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Austrian-Slovenian relations are getting a lot of attention, especially lately. The reasons and everything connected with, for example, the Austrian State Treaty or the statements of this and that chancellor or governor are not so important. Let us look beyond and focus on the positive things that connect us with our northern neighbour. Even though our historical link to Austria is very strong, we can not forget that our roots are different: one is Germanic and the other Slav. It seems everything is in the power of exploitation of the riches of differences and not of falling or loosing ourselves in the abyss of differences.

This is where the role of intercultural communication is so important, which above all means to know how to "feel one another, i. e. the difference". To adjust to another's views and standpoints, to understand their different understanding, to think of the possibility something can be good or even great, even though it is completely different from our way. Yes, it takes a lot of effort and good will to understand a different culture. But if we keep our goals in mind, we know it is worth it.

We have been neighbours for a long time. And we will also stay neighbours. We have a common, not always pleasant history that connects us and none can forget this even if one wanted to. But something is true for sure: the image of a typical Austrian, as stereotypically seen by an average Slovenian, is more similar to a provincial Carinthian than to a cosmopolitan Viennese. And this kind of perspective tells us more about ourselves (and our narrow-mindedness) than about those opinions we have and keep.

Even though Austria is quite bigger and has a much greater population than Slovenia, it is still a small country from the European and even smaller from the global point of view. Especially in the field of its perception of "smallness" Slovenes could learn a lot. The Austrians namely do not have such strong inferiority complexes and self-limitations in different fields arising from their relative smallness, as the Slovenians have. Regardless of the smallness of territory and limited number of inhabitants, the Austrians (most of the times justly) are proud of everything that makes them what they are, in comparison to Europe and the whole world, "big", often also "the biggest": cities of Vienna and Salzburg, composers Mozart and Beethoven, ski teams, governor Schwarzenegger, beautiful landscape...

Moreover, Austrians do not feel so traumatic when a foreign, especially German capital entered their market and bought up national companies after Austria joined the EU, if not sooner, for which also Slovenians (I think justly) with uneasiness expect to end up in foreign hands.

Most likely one could also find some kind of historical explanation for this tendency towards often gaudy boastfulness the Austrians master. Though less pushy than in Slovenia, the display of money and wealth in Austria is a very popular national sport. But because they can do it in a more relaxed, nonaggressive and almost friendly manner, we do not resent them for showing off at the opera ball as much as, e.g., those Slovenians that decided years ago to suffer at the Pavarotti concert in Ljubljana, even though they did not even know from the start what kind of music they will listen to. But like at the Vienna ball: they were seen and everybody knew the price they had paid for the tickets.

Leaving the stereotypes aside, we ask ourselves what does modern sociological or anthropological science think of intercultural differences between Slovenians and Austrians; we can take a look at the results of one of the most thorough empirical researches in the field.

Geert Hofstede conducted a research during 1967 and 1973 in which he questioned 116,000 IBM employees from 72 countries, where 20 different languages were spoken. On the basis of the results, he set standards, with which approximately 50 percent of differences among national cultures can be explained. The rest of the differences can be explained with the specificity of individual countries. The standards are: masculinity, individualism (IDV), power distance (PDI), and uncertainty avoidance (UAI). During the research, Slovenia was, of course, not an independent country yet, so we have to add that the results for Slovenia were analysed in the 90's on the basis of the same standards which applied to the first research.

To sum up and compare the results of Slovenian and Austrian culture, we could simply state Slovenians see Austrians as "formalist individualist" who are not afraid of their superiors, but still want to have constant control over events and who on account of constant striving towards personal success neglect those "little joys" that create what we understand by the phrase "quality of life".

This means the main adjustments of the behaviour of a Slovenian who decided to adjust to the Austrian in a communication (and does not see it as a personal and national humiliation), went in the direction of ceasing to hide behind a group (and group responsibility), fulfilment of arrangements without proving why something could not be done (even if we REALLY wanted it), and direct feeling-less communication with everyone on all hierarchy levels.

And when you will sit with them in the evenings in a restaurant and drink white wine, do not spoil your previous success in communication, which you accomplished by considering the previously mentioned advice, and by all means avoid explaining the famous composer Hugo Wolf is Volk by birth, born in Slovenj Gradec and the Lipizzaner derives from... Lipica...

Standpoints characteristic of		Selected results
Low value of characteristics	High value of	
INDIVIDUALISM		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehending "us" • Opinions are determined by group • Priority is fulfilment of obligations towards family, group, society • Punishment for non-fulfilment: shame from others • Values differ within groups and between them-particularism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehending "me" • Opinions are created by individuals • Priority is fulfilment of obligations towards oneself • Punishment for non-fulfilment: loss of self-respect, feeling of guilt • Values should refer to all-universalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guatemala (min.): 6 • Slovenia: 27 • Austria: 55 • USA (max.): 91
POWER DISTANCE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers are people just as all employees • We do not like others to monitor our work • We do not fear disputes with our superiors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers are "the other kind of people" • Employees have difficulties trusting each other • From managers, distinctive power, autocratic decision-making is expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austria (min.): 11 • Slovenia: 71 • Malaysia (max.): 105
UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have unlimited time • We live day by day • We hope to succeed and are willing to take chances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time is money • We are constantly worried about the future • We are afraid to make mistakes and do not like taking chances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singapore (min.): 8 • Austria: 70 • Slovenia: 88 • Greece (max.): 112
MASCULINITY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of life and environment are important • Compassion towards the unfortunate • A little and slowly is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capability and growth are important • Recognition of the successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweden (min.): 5 • Slovenia: 21 • Austria: 79 • Japan (max.): 95