



Transforming our World

For Immediate Release

Mission-Net is intercultural

According to the Bertelsmann Foundation, intercultural competence is “the ability to reflect and act in an effective and appropriate manner in intercultural situations, based on distinct convictions and attitudes as well as particular reflection and response mechanisms.” But what does that actually mean?

Frank Hinkelmann, Leader of OM Europe, says that it is an awareness of one’s own cultural boundaries. “As a German living in Austria, I’m regularly reminded by my host country that I’m German. This in principle is neither bad nor good, but simply a reality I need to be aware of. At the same time, I want to be open to discover differences in the Austrian culture and I want to learn to appreciate them. This attitude of appreciation is needed if I want to share about the love of Jesus with other people. This attitude of appreciation also helps me to see elements of my own culture that are not helpful at all.”

Intercultural Lifestyle

But should we be open to an intercultural lifestyle, you might ask. “Absolutely!” says James Price of World Outreach, and co-ordinator of Mission-Net short-term outreaches. This is true in mixing with followers of Jesus and those of other or no faith. Encountering our Christian faith in another culture deepens our understanding of the character of God, seeing things from a different worldview. And mixing with people who don’t share the Christian faith is equally important. “We are all called to make disciples of all nations, taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth,” adds James. “For God loves all people – every nation, tribe, people and language.”

Cultural Diversity

There are over 830 million people living in Europe – less than two per cent are followers of Jesus. In recent years the continent has witnessed increased secularisation of the nations and massive growth in the migrant population. Today’s European culture is multi-cultural and therefore demands an intercultural lifestyle.

“We live in exciting times – the ends of the earth are now our neighbours,” says James. Many people come to Europe from countries where they have no access to God’s truth, providing a great opportunity for the church to engage in the mandate of the Great Commission in its local communities. Who, if not we Christians as part of one body – the Church – can be a prime example of an intercultural lifestyle, appreciating our differences without giving up our cultural distinctiveness?



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Opposing Trends in Europe

Two opposing trends can be witnessed in Europe: One is very much characterised by a growing nationalism often linked with ethnocentricity, while the other is the preference, especially amongst the youth to define oneself as European rather than as a citizen of one's respective country.

Both of these trends are strongly influenced by a vibrant migration within Europe such as Poles working in the UK, Romanians in Spain and Portugal, Albanians in Italy. In addition there is evidence of a growing and constant migration to Europe, mainly from Africa and certain parts of Asia.

As many of the migrants from the Global South are believers, an inflow of new vibrant and authentic expressions of Biblical Christianity is emerging in Europe. "I believe these Christians will be the new mission force to Europe," says Frank. "However, I also observe an attitude of ethnocentricity in many churches, sometimes even linked with racism. This is certainly against all Biblical values."

Intercultural Experience this Summer!

Under the umbrella of Mission-Net, OM and World Outreach are hosting short-term outreaches to Germany, Malta, Romania, Sweden and UK this summer. When asked why young Europeans should sign up, Frank responds emphatically, "Because a summer outreach can be a life changing experience – I've seen it myself. You'll learn more about yourself, you'll learn more about other cultures – be it the culture of your teammates or your host country. And you'll have the great opportunity to share the good news about Jesus Christ in ways you might not have done before."

"Spending time in another culture can be really challenging, but equally rewarding," adds James. "Stepping out of your comfort zones allows God to stretch you and enlarge your vision for the nations. You will learn more about yourself and God as you put your faith into action."

Concludes Frank, "Mission-Net is a terrific event for young Christians from across Europe to not only hear about what God is doing in today's world, but also to grow in their personal walk with God. Mission-Net provided the opportunity to make friends from all over Europe and to build inter-cultural relationships." For more information, check out www.mission-net.org or contact James Price about outreaches this summer: james.price@wouk.org

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