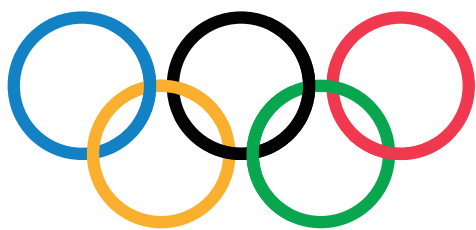
The logo features a large white arrow pointing upwards, which forms the letter 'U' in the word 'UP'. The word 'GRADE' is positioned above 'UP', and '2WORK' is below it, with the '2' in orange and 'WORK' in white.

GRADE  
UP  
2WORK



# OLYMPIC TOOL

**ESF**  
INVESTEERT IN  
JOUW TOEKOMST



**stebo**  
ondernemend  
voor de samenleving

AGENTSCHAP  
INTEGRATIE &  
INBURGERING



**KU LEUVEN** **HVA**  
ONDERZOEKSIJNSTITUUT VOOR  
ARBEID EN SAMENLEVING



## EXERCISE 2

### Cultural preferences

#### 1. Goal

In this exercise of the Olympic tool we are going to work with behavioral preferences, which are relevant on the Flemish work floor.

A behavioral preference is usually a form of manners, a behavioral expression or a way of functioning. It is about acting yourself or others according to values and norms. It is not about skills.

Every culture is situated somewhere on a 'continuum of behavioral preferences', with a pronounced preference pole at the beginning and at the end. The two preference poles are extremes, opposites of each other.

Every culture encourages certain behavioral preferences in everyday life and thus also in the workplace.

An example of a behavioral continuum, relevant in the workplace.



We have selected preferred poles for five topics that are relevant in the workplace:

1. Positioning - profiling: this is how I profile myself
2. Equality: me and other colleagues
3. Hierarchy: me and my boss
4. Task/Humanity: Me and My Attention
5. Working style: me and my working style.

In Flanders, certain behavioral preferences dominate on most work floors. They also dominate in most jobs. We incorporated these dominant behavioral preferences in the exercise.

## Inspiration for the exercise

Several models inspired us: Hofstede's culture dimensions, Pinto's F and G cultures, Hall's cultural factors, Erin Meyer's culture map, Trompenaars' culture model/ 7D model. Each of the models provides a continuum with preferred poles between which cultures can be situated. See further under 6. Inspiration.

We supplemented these theoretical insights with practical experiences of job coaches who coach employees with a migrant background on the work floor.

## Results of the exercise:

- In this exercise, your coachee discovers where he is on the cultural continuum with respect to five workplace themes: profiling, equality, hierarchy, task/people orientation, work style. Which pole of preference does he tend towards? How does he stand in the workplace?
- The coachee discovers whether his preferences match those that dominate on the Flemish work floor.
- The coachee gains insight into his resilience to deal with these differences.

## 2. Items in the theme

In this exercise, we work with 23 preference poles. These fall under 5 work floor themes.

### This is how I profile myself

1. I don't tell others my opinion often I tell others my opinion often.
2. I follow the rules of the organization I choose my own rules.
3. You get respect from others by the status of your family You get respect from others by good behavior.
4. I follow the ideas of the group I choose my own ideas.

### Me and other colleagues

5. A colleague must be of the same gender A colleague can be male or female.
6. A colleague must be young A colleague can be young or old.
7. A colleague must be of a certain nationality A colleague can be of any nationality.
8. You have to get on well with all colleagues You don't have to get on well with all colleagues.

### Me and my boss

9. I do not address my boss myself I address my boss myself.
10. I always do what my boss says I think along with my boss. I express my opinion.
11. A boss should control staff A boss should help staff.
12. The boss decides alone The boss decides after consulting the personnel.

### Me and my attention

13. I think it is important that a colleague does his work well I think it is important that a colleague is nice.
14. I only want contact with colleagues at work I also want contact with colleagues outside work.
15. I avoid discussions at work I sometimes have discussions at work.
16. I think it is important to get a bonus at work I think it is important to have a good atmosphere at work.
17. I do not show my emotions I do not show how I feel I show my emotions. I show how I feel.

## Me and my work style

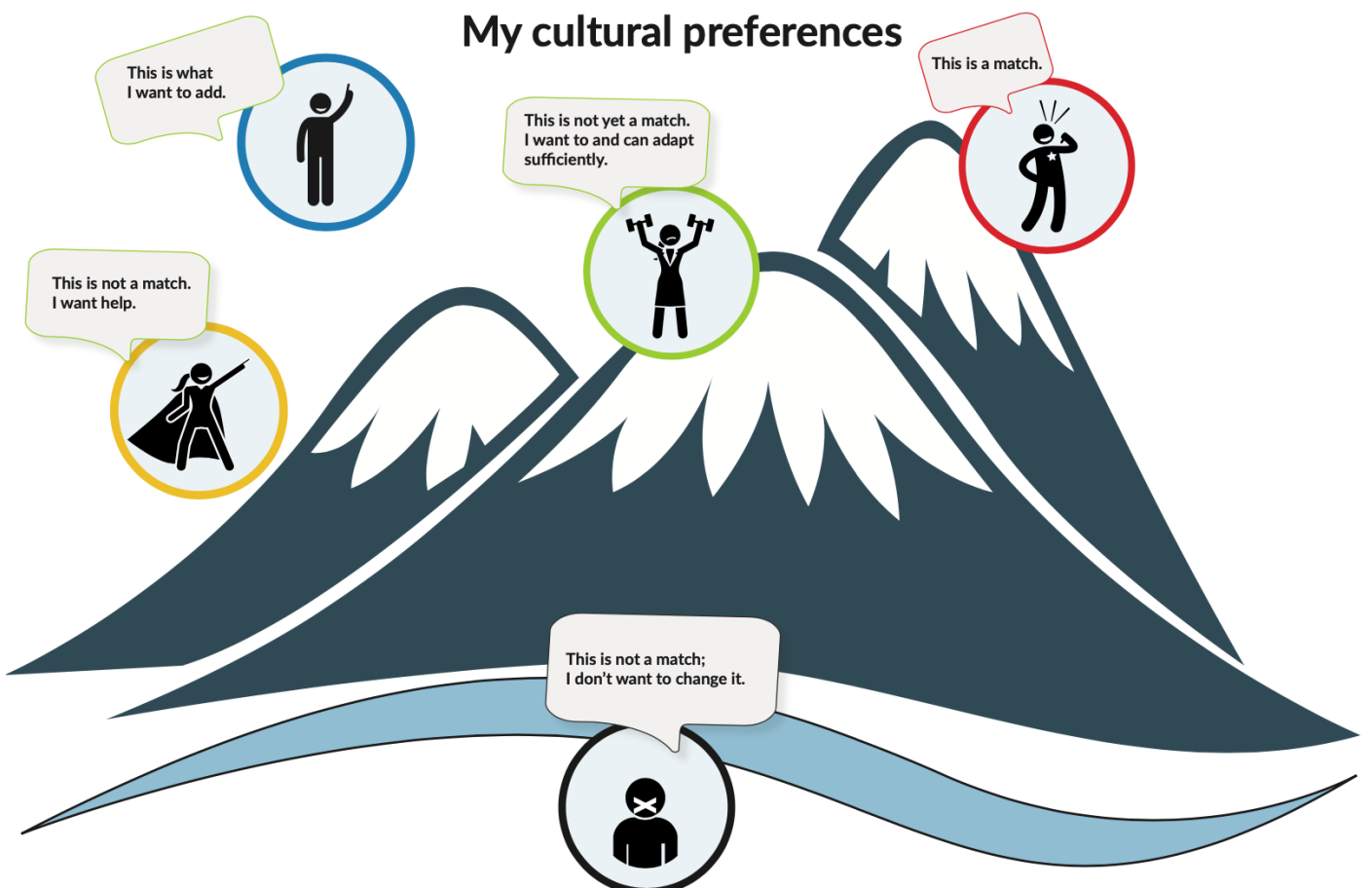
18. I draw conclusions by looking at the practice I draw conclusions by looking at the theory
19. I always work until a task is done I do not always work until a task is finished.
20. I need clear assignments I do not need clear assignments.
21. I like to do the same thing every day I like to do something different every day.
22. I like to work on 1 task at a time I like to work on several tasks at a time.

## 3. Material (downloads)

### 3.1. 'My cultural preferences' cards



### 'My cultural preferences' board



## 'My cultural preferences' board: meaning of the five rings.



### **RING 1 'This is a match'.**

The coachee's preferred behavior matches the behavior that employers expect on Flemish work floors, or more specifically, that of the company where he wants to work.



### **RING 2. 'This is not yet a match. I want to and can adapt sufficiently'.**

The coachee has already experienced or knows that employers in Flemish workplaces generally expect different behavior. The coachee understands that different behavior is desirable and is willing to adapt his behavior accordingly. He can also clearly state how he will do this.



### **RING 3. 'This is not a match; I don't want to change it'.**

The coachee has already experienced or knows that employers on Flemish work floors generally expect different behavior. The coachee does not understand that different behavior is desirable or chooses not to modify his behavior accordingly. He is not ready yet. As a coach, you have to respect that. So leave it under the waterline. Do indicate what the consequences of his choice might be.



### **RING 4. 'This is not a match. I want help'.**

The coachee has already experienced or knows that employers on Flemish work floors generally expect different behavior. The coachee understands that different behavior is desirable and wants to adapt his behavior accordingly. He cannot say how he will do that. He indicates that he needs help to do it.



### **RING 5. 'This is what I want to add'.**

The coachee wants to add a cultural preference that he or she considers important. That preference is not included in the set of cards. He writes it down on a blank card. It may be a preference for which there is a match or not and for which he may or may not want help.

## 5. Approach.

In this exercise, we distinguish 8 phases.

### Phase 1. Find out what cultural preferences the coachee has.

Put the 22 cultural preference cards on the table.

Explain what cultural preferences are.

For example: cultural preferences say how you think as a person or what you usually do in a situation. Everyone 'naturally' tends more towards one preference or the other.

Nothing is right or wrong.

The Flemish workplace has dominant preferences. However, they can differ slightly per work floor or team. Employers reward preferential behavior on their work floor by valuing and retaining the employee who displays it.

Go through the cards with the preferences. Do this systematically. Ask if the preference is clear. Ask each time to choose one of the two cultural preferences.

Helping questions can be:

- Which sentence do you recognize most?
- How do you usually react or think?
- Which sentence fits you best?

### Tip!

Use the help sheet for the coach: "Intro questions for the 22 statements" - download



Use the cards as a means and not as an end.

You can, but you don't have to use all cards. You can make your own selection beforehand. For example: one pair or three per theme category.

### Tip!

You could also make a selection that matches the needs for life that the coachee indicated in exercise 1. After all, there is a link between life needs and behavioral preferences.

Here are a few examples:

- Need for security: usually linked to "my work style.
- Need for belonging/acceptance: usually linked to 'me and other colleagues' & 'me and my attention'.
- Need for recognition: usually linked to 'this is how I present myself' & 'me and other colleagues'.
- Need for self-development: usually linked to 'this is how I present myself' & 'me and my boss'.

## Phase 2. Understanding the coachee's preferences.

Ask the coachee to explain his preferences and give examples.  
Do this for each card.

### Questions for help:

Tell us more about this preference/choice. Can you give an example?  
Where/when did you think or react like this?

### Tip!

For further questions, use the help sheet for the coach:  
"Questions about the chosen preferences"

## Phase 3. Discuss the preferences on the Flemish work floors.

Ask the coachee which preferences he notices in Flanders?

### Help questions:

Think about people who were born in Flanders. What suits them best? What preferences/behaviors do you notice in them? What do they usually do/think? Do you experience a difference with others in this respect?

Tell us more about it. Where/how/when did you notice this?

At appropriate moments, give information about the preferences/expectations on the Flemish labour market, of an employer and/or of a company.

### Helping phrases can be:

- 'The situation in most companies is ...'
  - | Example: ... that the work floors are mixed,  
a mix of gender, age, nationality, ...
- 'Most employers therefore expect employees to ... '
  - | Example: treat each other equally, talk to each other in the same way, have lunch together, ...
- 'If employees don't do this, the boss/management/colleague may see this as ...'
  - | Example: not having respect, not being able to cooperate, feeling better than someone else, ...
- 'This behavior can cause ...'
  - | Example: not being accepted in the workplace.  
Example: that you are not accepted in the team, that the boss thinks you cannot work together, that colleagues think you have no respect, ...

## Phase 4. Find out if the coachee is ready for the Flemish labour market.

In phase 1, the coachee selects a number of statements with preferred behavior for five items that play a role in the Flemish workplace.

In this phase, you ask to assign a value to the selected statements. You do this by asking the coachee to place the cards in one of the five RINGS on the 'My cultural preferences' board.

The place where the coachee places the cards with statements indicates whether the coachee is ready for the labour market. More concrete: to what extent his preferences match those of the Flemish labour market, a sector, a company, a team, a job.

In principle, an alarm bell should ring when you notice that there are many cards in RING 3, "This is not yet okay, I don't want to change this now, I don't want to talk about this.



Then the coachee is definitely not ready for the labour market.

In all other cases, in principle he is.

Note: the weight that an employer gives to a preference that does not match also counts (RING 3). It may be that there are few tickets in those RINGS, but that those preferences are very important to the employer. Be sure to pay sufficient attention to this.



Also be attentive to overconfident behavior. If you notice that the coachee only uses the rings 1 and 2, ask about these preferences. Also ask what causes the other rings to remain empty, and continue to ask about that as well. Break through the pitfall of coachee's of showing so-called socially desirable behavior.

## Phase 5. Discover the coachee's strengths and growth potential.

The place where the coachee places the cards with preferences in phase 4 also gives an indication of his strengths and his margin for growth.

The statements that the coachee places in RING 1 and 2 are preferences that sufficiently match the Flemish labour market. This is usually where the coachee's sources of strength lie.

An example:

'friends' lies in RING 2. This indicates the existence of a network, perhaps still young, but under construction. The coachee has confidence that things will work out and may also have the necessary skills.

The statements he makes in RING 3 and 4 are preferences that do not sufficiently match the Flemish labour market. There is still a lot of room for growth for the coachee here.

An example: "learning and growing" is in RING 4. The coachee considers this important, but does not get around to it enough. He wants to discover how it can be done with the help of his coach. He also indicates this.



## Phase 6. Discuss with the coachee his strengths and growth potential.

Phase 5 gives an indication of the coachee's sources of strengths and potential growth margin. In this phase you go a step further. You enter into a conversation with the coachee about this. You take the coachee with you in an introspective process. This has an identity-strengthening effect.

For this conversation, choose an appreciative inquiry approach. In this way, you also strengthen the coachee's resilience and sense of belonging. First discuss with the coachee "what is already going well" (RING 1 and 2). Only then do you zoom in on "what is not/less going well" (RING 4 and 3).

We describe the steps and the help questions that you can ask in this extensive introspective inquiry.



### **Preliminary step (possibly) - RING 5. 'This is what I want to add'.**

The coachee has added statements to the blank cards and placed them in RING 5? Then first ask the coachee to move these cards to RING 1, 2, 3 or 4. Discuss these cards first at each subsequent step



### **Step 1 - RING 1. 'This is a match'.**

Ask the coachee to place cards that belong in this RING. Then discuss them. Some help questions are:

1. What does this match mean to you? What makes you happy, satisfied, proud?
2. What have you done for this match?
3. What role did others play?



### **Step 2 - RING 2. 'This is not yet a match. I want to and can adjust sufficiently'.**

Ask the coachee to place cards that belong in this RING. Discuss them afterwards. Some help questions are:

1. What makes it almost a match?
2. What gives you confidence?
3. Who and what can help you?



### **Step 3 - RING 3. 'This is not a match, I don't want to change it'.**

Ask the coachee to place cards that belong in this RING. Does the coachee show no openness to a conversation? Then respect it. Let it sit below the waterline. Do indicate what the consequences of his choice might be.

Is he showing openness? Then you may want to ask the following questions:

1. What exactly would you like to change, but not yet?  
What is so difficult/impractical?
2. How would you like it? What situation do you want for yourself?

3. What is needed in order for you to be able to change this?  
What can you do yourself? What can others do?
4. What can you use from other situations that you have experienced in the past?

#### **Step 4 - RING 4. 'This is not a match. I want help'.**



Ask the coachee to place cards that belong in this RING. Discuss them as well. Preferably use a situation question. Ask about a situation in which there was first no match and then there was. There may be similar situations in RING 1.

- What was the difference?
- What made that difference difficult/difficult for you?
- How did you deal with this difference?
- What did you do? And the other person?
- What effect did it have?
- How is your contact with this person now?
- What can you use from this situation in other situations?

#### **Phase 7. Teach the coachee to engage in dialogue in the workplace about differences in preferences..**

You give the coachee an approach that he can use in the Flemish workplace to come to workable agreements with the employer. These are agreements that allow him to remain true to himself and at the same time fit in sufficiently with the dominant preferences on the Flemish work floor.

The key word in this approach is 'dialogue'. The approach is gradual:

- Say what you see.
- Say how you experience it.
- Say what it means to you.
- Ask the employer what it means in this culture.
- Come to workable agreements:
  - ▶ De eigen perceptie aanpassen + ander gedrag accepteren: praten over onderwerpen die taboe zijn voor hem aanvaarden, maar enkel luisteren, niet actief meedoen.
  - ▶ De eigen perceptie aanpassen + ander gedrag aannemen: actief meedoen in gesprekken over onderwerpen die voor hem taboe zijn.

**Tip!**

You can give the tips, or you can teach them in a role-play or by discussing a case.

## Phase 8. Gather the strengths and growth opportunities.

### My CV-Narrative



#### Strengths

This matches the Flemish work floor.



#### Growth margin

This is what I need from colleagues/employers to perform well on the Flemish work floor.

#### Tips for the coach

- 1. Overflow the harvest on the harvest board.**  
Does the coachee still recognize himself in it? Is there anything else the coachee would like to add? Admit anything? Move things around?
- 2. Choose the core.**  
The coachee chooses from the medals 'strengths' 3 characteristics that match the Flemish labour market.  
The coachee chooses from the medals 'growth margin' 3 commitments he needs from others in the workplace to perform well.
- 3. Bind the words into a statement.**
  - 6 to lines of short text
  - No bullet points
  - I form
  - Be truthful
  - Write what is most likely to get work.
- 4. Encourage the coachee to show his/her CV-narrative to family and friends for feedback.**  
Adapt the narrative where necessary and possible.

#### CV-NARRATIVE

Welke sterktes van jouw coachee haal je uit deze oefening?

Wat matcht met de Vlaamse werkvloer: wat doet jouw coachee spontaan, wat kan hij, wat heeft hij dat de kans op werk op de Vlaamse werkvloeren verhoogt?

Welke groeimarge haal je uit deze oefening?

Wat kan en wil hij aanpakken, veranderen, verbeteren, leren, ... om de kans op werk op de Vlaamse werkvloeren te verhogen?

Wat heeft hij nodig van anderen op de werkvloer: collega's, werkgever, ...

Overloop de sterktes en groeimarge met de coachee. Herkent hij zich daarin? Wil hij nog iets toevoegen? Veranderen?

Noteer de sterktes en de groeimarge bij 'Mijn culturele voorkeuren' op het bord 'Ik op de werkvloer'. Wanneer je de CV-narrative opmaakt neem je deze oogst al dan niet mee. Laat je bij de beslissing daarover leiden door de tips op het bord 'Mijn CV-narrative'.

## 6. Inspiratie

Onderstaande bronnen inspireerden ons:

[Behoeftepiramide Abraham Maslow](#)

[Behoeftepiramide David Pinto](#) en

<https://intercultureelcontact.nl/index.php/topic/culturele-verschillen-f-en-g-cultuur/>

[Culturele dimensies Geert Hofstede](#) en

<https://intercultureelcontact.nl/index.php/topic/hofstede-cultuur-dimensies-2/>

[Culturele factoren Edward Hall](#) en <https://intercultureelcontact.nl/index.php/topic/halls-cultural-factors/>

[Culturele dimensies Fons Trompenaars](#) en

<https://intercultureelcontact.nl/index.php/topic/fons-trompenaars-7-culturele-dimensies-3/>

[Culture Map Erin Meyer](#) en <https://intercultureelcontact.nl/index.php/topic/the-culture-map-erin-meyer-3/>