

## Germany Multikulti – fact or fiction?

Art and cultural exchange go global in Berlin Page 2

Balkan beats conquer Germany and the world Page 3

The Russian language of luxury Page 3

A Vietnamese life in Pankow Page 4

## Better a fan than a fanatic



Changing colors: A young Turkish lady in Germany expressing loyalty to her new home as well as to her religion

■ **The quest of integration** 16 million people, a fifth of the population, have a migrant background in Germany. 7.1 million still have foreign passports, 9 per cent of a population of 80 million. 3 million Turkish represent the biggest group, followed by Eastern Europeans

■ **Mesut means luck** One problem of integration in Germany, other than in the US for example, has been the lack of qualified migrants. This is changing: Soccer star Mesut Oezil. Vietnamese-born health minister Philipp Roesler, filmmaker Fatih Akin are the new role models

■ **The baby bomb** Half of the babies born in Frankfurt last year have Muslim parents. Are we – the Germans – dying out, asked controversial banker Thilo Sarrazin, sparking fierce debates whether Multikulti, German slang for multiculturalism, is a benefit or a nightmare

■ **What's god got do with it?** Of Germany's 80 million inhabitants 4 million are Muslims. Okay, some say, if we remain a strictly secular state. Others object to the fundamentalism inherent in Islam: A religion oppressing women has no place in a free German society, they say

## Uploading 361° of respect

Video-sharing campaign reaches out against exclusion in Germany

By Oscar Schlenker & Abdallah Hamad

**G**rainy, poor-lit videos filmed with shaky cameras are common traits of homemade movies found on YouTube.com, the world's most popular video-sharing network on the web.

A particular video uploaded last year featured a racist attack against a young man with a brown-painted

face, followed by a catchy German rap about tolerance.

Far from being the work of a professional filmmaker or even a Nazi extremist, the grim message was expressed by a group of students from Gifhorn, a small eastern German town. It was awarded first place in a 2009 YouTube contest to promote integration in schools.

The contest was part of a campaign that runs in German language and it's tailored for a German audience. With traces of Nazism still lingering the web, YouTube says it's committed to promoting open-minded internet users, especially in Germany.

YouTube's "361 Grad Toleranz" 2009 campaign against exclusion in schools is back again this year under a different title. "361 Grad Respekt," or 361 degrees of respect, has added one degree of extra effort for a complete turnaround from Germany's past perspectives about diversity. According to Stefan Keuchel, spokes-

man for YouTube in Germany, over 54 million people have been exposed to the campaign since it began in 2009. German pop stars and politicians support the initiative.

Participants are asked to upload videos expressing opinions about respect through songs and skits. More than 2000 videos have been uploaded so far and have produced almost two million clicks from

viewers. From the 50 best videos of 2010 a jury will select the winner who will attend a V.I.P. concert in November and meet the popular German band Die Fantastischen Vier, who have a strong standing against intolerance.

Last year, none other than German Chancellor Angela Merkel uploaded a video stressing the importance of tolerance in schools. In September, Germany's federal minister for family, Kristina Schroeder, launched the second round with a speech. Rock bands



Upload your video now: the YouTube contest is ongoing

SCREENSHOT: YOUTUBE

### TOLERANCE ONLINE

Four video clips from the popular website Youtube illustrating the ongoing campaign for respect



**A minister's appeal:** Kristina Schroeder, the German Federal minister of families, launching the Youtube "361 Grad Respekt" contest earlier this year: "We all want to be respected as we are, with all our particularities. Whoever wants to be respected, has to show respect for others." Total Views: 1,100



**Last year's winning video:** Students from Gifhorn acting out in their video how a Neo-Nazi attacks a young man. The clip addresses the issue of solving problems without violence. Total views: 53.993



**Popstars show solidarity:** Most viewed video on the channel features the German hip-hop band Die Fantastischen Vier. This year's winner will meet the band and attend their concert in Berlin. Total Views: 300,500



**It's respect this year:** One of the new videos submitted this year shows how some students mistreat the Turkish girlfriend of one of their classmates. Contest ends October 16. Total Views: 253

**Want to join?** Website of the 361 Grad Respekt Channel:

► [www.youtube.com/user/361gradtoleranz](http://www.youtube.com/user/361gradtoleranz)

### A WEB GIANT

■ **YouTube** was founded in 2005 and quickly became the world's most popular online video sharing website. It gets two billions views per day, and is the third-most visited website after Google and Facebook, generating 10 per cent of internet traffic.

■ **361 Grad Respekt** is the name of Youtube's contest for more tolerance where users upload their videos. Almost two millions people have watched more than 2000 of these videos so far.

SCREENSHOTS: YOUTUBE



Urban stage: "Rendido" (capitulated) is a reference to the violence in the metropolis



Women behind the veil: "New costumes" explores the relation between alienness and beauty

## Dialogue is an art

A view of the world through a plastic veil. A painting of a surrendered man on the floor of a historical building. These art-works by the Brazilian artists Laura Lima (above) and Guga Ferraz (left) are examples of "A Gentil Carioca" (in English, a friendly inhabitant of Rio), a Brazilian gallery

exhibitions is to offer insights into the mode of operation of foreign partner galleries and into local cultural scenes from all over the world. Ifa has galleries in Berlin and Stuttgart. Its cultural trilogy is completed by a quarterly journal for international perspectives, the magazine Kulturaustausch (see article below).

# Seeing the world with local eyes

### A sophisticated German magazine overcomes boundaries to promote international cultural dialogue

By Madalena Sampaio & Rodrigo Rodembusch

The headquarters of the only German-language journal for international perspective is located in Berlin's effervescent Mitte district. An area where cultures interact, converge and re-invent themselves. Kulturaustausch (in English, cultural exchange) is a magazine that promotes cultural dialogue instead of cultural clash.

The paintings on the walls of the editorial office are not just a decorative element for the white walls. Perfect reproductions of covers from the latest issues on canvas transform the place into a real art gallery. "Art is an important vehicle to promote a constructive intercultural dialogue. This is the philosophy behind our journal", confirm Karola Klatt and Carmen Eller. The two journalists, among others, are responsible to keep track of the magazine's mission: to present culture from many different views. That is one of the reasons why, in 60 years of history, the publication has conquered a high position in the international cultural scene.

With a circulation of 10.000 copies, the publication is sent worldwide to several decision-makers. Seeing the world through local eyes is the formula used. The magazine published in German with English summaries thrives on the perspective and background of

manage it", says editor Carmen Eller. The message is clear: what people have to offer plays a bigger role when selecting articles and not only the degree of their prominence. Collaborators are foreign journalists, scientists, and philosophers. In the list, heavy names,

search in shelves to find editorial treasures like the first copy of the magazine from almost 60 years ago. Since its creation in the 1950s, some topics provoked particularly strong reactions such as a controversial issue published in 2009, which dealt with the theme of Western beliefs versus Islam. The front cover depicted two men looking at each other through lenses. One sees a pig and the other sees a camel. "Many readers loved it, some considered it to simplistic to illustrate the complexity of the topic", says Karola Klatt. "Our intention was to have a cover that reflected how we see each other and look at each other with stereotypes and clichés", underlines Carmen. Such themes generate debate not only among readers. "Even in the editorial meetings the discussion was long", she concludes.



Karola Klatt (left) and Carmen Eller make sure the magazine presents culture in the most various perspectives and contexts

contributors from 146 countries. "We want to have a very concrete narrative of what these people are confronted with and how they

such as the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, and the Islamic scholar, Tariq Ramadan, can have the same importance and space as articles written by people who do not belong to the top-ten faces in their field. And this mixture of content is what readers from all over the world are looking for.

### Dialogue or clash of cultures?

What role does Kulturaustausch play in promoting intercultural tolerance in Germany? In the office, Karola Klatt and Carmen Eller climb stairs and



Hot: art work from Brazil

## Burning global issues

What topics occupy the global debate today? This ranking by the editorial office of the magazine Kulturaustausch goes far beyond the current German debate about integration.

- **Decline of natural resources**  
How will different cultures, poor & rich countries, approach one of the most relevant problems of the planet Earth?
- **Climate change**  
How do cultures deal with climate change and "eco-refugees", people displaced by weather catastrophes?
- **Religious conflicts and fundamentalism**  
What exactly are the reasons for the lack of dialogue and intolerance?
- **Migration**  
How integrated are people outside their own cultures? What are the necessary tools & incentives?
- **Future of European integration**  
How to deal with economical, cultural and social differences inside the European Union?

# Zaigrajmo! Peace on the dance floor!

### Balkan beats uniting people of a former war zone in Germany

By Marija Ignjatovic

Twenty years ago, on the very day of German reunification, he came to Berlin with nothing in his hands. Today, Robert Soko is one of the most popular disc jockeys in Berlin; electrifying youngsters on the dance floor with his unique musical invention - Balkan beats.

Dancing, sweating, jumping – Berlin has it all. Especially on every second Saturday in club Lido, located in eastern Berlin, where different nations join together and dance to the Balkan rhythm. „A good party is neither a lecture about music, nor a music museum“, states 40-year-old DJ Robert Soko, "a good party is an energy factory making us feel good and forget about our conflicts."

In 1990, Robert Soko left his hometown Zenica, in Bosnia, to explore the world and find a job. It was only a year later when the Balkan war began, which fragmented former Yugoslavia and broke the peace between Serbs, Croats and Bosnians for more than a decade.

Robert finally settled in Berlin working as a cab driver. He fell in love with an East Berlin lady and rapidly learned the language. He seemed to assimilate quickly and well into the German surroundings.

Suddenly, the war in Bosnia brought more and more refugees from former Yugoslavia to Berlin. Many of them started to meet at the Arcanoa, a small pub in



A DJ with a vision: Robert Soko invented Balkan beats, sometimes called the Latino pop of Europe

Kreuzberg. Robert came up with the idea to launch some old Yugoslavian rock music there. "At the beginning it was just my hobby", he remembers: "affected by nostalgia, we started to celebrate old socialism holidays that nobody celebrated any more, such as the birthday of Tito, the president of former Yugoslavia. We called it culture recycling. We recycled the culture of the nation that didn't exist anymore."

Robert's father is a Bosnian Croat and his mother a Serb from Belgrade. His best friend from back home was a Muslim. With such a mixed cultural background, when the war started Robert didn't know which side he belonged to, he also didn't want to take sides. "I feel as a Croat,

dream as a Serb and love as a Bosnian," says Robert.

But still, Former Yugoslavia collapsed, countries separated. Years of darkness, poverty and isolation followed. More than one million "Ex-Yugos", as the refugees from former Yugoslavia were labeled, had to leave their home and "germanize". They arrived in the country under shock, bearing the scars of war on their faces. Was it really possible that these people would peacefully sing and dance together ever again? "It sounds paradoxical, but it is true," says Robert: "I can remember only a few problems among the Ex-Yugos but they were really harmless, there was no aggression. Somehow here in Germany the crowd became tolerant. Balkan beast turned into Balkan beats."

Germans discovered Balkan beats, too. Nowadays, the parties are one of the top events in Berlin. "The Yugos now make up for less than a quarter of the crowd" says Robert. The rest are Germans; as well as Russians, Italians, Polish and Slovaks. "My audience is multilingual, open-minded and sexy," he says with a laugh.

After twenty years, DJ Robert Soko still lives in Berlin with his 10-year-old son. After getting an unlimited state permit for Germany, the idea of going back to Ex-Yugoslavia has vanished. "I'm a Bosnian-Berliner" says Robert, "in Berlin I feel at home. Berlin has stolen my heart". And his message is clear: "Make peace with music instead of war; dance and unite". Ajmo sad-zaigrajmo!

### "Balkan beasts turned into Balkan beats"

### THE BALKAN COCKTAIL

■ Mix 2 deciliters of Yugo Punk Rock with 1 deciliter Balkan Ska into a glass, add one spoon of Electro, shake well and you get a yummy cocktail – Balkan beats.

■ Following the example of united East and West Berlin, DJ Robert Soko fused western electronic music with eastern Balkan ethno sounds, some of it with traditional string music. "It was amazing to see how Germans fell in love with the music. It is very infective", says the DJ from former Yugoslavia who has since become a disco star in Europe.

■ In 2009 he launched the last of his four Balkan beats CD compilations. With his albums, concerts and parties he earns enough money to support him and his son in Berlin. He is booked not only in Germany but also in Paris, London, Budapest, and even in Chicago, New York, Brazil.

Balkan beats cocktail is ready. Let's drink it, and dance!



DJ Soko's latest album

Find DJ Robert Soko at:  
► www.balkanbeats.de  
Club Lido in Berlin:  
► www.lido-berlin.de

By Veronika Kramar

To be or not to be: while immigrants define their own ways of integration, language is surely one of the most important elements of the complicated process. Four Million Russian speaking people in Germany rely on their own media – although in Russian language.

The room is full of a warm yellow light shining above a pleasant green floor. All around there are glass walls with dark wooden doors. There is an impression of stability and transparency, probably not exactly Russian virtues. At Werner Media the work is now at its boiling point. Twenty editors, largely with immigrant background, write for the biggest Russian language media-publishing house in Germany. It caters to one of the biggest ethnic minority groups here. Since 2001 Werner Media publishes six newspapers and magazines trying to satisfy the demands of Russian immigrants who are already integrated, still in the process - or maybe don't need integration at all.

### "Rich people don't need integration"

"Rich people don't use the notion of integration, and this question doesn't bother them much," stresses one of the editors of Werner Media, Galina Demina: "they are integrated through money and business. They travel or live in Germany, conduct their business

# The language of luxury

### Russian speaking publisher in Germany advocates integration – with a twist

and communication in Russian or even English and feel wonderful." For the special luxurious audience Werner Media invented the glossy bi-monthly fashion and lifestyle magazine "Vsja Evropa" (All of Europe) with the motto "Russian is the language of luxury." It has its readers not only in Germany but also in several European countries and has a circulation of 72 000

copies. Galina explains: "Russians are known in the whole world as lovers of fashion, fur coats, jewelry and diamonds. They brought their own culture to Europe and at the same time consume luxury with pleasure". The magazine carries dozens of full-page luxury advertisement. This seems to pay off very well to the publisher: each copy of "Vsja Evropa" is sold for five Euros.

Werner Media in Germany has three main groups of readers: Russian Jewish immigrants prefer the weekly newspaper "Evrjskaja gazeta". The "Judische Zeitung" is read by both German Jewish and non Jewish. But, Russians with German background from the former Soviet Union are the largest group and the main target audience of the weekly "Evropa-Express" and "Berlinskaja gazeta" (Berlin Newspaper). They are immigrants mostly from the agricultural regions of Povolzhje and Kazakhstan. "They are simple people, farmers. It is not easy for them to learn German. Our newspaper puts them closer to German life and the news happening around them," says editor Elena Demina. The newspapers cover stories with Russian, German and European perspectives such as how to attend language classes, how to save energy or even the controversial remarks of Ex-banker Thilo Sarrazin, who sparked a big debate about immigrants in Germany. "By doing so we actually are a tool of integration to our readers", says Demina.



Glossy and seriously: media made for Russians  
Werner Media Group is the largest Russian-speaking publisher in Germany and Europe since 2001. The glossy bi-monthly magazine "Vsja Evropa" (left), translated as All of Europe is their most profitable publication. "Europa-Express" (right) is one of six other weekly or monthly newspapers published by Werner. All in all, the publications reach 400 000 readers in Germany

### WHAT DO YOU READ?

We asked Russians on the street of Berlin which media they consume in Germany:

- **Dmitrij Voronov**, 16, pupil: "I almost don't read newspapers, I prefer to watch everything on the internet."
- **Galina Wolf**, 42, housewife: "I read both Russian and German newspapers, but Russian newspapers are closer to me."
- **Mikhail Müller**, 37, salesperson in food shop: "Usually I get informed through the internet, but if I read then a bit of everything."

man because they no longer work and they actually don't have the need to learn it. They feel comfortable within their families and Russian communities in Germany", says the editor-in-chief of "Jüdische Zeitung", Lutz Lorenz.

Another fear is that the new generation of young immigrants won't read newspapers in Russian any longer but will use the internet instead. "We will certainly have to adapt to this and establish a stronger online presence," the editors of Werner Media agree. "Our newspapers are a bridge in both directions. We help our readers to understand Germans and at the same time integrate their own culture and lifestyle into German society, hopefully making it richer", said Lutz Lorenz.

► www.wernermedia.de

### CULTURE GOES GLOBAL IN BERLIN

- **Kulturaustausch** is a quarterly publication from the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen - ifa), financed by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The circulation is 10.000 copies. Typical readers are decisionmakers from cultural institutions, diplomats, doctors and other intellectuals. Future plans: editions in English, French, Spanish and Chinese.
- **Art exhibitions** of ifa are shown at two popular art galleries in Berlin (Linenstraße, 139/140) and Stuttgart (Charlottenplatz, 17).
- **Information** about ifa's many cultural activities: www.ifa.de

# Vietnamese dreams in Pankow

Integration: one destination, many paths. The story behind the life of a flower-shop owner in Berlin: Mrs. Huong Thu from Hanoi



FOTOS: QUY NGUYEN

Giving is receiving: Mrs. Huong Thu in the garden of her flower-shop in Pankow. "Being sensitive enough to read my customer's mind and to understand them like a friend is the secret of my business success", she says

By Hien Nguyen & Quy Nguyen

**Mrs. Huong Thu is 41 years old and she has done many kinds of jobs.** She came to Germany in 1987, at her parent's wishes, as a contract-worker with former DDR government in a textile factory in Rostock, a coast city in northern Germany.

Over four years after the Berlin Wall came down and the factory was closed, she survived by cleaning hotel rooms, helping in clothing shops and restaurants run by other Vietnamese migrants. She also tried to run a clothing shop by herself but failed at the end.

But as difficult as her life was, it took the turn to a much happier ending. Now Thu is standing in a large, neatly decorated flower-shop Thu's Corner, showing a German shop assistant how to make a flower bouquet. "I found the job perfect for me. I have loved flowers all my life," she says.

The shop is named after her and is located in the East Berlin worker suburb called Pankow, a green oasis with its many parks and trees. "There's a saying in Vietnamese that if the place is good, the birds will come," says Thu: "I have that feeling here. I always felt I belonged to this place. Just by seeing the trees in front of my shop, it can make my long days shorter and lightens myself up on a gloomy day."

Since opening her business 15 years ago, Thu's shop has stayed on the same street. "At the beginning, I had just one small plain kiosk," she says and points to the

Currywurst stall on the other side of the street. "And it was much colder there than here in the winter." But the joy from what she was doing made her quickly forget about her difficulties. Contrary to what most German people think, not all Vietnamese are natural experts in the field of flowers and floral arrangements. "Many of us chose to do it just because we only need a small sum of credit to start with," Thu explains: "It's a business like any other." In fact,

the first one to teach her about flowers - from German roses to Dutch tulips - were her own customers. But now she has become the one who gives them advice. "I have become a small flower expert myself," she says it with a big smile.

Thu's success, however, is only half of her story. When talking to outsiders she does not easily reveal the rest of it. Her unreal-



Blooming business: The flower-shop Thu's Corner thrives in Pankow since more than 15 years

ized dream to become a professional singer, harshly interrupted when her parents sent her off to Germany. Her tireless struggle for integration in a foreign country, where her children have from the beginning spoken the native language better than her. Her sorrow, when her four-year marriage to a fellow countrymen fell apart and she had to walk away with two small children, Giang Nguyen and Son Nguyen, at the time three and one year old. "That was the most difficult time in my life", Thu recalls. "I was unmotivated waking up every morning. But again I found myself worn-out at the end of the long work day. I was only lucky to be born with a positive attitude to life that kept me always moving on," she added.

## "Your future will be better than mine"

Has Thu ever faced any discrimination, subtle or direct during her 23 years in Germany? Does the Vietnamese flowerseller sometimes still feel she does not belong? Thu smiles gently before she answers: "Did I ever have the luxury to think too much about such things?" In the last 15 years she has had the same routine every day, leaving the house at 5 a.m. to buy fresh and beautiful flowers from the retailer and to return before 7 a.m. when the kids wake up, so that she can prepare breakfast for them.

Often Thu spends her free weekends with her family. The traditional Eastern culture gives her a close tie with her children but, like any typical Vietnamese mother, she's still shy showing her motherly emotions to them explicitly. Her

children, born and bred in Western culture, are more outspoken and write her small messages like "I love you" or "You are the best mom", expecting to receive such expressions of affection from her, too. But Thu cannot do that.

Thu's oldest daughter, whom she lovingly calls "Giangy", is turning 18 this year. Will she ever see her dreams reflected in her daughter's lives? Will she ever talk to them about her dreams? "I

## THE LIKEABLE IMMIGRANTS

■ Nearly 85.000 people with Vietnamese passports are living in Germany for different reasons and with diversified backgrounds, plus a great number of Vietnamese immigrants holding German citizenship. The biggest waves of Vietnamese immigrants came as "Boat People" from Southern Vietnam during the 70's, shortly before the end of the American war in Vietnam. Others were contract-workers in the DDR who were left behind after the fall of the Berlin Wall - just like Mrs. Huong Thu (see main story).

■ Vietnamese immigrants, now mostly residing in the old Federal States, often run gastronomy and textile business or sell flowers. They have a reputation for being hard-working and integrating very actively in Germany's society, but still preserving their own traditional culture. Young Vietnamese with migration background from second generation belong to the best students in school among other migrant groups.

SOURCE: FEDERAL OFFICE FOR MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

didn't tell them in a straight way, but hopefully they understand it somehow through the lullabies that I often sang to them since they were small: "My baby, do you feel my love for you? Your future will be much better than mine..." Mrs. Thu used to have her dreams. But now, she is dreaming those of her children.

► Flower-shop Thu's Corner, Bahnhofstr. 63, 13127, Pankow, Berlin

## Life between two cultures

Mrs. Thu's oldest daughter Giang Nguyen about her life in Germany

**What is home?** "One time when I was in elementary school, my teacher told me to give her a ball-point pen. I couldn't figure out what she meant because I just did not understand the word 'Kugelschreiber'. From that moment on I began to question myself: 'Who am I?' Still I know there's foreign part in me despite the fact that I was born and grew up in Germany. There is a second homeland in my heart, Vietnam."

**"Deutsch".** "German language shaped my identity, personality and mindset. It gives me freedom for integration."

**Vietnamese language.** "For me, it's the language of family, as I mostly speak Vietnamese to my beloved ones. The language is melodic and I instinctively trust

any person who speaks it, even if it's a stranger on the street."

**Dreams.** "My mother had big dreams when she was young.



Giang Nguyen (left), 18, her sister Laura, 6, and their mother, Mrs. Huong Thu, 41

My sister and me, we are more insecure. We set our expectation low so that we won't be disappointed. I wish my mother would think more about herself than caring only about us."