

- Support the Children – children experience the same emotions as their parents during transition and the country may not be as familiar to them as to you

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. With whom are we working? Age, social or ethnic background, faith links
2. What is my theological background? What assumptions do I make about how people come to Christ and the basics of faith?
3. What has worked for me in the past?
4. Will that work here? If not, why?
5. What questions do I need to ask?
6. Are people curious about me? What is different about me?
7. What connections can I make that indigenous Europeans cannot?
8. Where can my gifts be best used?
9. Who can mentor me in this situation?
10. With whom should I build relationship in order to be more effective and better supported?

Marion Knell

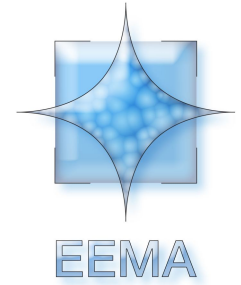
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“The European Evangelical Missionary Alliance (EEMA) has the vision to foster the welcome of non-European mission workers into Europe to join with us in our mandate to evangelistic mission”

What Every Mission Worker Should Know Serving in Europe



Europe is a jigsaw puzzle of

- Countries
- Languages
- Lifestyles
- Traditions

Which part of the puzzle are you going to? You will need to do some investigation on that particular location. Not all Europeans are the same any more than all Africans!

The Context

- The Social Climate

What shapes Europe? Here are 10 identified trends:

1. Globalisation
2. Service society – we look to be served
3. Performance-orientated
4. Media crazy – media shapes as well as informs
5. Superannuation – population is getting older
6. Loneliness – break up of the family unit
7. Individualisation – loss of community
8. Mobility – employment-driven
9. Fun Society – live for today
10. Fast-lane factor acceleration – speed of life

- The Political Climate
 - The European Union is enlarging
 - There is a growing Nationalism
 - Relations with Muslims have been strained
 - Elections produce apathy
 - Ecology is an important issue
- The Religious Climate
 1. Faith is a journey, not an overnight experience
 2. Experience not truth orientated
 3. Lack of Biblical background for the younger generation
 4. Peer group influence – youth churches
 5. Spirituality is OK, religion is not
 6. Pick and mix spirituality – consumerism
 7. Lack of purpose in life
 8. Desire for relationship and belonging
 9. Inclusive not exclusive – no ‘one-way’
 10. Desire for authenticity, life-style and belief
- The Financial Climate
 - There is much material prosperity
 - Inner City poverty exists
 - Debt levels are high
 - Property owning is a strong value
 - The cost of living is high
 - Transport is expensive
 - Access to social benefits is being restricted
- The Church Climate in Post-Christendom Europe
 - The Church is at the fringe not the centre of society
 - Values are political – the church must help shape them
 - Tolerance is the big value in a multi-faith society
 - Discovery of new ways of doing/being church
 - Disillusionment amongst older church-goers
- Educational Issues – the method of learning may be very different as well as the way schools are set up. Does your child need language support?
- Expectations for Ministry – how realistic are they? Have you researched the area in which you will be working? Europe is stony soil
- Appropriate methods – what has worked for you before may not work in Europe. Take time to learn how people respond
- Partnership with nationals – make every effort to partner with national Christians in their local churches or mission agencies. Both sides will benefit
- Spiritual Refreshment – make sure you have time for your own spiritual refreshment, particularly in your own tongue. Find out what facilities are on offer to you in your new country
- Communication with home – maintain regular contact with your sending body and be honest about how things are. Build bridges back into your community, particularly if you have children

Re-entry and Home Assignment

- Establish a base – don't just live out of a suitcase. Ensure you have a stable base from which to operate. The sending church is best agent for providing this
- Debrief – ensure you have time to tell your story and unpack what has happened to you whilst overseas with someone who understands. This ensures good closure on events and healthy integration of the experience in your life
- Time and Space to process – don't be so busy on your return that you don't have time and space to evaluate what has happened, what God is saying and what the next step should be
- National Links – build links back into your own culture and community, especially for a family
- Practical Skills – how much have things changed since you left? Do you or your children need to acquire new skills?

All of the above refers mainly to Western Europe. There may well be less prejudice and a cheaper cost of living in Eastern Europe

- **The Implications**
It is important to understand that culture shock affects everyone who moves cross-culturally, that there are physical, emotional and spiritual reactions. Making a good ending is as important as making a good beginning. Whilst change is immediate, transition is a process and takes time. One secret of integrating well is to find a culture mentor.
- **Cross-cultural stress**
 - Signs – anger, frustration, irritation, sleeplessness, headaches, and spiritual dryness are ways in which stress is expressed.
 - Reactions to stress – denial, suppression, withdrawal, insulation, compensation. There is the temptation to withdraw into dreaming, alcohol, Internet use and to compensate by getting involved in an easier ministry, e.g. amongst your own language group, rather than the task for which you came.
 - Increasing Stress – stress is increased by the degree of involvement in the new culture, the difference in value systems and temperament and by the degree of frustration it produces.

Pre-Field Orientation

- **Language Skills** – evaluation of language skills needed and plans to get them
- **Cross-cultural Experience** – a short experience outside of the passport culture is good preparation for the coming culture shock
- **Spiritual Skills** – developing resources for sustaining spiritual growth where church may be different and lack of language may make it incomprehensible
- **Relationship Skills** – marriage and parenting skills are necessary for sustaining relationships in an alien culture. Ask

questions about the models of relationship you grew up with and how they affect your current relationships.

- **Team Skills** – most mission workers are operating in multi-cultural teams and need skills to appreciate the different ways of working together and doing ministry
- **Practical Skills** – there are many life-skills needed in a new culture to deal with housing, finance, occupation, government etc.
- **Children's and Family Issues** – education, discipline, leisure pursuits, family expectations vary enormously across cultures and children also need help to make the transition. An understanding of the 'Third Culture Kid' identity is vital. Parents who express negativity to the new culture make it difficult for children to settle.

Coping with Transition

- **Time and Space** - transition takes time and it is important not to try to do too much too soon. Allow yourself space and time to adjust.
- **Realistic Expectations** – people come with high hopes and expectations. During the early days it is important to set realistic goals of what is achievable.
- **Coping with Stress** – know your own reactions to stress; accept the new culture as legitimate; find an escape valve when things get too much; build emotional security.
- **Communication** – find someone who will spend time with you and listen to you; don't be afraid to voice your concerns.
- **Mentors** – the best way to enter a new culture is to find people who are willing to take the time to explain to you how things work and go with you into new situations

Evangelism – What works?

- Relational, including virtual relationships rather than proclamational
- Seeker-oriented rather than programme-oriented
- Web-based evangelism
- Social action/compassion evangelism
- Networking across churches for ministries, e.g. youth, elderly
- Immigrant/asylum seekers/international student communities
- Pro Christo movement, strong on continental Europe:
 - Media
 - Local
 - Personal
 - Website
 - 8 languages
- 24/7 prayer initiative impacting towns

All of the above is only the first part of a guide to working in Europe as an evangelist. Someone has spoken of “the charisma of the foreigner”. As a stranger to these shores, you may well find openings that do not exist for the rest of us. It is important, too, to know your audience and develop cross-cultural antennae to pick up the shades of meaning in the spoken and unspoken communication. Be prepared to take risks, but also be prepared to do your homework to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

Life and Ministry

- Financial Issues – the cost of living is very high in Europe; know your means and investigate possible tent-making opportunities
- Social Issues – Europeans are not very community-minded; becoming accepted takes time; learn to read the signals people send by their body as well as verbal language

and there the church may be more traditional and entrenched in certain parts of society.

In addition, you will need to investigate the particular characteristics of the country in which you will be serving.

Culture Shock

- What is Culture?
Culture is everything a group of people does, believes and values. It is like an iceberg; you can only see 10% of it, the rest is beneath the surface. What you can see is food, clothing, and language. Beliefs, attitudes, values are all unseen and have to be observed and learnt.
- What is Culture Shock?
Culture shock has been defined as ‘The anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse’. In other words we feel lost, we don’t understand how life works on the social level.
- Cultural Transition
The movement between one culture and another has a characteristic shape which must be recognised and accepted. It begins with endings – saying goodbye and making good closures at the point of departure. It then goes through five stages:
 - 1 Fun: The excitement and adventure of experiencing new people, places and opportunities
 - 2 Flight: The urge to avoid everyone and everything that is different
 - 3 Fight: The temptation to judge people or things that may be different as bad or foolish
 - 4 Fancy: The willingness to learn and experiment with the new culture
 - 5 Fit: The ability to understand, embrace and participate in the new culture