4 Empirical Findings in the European Commission

Based on the qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2003), several categories were identified as factors influencing teamwork in the European Commission. This general analysis implies the following:

- Successful multinational teamwork consists of five categories: society, organization, individual, team and moderators.
- Relevant relations exist between these categories.
- Each category consists of sub-categories which are described by codes and sub-codes.
- The interrelations of the several codes in each sub-category have to be considered in the analysis.
- A combined analysis of the categories is crucial for understanding of what really matters in the multinational team work.

In the following, the empirical results of the study of multinational teams in the European Commission will be presented. Data analysis and interpretation are based on the findings of the literature analysis and interview transcripts reflecting the behavior and experiences of the interview partners. Analyzing some 200 pages of interview protocol (textual data), makes presenting all quotations in detail impossible. Consequently, those quotations are chosen which represent typical as well as particular arguments and are translated into English by the author. The empirical analysis is organized as follows:

- Description of the category
- Detailed analysis of codes

Table 10 shows the five categories of influence on team performance in the European Commission, focusing on the relevant sub-categories and its codes with sub-codes.

After the empirical analysis, this chapter is concluded by a summary and propositions derived from the empirical data.

For the presentation of the categories I start with macro-level influences on team performance (society and organization), next I analyze the micro-level (individual and team) and conclude the empirical analysis with a presentation of the relevant moderators.
Table 10: Five categories of influence on multinational team performance in the European Commission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Defined as (Codes)</th>
<th>Defined as (Sub-Codes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>General cultural differences versus personality</td>
<td>Style of criticizing goals- versus process-orientation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural differences in norms of behavior: North versus South</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>Perceived organizational culture</td>
<td>“Being a human machine in the system” (main organization)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Culture of tolerance (team)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explicitly defined organizational culture</td>
<td>Eurospeak</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>French- versus Anglo-Saxon system</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance appraisal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mobility – job rotation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Personality traits</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team Member</td>
<td>Personal experiences</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal interests/motivation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Educational background</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team Leader</td>
<td>Leadership-style and power</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Team Norms</td>
<td>Informal rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitation of communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual considerateness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderators</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Responsibility assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>Team size</td>
<td>Number of cultures in team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Analysis of interviews
4.1. Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The influence of cultural value dimensions on multinational team performance is superimposed by personality traits of the individual team members. The personal characteristics are more important in the multinational team interactions than the measured cultural characteristics within a society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two major cultural differences in norms of behaviour can be identified: different styles of criticizing and different approaches to work (goal- versus process orientation).

**The different styles of criticizing** (direct, diplomatic, indirect criticism, or more specific: allusive, oblique) have consequences for successful multinational team interactions: The same message should be presented in different ways depending on the cultural background of the other team members, who receive the same message.

Consequently, to perform efficiently, teams have to be made aware of the different styles of criticizing they use and have to develop a common style that suits all members in a multinational team.

40% of the interviewed persons pointed out that they recognize cultural differences in working styles. The north-countries (e.g. Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark) including Austria are seen as being more goal-orientated and therefore prefer to come straight to the point e.g. in presentations or during the preparation of a paper. In contrast, south-countries (e.g. France, Spain, and Portugal) are more process-orientated. They prefer extended explanations in e.g. presentations and rely on personal relationship in the communication.

A mediator of this code is “time pressure”. If there is enough time to fulfil a task then the different working approaches might not significantly influence the teamwork. However, if the team is under time pressure, the different approaches might lead to dissatisfaction of team members.

With EU enlargement 2004 there are now 20 official languages in the European Union. However, in the European Commission the daily working languages are more or less limited to English and French. The inherent problem is that non-native speakers might feel under pressure and feel themselves more vulnerable than it is the case when working in their mother language.

Most of the culture description/cultural dimension literature (GLOBE, Hall & Hall, Hofstede, Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, Schwartz, Trompenaars) is implicitly based on sociological and anthropological backgrounds. Based on Parsons’ model of the interdependence of the social, personality, and cultural systems, the underlying assumption is that personality traits and values characterize individuals and somehow relate to their behaviour (Parsons & Shils, 1962: 47–234). The values shared within a group allow the group to distinguish itself from other groups (dif-
ferent cultures). Therefore, there are at least two reasons why culture is of relevance to understand the performance of multinational teams: (i) given little or no other information about an individual's values and behaviour, culture provides a good first impression of that person, (ii) cultural assumptions and values describe the nature of relationships between people and their environment and among people themselves (Maznevski & Peterson, 1997: 66). In multinational team literature, studies using the cultural value dimensions to investigate the relation between cultural differences in a multinational team and its impact on multinational team performance are widespread (e.g. Probst et al., 1999; Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001; Thomas, 1999). However, the empirical analysis of the interviews in the European Commission shows that the influence of diverse cultural value dimensions on multinational team performance is highly influenced/ moderated by the personality traits of the team members.

The category “society” is divided into two levels: First, an analysis of the role of general cultural differences and its relation to the personality of the individual will be conducted. Secondly, a description of the perceived North-South-differences in norms of behavior and its consequences on teamwork will be presented.

4.1.1. General cultural differences versus personality

According to the Parsons/Shils model (1962) the individual system is influenced by the cultural system and vice versa. This strong relation was also emphasized by the interview partners. Although the perceived general cultural differences (i.e. often stereotyping) play an important role in the first impression formation towards other team members, it seems that experienced multinational team members quite often rely more on the “personality-fit” than on the “culture-fit” to ensure the functioning of the team work. The personal characteristics are more important in the multinational team interactions than the measured cultural characteristics within a society. As also seen in the literature analysis, the statistical significance of some personality traits seems to be sensitive to other variables (e.g. Beersma et al., 2003). This has an important impact on management as well as on the investigation into multinational teams: The role of general cultural differences within societies (expressed as values) should be linked to personality traits of the interacting individuals to get a more complete picture of the influencing forces on multinational team work.

Then, of course, it depends on the people there. These multicultural types – there really are two main elements in this respect. One maybe really is a person’s origin, or that may be stereotypes you often find shown to be true, but also exceptions, and what is maybe even more important, personality. How can I say, a person can come from a Southern European area, who does not fit this southern stereotype at all, because he has a strong personality and this ability to interact with other people. (P15: EK_586; 03:03)
However, there are two main cultural differences in norms of behavior influencing the multinational team work from an Austrian perspective.

4.1.2. Cultural differences in norms of behavior: North versus South

When talking about the influence of cultural differences in norms of behavior on the performance of multinational teams, the interviewed persons were mainly concentrating on a more general kind of "North versus South" category thinking. They use this classification to describe problems occurring as a result of different working and communication styles of various cultures. Nevertheless, the findings of culturally determined differences in norms of behavior in multinational teams are supported by the findings of the cultural standard research in a bi-cultural setting (Fink et al., 2004c).

In the analysis of the interviews two main work- and communication-related norms of behavior were found: the way of "how to criticize other team members" and the "goal- versus process orientation".

4.1.2.1. Style of criticizing

The aim of the analysis is to highlight the importance of the perceived differences in norms of behavior in a general way. This is valid as the interviewed persons are using this kind of generalized thinking in their daily work. The north-countries mentioned in particular are Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Netherlands whereas the south-countries are Spain and Italy.

36% of the interviewed persons referred to different types of criticism in the interaction with other team members (Table 11).

Table 11: Types of criticism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South</th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>North</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect criticism (e.g. it is important to highlight that the criticism has nothing to do with the person itself).</td>
<td>Diplomatic criticism (e.g. ,,that is an important point, but maybe we should also concentrate on this fact”).</td>
<td>Direct criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of “question of honour” has to be considered when criticising</td>
<td>“Bauchpinseln”</td>
<td>Straight to the point (e.g. ,,the way you are carrying out the evaluation is completely unsatisfactory”).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Analysis of interviews

[...] Many people including me think that we Austrians do this for quite tactical reasons, not because we're nice, but for tactical and rhetorical reasons, to flatter people a bit, and we say, yes that's a very interesting aspect and I can really go along with
this, but I would really think and so on and so forth. And you somehow manoeuvre through the meeting, until you state quite clearly where you want to go. The Finn, Whack – Statement – End of Story, doesn't care on the effect this has on the other [...]. Now, we often have meetings where we discuss problems with the DGs (note: Directorates General). Well, I know, he arrives at the meeting and is already a little bit tense and thinks, what is it we get from the budget DG today, and then this Mr. X arrives (note: above-mentioned Finn) and says, erm, the way you are carrying out the evaluation is completely unsatisfactory. That's the introductory statement and that was it, he is not trying to be nasty or aggressive, but that's simply his assessment. And then there are people who ... either they get aggressive and quarrel or what have you [...]. The meeting stalls from the beginning and there's practically nothing you can do. There's some antagonism and right to the last minute of the meeting, there is no mutual improvement or so or we're looking for a solution, but there are opposing positions and that's crystal clear. (P10: EK_461; 10:10)

The following assumptions can be made and are presented in the “criticism-continuum” (Figure 7). One issue that might emerge from the different styles of criticizing is that the point of critique is not caught by the counterpart.

- Direct criticism meets diplomatic criticism = clash (depends on the degree of the direct criticism (e.g. impoliteness))
- Indirect criticism meets diplomatic criticism = clash
- Indirect criticism meets direct criticism = clash

**Figure 7: Criticism Continuum**

![Criticism Continuum Diagram]

Source: Analysis of interviews

In analogy to this general presentation of styles of criticizing the following more specific/detailed styles of criticizing could be identified: The Austrians perceive themselves as being oblique in their criticizing style. Austrians perceive e.g. Italians and Spaniards as allusive in their criticizing style. This is consistent with
findings in a bi-cultural context (Fink et al., 2004c). The Finish and Danish style of criticizing is perceived as straight to the point by the Austrian interview partners.

The way of criticizing (direct, diplomatic, indirect criticism, or more specific: allusive, oblique) has consequences for successful multinational team interactions: The same message should be presented in different ways depending on the cultural background of the other team members. However, there is no easy way out since within teams communication is directed to all team members at once. It is not possible to communicate simultaneously in an allusive style to e.g. Spaniards and in a straightforward style to e.g. Finns. Consequently, teams have to be made aware of the different styles of criticizing they use and have to develop a common style that suits all members in a multinational team (Fink et al., 2004c).

4.1.2.2. Goal- versus process-orientation

40 % of the interviewed persons pointed out that they recognize cultural differences in working styles. The north-countries (e.g. Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark) including Austria are seen as being more goal-orientated and therefore prefer to come straight to the point e.g. in presentations or during the preparation of a paper. In contrast, south-countries (e.g. France, Spain, and Portugal) are more process-orientated. They prefer extended explanations in e.g. presentations and rely on personal relationship in the communication. These findings are consistent with the code “criticism” (Table 12).

The different work approaches directly influence team work. Consequently, strategies have to be developed of how to deal with these different approaches in order to ensure efficient team processes. This is closely linked to the creation and establishment of a team culture, meaning the use of team norms.

A mediator of this code is “time pressure”. If there is enough time to fulfil a task then the different working approaches might not significantly influence the teamwork. However, if the team is under time pressure, the different approaches might lead to dissatisfaction of team members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12: Goal- versus process-orientation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>South</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process orientation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Explanations (see interviews 1, 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relationship oriented (see interviews 2, 3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Analysis of interviews
Interview 1:

With Scandinavians, English, the Benelux, they are more reticent, less self-portrayal. With the French, Spanish, they talk more, verbose [...]. When I work in a team with 6 Frenchmen, 4 Italians and 3 Spaniards, I need some restraint. They are so much more extrovert. For example, an awful lot has to be explained. The Finns are silent, a reticent people. Another Example: a meeting on Friday, 4 p.m. with Dutchmen and Norwegian, much more relaxed than a bunch of Italians/Frenchmen and Spaniards. Furthermore it depends on the situation. (Note: responding to the interviewer's question: How do you react?). If, for instance, there is a Directory Meeting on Monday, 9.30, you are calm, patient, haven't read any mails yet (Note: But) on Friday afternoon, pointless blather, endless talk. (P9: EK_44; 41:42)

Interview 2:

Well, it can get interesting, for example, when you are, I have experienced this myself, when you are under time pressure, when people approach a problem differently. Then, people from several countries, rather Northern Europeans, when there's not much time and you ask them, quite simple, is there something about this, do we have a problem or don't we? And then the answer is no, there's no problem, that's enough for an answer. I you ask a Frenchmen, in particular, he thinks it intellectually unsound to give you a straight answer without a prior explanation. Following the French education method you have to provide at least three pros and three cons before you can arrive at an acceptable conclusion and this takes time and, particularly with people not used to this, listening to this beforehand, this results in impatience and can effectively lead to communication problems, because you simply say, this person is inefficient, instead of saying yes or no it always takes him 5 minutes to explain why. I'll gladly spend the 5 minutes if I have the time or if I want to know more but a yes or no would be a sufficient answer. Why should I listen to the rest? I've e.g. specifically encountered this problem even with highly qualified personnel, where the counterpart, in particular under time pressure or when you want to work efficiently and fast, where you have no sympathy, that people, I've particularly seen this with my French colleagues, that they think it's intellectually unsound to come out with the result straight away, but simply think it's important to also provide the reasoning that led them to arrive at a particular conclusion. (P6: EK_321; 07:07)

Interview 3:

[...] When you go into a meeting, the feel good factor so to say, basically as opposed to the Finns, Dutch or Swedes, but from the Italians or Portuguese you learn very little when you go straight to the point. Or it's not ideal for the atmosphere and you realise, he's stalling a bit, he wasn't very open or some such. You really have to take your time to take social preferences into consideration. That's sometimes extremely difficult, if you're under a lot of stress yourself [...]. For years, rather 2 ½ years, I
had a Portuguese boss, with whom I got along awfully well. There were absolutely no problems of hierarchy and we worked together a lot on important dossiers. Calls me to his office, hey, call from the Cabinet, a crisis, they need a briefing on such and such topic for the commissioner within an hour, because a press guy or someone from Parliament is on his way, or something like that. Quite a tricky subject, where you knew that's not just cut and paste, but you're thinking, I'll have to think about that, how do we do that, how do we approach this and where we get that from. And there's hardly any time and you have to put this on paper and it has to look good and so on. What does the Portuguese say? Let's have a coffee first, I'm not exaggerating, I've had this a couple of times with this guy and also with others, the old Italian with whom I worked. You have one hour for something you'd like to have a whole afternoon for and then you're not sure whether it can be done, and he says, let's go for a coffee first. That does not mean you spend half an hour in the cafeteria, but you go two floors up, have a coffee from the machine and lose ten minutes. Without that you couldn't work with him. He wouldn't have accepted me saying, forget your bloody coffee, we can have that later once it's done, that's how I would have done it, sit down for a coffee and a fag and relax a little, wouldn't have worked. We already discussed the topic over the coffee and so on. And then he was ready and we went to the computer and that's how we handled it. (P10: EK_461; 42:42)

4.1.3. Language proficiency

The aspect of working in a foreign language was found to be crucial for the efficiency of multinational teams. Marschan et al. (1997) argue that language is an important element in multinationals as it pervades every aspect of the business activities. Language barriers cause a huge number of negative consequences: breeding of uncertainty and suspicion, accentuation of group dividing, deterioration in trust building and leading to polarisation of perspectives, perceptions and cognitions (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 41).

With EU enlargement 2004 there are now 20 official languages in the European Union. However, in the European Commission the daily working languages are more or less limited to French and English. The inherent problem that non-native speakers might feel under pressure and feel themselves more vulnerable as it is the case when working in the mother language was mentioned by the Austrian interview partners.

First, and I'm looking at the facts here, there's a difference whether you work in your mother tongue or not. They simply have, depending on how good their command of the language is, an output that's lower than with someone working in his mother tongue. I think that's not appreciated enough in our work, because those working in their mother tongue more or less assume that the others have no difficulties with that
either and can do it in the same way. On the other hand, it works very well. (P12: EK_493; 03:03)

A Frenchman is a Frenchman and will always be a Frenchman and will have no problems in French. An Englishman is and will always be English and will have no problems in English. You have to work in English and French here and everybody who is no Anglophone or Francophone from birth is required to operate in a foreign language and this has an influence on team work. E.g. in a meeting, English has been agreed upon, but now there is one person who's not very good at it, he as well as the others will now have a problem. Okay, everybody talks in his favourite language, in meetings languages are mixed. DG X, for example, which works a lot with South America, there are departments with Spain as a lingua franca. (P22: EK_857; 11:11)

4.2. Organization - Organizational Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational context</strong> is the framework within which teams are established and act. This study identified a strong impact of organizational context (i.e. organizational culture and organizational structure) on <strong>multinational team performance</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The perceived organizational culture</strong> in the European Commission (main organization) can be described as ‘being a human machine in the organization’. The team culture (team organization) within the main organization is perceived as ‘culture of tolerance’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The feeling of ‘being a human machine in the organization’: The creation of tasks solely for the functioning of the bureaucratic system (“Parkinson’s Law”) has been recognized by several interview partners as an important aspect of the organizational culture of the European Commission. It is examined as being inefficient for the function of multinational teams. The analysis of the interviews suggests that under the existing organizational culture the establishment of efficient and goal-oriented teams is difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While the organizational culture of the main organization is described with the feeling ‘being a human machine in the organization’ the culture within teams is perceived as a ‘culture of tolerance’. As the regulations of the main organization are often felt to be too rigid, multinational teams (i.e. team organization) in the European Commission develop their own ‘culture of tolerance’. However, this specific ‘culture of tolerance’ of a particular team is itself defined by e.g. team norms affecting the team work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One characteristic of the explicitly defined organizational culture is the ‘euro-speak’: In the European Commission a kind of “euro-speak” (i.e. a special language) has been developed as a result of the mixed use of different working languages, especially French and English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
'Organizational context' (e.g. organizational culture) is the framework within which teams are established and act. According to Milliken & Martins (1996: 420) the context may effect whether differences between the individual team members are noticed and how the single team members react. However, the question of how contextual and situational factors in multinational teams influence team members’ behavior and team members’ identity salience is an understudied field of research (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003: 432). The analysis of the interviews shows the strong impact of organizational context (in particular ‘organizational culture’ and ‘organizational structure’) on multinational team performance in the European Commission.

Cartwright & Cooper (1992: 56) define organizational culture as “the way in which things get done in an organization”. In multinational teams the following three characteristics of organizational culture are of particular importance:

- “The way in which people interact, their terms of address and the language and technical jargon they use,
- the norms which govern the way in which work is organized and conducted, e.g. preference for written or verbal communication, and
- the rules for playing the organizational game, e.g. what is considered to be a good employee or effective manager” (Cartwright & Cooper, 1992: 57).

The relation between organizational culture and teamwork is characterized by the influence of the organizational culture on the socialization process of the individual team member in the organization. In order to stabilize the organizational culture the optimal person-organization fit (meaning the congruence between organizational values and individual values) should be investigated by the organization (Chatman, 1991).

Cartwright & Cooper (1992) elaborate upon Harrison’s (1972) four typologies of organizational cultures “power, role, task/achievement and person/support” to develop their model of organizational cultures. This model can be used as a frame of reference to identify the optimal organization-person fit in a given organizational culture. In analogy to their typology, the European Commission can be described as a “role culture”. Role cultures represent the Weberian concept of bureaucracy. The organization defines itself as a collection of roles to be undertaken rather than a collection of people/personalities. In such cultures things get done according to a ‘corporate bible’, meaning that role requirements, boundaries of authority and reporting arrangements are clearly defined. Therefore, a central characteristic of this type of culture are formal procedures and regulations defining the way in which work is to be conducted (Cartwright & Cooper, 1992: 62).

According to the cultural immersion theory, people develop “shared schemas” and consequently, “if people from a given society share schemas, then the organizations within that society are likely to have structures and cultures that reflect those schemas” (House et al., 2004: 77). The fundament of the organizational cul-
tured is set by the founders and their core group affected by cultural values of the larger society (Kirchler et al., 2004: 155; House et al., 2004: 78).

The creation of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (1952-1967) was characterized by Jean Monnet’s thinking that the creation of a commonly administered common market for coal and steel could provide the foundations for Franco-German, and more broadly Western European, reconciliation. Drawing on the model of the French Planning Commission, which he himself had largely created, Monnet wanted the High Authority to be an innovative organization, leaving the routine and detailed work as far as possible, to national authorities. Therefore, the High Authority was to be small, non-hierarchical, and informal. However, the increasing workload and size, overlapping competencies and delays in decision-making caused by the non-hierarchical structure, lead to a movement towards a more bureaucratic structure and a hierarchical approach of procedure (Nugent 2001: 19-22). According to Mazey (1992: 43), between 1952 and 1956 “the administrative services of the High Authority […] were transformed from an informal grouping of sympathetic individuals into a professional bureaucracy which, in terms of its structure and “technocratic” character, resembled the French administration”. In 1967, the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the Commission of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), and the Commission of the European Economic Community (EEC) were merged into one Commission of the European Communities. Nugent (2001: 27) showed that French practices strongly influenced the construction and development of the EEC Commission (e.g. the Commission’s structure was designed along the lines of the High Authority and systems established for staff recruitment and grading were similar to those long used in France). This historically explains that the organizational culture in the European Commission is (at least at the moment) French dominated. Therefore, one can assume that team members who have been socialized in the French administration system, might more easily adapt to the organizational culture than members from other countries:

*I think we have a cultural entry barrier here, because we are in this French system, which I do not want to discredit, on the contrary, I'm being completely neutral here, I'm just saying there is this tradition and you have to bow to that or you don't survive, or you have to adapt, let's put it like that. (P20: EK 716; 31:31)*

Thus, the first context-dependent characteristic in the European Commission is that individuals working there might have different approaches to the organizational culture caused by their different socialization processes and educational background (e.g. French team members who are familiar with the French administration system as they were educated in the “école nationale d’administration”).

Nevertheless, the reform of the Commission (Reforming the Commission: A White Paper – Part 1, 2000) might lead to a change in the relevant aspects of the
existing organizational culture. Especially in bureaucratic systems the need for a development towards a performance oriented organizational culture is recognized. Conducting an analysis of the existing organizational culture helps to identify ineffective basic assumptions. Therefore, practical interventions can be undertaken in order to change the organizational culture towards the defined direction (Kirchler et al., 2004: 157).

The sub-category „organizational culture“ is subdivided into:

- "Perceived kind of organizational culture": "being a human machine in the organization“ and culture of tolerance
- "Explicitly defined organizational culture": Eurospeak

4.2.1. Perceived kind of organizational culture

4.2.1.1. "Being a human machine in the organization"

As Kirchler (2004: 155) states it is difficult to make the organizational culture of an organization obvious. According to current organization theories, especially in the New Public Management theory (e.g. Budäus, 2002; Hughes, 2003; Schedler & Proeller, 2003), the organization should focus on the improvement of its efficiency. However, Parker & Bradley (2000) analyzed the organizational change towards the development of a post-bureaucratic organizational culture in six public sector organizations, concluding that these organizations continue to emphasize the values of a bureaucratic organizational culture.

The creation of tasks solely for the functioning of the bureaucratic system has been recognized by several interview partners as an important aspect of the organizational culture and is examined as being inefficient. These findings can be explained with "Parkinson’s Law". It identifies two causal driving powers which can be summarized as follows: (1) Every civil servant or employee seeks to maximize the number of his subordinates but not the number of his rivals, (2) civil servants or employees create tasks to keep each other busy (Parkinson, 1992: 18-21, translation by the author).

The analysis of the interviews suggests that under the existing organizational culture the establishment of efficient and goal-oriented teams is difficult.

Regarding administrative structure I can give you an example: a department is overworked, asks for new staff, which is approved, a sort of sub-department develops, with the result, as nobody’s to be discriminated against, that the same letter, which up to now had been answered by just one person, will now be replied to by three. The organisation has thus created work for itself. (P1: EK_424; 32:32)
4.2.1.2. Culture of tolerance

There seems to be a discrepancy between the organizational culture of the main organization, perceived as very rigid and a perceived culture of tolerance within teams. There are theories that help to understand the dialectic relationship between personal freedom and individualism at the level of society on the one hand and strong corporate cultures and rule dominance at the firm level (Lehmann, 2003a, 2003b). In the European Commission 25 cultures work together. The organization tries to handle these 25 culturally based degrees of freedom by implementing rigid structures. One consequence is that the organizational culture of the main organization (i.e. the European Commission as a whole) is perceived as supporting the feeling of “being a human machine in the organization”. As the regulations are often felt to be too rigid, multinational teams (i.e. team organization) in the European Commission develop their own ‘culture of tolerance’. However, this specific ‘culture of tolerance’ of a particular team is itself defined by e.g. team norms affecting the team work.

Although we are talking about perceptions of the organizational culture it appears that the perceived culture results in the creation of team (inter)action strategies. Thus, the analysis of the perceived organizational culture is the starting point to develop guides for action, meaning the creation of efficient team norms as optimal solutions, i.e. how to work efficiently together within the given organizational culture and organizational structure.

A lot of pragmatism, a lot of tolerance – and tolerance is seen positively now. Often also the realisation that it cannot be done any other way. And if you as the head of unit, the department head, have had to struggle with Portuguese and other nations for three years, who often work a little differently, you try to accept or you have to accept they do it differently and try to take them as they are. That means an anything goes culture, you could say, in a homogeneous culture you can work with mutual values, common sense and so on, and you don't do that and there are certain standards and so on. Naturally, you don't get that anymore from Finland to Greece, you can forget all that, if you somehow have to find a common standard, it will be very low, which basically means laissez faire, you leave a lot of leeway, you accept a lot. There's a tendency towards – tolerance, a positive term, opportunism, a more negative word, pragmatism, that can't changed, that's just the way it is. (P10: EK_461; 6:6)

4.2.2. Explicitly defined organizational culture

4.2.2.1. Eurospeak

According to Schein (1992: 8) culture is made up by the observed behavioral regularities in the interaction of people. One of these regularities is the language that members of an organization use. In the European Commission a kind of
“euro-speak” has been developed as a result of the mixed use of different working languages, especially French and English.

It is also an important factor in comprehending people, as in administrative practice and in work practice some type of separate language has developed. This is administrative French or English, that's quite interesting. With their own idioms, and how notes will be written. But also if you take a look at the language of these notes, that's not French anymore, I'm quite sure if a Frenchman reads this, who hasn't been outside France in his life, he would find that quite weird as regards the language. The same goes for English native speakers [...] (P18: EK_693: 1:1)

4.3. Organization - Organizational Structure

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<th>Major findings</th>
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| In the European Commission there is a discrepancy between the promoted ‘tools’ of the new public management approach and the existing structures of the bureaucratic, hierarchical organization, which are perceived as rigid. The role of hierarchy in the European Commission is explained as the sub-category “hierarchy: French versus Anglo-Saxon system”.
| Another important aspect of the organizational structure is the performance appraisal system, i.e. the system an organization uses to reward its employees. In the European Commission a Career Development Review has been implemented. As seen in the interviews an inadequate performance appraisal system might have negative impacts on (a) the establishment of a team culture and (b) on an already existing team culture. This emphasizes the role of “organizational context" when implementing and developing teams: the characteristics of a bureaucratic system have to be considered.
| With job rotation employees should gain a better knowledge of the work of other organizational units. However, the analysis of the interviews shows that job rotation does not automatically lead to knowledge transfer. The interviewed persons emphasized the issue of trust building within a team in an organizational climate of high mobility. |

The theoretical foundations of public administrations essentially originate from Woodrow Wilson and Frederick Taylor (United States), Max Weber (Germany), and the Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854 (United Kingdom) (Hughes, 2003: 17). As Weber’s theory of bureaucracy is one of the most important theoretical principles in the traditional model of public administration it will be briefly explained in the following. Weber set out 6 principles for modern systems of bureaucracy (as quoted by Shafritz & Ott, 1987: 81-82):

- There is the principle of fixed and official jurisdictional areas, which are generally ordered by rules, that is, by laws or administrative regulations.
The principles of office hierarchy and of levels of graded authority mean a firmly ordered system of super- and sub-ordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones. [...] The management of the modern office is based upon written documents ("the files"), which are preserved in their original or draught form. [...] Office management, at least all specialized office management – and such management is distinctly modern – usually presupposes thorough and expert training. [...] When the office is fully developed, official activity demands the full working capacity of the official, irrespective of the fact that his obligatory time in the bureau may be firmly delimited. [...] The management of the office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned. [...] Hughes (2003) characterizes the traditional model of public administration as "an administration under the formal control of the political leadership, based on a strictly hierarchical model of bureaucracy, staffed by permanent, neutral and anonymous officials, motivated only by the public interest, serving any governing party equally, and not contributing to the policy but merely administrating those policies decided by the politicians" (Hughes, 2003: 17). Nowadays the characteristics of the public administration according to the six principles of Weber have reached their limits: A highly dynamic environment requires increased flexibility of the public administration (Schedler & Proeller, 2003: 17). The limitations of the traditional models of public administration demonstrated by the model of Weber lead to the emergence of a new managerial approach in the public sector (new public management). Since the 1970s, public sector organizations across the world have been undergoing a series of progressive reforms. The aim of these reforms was to open up the public sector by increasing effectiveness, and reinforcing the concept of merit in recruitment and promotion (Dann, 1996: 28). However, in the analysis of the interviews it became apparent that there is a discrepancy in the European Commission between the ‘tools’ of the new public management approach and the still existing rigid structures of the bureaucratic, hierarchical organization. The role of hierarchy in the European Commission is explained in the following as the sub-category “hierarchy: French versus Anglo-Saxon system”.

Following Hughes (2003: 44-45) three elements describing the new public management approach influence the work of multinational teams in the European Commission:

- Pay greater attention to the achievement of results and the personal responsibilities of managers.
- Set organizational and personal objectives. This enables the measurement of their achievement through performance indicator.
• These two elements are strongly linked to the code “performance appraisal” identified in the interviews. As also seen in the interviews, critics of the New Public Management approach consider it as simply an “unquestioned adoption of the worst features of private management which pays no regard to the fundamental differences to the public sector environment” (Hughes, 2003: 45). Therefore, one has to be aware that dedicated public management practices have to be developed which take into consideration the differences between the sectors (Hughes, 2003: 45).

• Make organizations, personnel, and employment terms and conditions more flexible. This element is linked to the code “mobility: job rotation” identified in the interviews.

To sum up the sub-category „organizational structure” is sub divided into:

• Hierarchy: French versus Anglo-Saxon system
• Performance appraisal
• Mobility: job rotation

4.3.1. Hierarchy: French versus Anglo-Saxon System

In single Directorates-General the hierarchical structure is different. The historical background of the structure in the Directorate-General influences the organizational structure today and consequently the organisation of the daily work. Thus, e.g. the Directorate-General Agriculture is historically anchored in the French system.

The interview partners gave a good example of the influence of the hierarchical system on the daily work.

In order to be really integrated here, you have to follow a certain model and this model is still strongly influenced by the French system. We live here under French administration and even the general directorates in which e.g. English is the main language, can't escape from this. A least that's what I say. It was also quite interesting when I realised how far that went. Even the Spaniards, Italians and Dutch adapt to the system. It's incredibly strong, this French organisation, merely from the point of view how the work is done, ending with the question how good the contact is with political bodies; something that's handled completely differently in Germany or Austria than here in the Commission. Here there really is a strict separation between the political level, i.e. the Commissioner, and the General Directorate, i.e. the ministry if you want. So all informal contact with a Cabinet is practically reduced to old boy networks, but in normal life, for work they do not come in at all. Let me give you an example: When Commissioner X arrived, it was customary, whatever he did in city XY, he does not follow the hierarchy, for said reasons, because for political reasons country Y has always been critical towards the other, but also because of knowledge. I know from mister X, he simply called the civil servant directly, wants to know ex-
actly who is responsible, he was given the name, calls him and the guy freaks out, the Commissioner is calling me, how is that possible? Well, that's one thing, I'd say the system here is well established. It is likely to remain like this for some time. The question is, whether the new member states, which are more English, will soften that. Well, the whole organisation here follows this system and so you have to adapt, or you can't survive. (P20: EK_716; 11:11)

Thus, the importance of differences in the French and the Anglo-Saxon system has to be considered in the analysis of the influence of the hierarchical structure on teamwork. One of the interview partners highlighted the relevance of being aware of this difference. He gave an example of problems after the merger of two Directorates Generals representing the two different bureaucratic structures:

There are different national domains/islets, some DGs (note: General Directorates) are more characterised by one culture. This was interesting when the DG traffic (Tram), which is very heterogeneous and the English language prevails, as well as the English administrative style, merged with DG energy, which is very francophone and where there's a strong Greek influence. The French administrative culture has been in the Commission since the 1950s and is very hierarchical. DG X has a French Director General, who is seen as an "absolute emperor", a sun god. There is some interaction between an extremely rigid hierarchy, the highest person in the hierarchy breaks the hierarchy and shows it too, e.g. by passing over people in the hierarchy. Greek administration o the other hand is very southern, there are official rules, which will then be disregarded somehow. After the merger mentioned above, there was a double culture shock in DHG traffic: a) on a linguistic level, i.e. all documents have to be in French and b) also regarding the administrative culture: Anglo-Saxon administrative culture is very informal, there are hierarchies, but you can simply enter the room of a hierarchically superior person [...]. (Pl: EK_424; 8:10)

4.3.2. Performance appraisal

In “Reforming the Commission: A White Paper – Part 1” (2000: 15) the European Commission defines the performance appraisal as follows:

"Any staff appraisal system serves a number of purposes from providing feedback to staff and assessing performance against agreed objectives to judging their suitability for promotion. The starting point for staff appraisal in the Commission must be clearly defined mission statements for each department and job descriptions and task assignments for each member of staff. These are, in any event, key elements of the system of planning and programming of Commission activities. While a new system is needed, experience has shown that the key to a successful staff appraisal system lies in its fair and proper application by assessors. As a priority, management will receive special training in appraisal and there will be checks on their application of the
Further thought will be given to ways to guarantee that appraisals are conducted equitably and efficiently. The heart of the new system of appraisal should be an annual dialogue between the assessed and their assessor to discuss how far clearly set objectives have been achieved. This is common in other European administrations and would provide staff with objective feedback on their performance, recognizing achievement and, if necessary, encouraging them to do better by identifying areas for improvement. Career development issues, such as training and mobility, should also be discussed. Appraisal should also help in assessing a person's suitability for promotion based on past performance and aptitude for new tasks and responsibilities. Merit is a relative concept requiring staff to be assessed for promotion by comparison with their peers. This means that the appraisal needs to include the attribution of a mark (or marks). At present, appraisals in the Commission are made every two years. The link between the new annual appraisal and promotion procedures will be examined carefully to avoid placing an undue burden on managers and staff. More investment of time and effort in the new appraisal system is, however, needed. This new staff appraisal system must clearly be fair, transparent and objective. Assessment should be carried out by the staff member's immediate superior, perhaps involving other colleagues, and the use of "two-way feedback". Finally, the appraisal of managers should include an element of assessment by their staff. Safeguards will be developed for those involved in assessing their managers. A separate appraisal system will be introduced for Directors-General and Directors, which will assist the Commission in judging Directors for promotion to Director-General."

The European Commission describes the benefits of the appraisal system as follows:

"One of the benefits of a better appraisal system will be meeting the explicit requirement in the Staff Regulations that promotions should be based on merit. Further improvements to the promotion system are needed to bolster the aim that good performance should be properly rewarded. This should include taking account of mobility and the development of specialist skills. Procedures to help under-performing staff. A clear definition of each official's tasks will give them and their managers an agreed basis on which to assess performance. The annual appraisal dialogue ought then to lead to an earlier detection of under-performance. The new career guidance function will include counselling for apparent under-performers and a skills review. There will be a guide to provide a clear definition of under-performance and guidelines for detecting it as well as procedures to be followed. Remedial measures may include additional training and reassignment to other posts [...]."

McHugh & Bennett (1999: 191) argue that "the new agencies have experienced some difficulty with the implantation of their often disintegrated programs of strategic change. The root cause of these difficulties might lie in a rigid adherence to an outmoded set of cultural values, a bureaucratic structure and old reward systems coupled with a panic crazed obsession with efficiency, all of which may act
as impediments to longer term organizational performance”. They pointed out that one of the problems of implementing efficient teams in the public sector is that the reward system is geared toward the individual rather than the team (McHugh & Bennett, 1999: 191).

The Career Development Review and its implications on teamwork were critically analyzed by the interviewed persons. In teams with an established team culture (e.g. trust, existence of team norms that support the team work) the benefits of this control mechanism out weighed the problems.

_I could imagine this has effects on a team that's not so cohesive. In our team there has always been open discussion, also about evaluation matters. We have always told each other how many points they got, which is not that customary really, and which might lead to more competition, as in the end everyone is evaluated individually. When you work in a team, you will then be evaluated individually and not the team as a whole. The team as a whole may be evaluated or it is a part of the team leader's evaluation, but generally there is individual evaluation. However, thank god this has worked pretty well in our case. (P7: EK_357; 31:31)_

The benefits of the performance appraisal are a clear goal definition for the coming year based on the job description and a (more or less) subjective evaluation of the achievement of these goals.

_What we do, what many department heads and directors and such recommend, is that for example, and that's new in the system, that at the beginning of the year every employee gets a clear target for the year and is told how this target will be evaluated. And this target is then measured at the end of the year and this year, January and February is when we have the evaluation talks, we will do that for the first time on the basis of the 2003 targets. Then we will see how it works. And this is often included in the positive criteria, the willingness and ability to work in teams, i.e. we signal the people fairly clearly that soloists who aren't willing to be team players have to expect negative points. (P6: EK_312; 54:54)_

The major problem is that the Career Development Review is based on a point system. The number of points is directly related to the promotion. Therefore, there is a fierce competition in the team, although “being a team-player” is awarded with points in the performance appraisal. Individuals have to deliberate about individual interests or team interests. This might influence the efficiency of the whole team.

_No system can offer an evaluation, it is always subjective, i.e. personal evaluation, and if someone doesn't fit... The employee evaluation system has effects on all the team. Everyone's equally good, but three get more points than the others. That's linked to promotion. In addition, it is difficult to define a civil servant's performance. I think that customer satisfaction and enforcing the law, that's a contradiction. I believe you'd have to use different methods: Advancement based on seniority and pro-_
motion when I'm ready to face new challenges. When applying for a job, if you want to change, there is an independent commission you talk to and then there will be a selection. Only so will teambuilding be possible. At the moment: everybody puts in as much as possible for himself [...]. The System (note: employee evaluation system) is suitable for performance-oriented industrial companies and not for the European civil service. I'm trying to minimise the damage. Now it has to be proven that employees don't get better. This system, however, expects employees to improve through trainings or depart. (P13: EK_543; 47:49)

Consequently, it could be difficult to reach one of the important goals of the reform, i.e. making the bureaucratic organisation more efficient. This emphasises the role of "context" when implementing and developing teams: the characteristics of a bureaucratic system have to be considered. A control mechanism like the Career Development Review can be useful in the specific context for which it has been developed (here: multinational companies) but can fail in another context.

In summary, it can be assumed that the creation of a team culture (of trust) might help to make use of the benefits of the Career Development Review and on the other hand might facilitate coping with the inherent problems (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Benefits and Problems of the Career Development Review**

![Benefits and Problems Diagram](image)

Source: Analysis of interviews
4.3.3. Mobility - job rotation

The movement of employees between jobs over a period of time and for different purposes can be described as job rotation (Bennett, 2003). With job rotation employees should gain a better knowledge of the work of other organizational units. Weerd-Nederhof et al. (2002: 327) suggest that a high degree of job rotation supports the consensus creation of individuals and therefore the interpretation of information. Thus, job rotation is often used as an organizational learning strategy. It is identified as a mechanism to reduce people’s boredom and to keep them interested in their jobs (Ortega, 2001: 1361). Often job rotation is used to encourage the transfer of knowledge e.g. within a parent company and its subsidiaries. Kolling (2004) found out that in the knowledge management process between West- and East German companies the transfer of knowledge primarily takes place with the help of job rotation. However, the analysis of the interviews shows that job rotation does not automatically lead to knowledge transfer. The interviewed persons underlined the problematic of trust building within a team in an organizational climate of high mobility.

In “Reforming the Commission: A White Paper – Part 1” (2000: 13-14) the European Commission encourages mobility:

"Internal mobility will be encouraged by removing barriers such as those caused by the existing promotion system. The mobility rules specific to the External Service will be maintained and improved when necessary. The terms and conditions for mobility among European Institutions, and between them and Member State administrations and possibly public and private bodies, will be explored with a view to facilitating exchanges. More generally, to respond to limited mobility of certain people and to provide an incentive for mobility, it will be considered as an asset in staff appraisals and in appointing managers. The continuity of activities in the face of greater mobility will be ensured, notably, by better organization of the handover of responsibilities between officials."

The analysis of the interviews clearly demonstrates that there is a discrepancy between the “as it should be” situation defined by the organization and the “as it is” situation perceived by the team members.

The principle of rotation was formerly used in the diplomatic service, now universally for holders of so-called "sensitive jobs". This has led to enormous unrest amongst the staff. It has pros and cons: it provides relief for me as the boss, (note: the employee) will leave in a year's time anyway, don't make massive efforts to motivate him. The other person thinks the same, the German in question is 5 years older, knows he has to rotate away next year, thinks, I don't care what (note: the interviewed person) wants. This results in different behaviour. As a superior you invest more in new (note: employees), here I risk conflict, if you know someone leaves soon, what do I care. Rotation results in strange things. (P9: EK_44: 54:54)
[...] In the unit people have struggled to an agreement, someone leaves and you have to start from zero to teach the new employee everything. Like at school, where you have to teach people the same things right from zero. In every system that believes it has to be so economical that there is no overlap when a person is replaced. (P22: EK_857; 26:26)

4.4. Individual

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<td>This category comprises ‘personality traits’, ‘personal experiences’, ‘personal interests/motivation’ and ‘educational background’ of the individual team member as driving factors for efficient multinational team work.</td>
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68% of the interviewed persons highlighted the importance of **personality traits** as a factor influencing multinational team interactions. According to the literature analysis (e.g. Ward et al., 2001) it can be assumed that specific personality traits are supportive for multinational team work.

Another decisive issue for a well-functioning team is the **personal experience of individuals**. Especially **past international assignment** turned out to be of particular importance for team performance. Team members, who are experienced in multinational team work, are able to enhance the performance of teams in the **learning process** of the team as they know how to use the diverse (cultural) knowledge of each individual team member (Stern, 1997).

The **performance of an individual** in the team work is based on **personal interests** and is **motivation driven**. The interviewed persons mentioned the **stage of career development** of the individual team member as a **personal interest-driven factor** (extrinsic motivation) of how to contribute to the team work. Additionally, **personal interests/motivation** are strongly related to the **performance appraisal** (single versus team player). Hackman (1987: 325) pointed out that for efficient team work, rewards and objectives have to focus on group, rather than on individual behaviour. The **conviction of doing something useful** (intrinsic motivation) is a **motivational factor** which might lead to efficient contribution to the team work in the European Commission.

With **team implementation** the optimal level of **diversity** (qualifications, knowledge, personalities and cultural differences) has to be found to **perform the task**. A **mix of educational backgrounds** in a team (e.g. technicians and managers) might lead to a better problem solution as there are different approaches of how to deal with a problem. On the other hand the heterogeneity in the education of the team members might enhance the complexity of the team work.
The sub-category “individual team member” comprises personality traits, personal experiences, personal interests/motivation and educational background of the individual team member.

4.4.1. Personality traits

The role of personality in multinational teams was already highlighted in the literature analysis. In analogy to the expatriate adjustment literature (Ward et al., 2001) it can be assumed that specific personality traits are supportive for multinational team work. Therefore, it is important to choose the ‘right people’. Psychological tests, handpicking of experts and assessment centers are management tools right at hand. 17 of the interviewed persons mentioned the importance of personality as a relevant factor for the performance of their teams.

So, in preparation for the interview I thought, at the end of the day it's the person that counts, the human element, that is, what sort of human being a person is. Nationality maybe influences in a particular way, if you want you can certainly find national... Although I myself am a bit reluctant... I'm an open person, respect towards the other and then e.g. very personal factors play an important part, maybe also nationality, but in my experience it's more a person's personality. (P7: EK_357; 61:61)

It is tremendously important to create a feeling of trust, personal contact, personality. That is extremely personality-related and less related to nationality, well... in my area it is almost more important people have a certain attitude, a certain personality structure than that they come from a certain culture or are of a certain nationality. (P15: EK_586; 65:65)

4.4.2. Personal Experiences

One of the decisive issues of a well-functioning team is the personal experience of individuals. Especially past international assignment turned out to be of particular importance for team performance. It has an impact on the way people interact in a multinational team. One can assume that individuals with positive experiences towards living and working together with people from other cultural backgrounds will more easily integrate themselves in a multinational team. They are aware of problems multinational teams have to cope with and have the ability to understand implicit informal rules and norms in multinational teams much more easily than less experienced team members. Therefore, they are able to enhance the performance of teams in the learning process as they know how to use the diverse (cultural) knowledge of each individual team member (Stern, 1997).

What's more, nobody here comes unprepared from some godforsaken in-the-sticks backwater place and -whack- lands in a completely foreign environment. Everybody speaks foreign languages, two, three or more. Almost everybody joining the Commis-
sion had worked somewhere else in an international context, far from home. Most have a postgraduate degree or at least completed some course abroad. That is, no one comes here really formed by his local environment and has to come to grips with a completely foreign environment, that's not the case. It may be very rarely the case that someone really speaks absolutely zilch French and starts showing nerves. That is the big exception. I don't think there is a cultural difference in this job and, let's say, the professional adaptation of the staff is so strong that we create significantly more mutuality. (P11: EK_489; 005:005)

4.4.3. Personal Interests/ Motivation

The performance of an individual in the team work is based on personal interests and is motivation driven. This category deals with the question: What are the personal interests when contributing to team work? What is the motivation to add effectively to the team work? Power and interests of the individual team members on the one hand and the contextual organization on the other hand influence the learning process of individual team members and the team itself (Fink et al., 2004b).

The interviewed persons mentioned the stage of career development of the individual team member as a personal interest-driven factor of how to contribute to the team work: If the individual team member is e.g. in the middle of his or her career then she/he will perform in an outstanding manner in order to be promoted. If someone is already in the final stage of his/her professional career or sees no possibility to get promoted this might not be the case.

In addition, I'd say, there are several factors, cultural on the one hand and also from a development perspective, when the career perspectives are finished e.g. shortly before retirement, then they show a completely different behavioural pattern than people in the middle of their career. These probably try harder than those who are at the end. (P8: EK_43; 15:15)

However, it has to be considered that an outstanding performance of an individual may not automatically lead to efficient team work. The individual has to decide (based on personal interests) whether it is better to be a team player or a single player in order to get promoted. Additionally, personal interests/motivation are strongly related to the performance appraisal (single versus team player). Hackman (1987: 325) pointed out that for efficient team work, rewards and objectives have to focus on group, rather than on individual behaviour.

The interviewed persons pointed out that people might work for the European Commission as they are convinced that they do something useful. This is one of the motivations which might lead to efficient contribution to the team work.
To a satisfyingly large extent the Commission consists of people of conviction. If you don't believe in it, you despair. You will never find people so qualified who will accept personal problems and the glorious (note: ironic) career opportunities, unless they are motivated through doing something they think important. The day this factor disappears we might as well close down. (P22: EK_857; 35:35)

4.4.4. Educational Background

Well-composed teams are characterized inter alia by the high task-relevance expertise of their individual team members (Hackman, 1987: 326). The most visible kind of expertise is the educational background of a team member. The influence of a team member's educational background on team performance is strongly related to the task of the team. Depending on the type of organization, the task a team has to fulfill requires diverse skills. With team implementation the optimal level of diversity has to be defined to perform the task. A mix of educational backgrounds in a team (e.g. technicians and managers) might lead to a better problem solution as there are different approaches of how to deal with a problem. On the other hand the heterogeneity of the education of the team members might enhance the complexity of the team work. The code “educational background” does not only consider diverse fields of education but also diverse systems of education in the same field but in different cultures.

[...]. In fact there is, I'm not aware of any example of communications problems due to different origins or of problems in getting their work done because two people having interpreted their tasks differently because of their different national backgrounds. The problems in perception and differences between lawyers, economists and sociologists are certainly greater in their daily work than the differences in opinion between, say, a Spanish and a German lawyer. And in this connection the educational background and the divided educational background really make things much easier. In my current team we have fairly uniform tasks, are very mixed as regards nationalities and very diverse as regards educational backgrounds. So lawyers, economists, translators, agriculture, what else is there, combinations from these areas. And there you see the main problem again, when addressing a subject, if you have to get the same type of work done as in the specifically nationality-related [...]. (P6: EK_312; 03:03)

4.5. Individual - Team Leader

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<td><strong>Team leader characteristics</strong> influence the performance of multinational teams. The <strong>types of leadership style</strong> and <strong>power</strong> were identified as relevant characteristics influencing the performance of a team.</td>
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The **task-oriented delegation** of work and the **transfer of relevant information** to the team members were identified as crucial parts of a successful leadership style in the European Commission.

The **type of leadership style**, especially the way of delegation, is strongly related to **personal interests** and **power of the leader**. Consequently, for an efficient team work the leader has to walk a fine line in mixing personal interests, power and leadership style in a way that guarantees the optimal use of the potential of the individual team member.

With the new public management approach there is a move towards decentralization in administration. This is accompanied by the movement towards team working. Many managers perceive this as threatening, especially those individuals “who have been socialized within a culture where it is accepted that the manager is controller, rather than facilitator of team effort” (McHugh & Bennett, 1999: 191).

Team leader characteristics affect the team work. They play a crucial role in the encouragement of framing and reframing knowledge within a team (Edmondson, 2003) and consequently influence directly the performance of a team. Besides other factors mentioned in the sub-category “individual team member”, the type of leadership style and power were identified as relevant characteristics influencing the performance of a team.

### 4.5.1. Leadership style and power

The task-oriented delegation of work and the transfer of relevant information to the team members were identified as crucial parts of a successful leadership style in the European Commission. This is consistent with the findings of Sarin & McDermott (2003). They investigated that the more team members are involved in the decision-making process by team leaders, the more efficient is the learning process within teams. If team leaders show this participatory behavior, team members take a broader view of their jobs, use a wider range of information and consider constraints in their decision-making process (Sarin & McDermott, 2003: 725). A leadership style characterized by openness and information sharing supports the building of trust between team members (Costa, 2003: 119).

The type of leadership style, especially the way of delegation, is strongly related to personal interests and power of the leader. Consequently, for an efficient team work the leader has to walk a fine line in mixing personal interests, power and leadership style in a way that guarantees the optimal use of the potential of the individual team member.

[...] What apparently results in high motivation (note: in the team) is, when you really inform (note: the team members). I was shocked, because I had only said, I've just caught that, because I conduct meetings and I conduct a weekly meeting with the
whole team, with all staff together, takes one hour, which is too long anyway, because I'm quite critical there, as it always turns into a monologue, because there's so much information. I inform them about it, apparently not everybody does that or not on a regular basis or not quite to such an extent, which surprises me, because I had thought everybody does it. And there they come up from the cafeteria and say they were in the cafeteria with a colleague from another department, they don't even know that and naturally this gives them the feeling of being included. That is, to be as transparent as possible and not to hold back information. Apparently this is an element [...] (P20: EK_716; 61:61)

4.6. Excursus: Knowledge Management

The knowledge transfer in multinational teams in the European Commission was seen as being influenced by the organisational structure within the given organizational setting. Job rotation and the "Carrier Development Review" were identified as barriers for efficient knowledge management as they enhance personal interests of the individual team member. Personal interests/motivation to share knowledge with the other team members is influenced by the value of the individual's knowledge and the motivational disposition of the individual team member: it is coupled with the individual's interest to acquire and retain relative power within the team and the organization.

The sharing/transfer of knowledge depends on trust. The trust building process between individual team members needs time. Consequently, the inherently useful element of job rotation might negatively influence the knowledge transfer in a team.

The transfer of information to the team members was identified as a characteristic of team leaders positively influencing multinational team work. Consequently, as knowledge management does not fit directly in one of the other categories it was introduced at this place.

Gupta & Govindarajan's (2000: 475) concept of knowledge flows (into or out of a subsidiary) is based on the basic elements of a two-person communication: a message, a sender, a coding scheme, a channel, transmission through the channel, a decoding scheme, a receiver, and the assignment of meaning to the decoded message. It can be used as a frame of reference for the analysis of knowledge transfer within multinational teams in the European Commission. Gupta & Govindarajan (2000) define the knowledge flow as a function of the following five factors: (a) value of the source unit's knowledge stock, (b) motivational disposition of the source unit, (c) existence and richness of transmission channels, (d) motivational disposition of target unit, and (e) absorptive capacity of the target unit (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000: 475). Applying these factors to individuals in
multinational teams implies the following for knowledge transfer within such teams (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000: 475-476):

- **Value of individual's knowledge**: The greater the value of an individual's knowledge stock for the rest of the team, the greater its attractiveness for other team members. This is strongly related with the second factor influencing knowledge transfer within the team:

- **Motivational disposition of the individual**: An individual’s uniquely valuable knowledge is likely to enjoy an “information monopoly” within the cooperation. This is strongly related with the codes “personal interests” and “motivation”, meaning that it is coupled with the individual’s interest to acquire and retain relative power within the team and the organization.

- **Existence and richness of transmission channels**: Knowledge flows within teams cannot occur without the existence of transmission channels.

- **Motivational disposition of the other team members, which is characterized by the “Not-Invented-Here” syndrome.** According to Gupta & Govindarajan (2000: 476) this syndrome is driven by (a) an ego-defence mechanism against the other team members to block any information that might question one’s own competence and by (b) power struggles within the team and/or the organization.

- **Absorptive capacity of the other team members**, which is characterized by their “ability to recognize the value of new information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends” (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990: 128 as quoted by Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000: 476).

Holden (2002: 275-276) studies the role of 'atmosphere” in the cross-cultural transfer of knowledge. Atmosphere is a “pervasive feeling, which is derived from experience and serves as a determinant of expectations concerning future cooperation in a business relationship or group activity such as collaborative learning or knowledge sharing” (Holden, 2002: 315). In multinational teams individuals cannot know how to handle all situations. However, they can and should create and sustain a conductive and collaborative atmosphere to support knowledge flow within the team (Holden, 2002: 275). As seen in the analysis of the interviews the atmosphere within multinational teams is related to the establishment of multinational team norms.

4.6.1. Knowledge Transfer

In the empirical data the level of knowledge transfer was seen as being influenced by the organisational structure (i.e. the specific organizational context of the European Commission). Job rotation and the Career Development Review (which are themselves influenced by the codes “personal interests/motivation”) were identified as barriers for efficient knowledge management:
And as I said, this evaluation system, which is extraordinarily important for promotion, naturally is a very important evaluation for the individual him- or herself. Evaluation systems, where in the individual case there is of course the problem, do I keep my knowledge or abilities to myself and do I try as best as I can to get through with that vis-à-vis the director, department head or director general, or am I willing to share it beyond the borders of a department. And only very few, very good, people do that. Well, if someone really knows he is an authority in his area, really knows the subject inside out, then he is willing to share this. The, if he or she knows, if they do that, the other side also provides information he or she can make good use of. (P21: EK_751; 31:31)

The sharing/transfer of knowledge depends on trust. The trust building process between individual team members needs time. Consequently, the inherently useful element of job rotation might negatively influence the knowledge transfer in a team.

I don't know how often we reinvent the wheel within a year, but when a member of staff departs, at least half his knowledge is lost. Alright, there are the hand over notes and so on, but, no, a lot is lost. And often, no really as a rule, the successor of a departing civil servant, goes to another General Directorate, only arrives after he has left. That is, there is no overlap where you can pass things on. What is completely lost is contacts. If you have contacts to, say, professional organisations, stakeholders or whomever, or to other General Directorates, they are lost completely, they are not passed on. Reports and files are also not drawn up in a way to make them comprehensible, so that the next person cannot understand them. There is no uniform filing system, neither in the Commission itself nor in the departments, everybody does as he pleases. Well, that is an area where much is lost. (P23: EK_899; 83:83)

Earley & Gibson (2002: 161) state that teams need to create repositories of team knowledge and information (e.g. email archives, electronic versions of reports, meeting notes) to enhance their effectiveness.

The lack of a common archiving-system (information technology) as a support for efficient knowledge management was mentioned by the interviewed persons. With the reform of the European Commission this is changing (Reforming the Commission: A White Paper – Part 1, 2000: 10).

Then, up to now, but this is about to change, there has partly been little culture of documentation in the sense of knowledge management with systematic archives and similar things, which in Austria is a matter of course. Filing plans, fort instance, still haven't been introduced in the Commission, which in Austria is standard procedure down to the army, but in fact very few people have problems adapting. (P6: EK_312; 23:23)

One interview partner gave an example of how to deal with job rotation and its influence on knowledge management. He highlighted the importance of core team
members, meaning that there are some members who stay in the project for the whole duration as a kind of “knowledge manager”.

*There has certainly been a relatively strong continuity. Partly changed, but remained at the core, that is there were always memories, not just in paper and facts, but also in the form of informal communication, built-up trust, maybe also mistrust. Even this is possible.* (P24: EK_910; 15:15)

### 4.7. Team

**Major findings**

The establishment of multinational team norms helps to deal with complexity inherent in multinational teams. Thus, team norms need to be established to ensure an efficient use of the particularities (diversity) of each individual team member.

Multinational teams have to establish both relational (mutual considerateness) and performance-oriented team norms (informal rules, facilitation of communication) to increase their performance.

*Mutual considerateness* is based on mutual dependency within the team. It is supported by the development of an ‘**embedded buffer**’, i.e. “don’t feel offended when something does not work like you are used to”. Thus, this team norm helps to overcome problems based on culturally determined different e.g. working and communication - styles.

The use of informal rules is an instrument to facilitate communication within a team. The establishment of informal rules within teams allows for the acceleration of the information flow. In times of intensive use of information technology, communication via e-mail is quite often used to overcome hierarchical barriers.

As seen in the integrative diversity approach to study multinational interactions (see Figure 4) based on the literature analysis, the establishment of team norms is crucial for dealing with the complexity inherent in multinational teams: Team norms are an important tool to manage members’ behavior as they define the perception and interaction of a team’s members, the decision making approach, and the way of how problems are solved (Chatman & Flynn, 2001: 957). It has to be considered that norms are established and enforced not for every conceivable situation but with respect to behaviors that have some significance for the team (Feldman, 1984: 47).

An organization which delegates a team member, or an organization which establishes teams, could already have established a certain framework of norms for team work. Team members reconcile this framework and develop their own norms of communication and decision making within the given power and deci-
sion room of the team. The establishment of efficient team norms is related to the ‘atmosphere’ (Holden, 2002) within a team: Although team members cannot be aware of all situations which might emerge in a multinational setting they can create a conductive and collaborative atmosphere supporting the establishment of efficient multinational team norms. These team norms notably base on repertoires of behavioral norms that are known by individual team members from different contexts, which are in turn influenced by team members’ own perceptions, experiences and interests as well as cultural standards. Therefore, efficient multinational team norms are the mutual consensus of all team members of how to deal with their diverse perceptions and cultural standards within the given organizational context. Consequently, the existence of team norms does not mean that team members assimilate to a set of existing norms, which would imply a loss of the benefits of diversity within the team. Efficient team norms are a tool to facilitate interaction within a team, while at the same time making use of the particular knowledge of each team member based on his/her cultural background. Earley & Mosakowski (2000) refer to these shared team norms as ‘hybrid culture’. They define ‘hybrid culture’ as an “emergent and simplified set of rules and actions, work capabilities expectations, and member perceptions that individuals within a team develop, share, and enact after mutual interaction” (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000 as quoted by Earley & Gibson, 2002: 45). Duarte & Synder (1999) point out that multinational teams have to develop organizational norms and values concentrating on collaboration, respecting and working with people from all cultures, keeping criticism constructive and sharing information.

4.7.1. Informal rules

The influence of the hierarchical system on the team work was already mentioned. Individuals in the teams develop their own informal structures to facilitate and accelerate the daily work within the hierarchical organization. It is important for an efficient team work that team members are aware of these rules. The identification of these informal rules is not easy. One of these rules that could be identified within the interviews is the informal way of communication in a team.

[...] and even when you’re inside such a hierarchical system, you can still say, before I send a document on a trip, I’ll call such and such person, try to clarify things in advance or I simply put it in the mail and wait how it turns out in the end [...]. (P4: EK_208; 16:16)
4.7.2. Facilitation of communication

The use of informal rules is an instrument to facilitate the communication within a team. In particular, the interviewed persons see communication via email as a strategy to overcome hierarchical barriers.

*Everything got much easier through e-mails. Because I must not send a director in another General Directorate a note, I am only allowed to officially communicate with directors general of my own level, that is with an official note. But I can send anyone an e-mail. Thus a lot is done informally. Well, I would say, e-mail has changed our working style significantly, quite for the better.* (P23: EK_899: 107:207)

The question to whom to send a copy of the email is a question of power: If person A sends a mail to person B the question is whether to send the mail in copy to the team leader or not. The thought behind that is to ameliorate and accelerate the knowledge transfer as informing the team leader is used as a way of exerting pressure.

*Much more influenced by e-mail than formal rules, that is by the opportunities e-mail provides, how many people you inform about everything you do. When I write an e-mail to A, I add 5 people in copy or just one, or no one. There is yet little culture in the Commission to systematically include people in copy or generally to include no one. This is developing and much more depends on the individual than on fixed rules and I don't see any difference depending on a person's nationality.* (P6: EK_312; 27:27)

4.7.3. Mutual considerateness

Based on the mutual dependency, i.e. the awareness that the particular knowledge of each team member is needed to fulfil the task, the interviewed persons identified the mutual considerateness as factor for the success of multinational team work. Webster Dictionary (online: 07.09.2004) defines considerateness as “kind and considerate regard for others, whereas ‘considerate’ is defined as showing concern for the rights and feelings of others”.

*Nevertheless, there are certain rules, you also have to think from a human and the political perspective. Like the bull in the china shop – with this mentality you probably won’t get far, unless you’re the boss, but not even then. You realise you need the people somewhere. What my first colleague told me, roughly, no matter which civil servant you meet, you’ll be friendly in any case, as you don’t know where you will meet him again. Funnily enough we met again a month ago, even at work, after not seeing each other for 6, 7 years.* (P15: EK_586; 16:16)

Over the years each individual should develop a kind of “embedded buffer” which encourages showing respect to other cultures. This helps to deal with
emerging problems based on e.g. culturally determined different working and communication styles.

Occasionally you treat each other roughly, but you never go beyond a certain point. Great store is set by conforming with the rules, although you're very rough content wise. I would say, hurt yes, kill no, and if you hurt, not to leave scars, because we all have to change again and in the end we all depend on each other. That does not mean you don't address the issue, but you don't, I can't remember this ever happening, you don't really get personal. That you say, I won't do this because it's Mister X or mister Y, no, it is more businesslike. I mentioned earlier, the negative thing about the Commission is that they don't treat you as a human being, but rather as a thing. The positive effect of this is that it is not about A doesn't get along with B and so on, but once again we're on a factual level. (P12: EK_493; 11:11)

Another important aspect of this team norm is the search for consensus. The general approach to search for consensus is a basis requirement for efficient team work.

Often, everything is about group dynamics, there it depends on knowing where the individual interests lie, what a person's interests are and the interests of another. You don't want to, you are looking for consensus, you do not carelessly isolate anyone or ... unintelligible... exclude north-south, but you're trying to make it more abstract. Everybody has a problem at some stage, there's no one who's going to say yes and fine to everything [...]. And it's the same in meetings, this guy has been sent down from Helsinki, in order to say no, and when he returns and tells them he didn't say no, he's out of a job, or he can say, yes, I said no, but the other 14 all said yes and I was the minority and hard luck [...]. (P17: EK_671; 048:048)

4.8. Moderators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The relations between society, organization, individual and team category are defined by moderators: task, team size, and learning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task a team has to fulfil determines the optimal diversity mix within team members. The performance of a team depends on the degree of a task's responsibility assignment: Individuals who know what their task is perform better than those without a clear responsibility assignment. Team performance is also influenced by the type of task (e.g. routine versus special project).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team size depends on the task a team has to fulfil. In multinational teams, the number of cultures within a team is a crucial success factor. In teams with a large number of cultures it is easier to develop team norms: There is not so much concentration of culturally determined norms of behaviour as it is the case when two or three cultures dominate the team.</td>
</tr>
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To be continued.
In the latter case, team members of the dominant cultures will insist on their norms of behaviour rather than on the establishment of common team norms.

The empirical analysis shows that the **learning process** within a team is a main moderator of the relations between the categories in the model. In learning processes members of multinational teams become aware of the various categories that influence team performance and their inherent complexity. They learn about (a) the relations between society, organization, team and individual and (b) the relations within society, organization and team. However, learning processes within teams takes **time**. The empirical study shows that if the organization itself sets measures (e.g. job rotation) which are not compatible with the time needed for the learning process team work might fail.

The complex relations of the society, organization, individual and team category are influenced by the following moderating variables: the task of the team, the team size including the relevance of the number of cultures in the team, and the learning process.

### 4.8.1. **Task**

Hackman (1987: 324) defines the task of a group as a “whole and meaningful piece of work, with a visible outcome”. The task may determine performance pressure, since a goal has to be met. Rewards for achieving and sanctions for not achieving determine the influence of performance pressure on the behavior of team members and on possible outcomes. The nature of a task determines the needs of resources and skills (Jackson et al., 1995: 218). Based on the definition of the task the question has to be raised: Is there a team needed to solve the problem or is it more efficient to work alone? When deciding for the implementation of a team, an optimal qualification mix (diversity) of team members by educational and cultural background, experience, physical requirements, etc. has to be identified. Consequently, work on the task shows how efficient the team selection and implementation process was and how well the team is performing (Hackman, 1987: 324-327).

*Then I worked in a third team in the Commission. That was broader in its tasks, because it included a lot of advising politicians and again we were a mixed team. It was clear right from the start that the advantage of a mixed team, because it was easier when advising politicians to spot sensibilities in the individual member states early, which results in a possible solution compared to another possible solution for a problem or does not result in one and so on. This means, it could be seen most clearly that a team with a very mixed composition certainly increased our problem solving capacity and, in particular, improves our sensitivity towards problems that can lead to different suggestions for solutions and policies. That is, you can thus reduce the time you need to react to problems […]. (P6: EK, 312–03:03)*
4.8.1.1. Responsibility assignment

The responsibility assignment influences the output of a team. If each individual team member is aware of his/her task then the output will be higher.

_Everybody should be fully aware of his objectives, about his role in the team and not try to shirk responsibilities. If it is not clear who has to coordinate things, this might lead to problems. Everybody should see himself in the team's output and find himself reflected individually._ (P5: EK_261; 35:37)

The complexity of a task is described by the required acts and information cues and sets up the upper limits on knowledge, skills, and resources individuals need to fulfil a task (Earley & Gibson, 2002: 149). The acceptance of the responsibility assignment and the qualitative fulfilment of the task is influenced by the complexity of the task (routine versus special project) as this defines how often the team and therefore the single team member is in contact with a hierarchically higher positioned person. This might directly influence the personal career development and is therefore determined by personal interests of a single team member (team versus personal interests). Thus, it can be assumed that the responsibility assignment is crucial for the transfer of knowledge within the team.

_I have task areas, for example, where there is so much work to do which is distributed randomly, with the aim of providing equal workloads to everyone, so that no one has to struggle to do anything in particular. Then again, I could be in a department, where I know this year there are so and so many routine tasks and a project of which I know I will present to the Director General three times, where everybody is really keen to get the project and not the routine tasks assigned._ (P6: EK_312; 58:58)

4.8.2. Team size

Team size has to be large enough to fulfill the task, meaning that sufficient resources (manpower, time), sufficient capabilities and knowledge must be available. In consensus driven teams it seems to be easier to reach consensus among a smaller than a larger group. Therefore, large multinational teams might not be as efficient as smaller teams (Hackman, 1987: 327). At least, this is a proposition also often raised in the context of the enlargement of the European Union.

4.8.2.1. Number of cultures in a team

On the other hand, it can be assumed that the larger the team and the more culturally different the members in the team are the more easily the occurrence of bilateral conflicts might be reduced. If two groups with different values and norms have to interact in one team, then the adoption of either norms A or B as team norms becomes the core of a power game with a good chance to escalate and to become a stalemate confrontation. As the number of encounters grows by \((n^2-n)/2\)
the importance of a single clash of norms decreases by $2/(n^2-n)$. Beyond eight team members with diverse national backgrounds of values and norms it will be difficult for a team member to take note and assess all those clashes. Therefore, the importance of clashes becomes small enough to give room for adopting new reciprocal team norms that serve the interest of all team members. Consequently, it can be assumed that the likelihood to succeed with the establishment of new team norms is increases with diversity among team members (Fink et al., 2004b).

*I have to say, in our team German-speaking countries are strongly represented, I particular, of our 8 people 3 are German, 2 are French, the secretary is Belgian, also quite francophone, and one Austrian, that is me. In our department the Romance countries are heavily represented, there are many French speakers, but on the other hand there are also German speakers, extraordinarily many German speakers. We are three Austrians, in total we are 43 people of which three are Austrian, I have never seen anything like it, that is we have a strong element of German/French colleagues in the department and this certainly influences our work. (P7: EK_357; 15:15)*

### 4.8.3. Learning process

Learning processes within teams help to overcome insufficiencies in the action repertoires of individuals and the organization itself (e.g. organizational culture, organizational structure) (Stem, 1997: 70). Reflection on team processes increases awareness of team members and fosters learning processes, which in turn (in analogy to Argyris & Schöon, 1974) could help to make things right, but also to make the right things.

The learning process of individual team members and the team itself is directly influenced by power and interests of the individual team members and the particular organization. Conflicts of interest, the desire to gain or maintain power, or the wish not to subordinate oneself have an influence on team learning and consequently on team performance. Interests of individuals are influenced by the social system into which they are embedded (the contextual organization), by their personal needs, income, experience and stock of knowledge.

* [...] With this adaptation, the fact that you change, I would say, because of this constant exchange and watching and partly copying behaviour and so on. But also, in order to better understand where you frequently stand with certain nationalities, you behave indeed differently, because you respect that. During the learning process you often get a bloody nose or are confused or offended or whatever. In the meantime, when a Dutchman approaches me directly and says he doesn't find that particularly good, I don't immediately get this strange feeling in the stomach, he attacks me personally, but listen first what he has to say. And I know it isn't personal and so the*
learning process and the adaptation process are really important. (P10: EK_461; 46:46)

4.9. Recommendations for managers and researchers

This chapter has presented results of the empirical study in the European Commission. The analysis of the interviews followed the theoretical framework which highlighted three major research aspects. These aspects allow for a deeper analysis of multinational team work and are summarized in the following. Additionally, this section aims to develop propositions for future research which are deduced from the empirical findings of multinational team work in the European Commission. The propositions concern the previously identified categories of influence on multinational team performance. Managers can use these propositions as guidelines to analyze potential issues in their teams.

- **Research Aspect 1: Which categories influence the performance of multinational teams?**

  Research aspect 1 analyzes categories that influence the performance of multinational teams. Categories that affect multinational team performance are identified and arranged in an integrated model.

- **Research Aspect 2: Are these categories related? If yes, how are they related?**

  The analysis of categories influencing multinational team performance derives from a complex set of influences and needs to consider the context of the particular organization.

  Recent research on multinational team work investigates only a few variables in the particular categories (society, organization, individual, team and moderators) which have been identified through the interviews. As seen in the literature analysis the statistical significance of a variable might change when other variables are added. The empirical study shows that there are mutual causal relations between categories and that the categories are highly interdependent. Therefore, the model (figure 9) as presented below integrates all of the identified categories and shows its relations. However, in order to reduce complexity it does not include all the details of the data analysis. A summary of the complex relations between the various variables of each category is presented in appendix C. It shows the source of difference in each category and the characteristics of the specific source of difference within the category. Then it highlights how variables from other categories influence the category under study. Finally, it is shown if and how the specific category has an impact on a) other categories determining team performance or b) if it directly influences team performance.
FIGURE 9: FIVE CATEGORIES DETERMINING TEAM PERFORMANCE: THE COMPLEXITY MODEL OF MULTINATIONAL TEAM PERFORMANCE

The model contains five categories of influence on multinational team performance: society (cultural values and culturally determined norms of behavior), organization (organizational culture and organizational structure), individual (personal interests and motivations, personality traits, and personal experiences, i.e. past international assignments and educational background), team (team norms) and moderators (task, team size and learning process). The model is illustrated in figure 9; its description is done clockwise starting from the left.

Society
The first category consists of factors that concern the culturally determined source of diversity within a multinational team. It highlights the relevance of cultural values and culturally determined norms of behavior for the efficient multinational team work. Whereas most of the studies in literature analyze the relation between cultural values (e.g. individualism, collectivism, power distance etc.) and
team performance, the empirical part of this study underlines that not cultural values per se, but the experienced culturally determined differences in norms of behavior (which are indirectly reflected by cultural values) influence the output of multinational team work.

**Proposition 1:** In multinational teams culturally specific norms of behavior are indirectly reflected by cultural values.

*Culturally determined norms of behavior:* In particular, two culturally determined norms of behavior can be identified: different ways of criticism and different working styles. The diversity in these norms of behavior can be mainly explained by dividing team members in two main groups—those from the South of Europe and those from the North of Europe. Ignoring the influence of the other categories in the model, it can be said that people from the South prefer a more "indirect" way of criticism whereas those from the North are more direct in their criticism. In the way of how work is done, people from the South prefer a more process-orientated approach whereas people from the North are more goal oriented. Depending on the degree of difference, meaning where on these two sides of the working-style continuum each team member is situated, problems in the interaction might occur.

**Proposition 2a:** Culturally determined norms of behavior influence multinational team performance.

**Proposition 2b:** There is an inverse relationship between culturally determined different ways of criticism and the performance of multinational teams.

**Proposition 2c:** There is an inverse relationship between culturally determined differences of working styles and the performance of multinational teams.

*Cultural values:* The empirical study shows that members of multinational teams link cultural values to personality traits. If in the team work problems occur, the personality of a person is seen as a more relevant explanation factor than differences in cultural values. The influence of cultural value dimensions on multinational team performance is overwritten by personality traits of the individual team members.

**Proposition 3:** In multinational teams, a fit of personality traits between team members is more important than similarities in cultural values to perform efficiently.
Language: Another aspect of this category is language. In multinational teams, the communication in a second language is an under-considered stress factor. However, in the empirical study the "language" challenge was seen more as a hindrance to multinational team performance than cultural differences per se. The need to communicate in a second language might impair the active participation in the team work. Additionally, it can reduce the ability of placing key information within the team. Speaking in a second language increases the potential of misunderstandings. This slows down the trust building process within the team, which has negative impact on team performance.

**Proposition 4a:** Speaking in a second language is positively related to the feeling of stress.

**Proposition 4b:** The need to speak in a second language negatively effects the individual contributions to task achievement of a team.

**Proposition 4c:** The communication in a second language is a potential factor for misunderstandings in multinational teams. Misunderstandings between team members are inversely related to team performance.

Organization

The second category of factors which determine the performance of multinational teams derives from the organizational context. It includes factors which can be influenced by the organization itself. It is in the hand of the organization to define and regulate these factors considering its organizational environment and strategic thoughts. Ignoring the other factors of the integrated model, this category allows the organization itself to take the right steps to establish well-performing multinational teams and to foster their development.

**Organizational culture:** The organizational culture of an organization is linked to the cultural values of the organizational founders and their core groups. House et al. (2004: 77-78) underline that, "if people from a given society share schemas, then the organizations within that society are likely to have structures and cultures that reflect those schemas".

**Proposition 5a:** Organizational culture is influenced by societal culture.

**Proposition 5b:** Members of multinational teams who are socialized within the predominant societal culture of the organization adapt to the organizational culture more easily.

Individuals might perceive the organizational culture in a different manner than defined by the organization itself. The empirical study puts emphasis on the perceived kind of organizational culture in contrast to the explicitly defined organiza-
tional culture as influencing factor on team performance. The perceived kind of organizational culture might differ from department to department within the same organization.

**Proposition 6a:** Team members’ perception of the organizational culture actually experienced in their daily work might be different from the explicitly defined organizational culture by the organization itself.

**Proposition 6b:** In order to establish well-performing multinational teams, managers/team members have to be aware of the perceived kind of organizational culture. The organizational culture influences the establishment of a team culture (or not) and fosters the motivation to achieve a task (or not).

Culturally determined differences in norms of behavior foster the development of a kind of “culture of tolerance” within the organization under study. This might have a positive or negative impact on team performance. The feeling of working in a “low-trust culture” restrains the development of a team culture and negatively influences team performance. As the organization under study is a bureaucratic organization, another aspect of the perceived kind of organizational culture is the feeling of “being a human machine in the organization”. This feeling has direct impact on the personal motivation. Results of this study show that it is a negative relation.

The explicitly defined organizational culture identified in the empirical study deals with the huge number of diverse languages in the organization. The organization has implemented what is called “Eurospeak”, which is a mix between English and French.

**Organizational structure:** The organizational structure of an organization is an essential factor which influences the performance of multinational teams. In a bureaucratic organization hierarchical structures have an impact on the performance of teams. Based on the historical and national roots of a department, hierarchy is of particular importance (French system) or not (Anglo-Saxon system).

Another important aspect of the organizational structure is the performance appraisal system (see also: Kirkman & Den Hartog, 2004: 250-253), i.e. the system an organization uses to reward its employees. If an organization is interested in team work, then it has to establish a reward system that considers team performance and not only individual performance. If this is not the case, this might negatively influence the establishment of a team culture and the team work. This leads us to another key factor: The implemented appraisal system must be adapted to the particular organization. According to the empirical study, problems in team work emerge when a rewarding system which is particularly used by profit-organizations is implemented in a public, bureaucratic organization.
Proposition 7a: An inadequate performance appraisal system might have negative impacts on a) the establishment of a team culture and b) on an already existing team culture.

Proposition 7b: Performance appraisal systems need to be adapted to the needs of the particular organization.

Job rotation is a further aspect of organizational structure and the latter influences team performance. The findings of the study give evidence that a high mobility of employees might negatively influence the knowledge transfer willingness of team members as it hinders the development of a trust-based team culture.

Proposition 8a: Job Rotation might be inversely related to a clear identification with the team.

Proposition 8b: A lack of identification with the team leads to a lack of loyalty and trust within the team.

Proposition 8c: Job Rotation has negative effects on knowledge transfer among team members. However, it might allow bringing new knowledge in the team.

Individual

The third category of factors driving multinational team performance comprises sub-categories which can be influenced only by the individual team member itself. Ignoring the other categories of the model, the behaviour of the individual in multinational teams is influenced on the one hand by “non-visible” and on the other hand by “visible factors”. Non-visible factors are personality, personal experiences and personal interests/motivation. Visible factors are those which are readily detectable for all team members (e.g. educational background). Personality, personal experiences and personal interests/motivation are interactively related. However, it is quite difficult to be aware of possible overlaps of the non-visible characteristics of the single team members. Similarities and differences in this category will become obvious not until the interaction of the individual team members.

Personality: People are socialized within a specific society and consequently, cultural values of this society support the conformity in the ways individuals think and act (Brannen et al., 2004: 46). Nevertheless, people are also individuals which are characterized by their own personality. In the literature, talking about personality means talking about personality traits, i.e. relatively stable, unique characteristics of individuals (Brannen et al., 2004: 46). It was already highlighted that in multinational teams a fit in personalities of the individual team members seems to
be more important than similarities in cultural values. However, it cannot be ignored that these two constructs (i.e. the sociological and the psychological characteristics of an individual) are related. It is difficult to imagine that in collectivistic countries solely individuals with individual-oriented personality traits live.

**Proposition 9:** Personality traits of individuals in a given society are positively related to cultural values of this society.

**Personal experiences:** In multinational teams personal experiences are predominantly expressed in terms of past international assignments. Individuals who have already lived abroad and worked in multinational settings might integrate in multinational teams more easily. Past international assignments and working experiences in multinational teams foster the ability to understand implicit informal rules and norms in those teams. Being aware of the complexity of the influencing categories on multinational team performance allows for an efficient use of diverse knowledge of the other team members. Experts in multinational team work can further and encourage the establishment of efficient team norms as they are aware of the interrelations of the categories in the model: If one category is not considered or its influence is not taken seriously the whole model will be influenced – including team performance.

**Proposition 10:** Multinational team performance can be increased if there is at least one efficient multinational team work-expert in the team.

**Personal interests and motivations:** Personal interests and motivations of team members have an impact on efficient team work. The study underlines that the individual’s career development stage influences the interest to participate more or less in team work. However, contributing to team work might not automatically mean being interested in the success of the whole team. This is influenced by individual’s attitudes towards being a team- or a single player and can be implicitly affected by the organization itself (e.g. through a team-adapted job performance appraisal system). Additionally, an individual’s motivation to work in a specific team, or more generally in a specific organization, is of relevance for multinational team performance. In international public organizations the feeling of contributing to something useful and important for the general public has a positive impact on team performance.
Proposition 11a: Personal interests of team members influence multinational team performance.

Proposition 11b: Personal interests are influenced by personality traits and can be affected by the organization. Organizations might have structures which do (not) support individual’s orientation towards teams (e.g. team-adapted job performance appraisal system).

Educational background: is a visible characteristic of team members in multinational teams. Depending on the task a team has to fulfill, a mix of educational backgrounds is necessary or not. The empirical study underlines the existence of communication problems not as a result of cultural differences but because of diverse educational backgrounds of team members. Additionally, it has to be considered that even if team members have the same educational background, the education might be different in various countries. This leads to misunderstandings and slows down decision-making of teams. Therefore, task is a crucial element in the team performance process, as it deals with the question of the degree of diversity needed within the team.

Proposition 12: Depending on the task, diverse educational backgrounds of team members allow for efficient problem solutions. However, diverse educational backgrounds might slow down the decision-making of teams.

Moderators

The relations between society, organization, individual and team category are defined by the moderators (task, team size, learning process).

Task: The task a team has to fulfil determines the optimal diversity mix within team members. Thus, with the definition of task the optimal degree of the diversity needed within team members or conversely the optimal degree of individuals’ overlaps of the categories in the model is defined. The performance of a team depends on the degree of a task’s responsibility assignment: Individuals who know what their task is perform better than those without a clear responsibility assignment. Team performance is also influenced by the type of task (e.g. routine versus special project).

Proposition 13a: The task of a team defines the needed degree of diversity in the society and individual category.

Proposition 13b: A clear task responsibility assignment is positively related to team performance.
Team size: Team size depends on the task a team has to fulfil. According to the task the optimal team size needs to be defined. In multinational teams, the number of cultures within a team is a crucial success factor. In teams with a large number of cultures it is easier to develop team norms: There is not so much concentration of culturally determined norms of behaviour as it is the case when two or three cultures dominate the team. In the latter case, team members of the dominant cultures will insist on their norms of behaviour rather than on the establishment of separate team norms.

**Proposition 14:** The more cultures are represented in a team the less conflicts occur due to culturally determined norms of behaviour and the easier it is to establish efficient team norms.

Learning process: In the learning process members of multinational teams become aware of the various categories of influence on team performance and their inherent complexity. They learn about (a) the relations between the society, organization and individual category and (b) the relations between the subcategories in the categories. They use this knowledge to establish their team. In a next step, reflection on team processes increases awareness of team members and fosters learning processes, which in turn (in analogy to Argyris & Schöhn 1974) could help to make things right, but also to make the right things. Learning processes within teams in a particular organization consist of single-loop and double loop-learning (Argyris, 1999). “Whenever an error is detected and corrected without questioning or altering the underlying value of the system, the learning is single-loop” (Argyris, 1999: 68). Single-loop learning is appropriate for routines, meaning that it supports to get the everyday job in a team done (Argyris, 1999: 69). Double-loop learning is characterized by learning “when mismatches are corrected by first examining and altering the governing variables and then the actions” (Argyris, 1999: 68). It is more relevant for complex issues and may even lead to adaptation of values if ‘old value structures’ are perceived as obsolete (Argyris & Schöhn 1974). Thus, the implementation of new HR practices in the European Commission should be accompanied by a cultural and structural change in the long run.

Learning processes within teams take time. Multinational team members need time to understand one another’s behaviour, to identify mutually agreeable ways of working together and to judge one another’s capabilities (Ravlin et al., 2000: 40). The empirical study shows that if the organization itself sets measures (e.g. job rotation) which are not compatible with the time needed for the learning process the idea of team work might fail.
Proposition 15a: The learning process within teams is crucial for the success of multinational teams.

Proposition 15b: Multinational teams need time to undergo learning processes.

Proposition 15c: Organizations need to be aware that their structures influence the learning process within teams.

The literature underlines that simply providing teams with the opportunities to interact does not automatically lead to the elimination of negative effects of multiculturalism (Ravlin et al., 2000: 40). To deal with these problems, teams need to perceive process-related feedback to use the learning process over time for the improvement of team interactions (Thomas, 1999).

The empirical analysis shows that the learning process over time within a team is a main moderator on the relations between the categories in the model. An active, supervised learning process facilitates the establishment of the category “team”. However, the desired and really needed degree of supervision on part of the team members might depend on their personality and personal interest and their cultural background.

Proposition 16: If learning processes within teams are supervised (by the team leader, by team members themselves), the establishment of team norms is facilitated.

- Research Aspect 3: How do individuals cope with the complexity of working in multinational teams?

This research aspect addresses the analysis of coping strategies for problems inherent in the complexity of working in a multinational team. The last category of the model, i.e. team, focuses on this research aspect.

Team

This category comprises the established and used team norms. According to the empirical results team norms can be defined as the mutual consensus of all team members on how to deal with their possible diversity in the society and individual category, influenced by the characteristics of the organization and moderated by task and team size. Thus, team norms need to be established to ensure an efficient use of the particularities (diversity) of each individual. Consequently, the existence of team norms does not mean that there is an assimilation of team members which goes hand in hand with the loss of the benefits of the diversity within the team members (which is the reason why multinational teams are established).
They are a tool to facilitate the interaction while at the same time making use of the particular knowledge of each team member based on its individual and society background and influenced by the organization.

The findings of this study show that multinational teams establish both relationship and performance-oriented team norms to increase their performance.

**Proposition 17:** Team norms support the use of particularities of each team member and help to deal with the complexity of multinational teams caused by diversity in the society and individual category and the organization.

**Proposition 18:** Performance-oriented team norms need to be complemented with relational norms to increase the benefits of multinational teams.

**Mutual considerateness:** This team norm is relationship oriented. Mutual considerateness is particularly influenced by the learning process within teams. Developing an “embedded” buffer, i.e. don’t be harmed when something does not work like you are used to, supports mutual considerateness and is a pre-condition for the success of multinational teams. Therefore, mutual considerateness is a team norm that helps to overcome problems based on culturally determined different e.g. working and communication styles.

**Proposition 19a:** Mutual considerateness helps multinational team members to cope with their inherent diversity (e.g. culturally determined different working and communication styles).

**Informal rules and facilitation of communication:** The use of informal rules is an instrument to facilitate the communication within a team. These two norms are performance-oriented. The establishment of informal rules within teams allows for the acceleration of the information flow. In times of intensive use of information technology, communication via e-mail is quite often used to overcome hierarchical barriers.

**Proposition 19b:** Informal rules help to overcome organizational barriers (e.g. hierarchy) and consequently accelerate the flow of information within the team.