**Unit 13: Cultural differences**

« Reading is a bridge from misery to hope »

Kofi Anan, 1938-2018, 7th Secretery-General of the United Nations

What is culture? Culture can be defined as all the elements which come together to form the way of thinking and acting which allows one group of people to be distinguished from another and it includes, among other things, a system of values.

In a business environment, understanding cultural differences is essential: different attitudes, different behavior, different values must be understood and accepted if successful business dealings are to take place.

In Europe, broadly speaking, cultural variations differentiate the citizens of northern countries from those of Southern countries. Experts have identified some of the areas in which these variations come into play:

* How the citizen relate to the state: Northern countries see liberty as substantive; the individual may do anything as long as it is not expressly forbidden by the state. In France or Spain, it is additive, you may do it only if the government says you may.
* The conception of what should be organized: in the north, management is a set of tasks to be achieved, and the structure is built for that purpose. In the south, the people involved are central, the organization is created to manage the relationships.
* The role of authority: northerners vest power in the office and southerners ascribe it to the person. In the north, it maybe difficult to find out who is in charge, whereas in the south, the signs of status are immediately perceptible.
* Meeting: in the north, meeting invariably begin on time, tend to be rather formal and rarely overrun the allotted schedule. In the south, they are full of interruptions, spontaneous changes and disregard for agenda and time. The two systems do not mesh.
* Attitudes to work: one of the greatest fallacies is that northerners are hard-workers and southerners are lazy.

Nevertheless, attitudes to work differ immensely. People from northern, protestant traditions «live to work », while southern Catholics « work to live ».

* Self-expression: one of the most obvious and frequent causes of north-south misunderstanding is the extent to which people express themselves. Southerners tend to be spontaneous, colorful, and physical; northerners are more organized, regulated and distant.

**Comprehension :**

1. What is the meaning of substantive liberty?
2. What does organization in northern and southern countries aim for?
3. Are meeting more organized in the south or in the north?
4. What is the difference between “work to live” and “live to work”?

**Vocabulary:** Find in the text synonyms of these words:

Differentiate – contain – principles – essential – prohibit - function – implicate.