

## D Intercultural competence: Organisational culture

- 1 Discuss these questions.
  - a How is your organisation seen by other people?
  - b Does the image that other people have of it match the image that those inside the organisation have of it?
  - c What does an organisation need to make it a great place to work?
- 2 Before you look at the checklist below, brainstorm with a partner or small group what you think are the main ways in which the culture of an organisation can be described.
- 3 Describe the main characteristics of the culture of your organisation or your part of the organisation to a colleague. Use the relevant factors in this checklist to help you.

### Some characteristics of organisational culture

- Nationality
- Sector
- Size (annual turnover, number of employees)
- Location of headquarters
- Ownership
- Company structure
- Dominant functions
- Predominant management/leadership styles
- Main communication processes and channels
- Power distance
- Main stakeholders
- General working atmosphere
- Dress style
- Employee relations
- Career development policy
- Brand image
- Mission and values

- 4 Are there any aspects of your organisation's culture which you would like to change? Imagine that you and your colleague(s) have been commissioned to work on changing the culture of your organisation. Identify the features of the culture which you wish to focus on and draw up a programme to bring about the changes you want to see.
- 5 What impact can you have on the culture of your organisation?

## Case study: Interpolis

- 1 Read about some aspects of the culture of Interpolis, then answer the questions below.



Interpolis is one of the largest insurance companies in the Netherlands. The company has gained wide recognition with its advertising campaign 'Interpolis. Crystal clear'.

In addition to insurance, Interpolis is also known for its special attitude to work. No one at Interpolis has their own fixed work space. The employees can select a place of work that is best suited to them and to the job that they do.

Special areas called 'club houses' have also been created at the Interpolis head office, each with its own particular atmosphere. In these club houses, the Interpolis employees can combine various daily activities, such as working, consulting, meeting people, relaxing and eating.

This flexible working concept led to a cultural transition at Interpolis. That is because flexible working is not just a matter of moving some furniture around. Flexible working must also become embedded in the way employees think and act.

Employees at Interpolis do not have to clock in for work. The motto at Interpolis is 'As long as the work gets done'. Whether it is done from home or at the office is something employees can decide for themselves. Interpolis is a pioneer of teleworking in the Netherlands. At present, about 2,500 employees work from home several days a week.

- a People at Interpolis 'hot-desk'. What in the article tells us this?
  - b What type of flexible working is there at Interpolis?
  - c Why do Interpolis people have more than one place to work in the office?
  - d What is the Interpolis motto?
  - e What is 'teleworking'?
- 2 Work space is an important aspect of the culture of any organisation. How similar is Interpolis to your workplace?
  - 3 Does your organisation operate a system of flexible working? If not, should it?
  - 4 Describe the typical work spaces of people in your organisation. How well adapted are they to your professional and personal needs? Imagine that your organisation is relocating to brand new premises and that you have been invited to discuss with the architects the working environment which will work best for you. What does your ideal work space look like?