



**„ReliXchange“: Religion and Society in Egypt and Germany –  
– a German-Egyptian Youth Exchange**

# **INFORMATION KIT**

**For Participants**

## **Important Data**

### **For the exchange week in Berlin**

#### **Important phone numbers**

Person 1 (14km): XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Person 2 (14km): XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Pegasus Hostel: +49-30-2977360

Police: 110

Ambulance/Fire Brigade: 112

#### **Address of Your Accommodation in Berlin**

Pegasus Hostel Berlin  
Straße der Pariser Kommune 35  
10243 Berlin

#### **Closest Underground (U-Bahn) Station**

U Weberwiese

#### **Closest S-Bahn Station**

S Ostbahnhof

### **For the exchange week in Cairo**

#### **Important phone numbers**

Person 1 (14km): XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Person 2 (NHASD): XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

#### **Address of Your Accommodation in Cairo**

Al Saed Association for Education and Development  
65 El Kabesy Street  
El Daher, Cairo

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**Dates**

**Exchange Week in Berlin, Germany**  
27 October – 2 November, 2014

**Exchange Week in Cairo, Egypt**  
17-23 November, 2014

**Wrap-Up Seminar (separately in Berlin/Cairo)**  
6/7 December 2014

**Packing Checklist**

**Here are some important things that you should bring to Berlin...**

- Your passport
- Good walking shoes
- Towels
- Rain jacket
- Warm clothing incl. cap

**... and some important things that you should bring to Cairo**

- Your passport
- Good walking shoes
- Towels
- A light jacket
- Long trousers or long skirt

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### **Other important stuff to think about when packing your luggage**

#### **Weather and clothing in Berlin, Germany**

In autumn and winter it can sometimes get very cold in Berlin (including snowfalls), with temperatures varying between 15 and minus 1 degrees in October/early November. So you better put a warm jacket, cap, eventually scarf/gloves and some pullovers in your baggage. You should also be prepared for rainy days, where we will go out anyway – a rain coat is thus advisable, in addition you can bring an umbrella or buy it in Berlin. Take good and waterproof walking shoes as there will be outdoor activities!

#### **Weather and clothing in Cairo, Egypt**

In November, Cairo temperatures can vary between 14 and 26 degrees. So while Egypt is generally a warm country, Cairo can have some chilly days in November, and you might want to bring some light as well as some warmer clothing, i.e. T-shirts, light long-sleeve tops, shirts, sweater and a light jacket. As we will be visiting religious places, please be prepared for having to cover your arms and legs, so long trousers and long-sleeves will be helpful. Take good walking shoes as we will undertake some outdoor activities.

## **The Project Partners**

### **14 km – the shortest distance between North Africa and Europe (14km e.V.)**

14 km is a non-profit association seeking to encourage dialogue and cooperation between Europe and North Africa/the Middle East (MENA region). It is based in Berlin and organises projects which aim to bring people from the two regions together, bridging the gap between religions, cultures and social systems, promoting tolerance and mutual understanding. Through educational initiatives, creative approaches and networking, 14km seeks to create partnerships between individuals, organisations and communities from both regions.

### **New Horizon Association for Social Development (NHASD)**

NHASD is a Cairo-based non-governmental organisation dedicated to improving the quality of life of the most marginalized and underdeveloped communities in Egypt. It works through advancing sustainable community-based development and create initiatives which aim to help the poor, including the provision of fundamental social services such as healthcare and education, providing access to food and clean water, and encouraging participation. It is also active in the area of inter-faith dialogue on the national and international level.

## **The Exchange Project**

### **Aims and Content**

As an elected participant you already know that the project consists of an interfaith youth exchange, which 14km undertakes with its Egyptian partner organisation 'New Horizon Association for Social Development'. In the course of the exchange, 10 young Egyptians and 10 young Germans of different religious

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backgrounds spend one week in Germany (17.10-2.11.2014) and one week in Egypt (17.-23.11.2014). The project revolves around the principles of faith and traditions of the three Abrahamic faiths, the role and meaning of the corresponding faith groups in both countries, focusing on the position of religious minorities and on the further development of creative methods of international interfaith youth work with the participants. Thus, the project aims to provide you, the participants, with an intensive interfaith and intercultural experience, to offer new perspectives on the three religions in focus, and to work with you on ideas on how a tolerant and respectful coexistence can be achieved. At the same time, a set of new methods will be elaborated for (inter)national interfaith dialogue, in particular such methods which are sustainable among young people.

### **A Note on the Methods**

Although this is not the first interreligious youth project, it is still something special - among other things because we want to try out some new methods with you guys. No worries, it doesn't hurt! ☺ While many of the methods for interfaith dialogue work through explicitly cognitive means, we would like to work with you on some different approaches that put more emphasis on creativity, activity, self-organisation, and the means of arts and the media. Thus, we ask you to be open to experiencing new ways of approaching the topics of the exchange. Trust us and try them out even if you're not sure about what is going to happen from the very start. Also, we are really interested in what you think about it, and would like to develop the methods further with your help and participation. By the end of the exchange project, we would like to publish the methods that we developed together in English, Arabic and German, so that in the future anyone who is interested in interfaith dialogue can use them or get inspired for their own activities.

### **The trainers**

Sara-Duana Meyer (Germany, Egypt)

Gihan Abou Zeid (Germany, Egypt)

Gino Giovanni Santo (Germany)

Islam el-Ghazouly (Egypt)

### **The organisation and support team**

Anja Gebel (project management)

Andreas Fricke (project coordination)

Jade El-Zoghbi (language facilitation)

Houssein Ben Amor (language facilitation)

Caroline Bunge (public relations assistance)

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**The sites of the exchange: Berlin and Cairo**

In the following you will find some information about Berlin and Cairo, the two sites of your exchange. Please note that this can only be a very sketchy and incomplete overview, which is to serve merely as a brief introduction, providing a basis for you to find out more by yourself online and live during the two exchange weeks.

**Berlin**



*Berlin – Brandenburger Tor 04\_CC-by-Daniel Mennerich-NC-ND 2.0 on flickr*

Berlin is the capital city of Germany and at the same time one of the 16 federal states of Germany. It has a population of 3.5 million people and is the seventh largest urban area in the European Union. Its history dates back until at least 1237, when it was first mentioned in a deed.

Berlin is multicultural and cosmopolitan. Around 15% of its residents are of foreign origin. Because many of the Turks who in the 1950s were invited to Germany as guest workers ended up staying, Germany and especially Berlin have a large Turkish community. 5% of Berlin's population has a Turkish background, which means that Berlin has the largest Turkish population outside of Turkey. Also Poles, Russians and Arabs are represented with particularly large communities there. 3% of Berlin's population are made up of expats from other European countries and of Israelis.

Berlin's resulting cultural and social diversity creates a society that is comparatively plural and open minded towards different nationalities and religions. This multi-layered and colourful environment is an inspiration for artists, an appealing place for migrants and a chance of economical rise for businessmen. The city of Berlin is also known for well-respected institutions such as universities, research facilities, museums, and other attractions. Despite the fact that Berlin is the political hotspot of Germany, the city also offers a great cultural programme: An interesting historic and modern, an enormous variety of different cuisines, an great variety of music and many night clubs and cafés for one's enjoyment.

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**Cairo**



*Cairo skyline, Egypt\_CC-by-Safia Osman-NC-ND 2.0 on flickr*

Cairo is a very vivid and famous metropolis and the capital city of Egypt. Including the gathering ground the biggest Arabic city has a population approximately over 20 Million spread over 453 square kilometers, which makes Cairo the largest city in the Middle-East and second-largest in Africa after Lagos. It is located near the Nile Delta and was founded in AD 969. It lies very close to the ancient cities of Memphis, Giza and Fustat, near the Great Sphinx and the pyramids of Giza. This only remaining one of the seven world wonders was completed in 2470 BC and built by the order of the Pharaoh Cheops of Egypt.

Nicknamed "the city of a thousand minarets" for its preponderance of Islamic architecture, Cairo has long been a center of the region's political and cultural life. It is famous throughout the Arab world because of its large film and music industries, as well as because of the world's second-oldest institution of higher learning, the al-Azhar University (established in 975 CE). Today, the university is the foremost center of Islamic learning in the world and one of Egypt's largest universities with campuses across the country. In 1979, Cairo's historic city has been declared a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage. Concurrently, Cairo has established itself as a political and economic hub for the Arab World, with many multinational businesses and organisations operating out of the city, including the Arab League.

Cairo was the focal point of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, with tens of thousands of Egyptians gathering on Tahrir Square to demonstrate against the Mubarak regime.

Sources

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo>

Video: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/89/video>

<http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/01-Laender/Aegypten.html>

<http://www.reisebuero-aegypten.de/kairo-aegypten-reisen.html>

<https://www.nileguide.com/destination/cairo/overview/local-info>

[http://www.helles-koepfchen.de/die\\_sieben\\_weltwunder/die\\_pyramiden\\_von\\_gizeh.html](http://www.helles-koepfchen.de/die_sieben_weltwunder/die_pyramiden_von_gizeh.html)

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## **The religions in focus**

In this section you will find some initial information on Christianity, Islam and Judaism – the three religions that will be in the focus of the exchange. We are of course aware that there are many more religions and faith groups in both countries which are all worth looking at. Yet there is only so much you can focus on within a two-weeks project; so we decided to stick to these three major world religions – also because faith groups that have particularly many believers also have particular power over social, cultural and political questions in this world, which is also something that we would like to deal with.

Another caveat is in order: Please note that the information given here on the three religions can just be a very superficial overview over their principles, history and traditions. There is no space for differentiation in this info kit and many believers including many of you will see things very differently. So please take this just as a very first and brief word on the topic, from which we will start to learn, discuss and change our perspectives during the exchange.

### **Christianity**



*Cross in the fields, CC-by-Pavel P. 2.0 on flickr*

Christianity began in the 1st century and is based on the belief that the prophet Jesus is the Messiah and the son of God. It is the world's largest religion, with 2.2 billion followers, predominantly in Europe, North America and South America. The teachings of Christianity are based on the New Testament, the second part of the Bible, which is regarded as the Holy Book. Major holidays for Christians include Lent, Easter, Epiphany, Advent and Christmas. The places of worship are churches and cathedrals where priests run services.

The Holy Trinity is the belief that the one God of the universe is comprised of three parts: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the creator and sustainer of the universe. The Son is Jesus Christ, who is the son of God and appeared in human form over 2000 years ago to be God's messenger on Earth. The Holy Spirit lives inside every Christian, and has the power to encourage and help them in their time of need.

Traditional Christians believe in an afterlife, during which every spirit will end up in Heaven or Hell. There is also an intermediate state called Purgatory, in which those destined for Heaven will “undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven”. Hell is guarded by the fallen angel

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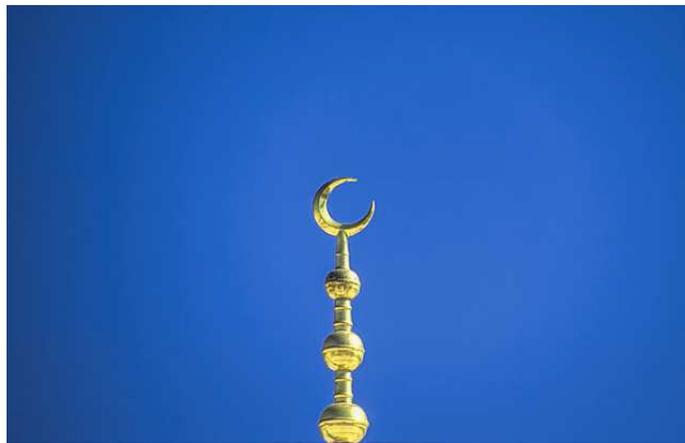
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Satan, who tempted Adam and Eve (the first man and woman) into committing the 'original sin', in which Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden for disobeying God. 'Original sin' is also the term used to mean that humans are naturally predisposed to sinful nature, and must repent in order to go to Heaven.

Catholicism is the most widely followed form of Christianity practised today. Catholics believe that the Pope is God's representative on Earth. In addition to that, other significant denominations include Orthodox churches, Protestantism (see 'Religion in Germany'), Baptism, Calvinism, Adventism and many more.

### Islam



Islam, CC-by-Edward Musiak-NC-ND 2.0 on flickr

Islam is the second largest religion in the world with more than a billion followers, mainly residing in North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Islam is rooted in Mecca (today Saudi Arabia) in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. Its followers are called Muslims, who believe in the existence of one almighty and omniscient God, who is called 'Allah', which can be translated as the “submission under the will of God”.

Islam's holy book is the Qur'an, written in classical Arabic language, consisting of the words of Allah, which were revealed to the prophet Muhammad (the final prophet of Islam) by the archangel Gabriel. The Muslims' place of worship is the Mosque, where the Imams preside over services.

The five pillars of Islam are the five practices that are the foundation of a life based on Islam. Firstly *Shahada*, the declaration of faith which professes that the only almighty god is Allah and that Muhammad is his messenger; *Salat*, the daily prayers five times a day serving as a reminder of Allah's almightiness and ubiquity; *Zakat*, the duty of a Muslim to pay a charity tax in order to support the poor and needy so that every Muslim in the community can live under acceptable and dignified conditions; *Sawm*, by which is meant the fasting in the month of Ramadan and *Hajj (Hadsch)*, the pilgrimage to Mecca that should be done at least once in a Muslim's life.

There are two main groups within the Islam faith group which are the Sunni and the Shi'a. They share the fundamental beliefs of Islam and the Qur'an as the holy book, but differences can be found in the religious practices based on history, ethnicity and political/social developments. The primary reason for the division of Islam lies in the 7<sup>th</sup> century when Muhammad died in the year 632, leading to a dispute over his

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succession as a caliph of the Islamic community spread across various parts of the world and consisting at that time of around 100.000 believers.

The official Islamic calendar (the Hijri calendar) has its foundation on the cycles of the lunar phases, where one year consists of 354.37 days (different to the Gregorian Calendar). The ninth month of the Islamic calendar is Ramadan, a month in which Muslims must fast during daylight hours. The holiday at the end of Ramadan is a feast called Eid al-Fitr. Other Islamic holidays include Eid al Adha, al Hijra, Lailat al Qadr, among others.

### Sources

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[http://www.islamisches-zentrum-muenchen.de/html/islam\\_-\\_der\\_glaube.html](http://www.islamisches-zentrum-muenchen.de/html/islam_-_der_glaube.html)

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sunnishia\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sunnishia_1.shtml)

<http://www.islamicbulletin.org/german/german.htm#a2>

### Judaism



*Dolne swiatlo iii\_ CC-by-Mammal-NC-SA 2.0 on flickr*

Judaism is the third of the three Abrahamic faiths next to Islam and Christianity and has the smallest faith group of the three. Last year, the Jewish population of the world was estimated to be around 13.9 million, which is about 0.2% of the world's population. The country with the highest Jewish population is Israel, while the United States have the second-largest population with a Jewish minority of between 5 and 7 million. Apart from that, people with Jewish belief are distributed all over the world.

Judaism is a strictly monotheistic religion, which means the belief centres around one single God. The roots of Judaism can be found in the Middle East approximately 4000 years ago. According to the Jewish religion, the prophet Abraham, the prime father of the Jewish people, adopted the Jewish faith when God selected him to call his people to submit to God. In the course of time Jews that were living in Egypt were experiencing hardships executing forced labour commended by the Pharaoh. Moses, who is seen as a messenger sent by God in order to free the oppressed Jewish folk, led the Jews away from Egypt to the land of Canaan (“land where milk and honey flows”, roughly corresponding to today’s Levant). After Moses

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led his people to Canaan, God gave him the teachings of the Torah, which is written in Hebrew language and the holy scripture of the Jews representing the fundamental principles and practices of Judaism.

Until the 21<sup>st</sup> Century different streams evolved within Judaism (Orthodox, Hasidic, Reform and Conservative). They differ especially concerning the observation of the principles given by the holy Torah. Unlike the Orthodox Jews, many Jews do not strictly follow all its principles and biddings.

Traditionally, prayer in Judaism happens three times a day. Shabbat is the weekly day of rest lasting from before sunset on Friday evening until the appearance of three stars in the sky on Saturday night. Jewish holidays include Passover, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Purim and Hanukah.

### Sources

<http://www.judentum-projekt.de/religion/judentumwasistdas/>

[http://www.hlz.hessen.de/index.php?id=swb1314\\_religion](http://www.hlz.hessen.de/index.php?id=swb1314_religion)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah>

## Religion in Germany

Christianity is the largest religion in Germany. The second largest one is Islam accounting for around 4% of the population. Berlin has a Muslim population of 220,000. There is also a significant Jewish population of 200,000.

The German constitution, written in 1949, guarantees freedom of religion and that no one may be discriminated based on faith. According to a survey by the Protestant church, around 33% of the German population do not associate themselves with any confession, around 30% are Catholics, around 29% Protestants, and the rest accounts for other religions.

Protestantism emerged in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century due to criticisms of the ruling Catholicism and in particular the demands for reform of Christianity by the priest Martin Luther stated in his 'Ninety-Five Theses'.

Germany's large population of people with a Turkish origin accounts for most of the Muslim minority. Most of them are Sunni Muslims, but there are also many Alevi, Shia and Ahmadiyya Muslims. Two famous German Muslims include Sami Khedira and Mesut Özil, who both play on the German football team. Around 97% of all Muslims live in states comprising former West Germany, due to the lack of labour immigration in the former East Germany before 1989.

There has been a Jewish population in Germany since the first millennium. Famous German Jews include Albert Einstein, Karl Marx and Hannah Arendt. Between 1941 and 1945, under the Nazi regime in Germany, Jews were targeted and systematically murdered in what was known as the largest genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Holocaust. Of the nine million Jews that lived in Europe before the Holocaust, around two thirds were killed and many others emigrated in fear of facing death. Before the Nazis came to power in 1933, the Jewish population was over 500,000. After the end of the Nazi-Regime, the Jewish population slowly began to grow again.

### Sources

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<http://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/zahlen-und-fakten/soziale-situation-in-deutschland/145148/religionszugehoerigkeit>

[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religionen\\_in\\_Deutschland](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religionen_in_Deutschland)

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### Religion in Egypt

Depending on different estimations, around 85 to 90% of Egyptians are Muslim, the majority of whom are Sunni who partly follow native Sufi orders. Most of the remaining 10 to 15% of the population are Coptic Christians belonging to the Oriental Orthodox Christian Church of Alexandria. Protestant churches and the Coptic Catholic church claim each around 300,000 Egyptian members.

The history of Coptic Christian in Egypt can be traced back to the first century and a phase of proselytising Christianity in Egypt (through Apostle Marcus). Christianity was the religion of the vast majority of Egyptians from 400–800 A.D. and still the majority after the Muslim conquest until the mid-10th century.

There is a small but historically significant non-immigrant Bahá'í population, estimated around 2000 persons, and a very small community of about 200 Jews which however dates 2300 years back in time. Before 1956 and according to the 1948 census there were 65,639 Egyptian Jews. They participated in the society and lived in relative harmony with the other religious and social groups in Egypt in the 19th and early 20th centuries. After the 1956 Suez Crisis, however, a great number of Jews were expelled by Gamal Abdel Nasser. Their Egyptian citizenship was revoked and their properties were confiscated. A steady stream of emigration of Egyptian Jews followed, reaching a peak after the Six-Day War with Israel in 1967.

A tiny but growing number of Egyptians identifies as atheist and agnostic. As there is no possibility to change one's official religious status, they are statistically counted as followers of the religion they were born with.

The constitution of 2014 states that Islam is the official religion, but that an absolute freedom of belief should be guaranteed which however refers mainly to Christians and Jews. Those are allowed to have their own personal statutes, meaning that all issues regarding family, religious affairs, and the election of religious leaders, for example, can be regulated on the basis of their own religious rules.

#### Sources

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion\\_in\\_Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Egypt)

<http://www.dw.de/egypts-constitution-supports-religious-freedom-expert-says/a-17371669>

### Prayer houses in Berlin

#### Churches

Evangelical St. Markus Church  
Marchlewskistraße 40  
10243 Berlin

Catholic Saint Antonius Church  
Rüdersdorfer Straße 45a  
10243 Berlin

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**Synagogues**

New Synagogue Oranienburger Straße  
Oranienburger Str. 28-31  
10117 Berlin

Synagogue Rykestraße  
Rykestr. 53  
10405 Berlin

**Mosques**

Sehitlik Camii  
Columbiadamm 128  
10965 Berlin

Umar-Ibn-Al-Khattab-Moschee  
Wiener Straße  
10999 Berlin

**Prayer houses in Cairo**

**Mosques**

Mohamed Ali Mosque  
Citadel of Saladin  
Cairo

Sultan Hassan Mosque  
Near Citadel of Saladin  
Cairo

**Synagogues**

Ben Ezra Synagogue  
Old Cairo  
Cairo

Sha'ar Hashamayim Synagogue  
17 Adly Street, Ismailia  
Cairo

**Churches**

Kasr El Dohara Evangelical Church

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El Sheikh Rihan St. 7  
Cairo

St. Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church  
Downtown  
Cairo

**The German and the Egyptian Culture  
A little Before-the-Flight Exercise**

Your trips to Berlin and Cairo are about to start. Now, before you fly over and meet with the other participants: How would you present your own culture to the others who might not know much about it? The following box gives you some space to think and write about it.

**Last, but not Least: Be Open**

The trip is about to start and it is going to be exciting. You will be meeting new people that might or might not have a different perspective on things, but definitely people that grew up in a different culture with different habits and rules, different knowledge, different religions etc. The advantage of an international encounter is that you as the participants will get to know a bunch of very interesting people and you will be able to learn an incredible lot about the respective other country, its history and culture. You will be able to widen your horizon, increase your general knowledge, and maybe make really good friends.

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Therefore, difference is great because it means enrichment, but sometimes it can be a bit challenging to deal with. While it is completely okay not to know how to deal with the unfamiliar, it always helps to be open to getting to know and understand it better. Before defending your opinion, take a critical look on it – may it be based on stereotypes that could be revised? Try to understand the positions, experiences and reactions of others – even if they seem strange to you in the beginning. When learning about other people and their cultures and beliefs, try to accept eventual differences between you and them – we don't have to always agree, yet we should always treat and look at each other with respect. Check your own perspective, your positive and negative sensations about things – to what extent might they be influenced by your own society, culture and its history? And how would you maybe view things differently if you had grown up somewhere else? How would you like to be encountered by someone else?

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