

A FRIENDLY, MULTICULTURAL WORKPLACE

A TOOLKIT FOR TRAINERS, MANAGERS, HR PROFESSIONALS AND
TRADE UNION LEADERS



Module V

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Culture map by Eirn Meyer

WHAT IS A CULTURE MAP?



Basic assumption

- Erin Meyer created her map based on years of experience, research and observation.
- The basis of this theory is the assumption that there are **invisible cross-cultural boundaries** that influence how we perceive reality, how we react to it and how we act within it.
- These differences arise from the **history, language, geographical location** and other conditions in which a culture has been shaped.

Basic assumption

- If we ignore cultural differences and focus on ‘individuality’, we inevitably **choose to judge the world from the perspective of our own culture.**
- Our behaviour is determined simultaneously by **cultural and individual differences.**
- The theory assumes the existence of **eight basic dimensions** that differentiate cultures and nations.
- The dimensions described can also be used to **describe a unique organisational culture.**

Eight basic dimensions

1. **Communication**
2. Trust
3. **Leadership**
4. Persuasion
5. **Decision making**
6. Dealing with differences of opinion
7. **Feedback**
8. Planning and timing

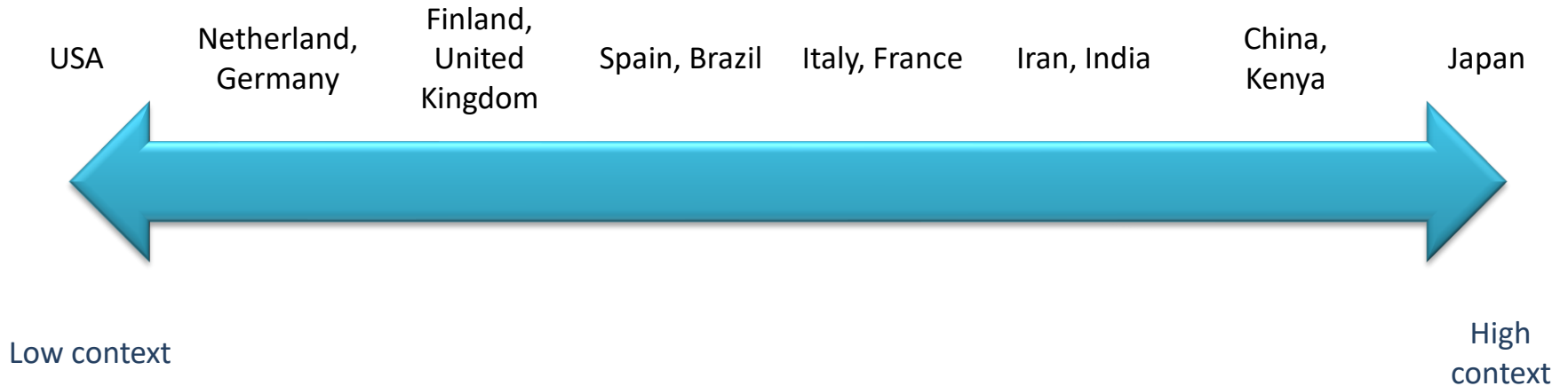
THE EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF THE CULTURE MAP



Communication

- **Low-context cultures:** simple, clear and precise messages; message expressed directly.
- **High-context cultures:** sophisticated, nuanced, subtle messages; message 'between the lines', 'given to understand' rather than expressed explicitly.

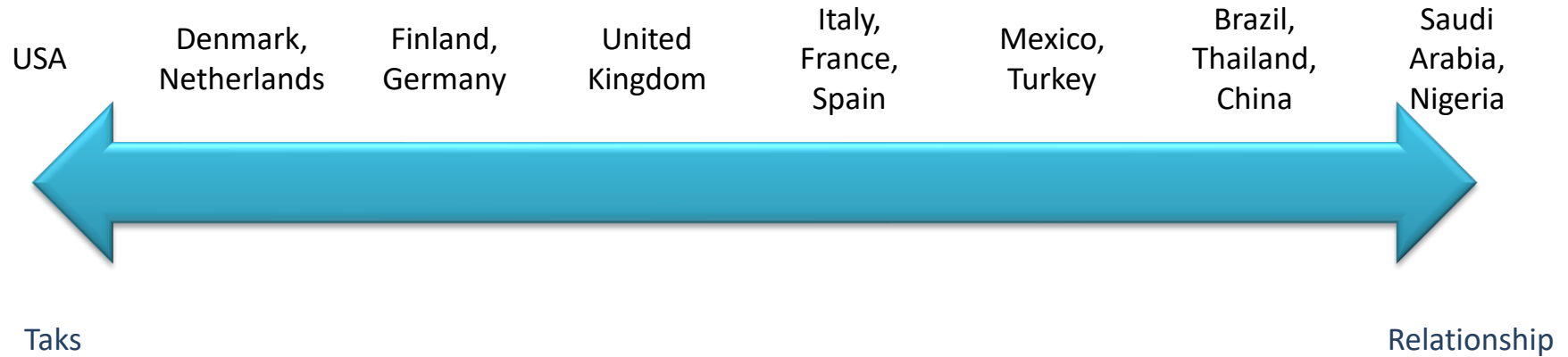
Communication



Trust

- **Task orientation:** the basis of trust is successful business cooperation; a hands-on approach to relationships - the ease of making and breaking relationships.
- **Relationship orientation:** the basis of trust is relationships outside of work: spending time together, talking about private matters, etc.; relationships are built over a long period of time but are also long-lasting and a source of loyalty.

Trust



Leadership

- **Egalitarian cultures:** small distance between boss and subordinates; flat organisational structures; ideal boss: person who organises and supports the work of equal experts.
- **Hierarchical cultures:** large distance between boss and subordinates; hierarchical, vertical organisational structures; ideal boss/boss: strong, articulate, 'know-it-all' person, imposing direction on others.

Leadership

Denmark,
Netherland,
Sweden

Israel,
Australia

Finland,
Canada

United
Kingdom,
USA

Germany,
Brazil

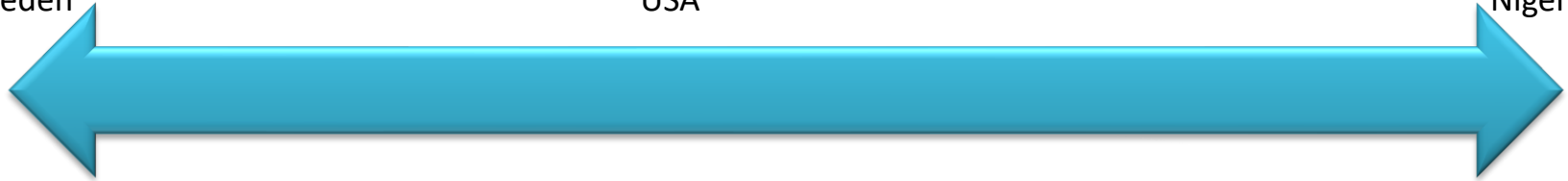
France,
Italy, Spain

India, China

Japan,
Korea,
Nigeria

Egalitarianism

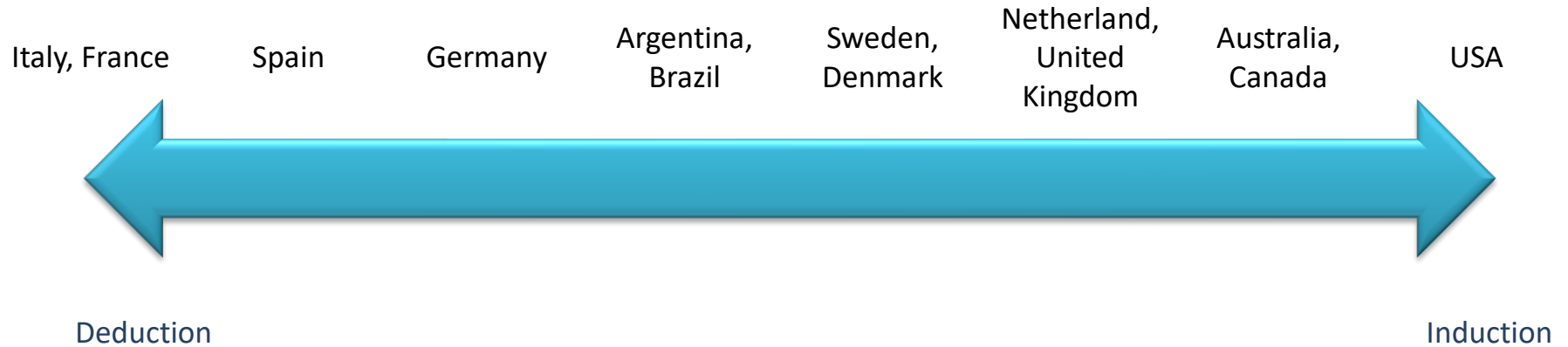
Hierarchy



The art of persuasion

- **Inductive cultures:** theory first, then practice; research and assumptions first then conclusions and ideas.
- **Deductive cultures:** practice first, then theory; conclusions and recommendations first then theoretical basis and justification.

The art of persuasion



Decision-making

- **Consensus cultures:** decisions made collectively; seeking unanimity.
- **Cultures preferring top-down decisions:** decisions made by those at higher levels of the hierarchy.

Decision-making

Japan

Sweden,
Netherlands

United
Kingdom

USA,
Brazil

France, Italy

India

China

Nigeria



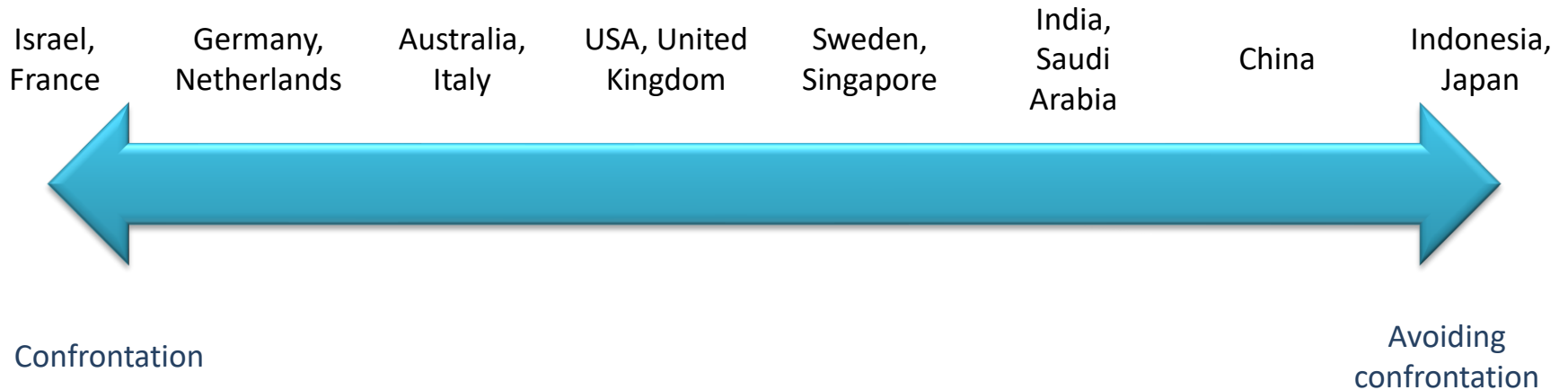
Consensus

Top-down

Dealing with differences of opinion

- **Confrontational cultures:** differences of opinion and lively discussions are a positive thing for the team and the organisation; open confrontation is seen as a natural element of cooperation and does not negatively affect the relationship between colleagues.
- **Cultures avoiding confrontation:** differences of opinion and discussions are a negative element of cooperation; open confrontation is seen as something negative and disruptive to the harmony of cooperation.

Dealing with differences of opinion



Feedback

- **Direct cultures:** feedback given directly, openly and honestly; no softening or mitigation; criticism allowed in the presence of third parties; frequent absolute terms: ‘totally inappropriate’, ‘completely unprofessional’, etc.
- **Cultures preferring indirect criticism:** gentle, subtle, diplomatic communication; presence of softening and mitigations (e.g. additional positive information); criticism only ‘face-to-face’, frequent conditional terms: ‘kind of inappropriate’, ‘somewhat unprofessional’.

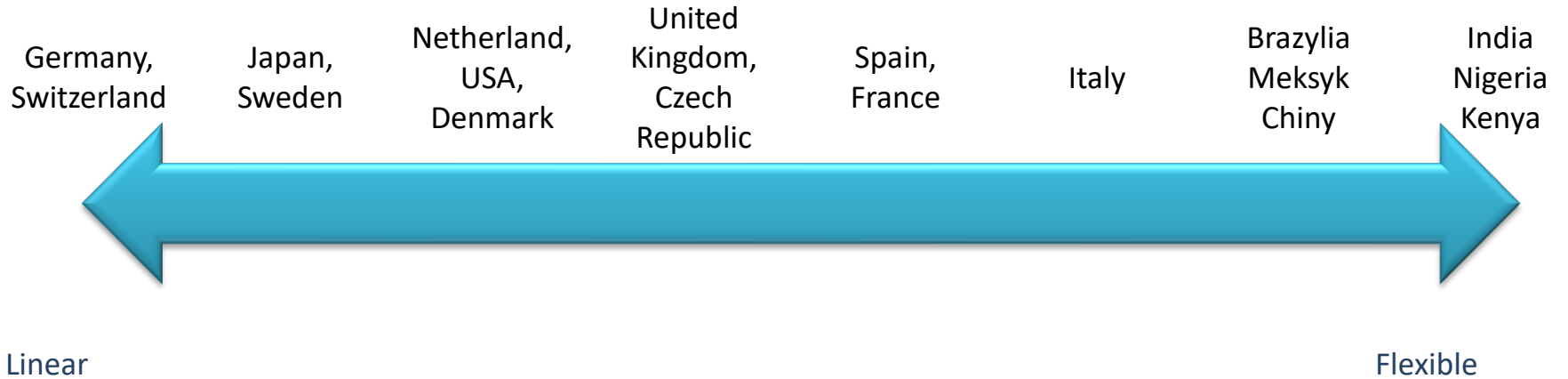
Feedback



Time and planning

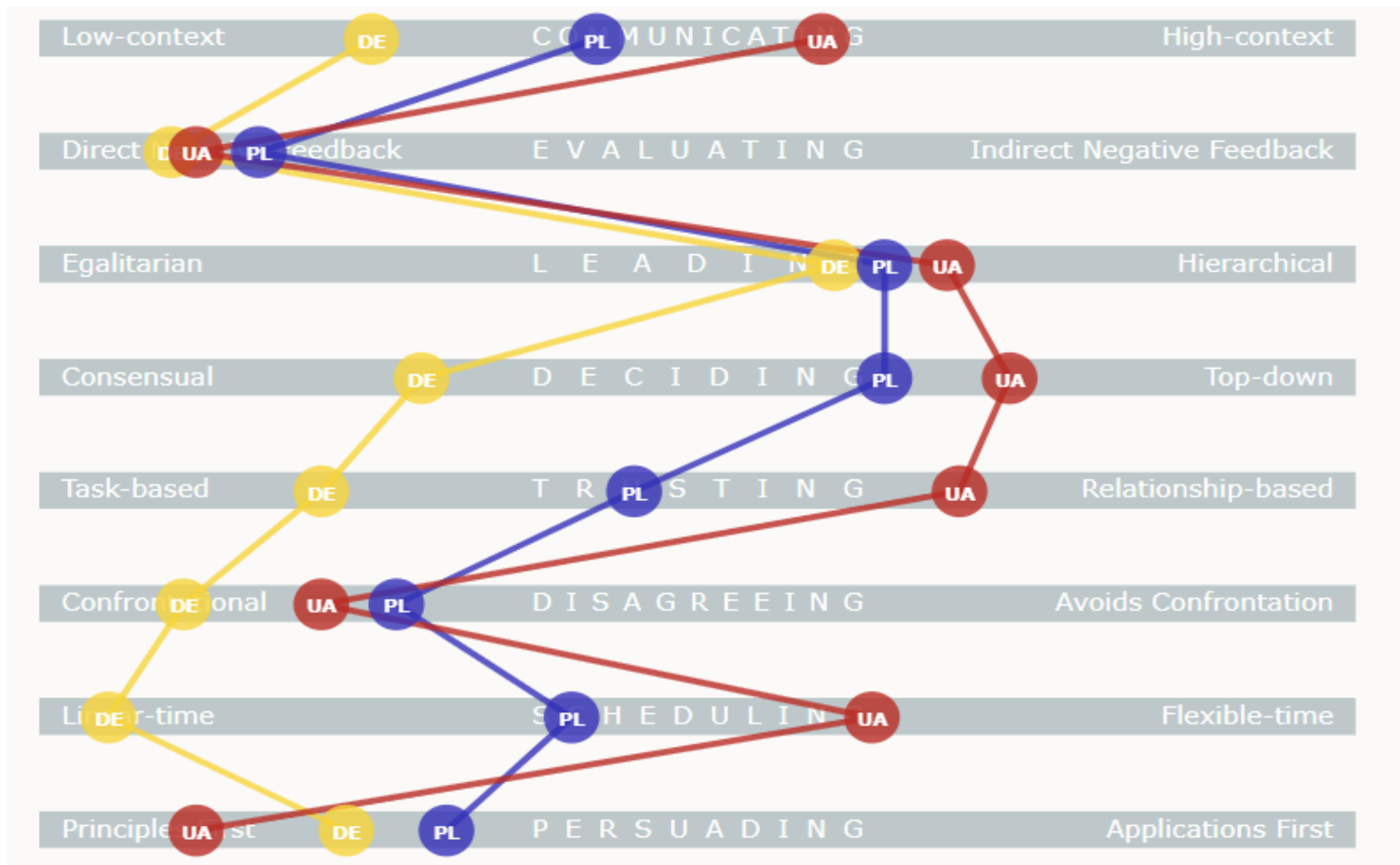
- **Linear cultures:** undertakings are carried out as sequences of individual steps; the previous one must be completed before the next task can be started; rather one task at a time; focus on deadlines and schedules; emphasis on punctuality and 'good' planning.
- **Flexible cultures:** undertakings are carried out in a fluid manner and the sequence of tasks may change when new circumstances and/or opportunities arise; multiple steps are carried out simultaneously; flexibility valued more highly than good organisation and punctuality.

Time and planning



POLAND AND ITS NEIGHBOURS





SUMMARY



Worth remembering!

- ✓ There are **invisible cross-cultural boundaries** that influence how we perceive reality, how we react to it and how we act within it.
- ✓ If we ignore cultural differences and focus on 'individuality', we inevitably **choose to judge the world from the perspective of our own culture.**
- ✓ More important than where our country is on the cultural map is what **our position is in relation to the country we are currently working with.**
- ✓ Being aware of intercultural differences and having a constructive conversation about the needs arising from them helps to **avoid misunderstandings and to establish meaningful cooperation.**

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Material based on a book by Erin Meyer „*The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business.*”

