

Cultural Kaleidoscope: India, Romania, and Austria at Work!

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2025-09-11 @ Engineering Kiosk Alps

Culture

 **culture**
/ˈkʌltʃə/

noun

1. the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.
"20th century popular culture"

Ähnlich: [the arts](#) [the humanities](#) [intellectual achievement\(s\)](#) [intellectual activity](#) ▼

2. the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.
"African-Caribbean culture"

Ähnlich: [civilization](#) [society](#) [way of life](#) [lifestyle](#) [customs](#) [traditions](#) ^

[heritage](#) [habits](#) [ways](#) [mores](#) [values](#)

Culture

Includes:

- **knowledge , beliefs , art, morals , law, customs, ways of doing things, and all other habits and skills acquired by a person as a member of a society**

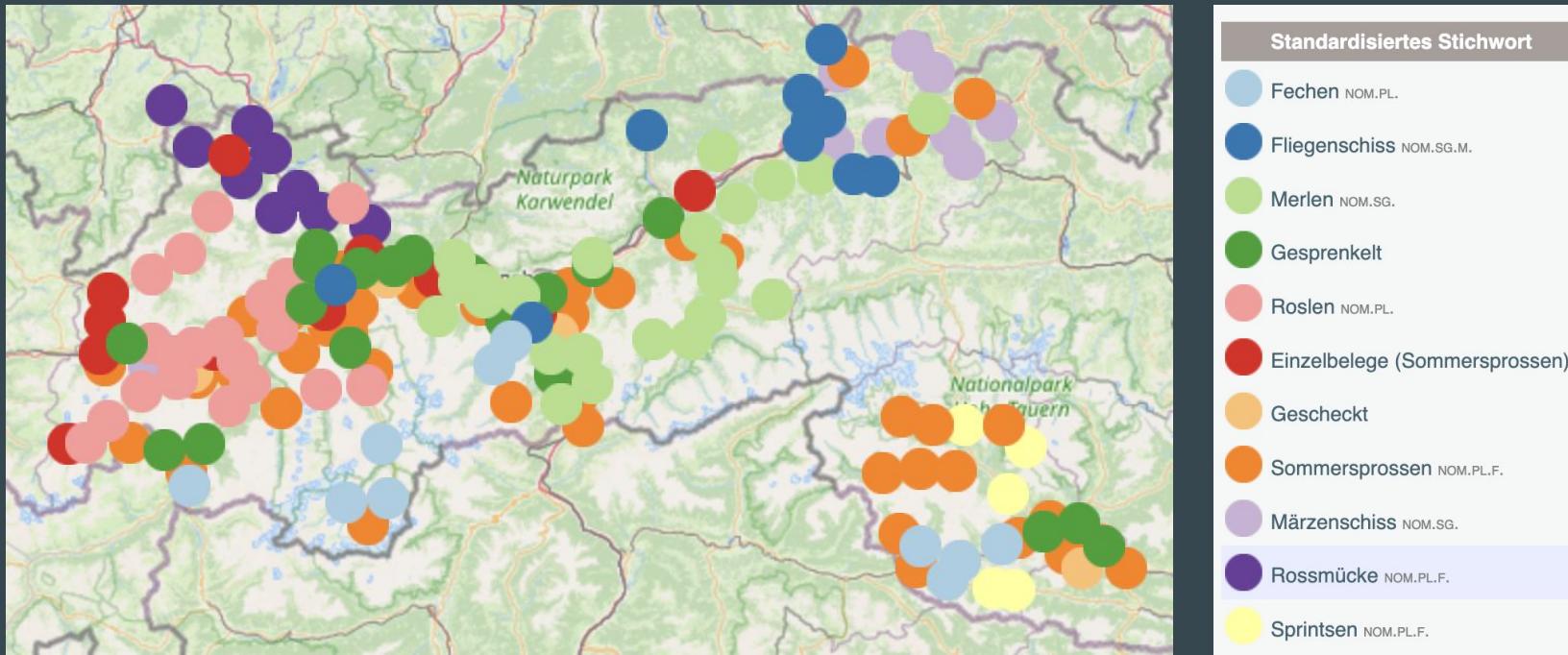
Refers to

- **a set of patterns of human activity within a community or social group**

Gathered or acquired

- **acquired through coexistence and social relationships within a community**
- **transmitted from generation to generation**
- **changes / evolves over time.**

Cultural Clash in Tirol (Sommersprossen)



Hi, I'm Chris.

aka: freelenzer



- Consulting, Architecture, Development, whatever it takes
- Go, Java, Web, Python, ... with strong opinions towards strongly typed languages
- Multiple times startup approved
- Software Development 25+ years.
- Mountain Rescue Team Innsbruck



router vendor

software company
for white label routers

US Company (California)

Office in India (Bangalore)

Team across the world:

- India
- Austria
- Germany
- USA (California)
- Romania
- United Kingdom
- Netherlands
- Belgium

Disclaimer

- It's just my view!
- Culture is a powerful influence, **but it does not define every individual** .

What's the team/time?

 Fremont Fremont, United States	00:02 -9.0 hrs	08:02 -9.0 hrs
 Innsbruck Austria, Austria	09:02 same time	17:02 same time
 Bucharest Bucharest, Romania	10:02 +1.0 hrs	18:02 +1.0 hrs
 Bangaluru Bengaluru, India	12:32 +3.5 hrs	20:32 +3.5 hrs

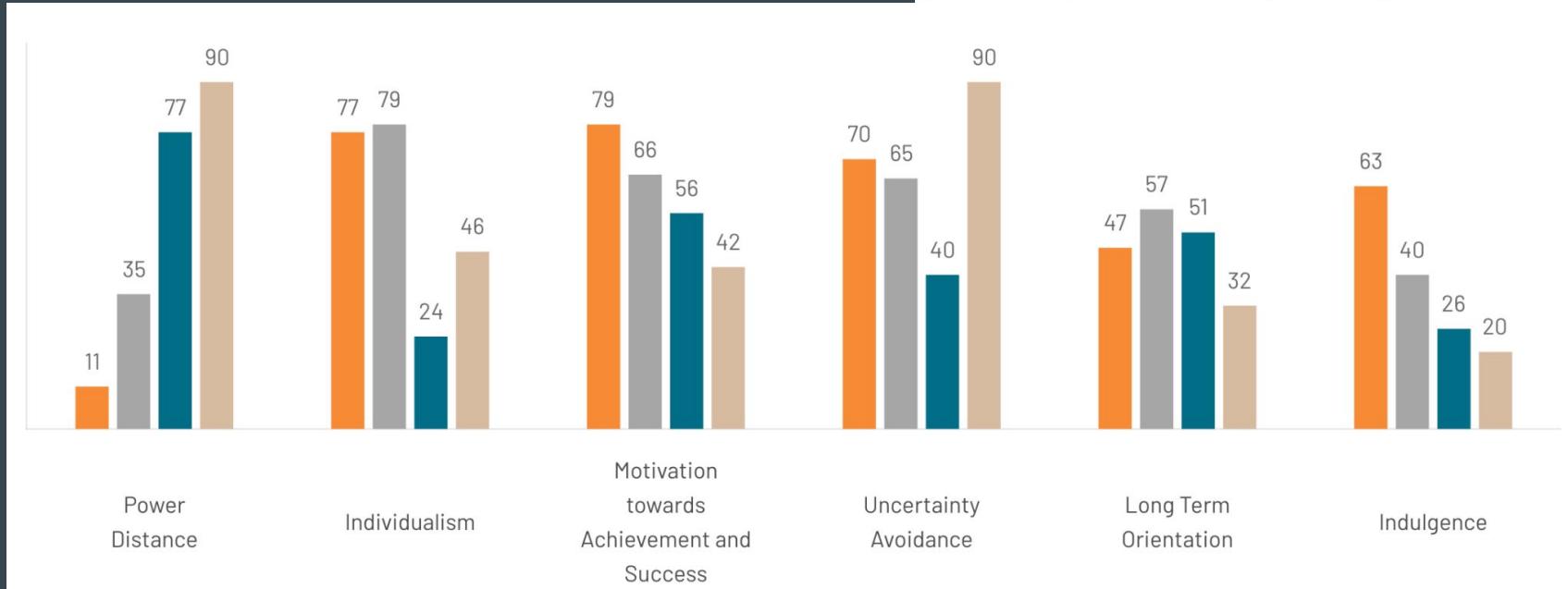
Good morning?

Academic Research

- Geert Hofstede[Chaert Yan Hofstayder] (1928-2020)
- A Dutch social psychologist and a pioneer in intercultural studies.
- He is best known for creating the **Cultural Dimensions Theory** .
- The theory provides a **framework to understand how cultural values affect workplace behavior** .
- He identified key dimensions like Power Distance and Individualism vs. Collectivism.
- His work has been highly influential in international business and management.
- connected with <https://www.theculturefactor.com/>

The 6-D model of national culture

Austria  Germany  India  Romania 

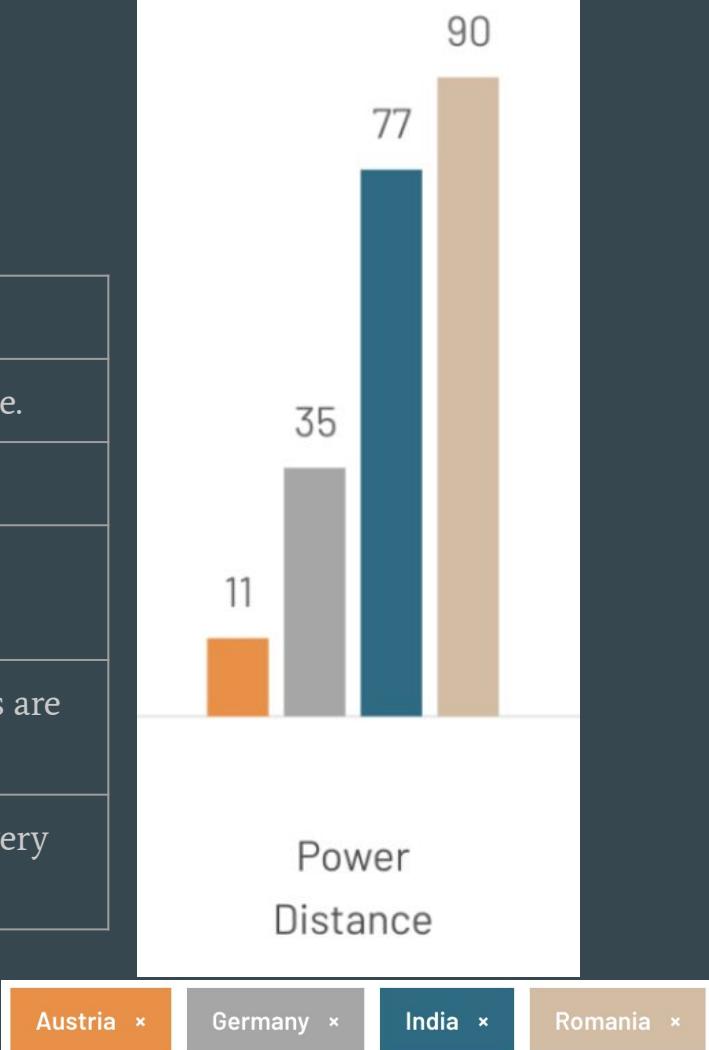


<https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=austria%2Cgermany%2Cindia%2Cromania>

Power Distance (PDI)

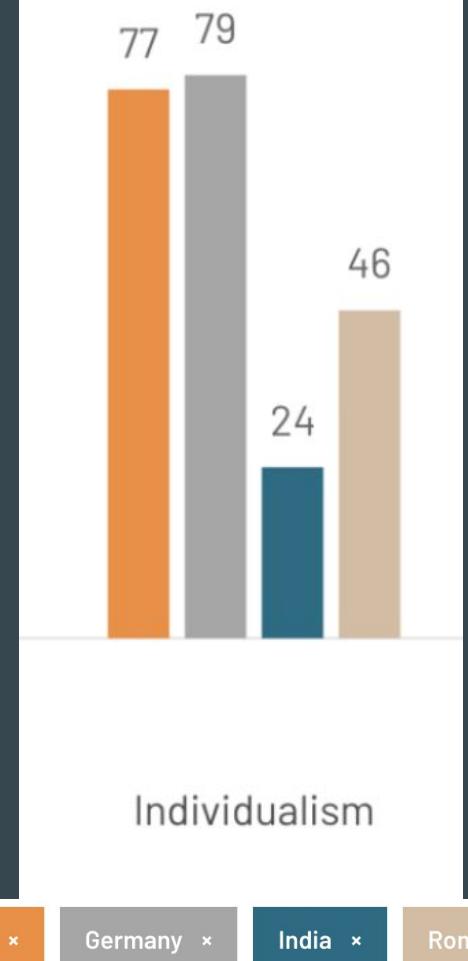
Definition: The degree to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.

Low Power Distance	High Power Distance
Parents treat children as equals.	Parents teach children obedience.
Education is Student-centered	Education is Teacher-centered
Subordinates expect to be consulted	Subordinates expect to be told what to do
Corruption rare; scandals end political careers	Corruption is frequent; scandals are covered up
Income distribution in society rather even	Income distribution in society very uneven



Individualism (IDV) vs. Collectivism /Examples

Individualism (High)	Collectivism (Low)
Everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself and his or her immediate family only	People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty
"I" – awareness	"We" – awareness
Right of privacy	Stress on belonging (Which group I belong to)
Others classified as individuals	Others classified as in-group or out-group
Speaking one's mind is healthy (Expressing your opinion is healthy)	Harmony should always be maintained
Purpose of education is learning how to learn	Purpose of education is learning how to do
Task is more important than the relationship	Relationship is more important than the task



Politeness Overload / Harmony

Example:

Instead of saying, "This approach is wrong," you might hear, "I think we can maybe try a slightly different method, if you don't mind."

Translation: "This is wrong—stop doing it!"

Why It Happens:

Indians value maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict in conversations.

Mitigation Strategy

Listen really careful.

Ask for more information.

Make them responsible for the outcome.

Overuse of "Yes"

Example:

You ask, "Do you understand the requirements?" and they say, "Yes!" Later, you realize they didn't fully understand.

"Wait, was that a yes-yes, or a yes-maybe, or a yes-but-no?"

Why It Happens:

Saying "no" directly is perceived rude, so "yes" is often used as a placeholder until clarity is achieved. So "yes" could be no (yes-but no) or a yes (yes-yes).

Mitigation Strategy:

Ask to add the task to sprint, which forces to write and describe it. Track progress and offer help when there is no progress.

"Ready Next Week" Syndrome

Example:

You ask, "When will the report be ready?" and the response is, "Next week, for sure!" But "next week" does not always mean next week—it might mean they'll revisit the task next week or start working on it then.

Why It Happens:

Indians often aim to give positive and agreeable responses to avoid disappointing others. A straight "No" is considered impolite.

Mitigation Strategy:

Asking for a committed date. Explain the consequences of missing the deadline. Sarcasm if you are already really familiar: "Which year?"—just to be sure!

The Eternal Optimism

Example:

No matter how tight the deadline is, they'll say, "Don't worry, we'll manage!"

"Manage what? The deadline? The chaos?"

Why It Happens:

Indians are known for their resilience and "jugaad" (a flexible, innovative approach to problem-solving).

Mitigation Strategies:

"When they say 'we'll manage,' believe them—they'll find a way, even if it involves duct tape and a prayer!"

Working in the “M”

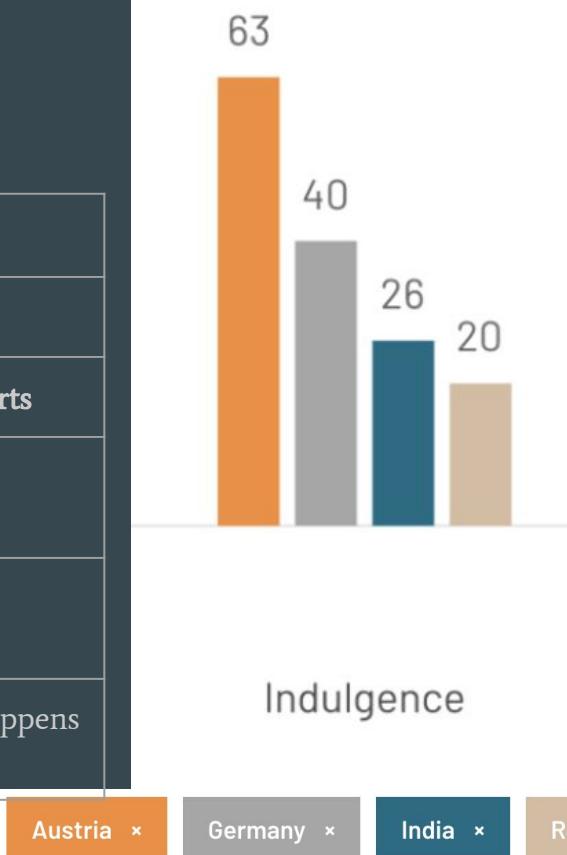
- This anecdote comes from one of my Romanian colleagues
- Tile Layer who worked for some time in Germany.
- German standard for tiling “Working in the m”.

- Working in the millimeter precision!
- We have an incredibly high standard to details.

Indulgence (IVR) vs. Restraint

Definition: This dimension is defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised. Relatively weak control is called "Indulgence" and relatively strong control is called "Restraint".

Indulgence (High)	Restraint (Low)
Higher importance of leisure	Lower importance of leisure
More people actively involved in sports	Fewer people actively involved in sports
Freedom of speech seen as important	Freedom of speech is not a primary concern
Higher percentage of people declaring themselves very happy	Fewer very happy people
A perception of personal life control	A perception of helplessness: what happens to me is not my own doing



Work-life balance

Feature	Austria/Europe	India
Average Work Hours	Generally 35-40 hours/week (sometimes lower), strict legal caps.	Often 50+ hours/week , despite 48-hour legal cap; actual hours frequently exceed legal limits in practice for many sectors.
Cultural Value	Strong emphasis on efficiency within defined hours and clear separation of work/life. "Work stays at work."	Emphasis on dedication and commitment, often equated with long hours and constant availability .
Boundaries	Clear and respected boundaries between work and personal life. Disconnecting is the norm.	Blurred boundaries ; expectation of availability after hours and on weekends is common.
Societal Factors	High value on leisure, hobbies, family time.	Strong familial obligations and social expectations. Pressure to earn more.

Takeaway

- **Take the opportunity to work with different cultures**
- **Research** cultural differences to understand the behaviour
- Use **humor** to bridge the gaps, not widen them
- **Celebrate** the differences and **enjoy the quirks** —it's all part of the fun of working in a global team!
- The **difficulties are mutual** . We are surprised by them, and they are surprised by us.
- Culture is a powerful influence, **but it does not define every individual** .
- Always think about the **circumstances** (living environment) your coworkers have to deal with.