

B1/B2 Cultural differences

Aims: To practise speaking skills by engaging in a discussion on European stereotypes.
To scan for information
To give a group presentation

Length of lesson: 60-90 mins

Level: YLs/Adults B1/B2 intermediate – but can be adapted to any level

Materials: Stereotypes - Worksheet 1
Flags and stereotypes – Worksheet 2
<https://europeisnotdead.com/european-stereotypes/>
<https://www.1cover.com.au/secret-traveller/national-stereotypes/>

Language: *I agree / I don't agree, I disagree, Before you go on, Can I say something? It seems to me, I think/believe, What I mean is, That is to say*

Procedure:

Warmer: Sts individually write down as many European capital cities as they can think of in 3 mins. Compare with partners and make a combined total. The pair with the most read them out. Other sts cross out their cities when they hear them. Any pair with a(ny) city(ies) left read theirs out. Continue until no cities left - are they all capital cities? Did they remember Edinburgh? Each pair gets 1 point for a correct capital. Who are the champions?

1. Give out quiz on stereotypes, worksheet 1. Sts complete individually and then check with partner.
2. Change partners. Give out worksheet 2. Check sts know all the vocabulary. In pairs, students discuss the questions on country stereotypes. Set time limit of 5 mins. Put pairs into groups of four, compare their responses, try to come to an agreement on all 8 stereotypes. This should take longer, but stop after 10 mins if agreement not reached. Each group then feeds back to the class their ideas – try and reach a class consensus. This should lead to some lively debate.
3. Put the following on the board:
 - world's strongest men and most beautiful women
 - macho and loud
 - polite and snobs
 - football addicts and bad listeners
 - hardworking but no sense of humour
 - lazy and negligent

4. In their groups, sts discuss which six countries are represented by these stereotypes. Stop after 5-8 mins, and give out national stereotypes, worksheet 3. Sts scan individually to see if they were right.
5. Move one member from each group to another group. Students create a new country with its own customs (including hand gestures, traits, rules, environment, etc.). They can draw on ones with which they are already familiar, adapt them and create new ones. They have 15 mins to do this, then each group needs to prepare to present their countries and “stereotypes” to the other groups and give reasons for their choices. Allow another 5-8 mins for them to prepare the presentation.
6. Open feedback. T comments on good language and boards some of the errors s/he heard. Sts correct as a class.

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Countries Quiz –Worksheet 1

1. Where do they drink a lot of beer?
2. Who are very loud?
3. Who are very passionate?
4. Where do people talk a lot about the weather?
5. Which people are scary?
6. Where is everyone nice?
7. Where do they love eating steak?
8. Which people like to smoke pot (marijuana)?
9. Where are the girls and the guys hot?
10. Which country has the reputation for being drinkers?

Choose from:

Australia	Italians	Canada	
Sweden	Jamaica	UK	Germany
Americans	Russians	Argentina	

Worksheet 3



PORTUGAL: Lazy and nostalgic?

An image many Europeans have about Southern Europe – including Portugal – is of being lazy. This often refers to the climate, and cultural habit of taking an afternoon nap. Portugal is often associated with sunny weather and beaches, which might also contribute to its image of laziness and negligence.



SPAIN: Fiesta, siesta and macho men?

Europe seems to have a clear image of what the Spaniards look like: “a nation high on fiestas, with stunning women who go to the bullfight dressed in miniskirts with their boyfriends and husbands who are so macho. And then there’s the siestas in the afternoon, and the partying at night. Elsewhere, Spanish people are said to be loud with a passionate character.



ICELAND: Unpunctual but Irresistible

One of the main stereotypes about Iceland is related to its size: Iceland has a very small population, of 320,000. Therefore it is said that ‘everyone knows everyone’ or that ‘everyone is related to everyone’. Another cliché is related to the beauty of the people there. That Iceland is home to the world’s strongest men and the world’s most beautiful women used to be a popular saying amongst Icelanders.



UNITED KINGDOM: Polite but snobs

Common beliefs about Great Britain are that British people are seen as being very polite, proper and sophisticated with an unhealthy tendency to be stiff, snobbish, unemotional or obsessed with class and status. Other common depictions include plenty of rain, bad food, and red telephone boxes and double-decker buses, which are common (tourist) attractions.



ITALY: Football addict and talkative fashionistas?

Europeans say Italians are chatterboxes, and bad listeners interested only in the sound of their own voices. It is also said that Italians are good-looking, crazy about fashion, or football addicts who never pay tax. Other common associations include the incredible coffee culture, or the love of pizza and pasta; with spaghetti almost sacred. It is also commonly stated that Italian people often say: “mamma mia!” or “va fan culo!” and that the Italian Mamma rules the roost.



AUSTRIA: Humourless hardworkers in Lederhosen?

Europeans often represent Austrian people dressed in a “Dirndl” or in a “Lederhose”. Regarding their national characteristics, Europeans would depict Austrians as rather fair-haired, serious, hardworking and lacking in any sense of humour. They would say that most Austrians are into winter sports and pretty well off financially. Another important aspect of the Austrian soul is the priority of domestic life. Austrians love to build, repair, extend, maintain, refurbish or modernise their houses. They also love gardening and spend hours in garden centres.