Geert Hofstede shows how cultures differ from each other and/or are similar to one another in terms of those five dimensions. There are naturally other dimensions in terms of which societies and their cultures can differ and thus be classified. One of these is the dimension **materialism – post-materialism**. Here we assume that increasing prosperity enables people to be less concerned about securing life's physical necessities. Their concerns shift from order, economic growth, stable prices, high spending for defence and the fight against criminality towards increased emphasis on personal political influence, a greater say with regard to their work, freedom of speech, quality of life in the neighbourhood, solidarity with others and creativity.

These ideas are based, upon other things, on the findings of the American researcher **Maslow**. In around 1950 he developed the so-called **hierarchy of needs**, shown on this page. According to Maslow, people first strive to meet their basic needs (step 1: food, water, etc.), then for safety (step 2: socio-economic security), then for social contact (step 3), then for recognition by others (step 4) and finally for self-actualization (step 5). To put it succinctly: If you don't know whether you will have anything to eat tomorrow, you will not be interested in a course in Japanese flower arrangement.

A **post-materialistic attitude**, so goes the reasoning, arises because in the modern welfare state, in which many Westerners live for example, we no longer have to concern ourselves with all sorts of material matters. After all, our situation is good, and additional material welfare does not lead to increased well being. There is no benefit in having seven refrigerators or eighteen cameras (unless you plan to sell them on eBay). Therefore, these days we are far more concerned about the quality of life. Not because we no longer find money and material goods important but because we can obtain little or nothing more from them in the way of happiness or welfare.

Another dimension, which is closely related, is that of **modernism and post-modernism**. As a result of the economic progression and the associated material security, but also due to the increased level of education, we can and will lead independent lives. We can determine for ourselves what is good and bad and no longer allow the church and/or government to tell us how we must live our lives. We decide that for ourselves. Values such as self-determination, self-development and personal freedom of choice are clear attributes of a post-modern lifestyle. In relation to **ethical issues** such as acceptance of other sexual behaviour, euthanasia, use of soft drugs, etc., people are therefore also more tolerant. This does not mean, however, that people will also ‘do’ these things themselves, but rather that they can empathize with the people who do make these choices. Increasing tolerance with regard to a number of ethical issues does not mean, however, that ‘anything goes’. With regard to a number of civil values, such as bribes, tax fraud, etc., we see that acceptance during the past decades has been limited, even in more post-modern societies.
In general, it is fair to say that in recent years increasing numbers of European countries have become more post-materialistic and post-modern. This is explained by the increasing welfare, the higher level of education and the (resulting) increasing individualization and secularization. Within specific societies (such as the Netherlands), young people have a more post-materialistic and post-modern vision than the older generations. Because the youth will slowly replace the older generations in the society, the society is slowly changing: from materialistic to post-materialistic and from traditional to modern to post-modern.

If we look at the world as a whole, we see that the differences are greater than within Europe. We find most European countries in the top right corner, where the cultures with post-modern and post-materialistic values are located. The horizontal axis is the so-called dimension of post-materialism. Thus, at the left, are the countries that place an emphasis on survival and material security. At the right side are those countries that place an emphasis on post-material values, because they all possess material security. The vertical axis is the axis of modernization. Below it are those countries where traditional religious authority dominates: the church, mosque, etc. have considerable influence. Above it are the countries where religious institutions have less influence and people are led to a greater degree by the government or by their own views. Over time we see that societies slowly move from the bottom left to the top right, but the manner in which they do so and the rate at which this process of change occurs differ from country to country.
Comprehension exercises to accompany instructional text ‘materialism and post-materialism, modernism and post-modernism’

1. Examine Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. For each of the following concepts, indicate where it belongs in the hierarchy of needs (I. primary biological needs, II. socio-economic security, III. social needs, IV. recognition and V. self-actualization).
   A. being a famous and successful researcher =
   B. drinking water =
   C. taking a painting class =
   D. having social drinks with co-workers after work =
   E. obtaining a permanent employment contract =
   F. having casual sex with a friend =
   G. being frisked at the entry to the stadium =
   H. making a website about yourself =
   I. receiving a bonus with your salary =
   J. playing football at the weekend =

2. Look up in the text: What characterizes a:
   - materialistic attitude?
   - post-materialistic attitude?
   - modern attitude?
   - post-modern attitude?

3. Indicate whether the following statements are most closely associated with materialism, post-materialism, modernism or post-modernism.
   A. We invest more than average in the public areas of the Zuidas business district. =
   B. Every resident of Rotterdam must be able to feel safe. =
   C. In the Netherlands you have the right to the [freedom of speech]: thus the residents of the Netherlands may say what they think. =
   D. They were against abortion weren’t they? They knew that God had created life and issued the commandment ‘Thou shall not kill!’ =
   E. A large portion of the youth state that they agree with the statement ‘I accept homosexuality’. =
   F. During the national fund-raising drive for the tsunami on 6 January 2005, the Netherlands showed its best side. =
   G. The global expenditures for weapons rose again in 2004. =