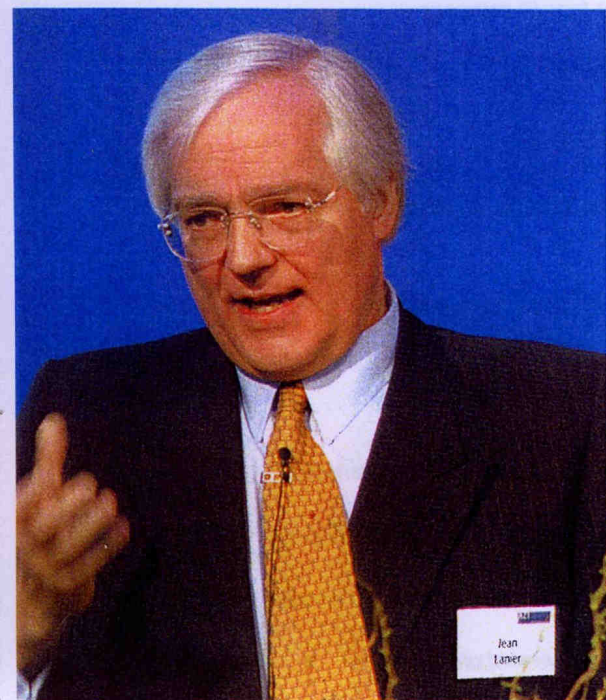


intercultural seminars to better know and understand

A valuable mix of cultures



After all the hard work, projects and changes that integrating the Euler Hermes Group has involved, I thought that it would be useful on the first anniversary of Hermes' arrival to hold a seminar for the Group's top executives to discuss methods to improve the way we work together. Our Group is a unique, "pocket-size" multinational, and it is and desires to be multicultural. As in any international group, it is also important that executives be managers and have a perfect command of the modern and commonly used techniques of management by objectives.

Our seminar thus had several aims:

- ↳ To help people understand their own and their colleagues' culture
 - ↳ To understand the challenges of working cross-border
 - ↳ To get to know our colleagues better on both the personal and professional levels
 - ↳ To find the common tools and decision mechanisms that will ensure our growth and profitability
 - ↳ To work together in defining a Euler Hermes culture founded on shared values
- Here three participants from three "cultures" give their impressions of the seminar.

↳ Jean Lanier

EULER HERMES KREDITVERSICHERUNG > GERMANY

An incalculable advantage...»

Recognising cultural differences and understanding their importance in co-operation in a group of international companies was the theme of the seminar that the Group invited some of its subsidiaries' staff members to attend in early July 2003. The objective, along with analysing the differences and their uses, was to improve co-operation through mutual understanding. The 21 participants, who included members of the Management Board,

came from eight countries. The seminar leader was Professor Jacques Pateau, a specialist in intercultural management who serves as an advisor in many "marriages" between French and German companies. Different styles of cultural management and the critical aspects of any kind of co-operation were among the many issues addressed during the two-day meeting. There was not of course enough time to develop any "patentable" me-

thods, but at the end of the seminar, the participants were at least able to agree that having an international dimension, diverse know-how and a variety of mentalities, personalities and cultural characteristics is an incalculable advantage for the Euler Hermes Group. The next step is to develop team spirit. Consequently, the tasks of the holding company, the Group functions and the subsidiaries are going to be more clearly defined. So will an action plan, whose objective



will be to improve communication throughout the Group. Another intercultural team-building seminar will be held in the autumn.

↳ Dr. Hans Janus

each other and to define a Group culture together

EULER HERMES SIAC > ITALY

« An interesting challenge »



How to improve the operational performance of a global, multinational enterprise like Euler Hermes by removing barriers? No, this is not the title of a new management guide or a business school seminar topic. This question was in fact put to Group senior managers at a two-day meeting held at Chantilly, outside Paris. I was there, and believe me, what seemed like a trivial question at the start turned

out to be an interesting challenge in terms of teamwork. Education, language, traditions, history and philosophy are all factors determining behaviour. Behaviour, in turn, influences the way teams work, meaning that it can result in late deliveries, communication problems and serious structural dysfunction. All these difficulties emerged when we were asked to do two or three supposedly simple exercises. Besides allowing

you to meet and get to know your colleagues, this outside meeting prompts you to ask questions about the nature of cultural behaviour, which affects your work every day, and to think about how to get over these barriers in order to work more efficiently. That was what the seminar was all about, and it is precisely what all of us are going to do, starting today. If you have the chance, attend the next one

✍ Luigi Epomiceno

EULER HERMES UK > UNITED KINGDOM

« Open-mindedness and frankness »

I was not very enthusiastic about going to this seminar, thinking that we would just be going over theories. However, my worries were dispelled from the start of the seminar, when we immediately began discussing some concrete issues related to the organisation and management of the Euler Hermes Group. I really appreciated the open-minded attitude of all the participants and their willingness to express their opinions frankly and confront difficult problems. A num-

ber of misunderstandings and assumptions were cleared up, which will make communication much easier in the future. Several concrete measures were decided, measures that are now under development.

Increasing communication at every level

After this workshop, my opinion is that the most important point is not our cultural differences, but rather the manner in which we communicate with each other. The cultural differences

will always exist and will really be a positive aspect of our Group. Increasing communication at every level in Euler Hermes can avert the problems that these differences cause. The best way to do that, I think, is to bring people working in different business divisions together as often as possible in an environment that offers the time and opportunity to have open and frank discussions. Ultimately it's something that is really worth doing.

✍ Paul Flanagan

