

H2020

LOG- BOOK



**YEAR
1**

Towards
the acquisition of
intercultural skills

HELLO!

NovaTris, Cross-border Skills Center of the University of Haute-Alsace (IDFI-ANR-11-IDFI-0005), would like to give you this logbook to use throughout the three-year training period of your ITN Marie Curie programme as a practical tool to keep in touch with others, your environment and – last but not least – with yourself.

Indeed, we invite you to use it as a companion in which you can note down your thoughts about new encounters, discoveries about culture, language or simply as an occasional co-traveller you open only once in a while. One way or another, we hope that you will find in this logbook contributions which can help you deepen your understanding of another person's culture and enhance personal growth.

We would like to encourage you to learn the language of the country in which you are going to live for about three years or, maybe, learn the language of your PhD-partner. That is why you will find an introduction to the principles of Tandem Language Learning at the end of this logbook.

We hope you will enjoy using this tool: please make it your own and write, draw or paste in it anything you like!

Do not forget: motivation is energy. That is why you will find regular invitations to write down your thoughts, your desires, your successes and failures so that you can make a fresh start whenever the PhD-process gets a bit hard for you.

Above all, we would like you to regard your experience as a living phenomenon, a dynamic experience which you can mould for yourself and add your own personal touch.

Yours sincerely,

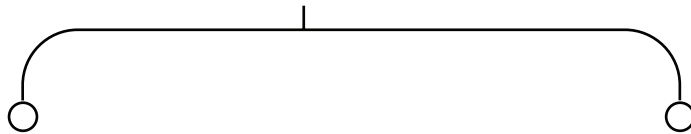
The NovaTris Team.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?



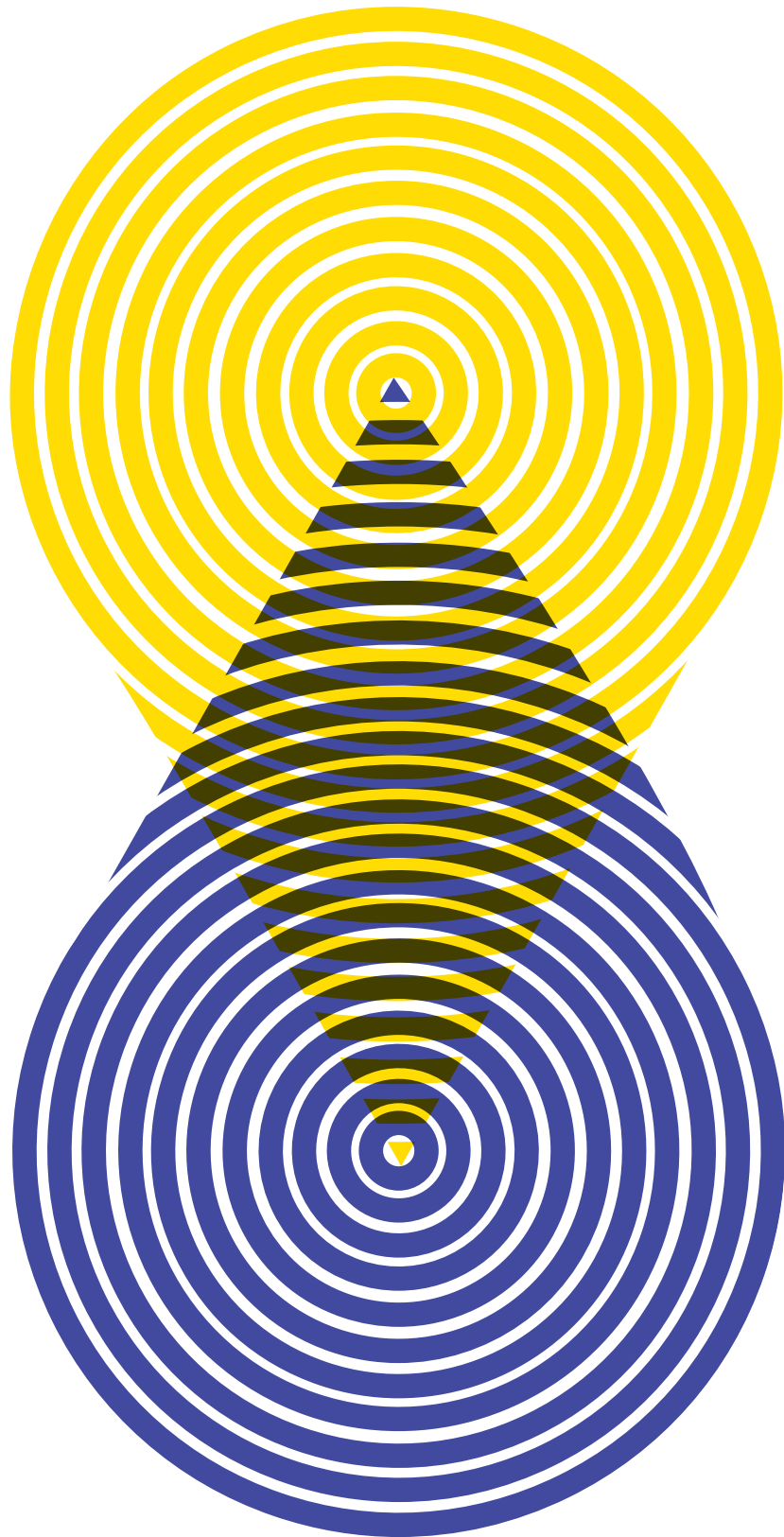
• WRITING •
MYPhD



WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

YOUR FEARS MAYBE?







**How I felt about
this meeting?**

(1=very pleasant ...
5 = very unpleasant)

**The things I learned
today about him/her.**

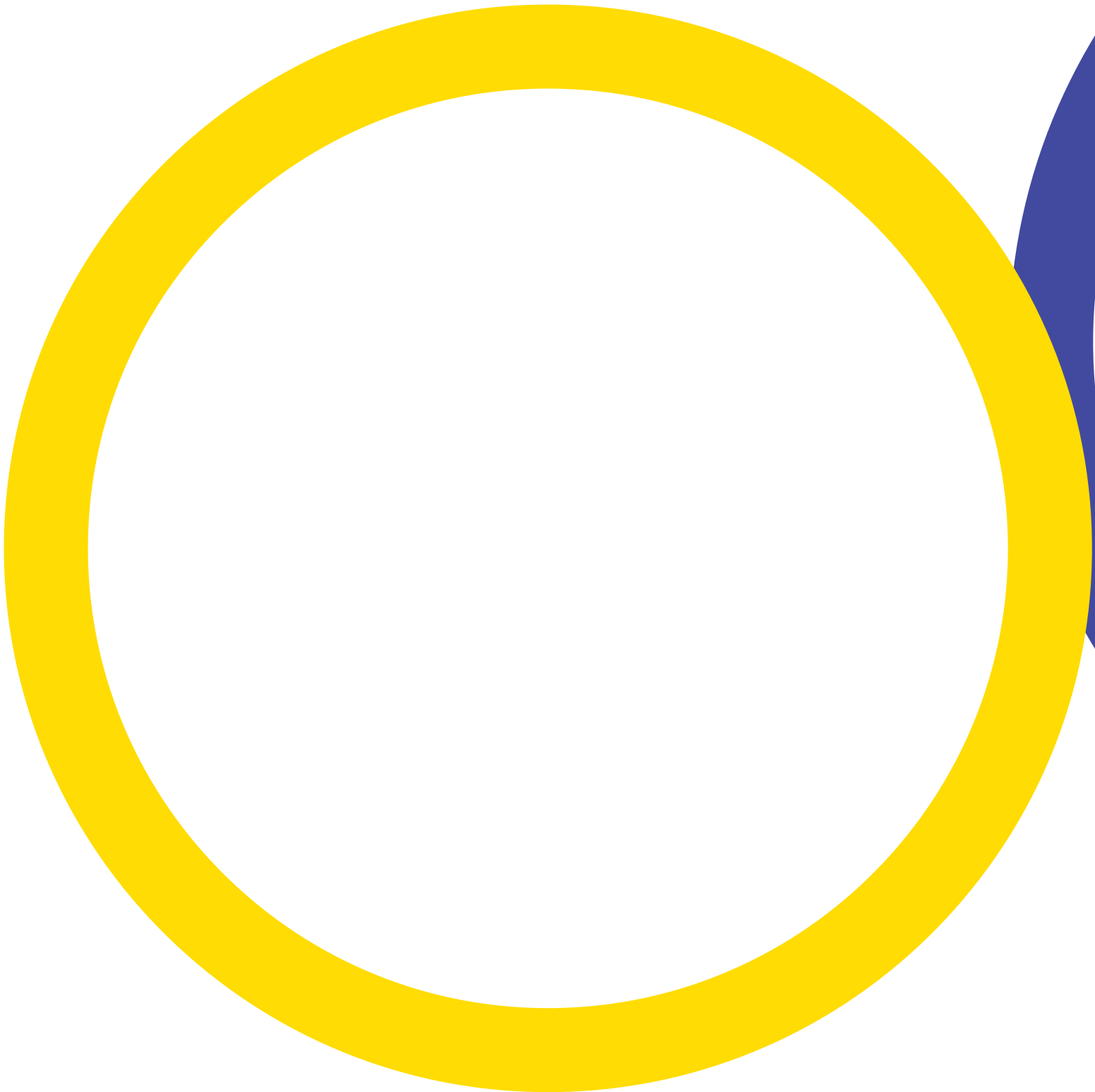
Questions I would like to ask next time.

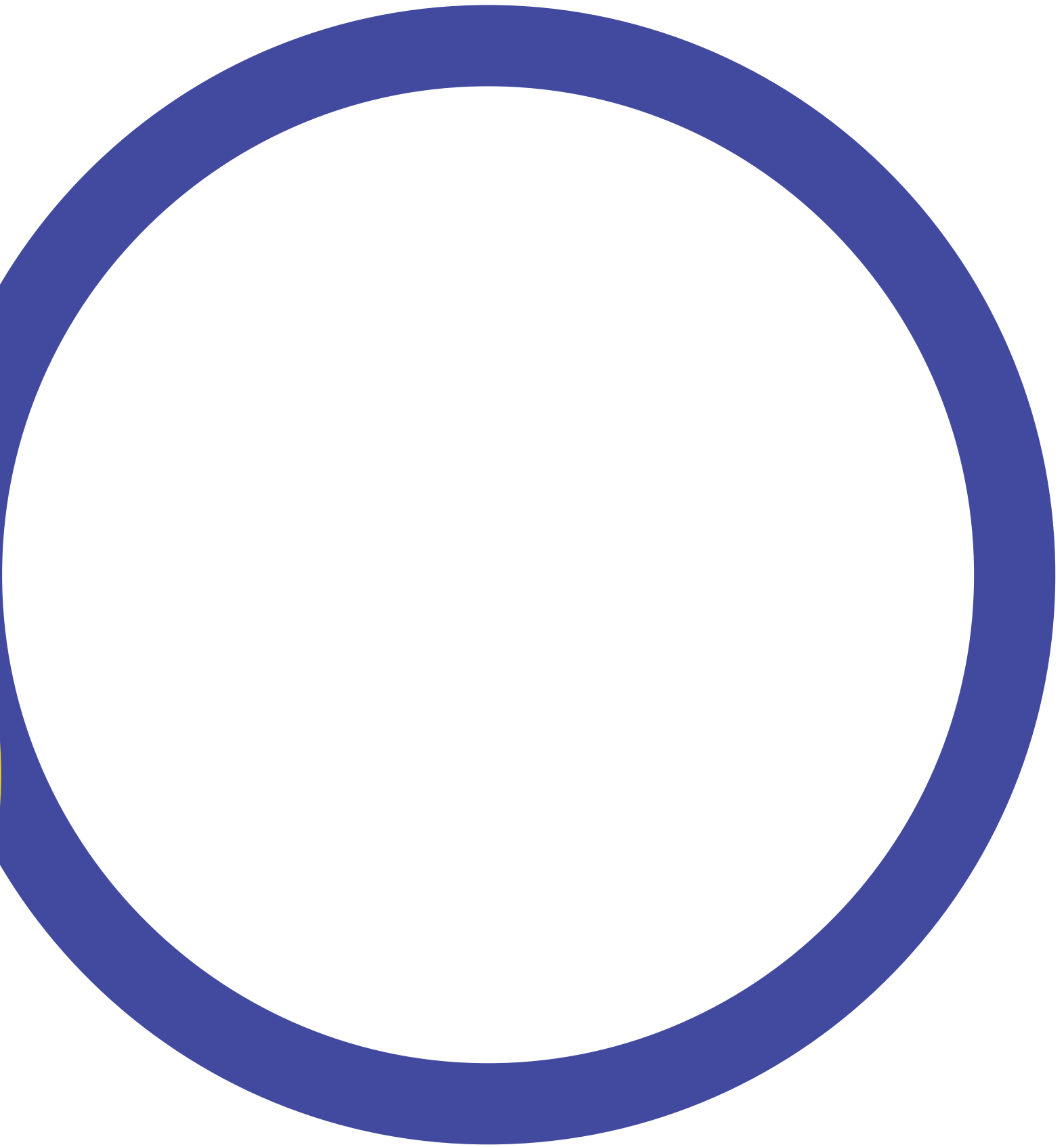


What have I encountered?

Which challenges have I had to face?

What new skills have I used?







The paradigm of coherence in the traditional concept of culture: that which unifies

By Stefanie Rathje

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Our everyday understanding of culture is characterized by an expectation of uniformity. The most common understanding of culture is one that imagines a high level of internal uniformity within a social system. Previously, this concept was limited to contexts of ethnicity or nationality (e.g. "Italians dress smartly"), while today common characteristics are often ascribed to quite different social systems of various sizes (e.g. "the liberal values of the Christian-European West", "Our customer-oriented corporate culture, "The cooperative leadership culture among women"). These formulations share a similar understanding of culture as an expression of coherence. The contradictory nature of these assertions becomes clear when we, for example, meet a sloppy Italian, when it occurs to us that the local janitor with dictatorial tendencies is indeed a European, when we reflect on the immense complexity of international companies, or even on our authoritarian class teacher who was far from cooperative and yet a woman, but this does not prevent us from continuing to seek that which unifies these groups. The idea of cultural coherence has a long tradition. Herder imagined cultures based upon a unifying principle he called the *Volksseele* ("spirit of the people"), leading to comprehensive social homogeneity. The works of respected ethnologists from the first half of the 20th century continued this notion of uniformity, which led them to define culture in terms of "internal coherence" (Kluckhohn, 1949) or as a "consistent pattern of thought and action" (Benedict, 1934) within human groups. Even under later thinkers, culture is described as the "collective programming of the mind" (Hofstede, 1984) or as a "universal organization and typical orientation system for a given society" (Thomas, 2003). These so-called cultural standards appeared to provide a consistent description of structured general principles. Coherence as a sign of culture even drives certain managers within large corporate organizations as they attempt to standardize their corporate culture in the name of competitive advantage (cf. Peter / Waterman 1982) through the establishment of certain shared assumptions, values and artefacts

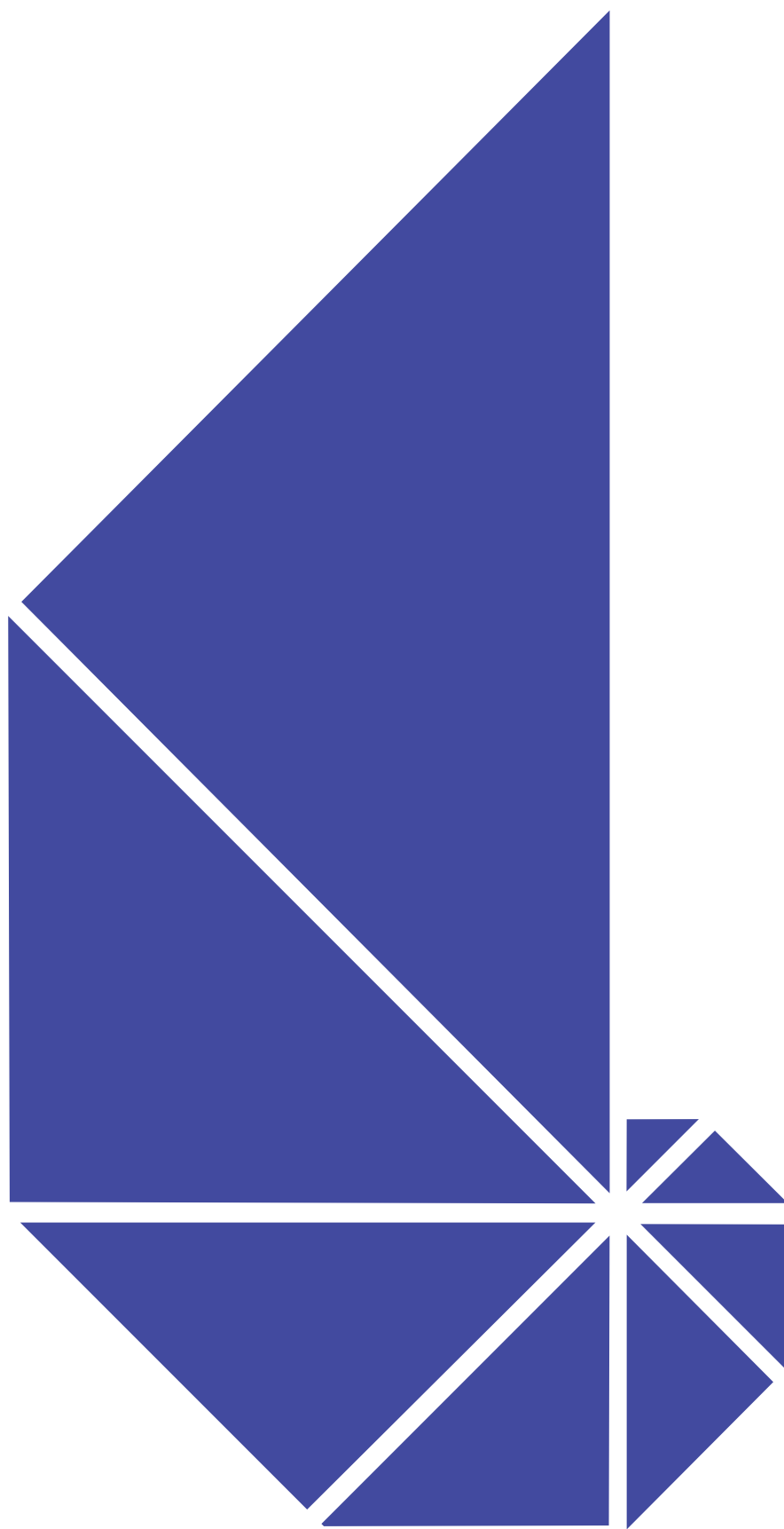
(Schein, 1995). The concept of cultural uniformity has already been persuasively criticized within various scientific disciplines. In the field of sociology, Max Weber describes the fragmentation of social units due to internal functional specialization into a variety of "of ultimate positions toward the world" (Weber 1922, translation by author). Cultural transfer research in the fields of linguistics and history has illuminated "various penetration and adoption processes" between national cultures (Espagne / Greiling, 1996) and reveals national territories to be "artificial things whose own identity is legitimized not only through the foreignness evident between the categories of 'at home' and 'abroad', but also through the appropriation of particular aspects of that very foreign thing" (Espagne / Greiling, 1996). The postmodern philosophers also recognize a radical plurality of general cultural principles and lifestyles within contemporary societies (Lyotard 1986, Welsch 1991). Subsequently, the bearers of culture to which the concept of cultural uniformity was usually attached have been dismantled or "deconstructed". This is especially clear in the narrower field of postcolonial studies in which cultural phenomena exist as the results of complex historical processes and the vehicle of civilization known as the "nation" is revealed to be a purely discursive construct. In the organizational sciences the concept of uniform business cultures is exposed as little more than the wishful thinking of managers seeking simplicity in a complicated and even contradictory corporate environment (Martin 1992). Even the assumed bastions of cultural consistency such as the division of human beings into two discrete gender groups with certain "cultural" signs has been called into question as a social construct by feminist research (Butler 2003). To be able to examine cultural phenomena in an environment lacking uniformity, therefore, dynamic and highly-flexible concepts must be employed. Bhabha, for example, describes such a process in the communicative negotiation that takes place within cultures in defiance of internal uniformity as "hybridization". Welsch likewise comes to the conclusion that cultures are "internally characterized by the pluralization of possible identities" and externally show "contours that transcend traditional borders." (Welsch). As a result, Welsch offers a new perspective beyond existing limitations of cultural composition in his formulation of "transculturality".

The Definition of Culture: An application-oriented overhaul (2009) (<http://stefanie-rathje.de>)

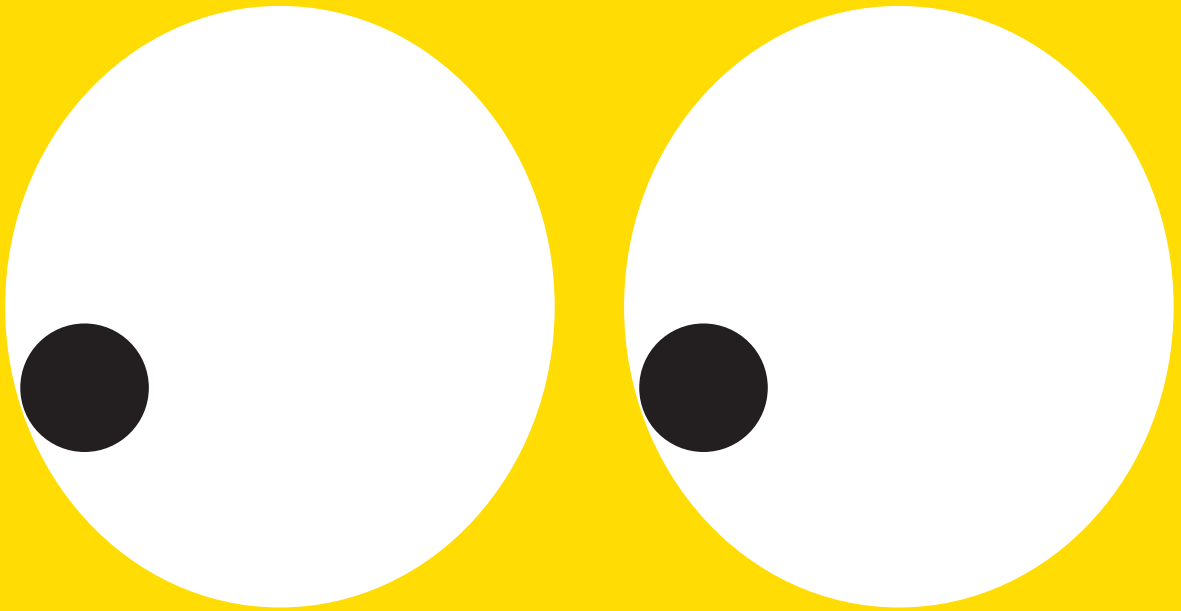


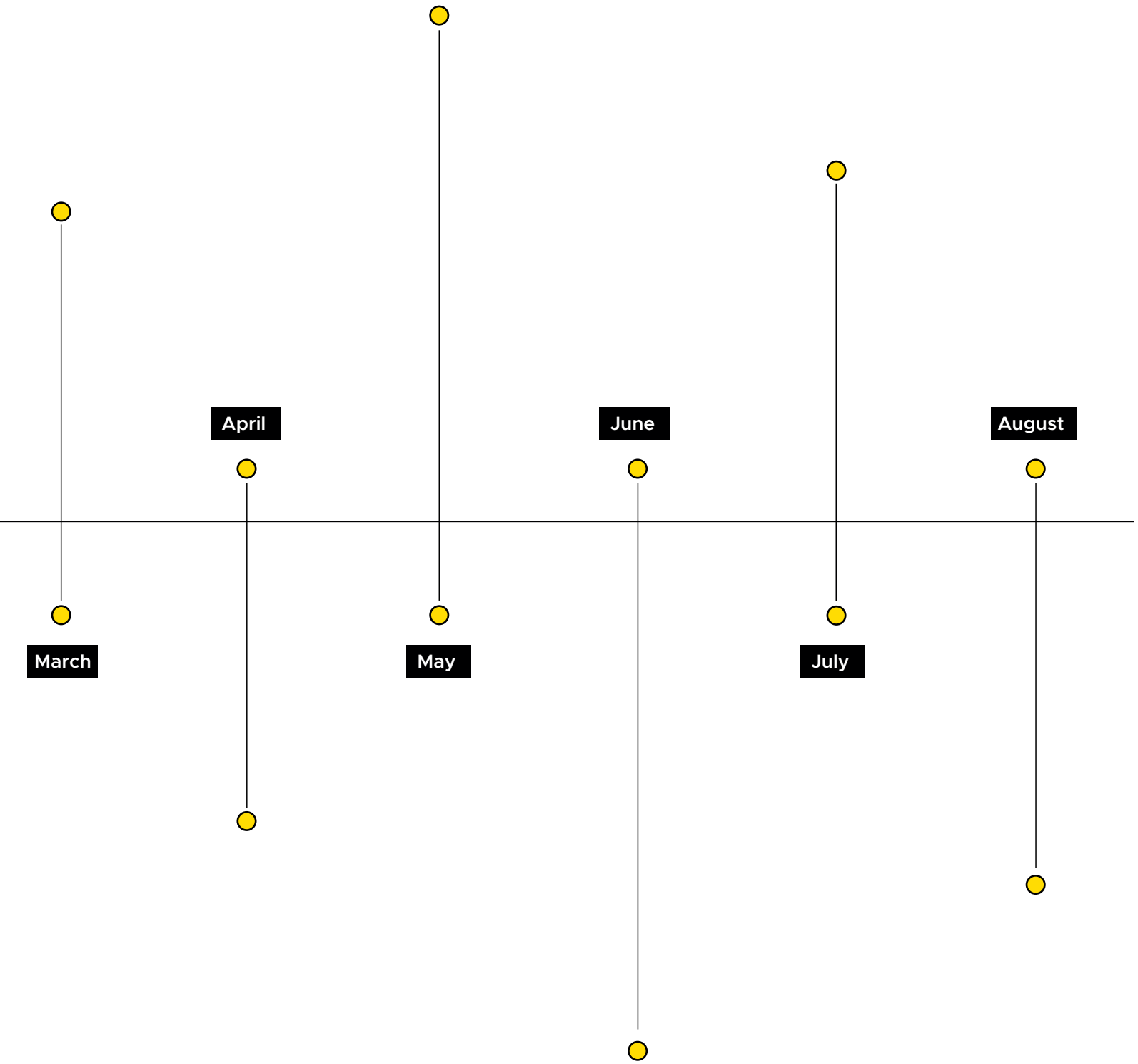
New words

In the past and still today, there are many controversies about how much our intelligence relies on our ability to keep ideas in our mind. Nevertheless, memory and intelligence do appear to be closely related and this may be even more true for learning a language. So take every possible opportunity to write down new words! At the end of the LogBook, you will find an intercultural glossary to help you summarize all these new words.



Time to look back







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Séverine Clément
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