provide more support.

To summarise, the internship was a good opportunity to gain a first insight into voluntary work and it was nice to see the helpfulness of the people there.

Victor

As part of our ethics lessons, we looked at the topic of how morality can be learnt. The answer in one of the texts was: by practising it! In school, however, it often remains theoretical and we discuss what constitutes good behaviour. However, we wanted to put it into practice and collected ideas on what we would like to do. One of our ideas was to offer our practical help at the refugee aid organisation's clothing store.

When we arrived at the station, we were immediately recognised as interns by Ms Wolff and instructed in our tasks. Among other things, we helped with sorting donations in kind and reorganising rooms.

The enthusiasm and energy of the volunteers, who are willing to sacrifice their free time for a good cause, was impressive. We had the opportunity to take the initiative ourselves and help where it counts. I'm sure more volunteers can be inspired with an increased external presence. What I liked best was the opportunity to be so close to those seeking help and to see the direct impact of our work. Everyone was very nice and helpful and there was a family atmosphere.

Ideal meeting place for hobby gardeners

The FHI garden on Gruner Straße

(sbo) Tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins, courgettes and lots of herbs: thanks to the hard-working international gardening team, the harvest in the garden of the Idstein refugee and integration aid (FHI) was once again plentiful. As well as digging, sowing, mowing the lawn and so on, we also had a lot of fun together!

To kick off the new season, we will be meeting again on Saturdays at 11 a.m. from March in the garden at the end of Gruner Straße (in the bend next to Gassenbacher Hof). Anyone can join in – new hobby gardeners are welcome!

For more information: fluechtlingshilfeidstein@gmx.de

Open day at the Idstein Foreigners' Advisory Council

Renate Stübing

In bright sunshine on 30 September, the Idstein Foreigners' Advisory Council, the integration scouts and the lay interpreters invited guests to the neighbourhood office in Idstein for a joint exchange.

The day flew by with lots of interesting conversations and a great buffet. There were visitors from many cultures and the dialogue was very harmonious.

Guests from the city, politics and other organisations came and went on this day. The children enjoyed the bouncy castle and were rewarded with sweets.

Shehide Selmani, Chairwoman of the Idstein Foreigners' Advisory Council, is also involved as an integration guide, lay interpreter, sports coach, inclusion officer and member of the "Demokratie Leben im RTK" (Living Democracy in the RTK) committee. She explained the tasks of the advisory board and was happy to listen to any concerns or requests for help. "The topics of education and work were particularly important for the women's sports group. They are also particularly interested in computer courses," says Shehide Salmani. "Important topics for the Foreigners' Advisory Council are: What services can we offer foreigners in Idstein? Can we organise advice and activities such as sports activities? Cooperation between the various volunteers and official bodies is very important here. The sports programme for women, for example, has been very well received, as you can see from the large number of members attending."

The Petrykivka Painting

An intangible cultural heritage of Ukraine

Hans-Peter Buscher

Mariia Babenko is an art teacher and master of Ukrainian petrykivka painting. She teaches this technique to her students with enthusiasm and dedication. One of them is Valentyna Melnychuk, who is a yoga teacher herself. In this way, the Ukrainian community lives through its own initiative and self-organisation in a variety of ways - and thus keeps each other's spirits high. We are delighted to be able to provide a room in the FHI meeting centre for this purpose.

Petrykivka painting is an art form of folk painting that originated in the village of Petrykivka (Dnipro Oblast). It has been practised there for a good 3 centuries. The symbols used each have a special meaning. In the modern sense, the style emerged at the end of the 19th century. Since 2013, it has been included by UNESCO in the list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. The ornaments with decorated colourful feathers, flowers, leaves and bows can be found on murals, cloths, musical instruments, toys ... They are simply aesthetic and beautiful to look at.

Politeness: "Please" and "Thank you"

Monika Wolff

We don't want to write about table manners here. In many countries, people enjoy food with their hands. Rules of etiquette are basic rules of behaviour. No elbows on the dining table, sit up straight! That's what children learn here. All this is only possible if you eat at the dining table, and not all cultures do that. But I am concerned about something that should apply everywhere in the world.

It's about the words: "thank you" or "thank you so much" or "please". "Thank you for the parcel", "Can you please help me?" Here are two examples from our experiences in the refugee aid:

► If you don't know your way around here and someone gets you a form that you need and drops it in your letterbox, you should let them know that you have received it. It is sufficient to write via WhatsApp or text message: "Thanks for the form", "Thanks for the letter"!

► If someone helps you fill out an application or answer a question, the answer is not: "Yes" or "OK", but "Thank you".

However, it is simply impolite to accept such help without responding and simply say nothing. It is also impolite to answer "Yes" to the question: "Did you get the letter or the form?!" It should at least be: "Yes, thank you".

People appreciate a "thank you", even those who help you because it's their job. For example, it is polite to thank the postman who delivers a parcel or the people who work for the authorities when they deal with a request.

Those of us who help with refugee and integration aid in the office or at home, who sort clothes so that we can offer them in our department store, or who give many hours of German lessons, do so on a voluntary basis, without a wage or salary. We simply help because we think it is right and important, and out of charity. We are also happy when we receive a "thank you" in return. It costs nothing to say "thank you". But those who say thank you usually get a smile in return.

The Game

A film about the game between life and death

By Bernd Kopsch

On 25 September 2013, Refugee Aid (FHI) showed the documentary film "*The Game - Spiel zwischen Leben und Tod*" (Game between Life and Death) as part of the intercultural week in Idstein. The documentary deals with the situation of refugees on the EU's external border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU country Croatia – the so-called Balkan route.

The concept of the Balkan route dates back to the Stone Age, when farmers from the Middle East settled in what is now the Balkans and heralded the change from hunter-gatherers to agriculture. The Balkan route has been an important trade route between Europe and the Middle East since Roman times at the latest.

In the 1930s and 40s, this route was once the scene of a major refugee movement, when many people fled from Europe towards Turkey and beyond during the Second World War.

Now it is mainly people from war and crisis zones such as Syria and Afghanistan who are making their way towards Europe.

The EU states have closed their borders and are trying to keep people out with fences and police. Refugees get stranded in the border region and try to cross the border illegally. They are often caught and brought back across the border. Although these so-called pushbacks are illegal, as every refugee has the right to apply for asylum, they are a daily reality. This "game" with the police is known among refugees as "The Game". The attempts are risky, people are injured, beaten and sometimes the game ends fatally.

The film team travels to the region to distribute clothing and other relief supplies. On location, they see how bad the situation is for the people and how some local helpers try to alleviate the greatest need. The film is free to watch on YouTube and is highly recommended. Just search for "The Game. Game between life and death".

The filmmakers

In March 2020, club operator Bernd Karmann and director Manuela Federl founded the association Lautlos e. V. to bring an aid transport to Bosnia to the aid organisation SOS Bihac. The Bavarian NGO is working on the refugees stranded on the Bosnian-Croatian border. A small film team accompanies the aid transport to show the donors that their clothes are arriving on site.

The organisation continues its work after the film project.

www.lautlos-verein.org

Strong together - a filmic journey through time and emotions

A documentary about solidarity and commitment in the Idstein region since the war in Ukraine

By Kateryna Shumeyko

On 24 February 2024, the premiere of a unique documentary film will take place in Idstein's town hall. Directed by a team consisting of Klaus and Elena Albrecht, Anastasia Malyshkina, Iryna Vitter and myself, the film captures the time, emotions and commitment of the citizens of Idstein since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

I wanted to capture our experiences and profound memories. The last few months since the outbreak of the war have been incredibly difficult, but also very special and enriching.

The idea of the film ties in with the free ideas of "Idstein HILFT Ukraine". This initiative brings together people from the region who come together to support others in difficult times. The documentary film aims to spread this idea and show how the community in the Idstein region is committed to solidarity. Over the past few months, numerous initiatives, organisations and committed citizens have been involved in helping refugees and those in need. These included members of FHI e.V. and "Idstein HILFT Ukraine", Ukrainian refugees, TV Idstein and members of the German-Ukrainian association Taunusstein. This should be particularly expressed in the film.

The film team conducted a total of 17 interviews with refugees and volunteers to record their stories and experiences. The recorded material comprises around 5 hours, but only the essential excerpts are used in the film. We all worked on a voluntary basis. The equipment was provided to us free of charge by the Wiesbaden studio "SonntagsFotos". In addition, the studio owners Elena and Klaus Albrecht accompanied us as camerapeople on all five days of filming.

The as yet unnamed documentary is not a lengthy film, but a powerful testimony to solidarity and compassion. It tells of the humanity that blossoms in difficult times and shows how commitment and co-operation can change people's lives. The premiere of the film on 24 February will undoubtedly be a moving and inspiring moment for all involved and for those interested in commitment and solidarity. The film aims to encourage viewers to think about their own possibilities and to take action for a better future. It is a powerful portrayal of the history and commitment of the citizens of Idsteiner Land. It is a reminder that we all have the power to make a difference and help others, and is a tribute to community solidarity and a call to action. The premiere of the film will undoubtedly be an event that touches people and makes them think. With our work, we want to emphasise the power of humanity and collective action and thus address not individual target groups, but the entire public.

Whether, when and how we make the documentary available to the general public will be decided after the premiere.

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steps humour

Super-DAU, PEBKAC, chat bots and other peculiarities

Funny stories from the world of IT

Steffi Bobrowski

We have a real love-hate relationship with our electronic companions. They have become indispensable to us, but when hardware or software breaks down, we normal "users" are quickly at our wit's end and need help from the computer service round the corner or the hotline in the office. Useful little programmes on smartphones, tablets and PCs make our everyday lives easier and would be inconceivable without the many clever people who programme them.

IT people, especially programmers, have a reputation for being "nerds" who are interested in nothing but hardware, software, bits and bytes and feel more at home in cyberspace than in the real world. They and their work are the target of a number of anecdotes, a selection of which we present to you here.

IT dictionary

Super DAU: the **d**umbest **a**ssumed **u**ser

PEBKAC: **P**roblem **e**xists **b**etween **k**eyboard **a**nd **c**hair

www: **w**orld-**w**ide **w**aiting

DAU: "My monitor isn't working."

Hotline: "Is it switched on?"

DAU: "Yes."

Hotline: "Why don't you switch it off?"

DAU: "Ah, now it's working..."

What does a pirate do on a computer?

He presses the ENTER* key.

* ENTER Key: In German the verb "entern" means "to board ship"

*

Call to a hotline: Caller: "I've just installed Windows...", hotline: "OK...?", customer: "My computer isn't working properly."

Hotline: "Yes, you already said that."
(or: enquiry to the Microsoft hotline: "I'm installing Windows right now, what should I press?" Answer: "Best to press both thumbs!")

A programmer dies and is received by St Peter. "You weren't good, but you weren't bad either. You can choose: Heaven or hell?" The programmer says: "Then I want to see heaven first." Peter shows him a huge room filled to the brim with the fastest servers, the very latest hardware and the best workstations. "You can programme here," says Peter. The programmer asks: "And what goes on in hell?" Peter replies: "It's here too, but then you have the administrator job."

What does a computer scientist eat in the evening while watching TV? - Chips.

Two computer science students meet while cycling. One says: "Where did you get that great bike?" The other answers: "I was out in the park yesterday and a pretty girl came past me on this bike. When she saw me, she threw the bike to the side, tore off her clothes and shouted: "Take what you want!". The other student responded approvingly: "Good decision, the clothes probably wouldn't have fitted anyway!"

How much space was freed up in the EU after Brexit? - 1 GB.

A doctor, a lawyer and a programmer discuss which is better: a wife or a girlfriend? The lawyer says: "A girlfriend is better. If you separate from your wife, you'll have a lot of stress with the divorce." The doctor replies: "A wife is better. She gives you a sense of security and that lowers your stress levels." Says the programmer: "You need both. If your wife thinks you're with your girlfriend and your girlfriend thinks you're with your wife, you can programme in peace."

What does a computer scientist do when his car won't start? He gets out and gets in again.

A doctor, a civil engineer and a computer scientist argue about which profession is the oldest.

Says the doctor: "The Bible says that God took one of Adam's ribs and formed Eve from it. So doctor is the oldest profession of all."

The civil engineer disagrees: "If you turn back a few pages in the Bible, it says: 'Out of chaos, God created heaven and earth. That's definitely civil engineering, and so we have the oldest profession.'"

The computer scientist laughs and says: "And who do you think created chaos with God's help?"

The shortest programmer joke: "I'll be finished in a minute!"

Three programmers are in a mental hospital due to overwork. After a few weeks, they are tested to see if they are healthy again. The attending doctor asks the first one to take a test in his office. "Tell me, how much is five times five?" The programmer thinks for a moment and answers: "110." The doctor shakes his head and refuses to dismiss him.

The second programmer also thinks for a while. Then he answers the question of what five times five equals: "Thursday." This patient also has to stay.

The third patient gives a quick answer to the question: "25." The doctor is pleased and signs the discharge note. He then asks the patient how he came up with the answer so quickly. "Quite simple," says the programmer: "110 divided by Thursday!"

Artificial intelligence

So, did you have any problems with your new language computer when you travelled to Greece?" - "Not me, but the Greeks ..."

A programmer wants to test the new AI and asks it a question: "Where is my brother now?" The computer calculates, and after a few seconds the answer appears on the screen: "Your brother is in the machine in Düsseldorf."

The programmer frowns and asks another question a day later: "And where is my father now?" The computer calculates again and then answers: "Your father is on the Lower Rhine fishing."

"Nah," says the programmer disappointedly. "I'm afraid you don't know everything - my father has been dead for five years!"

The computer starts calculating again and after a while comes up with its final answer: "It's true that your mother's husband is dead. But your father is fishing on the Lower Rhine."

An artificial intelligence talks about itself: Chat GTP introduces itself (no joke!)

"I'm ChatGPT, the one and only language model you can chat to for hours without getting bored, tired or hungry (well, maybe I need some power in between, but that's another story). I'm something of a cross between a chatty mate, a super-smart encyclopaedia and a witty comedian – all rolled into one! If you're feeling lonely, curious or just want to be silly, go ahead and say hello to your new robo-buddy! Just please don't ask me for a joke about binary code, because that would be too "0-0-1"-sided for me!"

(Found in Spektrum.de)

Obesity, diabetes and coronary heart disease – an epidemic

Hans-Peter Buscher

Why the topic in steps? Because many people from distant countries of origin have heard little about healthy eating. In our country, however, they are confronted with new "Western food" that quickly makes them overweight and fat. "Full-figured" is not bad in itself, but it should not go any further! Anyone talking to migrants and refugees about nutrition should have this in mind.

The crux of the matter: "Western food"

Our local diet is largely based on highly processed food ("ultra processed food") with a high fat, sugar and salt content. Typical of this are the baked goods and instant meals, which are specially flavoured to stimulate the smell and taste and are therefore bought. Then there are the high-calorie drinks, the energy drinks. The result is that you quickly start to consume more calories than you burn through physical activity.

What are the consequences?

The entire metabolism changes, especially the metabolism of sugar and fat. Over-caloric food soon overloads the body's sugar processing and excess fat is deposited.

When body weight increases

- ▶ then the spine and joints are strained. They start to wear out early. Osteoarthritis and back pain set in.
- ▶ then the belly also gets fatter and fatter. However, abdominal fat is a particular threat to health: it promotes subliminal inflammatory reactions throughout the body. This is particularly easy to recognise in the liver. It becomes fatty unnoticed, becomes discreetly inflamed and can begin to scar; the final stage is cirrhosis (scarred liver).
- ▶ Then there is a risk of diabetes with all its consequences.

Diabetes: insidious!

High-calorie drinks and food can overload the body's sugar processing. The consequences begin very early on, many years before diabetes becomes overt. These include vascular calcification throughout the body (arteriosclerosis), heart attacks, strokes, fatty liver, nerve damage with tingling and numbness in the legs and early dementia. All of this can begin in middle age or even at a young age, when you want to stay healthy and have lots of plans, but are still careless with your own health.

Risk recognised - risk averted?

Heavily overweight people should be examined and advised by their doctor, even if they feel well. The blood glucose level test can provide an early warning of impending diabetes: if the result is pathological (abnormal), it is time for a fundamental review of your own lifestyle, perhaps even for medication support. The most important thing is:

Plenty of physical exercise and a healthy diet, avoiding "fast food" and energy drinks!

Diet and exercise must be rebalanced.

- ▶ Regular exercise would be the best thing (TV Idstein has a wide range on offer!). And, of course, a healthy diet.
 - ▶ The basic principle of a healthy diet is a varied plant-based diet that is rich in fruit and vegetables and uses oils and margarines with unsaturated fatty acids. This is known as the Mediterranean diet.
 - ▶ The Mediterranean diet contains a relatively high amount of olive oil, nuts, fruit, vegetables and cereals, a moderate amount of fish and poultry and relatively few dairy products, red meat, sausages and sweets.
 - ▶ The Mediterranean diet enriched with fresh olive oil or nuts proved to be significantly more favourable in terms of preventing heart attacks and strokes than a low-fat diet. Healthy vegetable fats (except palm fat) should not be restricted. In the long term, however, largely avoiding animal fats and red meat has a favourable effect.
- But beware: anyone suffering from particular illnesses, allergies or irritable bowel syndrome will of course need a customised diet. Individual nutritional counselling is advisable here.

- ▶ Fast food, high-energy drinks and sweets are the causes of obesity and metabolic diseases and their consequences.
- ▶ Nutritional science says: eat consciously, moderately and sensibly!
- ▶ Low sugar, low salt, high-fibre with plenty of fruit and vegetables, preferably with little or no meat!
- ▶ Together with plenty of physical activity, this is the key.

Turkish cuisine: Imam Bayildi

What stuffed aubergines have to do with a fainted Imam

Steffi Bobrowski

Imam Bayildi – “the imam fainted” is the name of a famous Turkish aubergine (eggplant) dish that my Turkish friend Filiz and I want to cook today. It is called like this because an imam is said to have been so enraptured when he ate it for the first time that he fainted. We hope he only fainted *after* he had eaten it all...!

We didn't faint, but it tasted super good to us too.

In addition to the vegetarian original, we also made a version with a minced meat and vegetable filling. Then the dish is called Karniyarik. If you like it vegetarian, simply leave out the meat and use double the amount of tomatoes for the pure vegetable filling.

You need these ingredients for 4 people

- ▶ 4 aubergines
- ▶ 400 g minced beef
- ▶ 2 - 3 onions
- ▶ 2 - 3 cloves garlic
- ▶ 4 - 5 tomatoes
- ▶ 4 pointed peppers
- ▶ Biber (paprika pulp), alternatively tomato puree
- ▶ Oil
- ▶ Salt and freshly ground pepper
- ▶ Pul Biber (hot Turkish paprika) and Isot (Turkish chilli pepper) and thyme to taste
- ▶ flat-leaf parsley

Preparation:

1. wash the aubergines and peel lengthways to create a striped pattern (1 cm with skin and 1 cm without skin). Then cut in half lengthways. Place the two halves in a bowl of salted water for 15 minutes. Then remove, rinse, pat dry and brush all sides with oil.
- 2 Peel and finely dice the onions and garlic. Wash half of the tomatoes and peppers and chop into small cubes.
3. sauté the onions and garlic in a pan with a little oil until translucent. Add the tomatoes and peppers and continue to sauté the vegetables. Flavour with the spices.
4. Fry the mince separately and season. Finally, mix with the vegetables.
5. Preheat the oven to 200°C (hot air).
6. Line a baking tray with baking paper, place the aubergines on it and cook on the middle shelf at 200°C (fan oven) for approx. 20 minutes. They should be lightly browned and very soft on the inside.
7. Wash and clean the remaining tomatoes and one pepper. Cut the tomatoes into thick slices and halve the peppers.
8. Place the aubergines in an ovenproof dish. Press a fork into the centre of each aubergine half and brush with paprika or tomato puree. Then add the minced meat and vegetable filling and top with the tomato slices and pepper halves.
9. Place the baking dish on a rack in the centre of the oven and bake for approx. 15 minutes using the 200°C fan setting.

Serve as a starter (it also tastes good cold!) or as a main course with rice on the side. A dollop of yoghurt on top also goes very well.

Enjoy !

steps Puzzle

- ▶ **Everything flows – the crossword puzzle** is about rivers in Germany and in the world.
- ▶ **For logic fans:** two tricky maths puzzles

Logic Puzzle No. 1:

Where has the euro gone?

3 friends meet for breakfast. Each pays 10 euros. Together that's 30 euros. The waitress realises that there is a special price today: only 25 euros for 3 people. So she wants to give back 5 euros. The three of them say: Give 1 euro back to each of us and keep 2 as a tip.

Now one of them realises: 'We each paid 10 euros and then got 1 euro back, so we each only paid 9 euros. That makes a total of 27 euros. The waitress has kept 2 euros as a tip. That's 29 euros. But we gave her 30 euros. Where has the 1 euro gone?

Who can help?

Logic puzzle No. 2:

Here's a little logic puzzle that we won't solve. Each letter stands for a number. What are the numbers?

$$ABCD \times 4 = DCBA$$

Please send any solutions to the steps editorial team:
redaktion@steps-fhi-ev.de

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