



Experiencing diversity through encounter: „Drive and Ask“

On June 11th, the [1st German Diversity Day](#) was organised in Germany by the association [Charta der Vielfalt e.V](#) (Charta for Diversity). More than 230 companies and organisations took part and organised more than 360 actions. Through this initiative more than two million people were reached.

We decided for a public-external action, through which we wanted to include a special group of people, namely cab drivers in Berlin, into the discussion about diversity.

Cab drivers represent diversity par excellence. They come from all over the world themselves and at the same time they drive and encounter people from all around the world. They meet diverse customers and always have their ears on the pulse of society. As a result they have many exciting stories to tell.

Because of this reason we were driving by cab through Berlin and asked questions. Who are the Berlin cab drivers? Where do they come from? What does diversity mean to them? We now tell their stories, taken from real, authentic and unique in our June news-story edition.

Our approach and our lead question:

Today is the 1st German Diversity Day, since thought leaders from economy and politics have understood that we as a country can only ensure our economic strength by appreciating and using all our potential.

That means that all people must get access to the labour market. People with a foreign background, men and women alike, homosexual people, old and young as well as disabled people.

Our conclusion

We heard many different answers on what diversity means for the cab drivers but we also witnessed many interesting life stories. We will continue working on this project and encourage you to do “drive and ask” next time you jump in a cab. You can share the answers and stories with a greater public on our [Facebook-page](#).

Everyone has an opinion about diversity

First and foremost we were impressed, that all cab drivers whom we randomly met knew what we meant by the term diversity. In addition they all had an opinion about it – it felt like they have thought about it before.

The contingency did not authenticate the stereotype reputation: Only friendly cab drivers in Berlin

We didn't meet a single cab driver that matched the „bad reputation of Berlin cab drivers“. Not a single driver was gruff or unfriendly. We experienced the opposite; they were all very open and talkative. We were very happy about this and every ride went by very quickly. We do not share the prejudice and reputation of the Berlin cab drivers and are happy to contest that we were affirmed in our perception.

In case our random selection of Berlin cab drivers is representative, we disprove the unfriendliness-prejudice.

A diversity praise for Berlin ... what about the rest of the Republic?

All cab drivers stated that they find diversity in Berlin. Every driver interpreted diversity – always with a positive connotation – in a different way. They all made a clear distinction between Berlin and the rest of Germany. Most cab drivers appreciate the multiculturalism in Berlin and confess that they couldn't live anywhere else but Berlin. There seems to be a backlog in terms of multiculturalism and welcoming culture in other parts of Germany though. Every movement and every change process needs pioneers and inspiration ... this is Berlin. This message and movement will hopefully expand successfully and fast on a nationwide level.

Diversity yes – equality of opportunities no – catching up crucial and necessary

We were alerted by the answers concerning the perceived equality of opportunities. The vast majority of the interviewed people do not perceive that they find equality of opportunities for people from a foreign background. We differentiate between access to education and access to the employment market after successful completed education.

Difficult access to education

We were most touched by Ahmad's destiny. A young intelligent man full of joie de vivre from Afghanistan. Ahmad and his family waited for 14 years after arrival in Germany for their permanent residence authorisation.

For 14 years their provisional residence authorisation was extended for 6 months at any one time. Apart from the inherent lack of prospects and fear, this meant that Ahmad was neither granted access to apprenticeship training positions nor to educational support funds and scholarships.

This might be an individual case – we really hope it is – nevertheless this showcases once more that every talent that is not supported because of these reasons is a scandal, which we can't afford! Luckily we also witnessed stories of success and hope from children of migrants, who are very successful in secondary school and study successfully at German universities.

Successfully graduated, but no – or at least difficult - access to the employment market

With this we listened to stories that describe the difficulty of entering the labour market after finishing apprenticeship or after graduating from university. A Turkish name still seems to be a barrier even for only getting invited to a job interview. A [study](#) from the University of Konstanz, commissioned by the Institute for the Study of Labour confirms: „The applicants with a German name – with the same level and quality of qualification – received 14% more positive feedback on their applications than applicants with a Turkish name“ (Original quote in German: „Bewerber mit deutschen Namen erhielten bei gleicher Qualifikation insgesamt 14 Prozent mehr positive Antworten als die Bewerber mit türkischen Namen“.) We must address and change this reality quickly, if not we risk losing our credibility when we talk about skills shortage in Germany.

Friends are fellow countrymen – what about you?

We asked, if the cab drivers have German friends or if their friends are mainly fellow countrymen. Independent of how we define „friend“, the majority described that most of their friends have the same cultural background as themselves. The cab drivers stated this in a neutral non-judgemental manner, and didn't feel like this is a shortcoming. This reminded us a bit of any expatriate culture, in which people who live in a foreign country mostly stay amongst their also foreign friends. This seems to be similar in Berlin.

We unite all diversity components within our team:

We are 28 people from 18 different countries, 15 women and 13 men, aged from 28 to 74 years, hetero- and homosexual, with different religious backgrounds and most diverse life- and work-experiences. We speak 29 languages.

What can we do for you? Give us a call on +49 (0)6221 – 735 13 71 or drop us an [e-mail](#). We are looking forward to talking to you.

And the price for the best quote goes to:

Mr. Ucar, who commented on our introduction phrase about the 1st diversity day: “this is great, and if all goes well, we will have a new bank holiday in the future, right?!” We loved this great and visionary way of thinking and the humour of Mr. Ucar. In this spirit we continue working on that vision!

About us: what we can do for you

If you want to dig into diversity, appreciation, team spirit, trust and potential we can support you. We capture the atmosphere within your organisation and analyse the answers between the lines. We will make visible what a standard employee survey does not extract. We create a unique atmosphere of dialogue which empowers your employees to make creative, authentic and most of all constructive answers.