Everyday life in the global village …
Other countries – other solutions!

Should Britons still go to the pub, should Russians prepare for the worst, should the Chinese be confident and should French managers preferably stay at home? While the economic crisis is global and universal in terms of its economic consequences, there are varying country-specific views with regard to the question of how to cope best in everyday life. We have put together a personal impression from our international trainers and consultants for you.

People from every cultural background perceive crises as a threat. But various types of thinking and behaviour can be found in the ways in which they deal with the situation, where they see the conflict and place possible guilt and which solutions they are striving for. What may appear to be reasonable and necessary behaviour in one country is perceived with disapproval in another country.

In an opinion poll nearly two thirds of the French people interviewed approved of "bossnapping", i.e. the taking hostage of French managers by employees. It is considered a last attempt to gain an audience in a supposedly hopeless situation, since the dialogue to balance interests between employees and employers does not have a very strong institutional basis in **France**. As "patrons", managers have a high rank in the hierarchy – they are respected and it is expected that they show and provide care in return. When workers are laid off or plants closed, these duties of care have not been fulfilled from the perspective of the employees. Conflicts escalate or come to a head, as in this case, around the person of the executive manager.

Less spectacular, but featuring the country's typical pragmatism, are the reactions from **Great Britain**. There the crisis has taken its toll on an institution of national significance: the pubs. More and more pubs are closing because the guests are staying away. Some pub owners have even transitioned to exchanging beer for material assets, e.g. an old chandelier for "liquid gold". This way both sides can benefit – guests don't have to give up their favourite pastime and the publican may even be able to make his pub more attractive – and keep customers.

Many working Britons are also doing without popular but expensive takeaway meals and are resorting to the good old homemade lunch sandwich. This behaviour is leading to bitter losses in the takeaway industry, but Tupperware® and thermos vendors, on the other hand, have seen their sales nearly double. Even the English "bookies", the betting shops, are benefiting and increasing their revenues since many Britons are trying to increase their wages through gambling winnings. It remains to be seen whether the majority of betters will succeed, yet it is remarkable that so many islanders are putting all of their eggs in one basket.

The compulsion to save money also characterises the situation in **Central and Eastern Europe**. For example, leasing customers can no longer pay for their vehicles and are turning them in. Some owe utility bills and are facing judicial enforcement – however there usually isn't anything left to collect.

Even in **Russia**, where in the opinion of economic experts every seventh person could be unemployed by the end of the year, people are staying calm, observant and reducing their consumption. People are preparing for the worst but hoping for the best. In general, hope seems to play a central role in managing the crisis in Russia.

In many areas the Russian government is no longer in the position to help its citizens. Whoever loses their job must rely – instead of on government assistance – on their family and the famous Russian improvisational talent, which has already made many impossible things possible.

The perspective in **China** is supposedly also characterised by confidence – at least according to the statements made by Premier Wen Jiabao. With currently more than 10,000 factories closed, he doesn't want to believe in an economic miracle and instead propagates that "confidence is more important than gold or money." The Chinese endure crises and at the same time maintain the confidence that it will soon be over. For this they use the expression "to eat bitterness" ("grin and bear it"). This means that you muddle through the crisis and at the same time hope that you will survive it.

Calmness also plays an important role in **India**. In particular, small and medium-sized enterprises, which experienced rapid growth in recent years thanks to outsourcing from the United States and Europe, must now fight for their survival. Just one year ago head hunters were counter-bidding for the salaries of qualified applicants – and now there are hardly any job offers. Yet most Indians don't like to talk about negative things. They try to see opportunities in every situation and explore all available options.

One last look takes us to Latin America, where in the middle of this crisis **Brazil** has surprised everyone with the news that more cars were sold in the first quarter of this year than ever before for this time period. People are getting a lot of support from the typically large Brazilian families, where everyone helps each other and works together to improvise the legendary "jeitinho brasileiro", i.e. "a little temporary solution" – apparently a genuine recipe for success since economic recovery in Brazil has already begun in the second quarter.

With all the various intercultural solution concepts, the question remains as to whether there is in fact any connecting link in the global village?

Yes – we think so. It is the principle of "hope" – maybe even the experience that you have already overcome worse things – that apparently connects the people of the world with one another and gives them strength in times of crisis.

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