

## IO2: Comparative map of approaches to the intercultural work

This intellectual output aims to provide a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in the partner countries on a national level.

It will further describe the approaches to the intercultural work in these partner countries in comparison to the national approaches within Europe.

### **Target Audience**

The target audience will include 1.5 and 2nd generations' migrants who would like to pursue the career of an intercultural worker will have an overview of options. In addition, this material will provide knowledgeable information about gaps and dead spots. Thus, this training material is developed to help the project partners to build a knowledge base for the other project outputs (especially the IO4 and the IO5).

Guide to the content of the comparative map

Template	Remarks
Introduction	Briefly introduce the type of intercultural work.
Case studies/ practical examples	<p>Give practical examples if applicable from partners' countries.</p> <p><b>Case studies of intercultural work in each partner country will be analysed based on the following themes derived from the questions for final evaluation and reporting.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Coordination of intercultural work</b> : What is the specific system (national, regional, local) approach to the intercultural work; List concrete educational providers (e. g. NGO, vocational institutions, higher education institutions)</li> <li>2. <b>Recognition of intercultural programme:</b> Is it officially recognized as a profession, and if so, how is it regulated (e.g. mandatory education, official job description, etc.); What are the pre-conditions to enter the course? ( e.g. length of the course, main subjects taught)</li> <li>3. <b>Institutional roles:</b> What authorities (if any) take the role of intercultural workers; Which authorities hire intercultural workers?</li> <li>4. <b>Regulation and qualification of the intercultural workers:</b> What are the education options for intercultural workers (formal, informal), and how to qualify as an intercultural worker;</li> </ol> <p><b>Approach to intercultural work:</b> What is the approach used in intercultural work? What are the main tasks intercultural workers perform there? /Elaborating separately for every authority, such as court, hospital, police, reception centres etc</p>
Conclusion	General summary

## IO2: Comparative map of approaches to the intercultural work in Finland

This intellectual output aims to provide a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in the partner countries on a national level.

It will further describe the approaches to the intercultural work in these partner countries in comparison to the national approaches within Europe.

### Target Audience

The target audience will include 1.5 and 2nd generations' migrants who would like to pursue the career of an intercultural worker will have an overview of options. In addition, this module will provide knowledgeable information about gaps and dead spots.

Thus, this intellectual output will serve as a training module for the partners in the training program under the intellectual outputs (IO4) and the MOOC (IO5).

### Introduction

The IO2 of the GEM2-project provides a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in each partner country, creating a map of intercultural work in Europe with case studies from different countries.

### Aims and objectives

The aim of this intellectual output (IO2) is to explore the approach to intercultural work in Finland as social support system for the integration of migrants with diverse backgrounds in the host country.

Therefore, this comparative work is based five premise questions and case studies of intercultural work approach in Finland.

**In relation to the first premise on the coordination of intercultural work in Finland, it is important to find out the specific system (national, regional, local) approach to the intercultural work. Therefore, this section will provide a list actor such as educational providers, NGO, vocational institutions, higher education institutions involved in intercultural work in Finland.**

In Finland, the ministry of education and culture is actually responsible for the development of education, science, culture, sports and youth policies. The administrative branch of the ministry of education and culture comprises of 13 agencies including the Finnish National Agency for education, academy of Arts promotion etc.

International migration has made Finland more diverse and as concerns the coordination of intercultural work in Finland, it actually depends on the institution that needs the services e.g the Finnish immigration service do regularly needs an interpreter to assist an asylum seeker who does not really understands Finnish and English. In such cases, there are usually private agencies who offer cultural interpretation.

There is actually no state based policy on intercultural work, well, it's sometimes implemented on the local level. This is simply because of the unequal amount of migrant across the Finnish National Territory.

Most migrants turn to settle in big cities like Helsinki, Espoo city centres etc etc. The youth department of Helsinki utilized a system of intercultural mediators in tasks performance e.g parental evenings and organizing multicultural evenings, resolving conflicts between young and guidance to organisations.

On the other hand, Espoo city council cultural instructors do help in schooling. Multilingual cultural instructors also help to integrate families, support the cooperation of educators and home member so as to prevent exclusion of children and young people of their caretakers.

NGO's such as HEED FINLAND, AFAES etc all help in intercultural work in Finland through seminars on education, sport and immigrants integration. They also encourage foreigners to develop inter-cultural communication by providing them the opportunity of positivity facing and becoming aware of the prevailing cultural diversity.

**For the second premise on the recognition of intercultural programme, the main question explores the recognition of intercultural work as a profession, and if so, how is it regulated (e.g. mandatory education, official job description, etc.); What are the pre-conditions to enter the course? ( e.g. length of the course, main subjects taught)**

The intercultural programme does not actually form any entity by themselves. This is simply because intercultural work depends on the institution needs for the services e.g. interpreters who are constantly needed by the Finnish immigration service to assist in asylum interviews. Well, awareness of different languages and intercultural communication skills are considered essential for the basic education in Finland. Following the rise of multicultural education in the Finnish society, multicultural education has emerged in Finnish educational institutions to address the social and educational need of a multicultural society and face the challenges of the integration of immigrants in Finnish school and communities e.g. most Finnish students now take part in exchange studies and this thus goes a long way to increase educational equity for all pupils and students as well.

**The third premise focuses on the institutional roles in the coordination of intercultural work: What authorities (if any) take the role of intercultural workers; Which authorities hire intercultural workers?**

As already stated above that intercultural work is based on demand, most intercultural workers are hired by the Finnish immigration service to aid in translation purposes for refugees who barely understand Finnish.

The Youth department in Helsinki utilizes a system of intercultural mediators in task related to parental evenings and organizing multicultural evenings etc. In addition, the Espoo city council also employs cultural instructors to help in schooling while multilingual cultural instructors do help to integrate families and support the cooperation in education and other departments so as to prevent children and young people from exclusion in the Finnish society.

**The fourth premise focus on the regulation and qualification of the intercultural workers: What are the education options for intercultural workers (formal, informal), and how to qualify as an intercultural worker;**

International migration has made Finland more diverse. New language groups, religious communities and ethnic communities have emerged in our country. While this development challenges the conventions of Finnish cultural policy, it also offers many opportunities for the arts and cultural life. The increasing diversity of the Finnish population needs to be mainstreamed into the planning and decision-making procedures in arts and cultural policy. The funding of arts needs to be developed strategically, taking into account the growing societal importance of cultural diversity. Successful mainstreaming means engaging migrants more equitably into arts and cultural life. It is important to see multilingualism and diverse cultural competences as human resources and as an integral part of Finnish cultural life. Multilingualism and knowledge about different cultures play an important role in creative working communities, and we need a new understanding of this role. Arts and cultural organizations must be able to identify discriminatory structures and recruitment practices and recognize their varying degrees of existence in their own activities. Expertise related to cultural diversity, equity and equality should be developed in these organizations. Cultural actors need to consciously diversify their programmes and also foster contents arising from different cultural heritages and aesthetic concepts.

Thus, to qualify as an intercultural worker, it's quite simple, one just need to choose a field eg interpretation for those who speak numerous languages and be flexible as well so as to work with people with different backgrounds and characteristics.

In relation to the regulations, the NGO's usually run this department while the government do constantly check so as to make sure that they are doing the right thing as concerns immigrants integration and empowerment.

**The fifth premise focuses on the approach to intercultural work: What is the approach used in intercultural work? What are the main tasks intercultural workers perform there? /Elaborating separately for every authority, such as court, hospital, police, reception centres etc**

In general, the "Interculturally Effective Person" can be said be a person who is able to "live contentedly and work successfully in another culture" (IEP 2002: 4). This kind of a person has: an ability to communicate with people from other cultures in a way that earns their respect and trust; the capacity to adapt his/her professional skills to fit local conditions and constraints; and the capacity to adjust personally so that s/he is content and generally at ease in the host culture. (IEP 2000: 4)

In summary, to be interculturally competent in Finland means much the same as elsewhere in the world: to be flexible, sensible, and other-oriented. One should also be culturally literate, knowing the cultural foundations of the country and the people, in order to comprehend the 'hidden' culture and the mindset of the people one is dealing with. The biggest challenge in intercultural interactions is still, however, to know oneself, and the influence of one's own culture on communication, or as Heider (1988) puts it: "to know how others behave requires intelligence, but to know oneself requires wisdom".

That said the rule of intercultural workers to the Finnish Police is very important because communication is vital for effective law enforcement and crime prevention. The Finnish Police do usually hire the services of intercultural workers when need be e.g. in cases where by the service user

especially refugees just arriving Finland do not speak Finnish or English. Intercultural workers who mostly speak numerous languages do usually aid in interpretation.

Nowadays, most of the Finnish Police officers do speak Finnish and English although the country main language is Finnish. They try to learn English so as to facilitate their dealings with non-Finnish people.

In Finnish courts, the services of intercultural workers are usually highly needed especially when dealing with cases of non-Finnish peoples e.g. refugees. This because the courts main functioning language is Finnish, the intercultural workers do usually aid in translation between parties.

Hospitals in Finland and most especially those who constantly have refugees as clients do usually hire the services of an intercultural worker who helps to facilitate the doctors or nurses to understand the worries of the said client. In most situations, the nurses themselves help because they are all encouraged to learn English as a second language due to the fact that the immigrant population is currently growing in Finland. Most city councils do usually allocate an intercultural worker to its municipality hospital so as to facilitate understanding between all parties thus enabling the immigrants to always get their health issues understood and solved although with basically no Finnish knowledge.

Reception centres in Finland are actually the institutions that do have more intercultural workers. This simply because intercultural workers do have the knowledge of other cultures and respect other cultures/values as well. All the reception centres in Finland have intercultural workers due to the high rate of refugees from other countries entering Finland. The intercultural workers in these centres do usually aid the refugees e.g. taking them to the hospital, making sure they are enrolled in the Finnish language course, interpreting their decision from the immigration and often accompany asylum seekers to the Police, court or immigration service when the authority want to process the asylum seeker case.

To conclude, the demand for intercultural workers in Finnish institutions is constantly increasing nowadays as the number of immigrants and most especially refugees keep increasing.

## Case studies

### Case 1: Intercultural Trainings in Finland

In Finland, there are intercultural trainings that one can do, but they do not form any entity by themselves. The role of the intercultural worker depends on the institution that needs services. For example, there are private interpreting agencies which offer "cultural interpretation". Here the skills needed are more interlinked with the linguistic skills and education of the employee.

There is no state-based policy on intercultural work and it is not officially recognised. It is however sometimes implemented on the local level. This is logical because of the unequal amount of migrant population across Finland. Because most migrants proportionally are around the capital city, most of the intercultural work is located there, although it is still under development. Intercultural work is mostly based on specific projects when it can be found.

There are some examples of wider approaches to intercultural work. The Youth Department of Helsinki utilises a system of intercultural mediators in tasks related to parental evenings and informing parents, organizing multicultural evenings, resolving conflicts between young people and providing guidance to organizations.

The city of Espoo is the second biggest city of Finland and it is located right next to the capital Helsinki. Espoo employs cultural instructors to help in schooling. Multilingual cultural instructors help to integrate families, support the cooperation of educators and home members, and prevent the

exclusion of children and young people or their caretakers. Espoo's cultural instructors have first-hand experience of the immigration process from the perspective of the whole family, strong experience in the social, health and educational work. These examples show how an intercultural worker in Finland needs to have a strong schooling in another sector first before being able to specialise in intercultural work. Education that would lead to intercultural work by itself doesn't exist, although there are extra courses offered about similar subjects.

### Case study 2: Intercultural work in mental health of migrants in Finland

Case study on intercultural work activities in Finland explores the work conducted by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), an independent expert agency working under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. This agency studies, monitors, and develops measures to promote the well-being and health of the population in Finland. They gather and produce information based on research and register data. They also provide expertise and solutions to support decision-making.

This agency serves various parties: the government, municipal and provincial decision-makers, actors in the social welfare and health sector, organisations, the research community, and the public. They help to secure quality of life for Finns in a fair but dynamic welfare society.

Its intercultural activities in Finland, focused on supporting migrants and ethnic minority groups in fostering better health care accessibility.

The institute cross cultural activities align with health inequity among migrant groups.

### Example 1: Working with the assistance of an interpreter programme

Working with the assistance of an interpreter was a project that focused on a relationship that connected migrants with interpreters in the health sector. Migrants were assisted by an interpreter whenever the client's language skills are insufficient for properly discussing issues.

In Finland, under the Language Act, a person has the right to interpreting services if he/she cannot speak Finnish or Swedish or, due to an injury or illness, cannot be understood. The authority that booked the interpreter will pay for the interpretation costs, as the act obliges the authority to organise interpretation if necessary. In the case of patients with a refugee background, the state reimburses the municipalities for the interpretation costs.

The reception centres in Finland usually organise interpretation and translation services for asylum seekers in social and health care areas to reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding as well as fostering positive patient- medical professionals relationship.

### Example 2: PALOMA Project

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), has organised several cross-cultural projects supporting the health of migrants in Finland. These projects include the following;

PALOMA Project, a national mental health policy for refugees: this project was developed to support the mental health of refugees and other individuals from diverse backgrounds. The project was carried out by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Kuopio University Hospital, the Finnish Association for Mental Health, Helsinki University Hospital (Department of Psychiatry), and the City of Hämeenlinna.



Under the PALOMA project, free web training was organised for people with refugee background to foster their well-being.

### Project phases

The PALOMA project was divided into three phases:

During the first phase, information was gathered comprehensively about work, in different parts of the country and at different levels of administration, to improve mental health, and about problems that have been identified in that work and solutions to them.

Information was gathered through interviews with members of different professions and refugees themselves, and through a literature review, seminars, and discussions.

In the second phase, a model was designed during to improve mental health, in relation to refugees and individuals from comparable backgrounds. This model was designed by experts and it served as guidelines on mental health services and other measures to improve mental health of migrants. The purpose of the project's third phase was to assist in implementation of the model nationally and at different levels of mental health work. (The project was funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)).

### Other projects conducted by the institute to support migrants in Finland include the following;

1. Refugees, Mental Health and Integration
2. Diverse Population of Finland
3. Work Approaches for Working with Refugees
4. Working with an Interpreter
5. Resources and Risks of Mental Health
6. Recognizing Mental Health Problems and Using Cultural Interview
7. Empathy and Compassion Fatigue
8. Victims of Torture, Human Trafficking and Violence
9. Sexual Violence & Other Forms of Risk Behaviour
10. Undocumented Immigrants & Multiple Minorities
11. Children's, Young People's and Families' Viewpoints
12. Primary Health Care Belongs to All
13. Specialised Medical Care Perspective
14. Working with Refugees from a Social Worker's Viewpoint
15. Refugees as Clients from the Viewpoint of the Police & Promoting Refugees' Mental Health from the Viewpoint of Education.

### Other resource projects

#### Professional cultural interpreting services:

KA204 - STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR ADULT EDUCATION KA204-35C3B97C





<https://www.alintupa.fi/kulttuuritulkkauk/>

<http://www.suomentukitalo.fi/index.php/fi/palvelut/tukihenkioloepalvelu-3>

### Projects

- City of Espoo where three cultural instructors representing Arabic, Persian (Dari / Farsi) and Kurdish were hired for the project. In addition, cultural guidance is available in Somali, Russian, Estonian and Thai. The project's cultural instructors can be booked for basic education and early childhood education in Finnish in Espoo, and the service is free of charge.

[https://www.espoo.fi/fi-FI/Kasvatus\\_ja\\_opetus/Perusopetus/Suomenkielinen\\_opetustoimi/Opetuksen\\_kehittaminen/Edetaan\\_Espoossa\(134628\)](https://www.espoo.fi/fi-FI/Kasvatus_ja_opetus/Perusopetus/Suomenkielinen_opetustoimi/Opetuksen_kehittaminen/Edetaan_Espoossa(134628))

- Football club trains so-called cultural interpreters to facilitate communication, but also to teach families Finnish practices. There are many immigrants from Arab, Kurdish, and Somali backgrounds in the area where the club operates, and communication between families and the club is wanted to be smoother. Cultural interpreters themselves are people with an immigrant background who are familiar with both Finnish and their own cultural customs and practices.  
<https://www.palloliitto.fi/jalkapallouutiset/kulttuuritulkit-lisaavat-yymmarrysta-seuran-ja-perheen-valilla>

- Arjen apu (everyday help) -project from LAB university of applied sciences. The project supports the integration of immigrants through volunteer activities, personal guidance and knowledge and skills workshops in their own language. Immigrants receive help with everyday problems that do not require official or professional guidance and are due to lack of language skills and / or cultural alienation.

<https://www.lab.fi/fi/projekti/arjen-apu-vapaaehtoiset-kotoutumisen-tukena>

- Linkki -project from Pakolaisapu, NGO specialised in helping refugees. Kindergartens, schools or immigrants can request a cultural interpreter free of charge in the middle of everyday communication situations.

<https://www.veikkaus.fi/fi/yritys#!article/inhimillisia-utisia/julkaisut/2020/04/kulttuuritulkkauk>

- The Sharaf project organizes activities for young adults from different cultural backgrounds to support their understanding of different cultures and customs. The young person receives peer support from others in the same situation and has the opportunity to discuss matters that concern them.

<http://www.visitsaaga.fi/sharaf/>

### Course at XAMK university of applied sciences.

A cultural interpreter can work in different client situations where the client and the employee have a different understanding of the issue at hand. The course is aimed at professionals in the fields of education, early childhood education, social affairs, health and rehabilitation, as well as students in the field who speak a language spoken in Finland in addition to Finnish.

<https://www.xamk.fi/avoimen-amkn-kurssit/kulttuuritulkki-kulttuurien-valisen-yymmarramisen-vahvistaminen-10op/>

## Conclusion

Intercultural activities is a way of promoting integration which is a two-way process that both the immigrant and local residents become adjusted to each other within the host country. Integration has promoted a safe and non-discriminatory environment and a strong feeling that builds on trust among the people and the authorities. The feeling of security is undermined by experiences of discrimination and violence.

Thus, in order to foster a stronger and better intercultural activity, Finland would need to create more intercultural work opportunities. For now, intercultural work is limited to specific projects around the capital. There is little opportunities to qualify as an intercultural worker alone. If a worker is already qualified in the fields related to social work, education, linguistics or project management, he/she may then specialise in intercultural work.

## Resource Links:

1. Gudykunst, W.B. and Ting-Toomey, S. 1988. *Interpersonal Communication*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
2. Gudykunst, W.B. 1998. Individualistic and Collectivistic Perspectives on Communication: An Introduction. In: *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. Vol.22, No. 2, pp. 107-134.
3. Hofstede, G. 1994. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of mind*. Intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival. London: HarperCollins.
4. Heider, J. 1988. *The Tao of Leadership. Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching Adapted for a New Age*. New York: Bantam Books.
5. (IEP) A Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person. 2000. Centre for Intercultural Learning. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Canada.
6. Kirra, K-M. 1999. "Critical Incidents Perceived by Finns in Their Interaction with Non-Finns". Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.
7. Lehtonen, J. and Sajavaara, K. 1985. "The Silent Finn". In: D. Tannen and M. Saviile-Troike (eds.). *Perspectives on Silence*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publ.Corp., pp. 193-201.
8. Scollon, R. and Scollon, S. 1995. *Intercultural Communication. A Discourse Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell.

9. <http://afaes.fi/about-us/>
10. <https://heedfinland.org/index.php/our-events/>
11. <https://thl.fi/en/web/migration-and-cultural-diversity/support-material/paloma-training/episode-1-refugees-mental-health-and-integration>
12. <https://thl.fi/en/web/migration-and-cultural-diversity/support-material/paloma-training/episode-2-diverse-population-of-finland>
13. <https://thl.fi/en/web/migration-and-cultural-diversity/support-material/paloma-training/episode-3-work-approaches-for-working-with-refugees>
14. <https://www.hdl.fi/en/support-and-action/immigrants/traveller-population/>
15. <https://www.stncope.fi/en/whats-new/article-immigrants-as-clients-and-professionals-in-social-and-health-care/>
16. [https://youtu.be/Cuk\\_mrjNczE](https://youtu.be/Cuk_mrjNczE)

## IO2: Comparative map of approaches to the intercultural work in Bulgaria

This intellectual output aims to provide a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in the partner countries on a national level.

It will further describe the approaches to the intercultural work in these partner countries in comparison to the national approaches within Europe.

### Target Audience

The target audience will include 1.5 and 2nd generations' migrants who would like to pursue the career of an intercultural worker will have an overview of options. In addition, this material will provide knowledgeable information about gaps and dead spots. Thus, this training material is developed to

help the project partners to build a knowledge base for the other project outputs (especially the IO4 and the IO5).

## Introduction

The IO2 of the GEM2-project provides a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in each partner country, creating a map of intercultural work in Europe with case studies from different countries.

### Aims and objectives

The aim of this intellectual output (IO2) is to explore the approach to intercultural work in Bulgaria as social support system for the integration of migrants with diverse backgrounds in the host country.

Therefore, this comparative work is based five premise questions and case studies of intercultural work approach in Bulgaria.

## 5. Coordination of intercultural work

*(What is the specific system (national, regional, local) approach to the intercultural work; List concrete educational providers (e. g. NGO, vocational institutions, higher education institutions).*

Approaches to intercultural work in Bulgaria have been discussed and researched along with examples of good practices by a few non-governmental organisations but an organized system is not evident in Bulgarian laws or legislation. There is a common legislation such as Law on Asylum and Refugees but it consists of description of the conditions and the procedure for granting special protection to aliens in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as their rights and obligations. The following entities are specialized in regulation and monitoring of migration processes and international protection:

- Migration Directorate, Ministry of Interior – This is the national specialized structure for regulation and monitoring of the migration processes of foreigners in Bulgaria. You can find more information on their website - <https://www.mvr.bg/migration>

- State Agency for Refugees (SAR) with the Council of Ministers – This is an agency with special competence in the field of implementation of the state policy for granting international protection in the Republic of Bulgaria. You can find more information on their website - <https://aref.government.bg/bg>

Several sources such as The Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants (BCRM) mention that using social mediators in the integration of foreigners is deemed to be a good practice established through the years in Bulgaria. They are usually selected from concrete migrants' communities and are amongst: the persons who already have been granted asylum; members of families from mixed marriages; foreigners with residence permit; Bulgarian citizens who master the most common languages used by foreigners seeking asylum and are acknowledged with the culture of the biggest migrants' groups applying for asylum or humanitarian status in Bulgaria.

The spheres of social mediators' work include: introduction to the asylum seekers' rights and obligations in the country; **assisting with daily activities such as communication within intercultural environment**; finding accommodation; using public transport; support in securing medical assistance; support when contacting public institutions (legalization of documents, registration, etc.); mediating the communication between the, teachers, educational institutions and the migrant parents or migrants who are enrolled in studies. But the social mediation activities are financed under programmes and projects which are conducted for a period time and there is no constant support from the state for such activities. That is why BCRM mentions that there is no consistency in this sphere and the people who get experience in the field are rarely retained for long resulting in the lack of sustainability of achieved results. <sup>1</sup>

According to International Organization for Migration in Bulgaria - IOM Bulgaria the best intercultural mediation goes beyond translation and explanation of the meaning of words encompassing information on the culture, practices, norms and conventions in the host country, etc. Even though this line of work is assessed to be very important, the practice or profession of intercultural or social mediator is not officially recognized in Bulgaria. <sup>2</sup>

It could be said that the only profession in Bulgaria having some similarities with the duties of the intercultural worker is the "Educational Mediator" (code 53123004) established by Order of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy with №RD01-715 / 19.09.2017, which is based on Article 110, item 5 of the Ordinance on Inclusive Education (adopted by Council of Ministers №286 of 2016) and in connection with Decision №373 of 5 July 2017 on the establishment of a Mechanism for joint work of institutions for coverage and retention of students in education system in compulsory preschool and school age. The main goal of the educational mediator is to be a mediator between families, local communities, children, students, kindergarten and school, through which it promotes the coverage, social inclusion, integration, including the improvement of quality preschool and school education of children and students from vulnerable groups in the educational institution and the full involvement of the local community and parents in the development of education and personal progress of their children. <sup>3</sup>

Educational providers in the field of intercultural work:

**Higher education institutions:**

New Bulgarian University, Sofia

Sofia University St. Climent Ohridsky (SU)

University of National World Economy (UNWE), Sofia

**NGOs:**

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency <https://www.unhcr.org/bg/>

Caritas Bulgaria <https://caritas.bg/> - Center for Integration of Refugees and Migrants "St. Anna " and many more across the country

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bcrm-bg.org/docs/Dobri-praktiki-za-integracia-na-bejanci.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.iom.bg/sites/default/files/PROTECT\\_Empowerment%20Handbook\\_BG\\_Final\\_0.pdf](http://www.iom.bg/sites/default/files/PROTECT_Empowerment%20Handbook_BG_Final_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ordinance on Inclusive Education, <https://www.lex.bg/en/laws/ldoc/2137177670>

Bulgarian Red Cross <https://www.redcross.bg/> - Information and Integration Center of the Bulgarian Red Cross and UNHCR

The Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants (BCRM) <https://bcm-bg.org/> -

It was founded in 2005 by the Bulgarian Red Cross, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee and Caritas-Bulgaria as a platform of their activities related to the refugee and migration policy, protection and integration of refugees and migrants.

International Organization for Migration in Bulgaria - IOM Bulgaria: <http://www.iom.bg/>

Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR) <http://www.farbg.eu/en/who-we-are/#:~:text=The%20Foundation%20for%20Access%20to,founded%20in%20the%20public%20interest/>

Multi Kulti Collective (MKC) <http://multikulti.bg/>

## 6. Recognition of intercultural programme

*(Is it officially recognized as a profession, and if so, how is it regulated (e.g. mandatory education, official job description, etc.)?; What are the pre-conditions to enter the course? (e.g. length of the course, main subjects taught))*

Intercultural workers aren't recognized as a profession, they are rather classified as Social workers or Assistant, social work and social services; Assistant for social work with families, Intercultural or Social mediators, etc.

In Bulgaria there are no specific requirements regarding education and/or qualification in order to become an intercultural worker. Example requirements for occupying position as an intercultural worker or social activities assistant for work with migrants would be:

- ➡ Skills for working in an international team
- ➡ Experience in working with applicants for and granted international protection and / or migrants.
- ➡ Experience and knowledge in working with third-country nationals, especially children and parents
- ➡ Good command of Bulgarian and English, allowing written and oral communication; Speaking some specific languages like Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Kurdish, etc. is considered a priority.
- ➡ Experience in working with Microsoft Office
- ➡ Experience in providing social services
- ➡ Responsiveness, communication and serious attitude to work (Childhub, 2019)

From the aforementioned requirements it could be argued that the requirements are more focused on specific language and communication skills as well as personal qualities rather than specific education degrees or background. In terms of language skills speaking Bulgarian and English is a must and priority but not mandatory requirement is speaking some of the migrants' languages.

There are educational requirements only for teachers who are working with migrants, but they are general for all types of teacher – for instance, if one wants to become a teacher, he or she needs to have a VET qualification or bachelors/masters degree in Pedagogy with awarded professional qualification as "pedagogue" and / or "children's teacher", "children's and primary teacher". According

to the National Classification of Occupations and Positions (National Statistical Institute, 2011, pp 139-140) teachers working with migrants and immigrants fall in the category 235 Other teachers.

## 7. Institutional roles: What authorities (if any) take the role of intercultural workers; Which authorities hire intercultural workers?

*(What authorities (if any) take the role of intercultural workers; Which authorities hire intercultural workers?)*

As it was explained above, there is no official recognition of the occupation of intercultural worker or social/intercultural mediator but in several strategic documents the service of social mediation is stated to be provided by international and non-governmental organizations which may assist the local authorities.

### Best practice:

#### **National Program for the Integration of Refugees in the Republic of Bulgaria (2005 – 2013)**

The institution responsible for the implementation of this program was the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers. The program was developed after a thorough analysis of the legal framework and practice and contained the basic principles and means for achieving the integration of refugees in Bulgaria. Adaptation and integration activities were aimed at creating conditions for the full realization of the beneficiaries and providing opportunity for the development of their personal potential and active participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the Bulgarian society.

The NPIR was intended for approximately 100 beneficiaries of international protection annually, i.e. 60 adults and 40 children, and was centrally funded by the state budget. During this period, the average number of beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status was about 250 people each year. Over the years, the number of people willing to participate did not reach the estimated 100 individuals. Most of those who received protection are catered for themselves or left the country. Many of the registered participants left the program prematurely having gained the confidence to take care of their own interests. The NPIR was carried out only in the capital.

**During their training under the program the refugees received a package of measures in compliance with the current legislation for Bulgarian citizens included in the literacy and qualification programs of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The package of measures provided refugees with minimal social protection for their training period.**

The main objective of the measures was to integrate newly-recognized refugees in Bulgaria within no more than a year through learning Bulgarian, acquiring a profession, getting acquainted with the state administration, institutions, culture and traditions, getting access to the labour market and becoming financially independent in the country.

The Bulgarian language and vocational training courses were organized by the SAR in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Active partners in the process of integration of refugees were the Bulgarian Red Cross, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other non-governmental organizations.

The integration programme included:



- a package of measures for the integration of newly recognized refugees;
- elaboration of a guide with information on the rights and obligations of refugees in Bulgaria and the powers and functional competence of state institutions and non-governmental organizations working with refugees;
- provision of housing services for refugees – information, assistance with administrative formalities, address registration, legal assistance and advice;
- inclusion of refugees in employment and craft training programs at the Labor Offices and the National Craft Chamber as well as their training for the development and implementation of small business projects;
- legal regulation of the access of adult refugees without education to the state educational system;
- **inclusion of social mediators in the activities for social assistance for refugees;**
- inclusion of refugees in national programs for health and disease prevention;
- inclusion of refugees with special needs in various forms of psychosocial work, medical care, social patronage, cultural activities, etc.

Those wishing to join the NPIR were to submit a request within a specified period of time after receiving a refugee or humanitarian status. A social worker from the SAR conducted an interview with them, on the basis of which an Individual Integration Plan was prepared. The Individual Integration Plan included specific measures for the integration of the person and his family and deadlines for their implementation. Requests and plans were considered by an Integration Commission appointed by the Chair of the SAR, where apart from their staff representatives of NGOs, UNHCR and other institutions related to the integration of the beneficiaries of protection in the Republic of Bulgaria were also included.

Following a positive decision of the Integration Commission to include a person or a family in the program, between him/her and the Chair of SAR an Integration Agreement was signed, which specified the rights and obligations of both parties.

Financed under the NPIR were the following activities included in the Integration Plan:

### **Housing**

The people included in the NPIR were to find suitable housing by themselves or use the services of NGO mediators (BRC) who assisted them in finding housing. Through mediators, a contract with the landlord was signed, a copy of which remained in the refugee's personal record, and the amount of the rent financed under the NPIR was determined. During the last year of the program the rent was 170 leva for a single person, 300 levs for two cohabitants, 370 levs for 3 persons and 450 levs for 4 and more cohabitants.

When individuals had their own finances, they could rent a home with a higher rent where the difference was not paid out of the program budget.

### **Social assistance**

Upon entry into the program each household received a lump-sum targeted assistance up to the amount set for the year in the Regulations on the Application of the Social Assistance Act to cover basic needs and provide essential necessities.

### **Conducting Bulgarian language training**

The Bulgarian Language Courses were held in the Integration Centre of the State Agency for Refugees by specialists in teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language. As textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education and Science were not available, what was used were textbooks developed by Caritas – Bulgaria especially for the needs of the beneficiaries or those seeking protection at level A1 and A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. These can be found at:

<http://caritas.bg/bg/what-we-do/documents/documents/item/3834-dostap-manual>

<http://www.caritas.bg/Documents/Izdania/Dostap/A1-Bulgaria.pdf>

<http://www.caritas.bg/Documents/Izdania/Dostap/A2-Bulgaria.pdf>

A daily scholarship was paid for each day of the participants' attendance of the language course in accordance with the amounts envisaged in the Employment Promotion Plan for the respective year. The course lasted for 6 months. Upon conclusion the participants received a certificate of proficiency in Bulgarian.

### **Health Insurance**

Persons and their families were insured for the entire duration of their participation in the program.

### **Professional qualification and retraining**

In the Integration Centre of SAR there were courses in several professions and the participants received a daily scholarship in accordance with the amounts laid down in the Employment Promotion Plan for the respective year. After taking an exam, the participants received a certificate of partial qualification in a certain profession.

For more successful labour integration the refugees who had passed the training courses under the Program, with the assistance of social experts from SAR or NGO mediators, registered as active jobseekers in the Labour Office Directorate. The main purpose of ensuring employment to refugees was to give them access to the labour market and help them remain permanently on it. The highest rate of employment of refugees was registered in the catering, car repair, construction and utilities sectors.

### **Child Care**

The individuals were assisted in the enrolment of their children in kindergarten and pre-school groups. The fees for kindergarten as well as the lump-sums for enrolment in first grade set to be paid to Bulgarian children were covered by the budget of the program.

Particular attention was paid to the school integration of children whose parents were included in the NPIR. Meetings were held with teachers and parents to prevent the early drop-out of school children and to improve the conditions for their successful adaptation.

For the sake of the children's better adaptation regular consultations on the rights of refugee children, including unaccompanied minors, were conducted. Refugee parents learnt about Bulgarian culture and education. They were involved in intercultural activities with the participation of Bulgarian children and their families for the purposes of their social inclusion in the Bulgarian society. Special attention was paid to research and the development of curricula and projects related to the education of refugee children in Bulgarian schools. The Integration Program was monitored and controlled by the Integration Commission. The Integration Commission proposes to the President of SAR termination of the contracts with the individuals who did not comply with the requirements of the integration contract and, if necessary, a change of the conditions. In 2014 the Integration Centre of SAR with the Council of Ministers was closed with an amendment in the Institution's Rules of Procedure.<sup>4</sup>

After the programme, a new **Ordinance № 144 of 19 July 2017 on the adoption of an Ordinance on the terms and conditions for concluding, implementing and terminating the agreement on the integration of aliens granted asylum or international protection** have been enforced. Within the Ordinance the role of the central government bodies is described:

The process for implementation of the concluded agreements for integration shall be coordinated by a **Deputy Prime Minister, appointed by the Council of Ministers**. The Deputy Prime Minister shall be assisted by the administration of the Council of Ministers.

- **The State Agency for Refugees under the Council of Ministers has to:**

1. compile an Integration Profile of the alien during the procedure for granting asylum and international protection;
2. during the procedure for granting asylum and international protection provide information on the possibility for concluding an integration agreement;
3. conduct for the municipalities, which have submitted applications for concluding an agreement for integration, information campaigns among the foreigners accommodated in its territorial divisions, who have been granted asylum or international protection;
4. during the procedure for granting asylum and international protection provide information materials in which the rights and obligations arising from the conclusion of the integration agreement are explained in a language understandable to the foreigner;
5. provide the mayors of the municipalities, included in the register under art. 13, para. 4, information on the foreigners who have submitted an application for concluding an integration agreement;
6. render assistance for the transportation of the foreigner and of the members of his family to the respective municipality.

**The Ministry of Education and Science** shall determine the terms and conditions for admission and training of aliens seeking or granted asylum or international protection for:

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<sup>4</sup> National Program for the Integration of Refugees in the Republic of Bulgaria, [http://www.refugee-integration.bg/en/%d0%b4%d0%be%d0%b1%d1%80%d0%b8-%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b0%d0%ba%d1%82%d0%b8%d0%ba%d0%b8/?fbclid=IwAR1Rx5a5aLwcssKkpi1MHKTNP91-jROY\\_mzUP9ATwUqd-Lg7YJwB0hQZmL8](http://www.refugee-integration.bg/en/%d0%b4%d0%be%d0%b1%d1%80%d0%b8-%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b0%d0%ba%d1%82%d0%b8%d0%ba%d0%b8/?fbclid=IwAR1Rx5a5aLwcssKkpi1MHKTNP91-jROY_mzUP9ATwUqd-Lg7YJwB0hQZmL8)

1. training in Bulgarian language for minors and juveniles;
2. visiting preparatory groups for compulsory pre-school education;
3. attendance at school by the juvenile and juvenile members of the family of the foreigner with granted asylum or international protection.

**The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy through the Agency for social assistance** under the conditions for the Bulgarian citizens shall provide access to:

1. social services;
2. social benefits;
3. programs and measures for protection of children.

**The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy through the Employment Agency** shall ensure:

1. registration as job seekers in "Labor Office" directorates;
2. mediation in informing and employment;
3. inclusion in programs and measures for training and employment.

**The Ministry of Health** through the **regional health inspections** shall provide the foreigner, who has concluded an agreement for integration, with:

1. information regarding the procedure for carrying out the obligatory immunizations and reimmunizations according to the Immunization Calendar of the Republic of Bulgaria and the drawing up of a plan for priority carrying out of the age-appropriate obligatory immunizations and reimmunizations in the absence of data for such;
2. carrying out the obligatory immunizations and re-immunizations under item 1 until the implementation of selection of a personal doctor;
3. information regarding the procedure for carrying out prophylactic examinations and tests and the drawing up of a plan for their performance;
4. information regarding his right of access to health activities under national and regional health programs;
5. information regarding the health requirements for admission to a child and educational institution;
6. the implementation of anti-epidemic measures if necessary.

**The Ministry of Interior** shall exercise control over the observance of the law and the public order in accordance with its statutory powers.

For the established administrative violations and crimes, committed by foreigners with granted asylum or international protection, the bodies of the Ministry of Interior shall notify the mayor of the respective municipality.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports encourages and supports:

1. the sports organizations for inclusion of the foreigners with granted asylum or international protection in motor activity and practice of sport in order to maintain and improve their motor possibilities, healthy way of life and integration in the Bulgarian society;
2. the youth non-governmental organizations and the organizations, which work with and for the young people for realization of activities, directed to young people - foreigners with granted asylum or international protection at the age of 15 to 29 years.

The State Agency for National Security identifies risks to national security in the process of integration of foreigners granted asylum or international protection and carries out analytical and prognostic activities in accordance with its powers under the law.

**The State Agency for Child Protection:**

1. provide methodological support to the bodies for protection of the child, as well as monitor and control the observance of the rights of the children - foreigners with granted asylum or international protection, on the territory of the country;
2. coordinate the work on the development of a mechanism for interaction between the responsible institutions in their work in cases of unaccompanied minors and juveniles, who have received international protection.

#### **PARTICIPATION OF INTERNATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIAL PARTNERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTEGRATION AGREEMENT**

International and non-governmental organizations may assist the local authorities and the foreigners with granted asylum or international protection in the implementation of the integration agreement according to their respective mandate and possibilities, including through:

1. sharing guidelines, manuals, tools and good practices in the field of integration of foreigners granted asylum or international protection;
2. provision of expert consultations to the competent bodies and institutions;
3. **providing volunteers, mediators, psychologists, translators and other experts for rendering assistance to the foreigners with granted asylum or international protection for facilitation and directing to the use of services in the society and for their better integration;**
4. assistance in organizing information events and activities for popularization of the benefits of the integration of the foreigners with granted asylum or international protection;
5. encouragement of foreigners with granted asylum or international protection to physical activity and practice of sports through:
  - a) creation of conditions for practicing sports and participation in sports activities;
  - b) creating an opportunity for active sports, participation and performance;

6. participation in project activities aimed at young people - foreigners with granted asylum or international protection, such as:

- (a) voluntary initiatives and training to acquire knowledge, skills and competences for integration;
- b) provision of services in the field of personal realization and motivation for integration, aimed at young people - foreigners aged 15 to 29, through the existing financial mechanisms - national youth programs.

International and non-governmental organizations may enter into partnership with the bodies of the central and local authorities for the implementation of the integration agreement.<sup>5</sup>

## 8. Regulation and qualification of the intercultural workers

*(What are the education options for intercultural workers (formal, informal), and how to qualify as an intercultural worker?)*

On **tertiary level** only two full programmes focused on migrants and intercultural work are available in Bulgaria (see Table 1) in two of the biggest universities (UNWE & SU) both situated in Sofia. The available programmes are master degrees and they are targeting people with educational background in social or/and pedagogic studies who would like to be specialized in the work with migrants.

Table 1: Programmes with special focus on migrants and intercultural work

Academic Field	Existing programmes	Lead lecturer
<b>Social Work</b>	MA Social Work with Refugees and Migrants	Prof. Siyka Chavdarova Sofia University (SU)
<b>Administration and Management</b>	MA Managing the Migration Processes	Assoc. Prof. Nadya Mironova University of National and World Economy (UNWE)

*Source: 2021. Courses & Programmes. Academic portal: Forced migration and refugees*

Table 2: Bachelor's degree courses focused on refugees and migrants

Academic Field	BA Courses focused on refugees and migrants	Lead lecturer
<b>Social Work</b>	Social Work with Migrants and Refugees	Assist. Prof. Ch. Milkov, Shumen University
<b>Social Work</b>	Social Work with Refugees and Migrants	Assoc. Prof. Maya Cholakova, SWU
<b>Law</b>	Refugee Law	Prof. Blagoy Vidin

<sup>5</sup>ORDINANCE № 144 OF 19 JULY 2017 on the adoption of an Ordinance on the terms and conditions for concluding, implementing and terminating the agreement on the integration of aliens granted asylum or international protection, <https://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=116399>

<b>Law</b>	Refugee Law, Migration and Asylum	Prof. Blagoy Vidin, VTU
<b>Law</b>	Migration and Refugee Law	Prof. Vesselin Tzankov, PU
<b>Law</b>	Migration and Refugee Law	Prof. Vesselin Tzankov, BFU
<b>Law</b>	Migration and Refugee Law	Prof. Vesselin Tzankov, VFU
<b>National Security</b>	Migration and Refugee Law	Prof. Vesselin Tzankov, Academy of the Ministry of Interior
<b>National and International Security</b>	Migration, Refugee and Border Control	prof. Hristo Georgiev, Assistant Dafinka Sidova NBU
<b>National and International Security</b>	Training: Activities on humanitarian support of refugees during crisis and war conflicts	

*Source: 2021. Courses & Programmes. Academic portal: Forced migration and refugees*

Table 3: Master degree courses focused on refugees and migrants

<b>Academic Field</b>	<b>MA Courses focused on refugees and migrants</b>	<b>Lead lecturer</b>
<b>Social Work</b>	Social Work with Refugees	Prof. Siyka Chavdarova SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Fundamentals of Social Work with Refugees and Migrants (compulsory)	Prof. Siyka Chavdarova SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Refugee Law (compulsory)	Prof. Maria Slavova  SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Interviewing Refugees (compulsory)	Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiiska  SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Social Work with Refugees in the Bulgarian Red Cross (compulsory traineeship)	Mariana Stoyanova  Bulgarian Red Cross
<b>Social Work</b>	Social Work in a Refugee Organization (compulsory traineeship)	Linda Awanis  Council of Refugee Women



<b>Social Work</b>	Social Work in State Structures (compulsory traineeship)	Mariana Stoyanova  Bulgarian Red Cross
<b>Social Work</b>	Social Work in Migrant and Refugees NGOs (compulsory traineeship)	Martina Raichinova  Caritas Sofia
<b>Social Work</b>	History of the Social Work with Refugees (elective)	Prof. Albena Chavdarova  SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Integration Policies (elective)	Prof. Plamen Makariev  SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Evaluation and Monitoring of European Projects (elective)	Prof. Maria Stoycheva  SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Protection and Care of Refugee Children (elective)	Prof. Siyka Chavdarova SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Group Social Work and Group Therapy with Refugees and Migrants (elective)	Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiiska  SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Psychotherapeutic Approaches to Social Work with Refugees and Migrants (elective)	Assoc. Prof. Rumyana Krumova – Pesheva  SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Bulgarian Language Training for Refugees (elective)	Prof. Neli Ivanova  SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Social Work with Refugees in Germany and Austria	Prof. Albena Chavdarova  SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Family Social Work (elective)	Assoc. Prof. Toni Manasieva

		SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Organizational Culture in Institutions for Social Work with Refugees and Migrants (elective)	Assoc. Prof. Rositza Simenonova SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Quality Management in Refugee and Migrant Social Work Organizations (elective)	Assoc. Prof. Rositza Simenonova SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Art-therapeutic Aspects of Photography in Refugee Social Work (elective)	Assoc. Prof. Vladislav Gospodinov SU
<b>Social Work</b>	Social Work with Unaccompanied Refugee and Migrant Minors (elective)	Assistant Daniela Racheva SU
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Methods of Survey of Migration and Refugees (compulsory)	UNWE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Legal Aspects of Migration (compulsory)	UNWE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Strategic Management and Global Migration Dynamics (compulsory)	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Financial Aspects of Migration (compulsory)	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Countering Irregular Migration (compulsory)	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Management of Migration Crises and Related Conflicts (compulsory)	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	European Databases and Statistics of Migration Processes (elective)	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Theory and Practice of Integration. International	UWNE

	Protection (elective)	
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Economic and Demographic Aspects of Migration Processes (elective)	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Social Responsibility of Host Countries	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	EU and Migration Policy (elective)	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Intercultural Communication and Integration for Immigrants (elective)	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Border Control and Irregular Migration (elective)	UWNE
<b>Administration and Management</b>	Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (elective)	UWNE
<b>Law</b>	Migration and Refugee Law	Prof. Vesselin Tzankov, Academy of the Ministry of Interior

*Source: 2021. Courses & Programmes. Academic portal: Forced migration and refugees*

As it is visible the topic of intercultural work with refugees and migrants is part of many programmes predominantly connected to social work, law, national security and administration and management. The topic has more presence in Master degree programmes across Bulgaria and in only several Bachelor degree programmes.

Aspects of the topic of intercultural work are also mandatory part of the training material for specialties like:

- Pedagogy/Education – in these programmes the topic is part of courses devoted to intercultural education, family pedagogy, inclusive education, etc.
- Political sciences – in the programme the topic is part of courses like human rights, European Migration Policy, etc.

The **non-formal educational opportunities** are available mainly through European projects within the Erasmus+ framework focused on the topic of social inclusion of migrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups as well as some national voluntary initiatives belonging to NGOs working in this field. For instance, there is a mentoring program implemented by the Center for Integration of Refugees and Migrants "St. Anna" at Caritas Sofia which recruits volunteers who would like to support migrants and refugees in their social integration in Bulgaria. All volunteers go through special trainings in order to become mentors in the programme (Caritas Bulgaria, 2017).

## 9. Approach to intercultural work

*(What is the approach used in intercultural work? What are the main tasks intercultural workers perform there? /Elaborating separately for every authority, such as court, hospital, police, reception centres, etc.)*

The main approach and the tasks of authorities related to intercultural work were described in point 3 within the document. There are different types of mediators established in Bulgaria which are introduced as measure to social inclusion of vulnerable groups or groups of people who need active access to healthcare, education, employment and overcoming the consequences of social exclusion or isolation. These groups do not exactly constitute the group of foreigners but within it there could be subgroups of vulnerable parties. Following that logic, mediators are established in several areas in Bulgaria:

### - Social mediation

The social mediators supporting asylum seekers and beneficiaries are selected among other migrants, beneficiaries, family members of mixed marriages, foreigners with permitted residence in the country and Bulgarian citizens who are fluent in the most commonly used languages by those seeking protection and familiar with the culture of the countries where the largest groups applying for refugee or humanitarian status come from.

Social mediators play an extremely important role in the cultural orientation and integration of newcomers in the country. They are irreplaceable advisers and consultants in the first integration steps of asylum seekers and beneficiaries.

### Sphere of activity:

- acquainting asylum seekers with their rights and obligations;
- assisting them in everyday living activities – familiarizing them with the internal order of the housing centres, communicating in a multicultural environment (in the registration and reception centre and beyond), observing personal hygiene, hygiene in the housing and public places, visiting a shop, use of public transport, banking services, etc.;
- medical assistance related to attendance and translation during a visit to a health facility, contact with medical staff, administrative services for the detection of chronic diseases and disabilities, care for pregnant women, young mothers and children, awareness campaigns for the prevention of serious diseases and related to children's immunizations, etc.;
- mediation in contacts with institutions – issuance and legalization of documents, registration, etc.
- Assistance in children's enrolment in kindergarten and school and mediation in parents' contacts with school authorities and teachers.

Activities to facilitate the social and economic integration of refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian status:

- Consultations on issues related to the life and rights of refugees in Bulgaria;
- Assistance in getting access to healthcare and services;
- Assistance in finding a job;
- Social and cultural orientation;
- Housing program covering household expenses for a period of three months;
- Support for children attending Bulgarian schools through additional Bulgarian language training, provision of textbooks and learning materials;

- Support for refugees with special needs – disabled, single parents, elderly, separated children.

#### - Healthcare mediation

The healthcare mediator is a coordinating figure between persons of minority groups and communities and the healthcare and social services which is aimed at assisting overcoming the cultural barriers in communication and maintaining dialogue with institutions, optimizing programmes and information campaigns in the Roma people communities, protecting the rights of patients, etc.

#### Main functions:

- Supports access to health care;
- Provides assistance in working with health and / or social institutions;
- To conduct activities for health prevention and education. Themes of intervention include reproductive health, promotion and accompaniment for immunizations;
- Preparation of reports on its activities and recommendations;
- Keeping a unified register for work on cases;

Healthcare mediators partner with the municipalities, the local communities, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, local social and healthcare institutions, National Council for cooperation for ethnic and integrational issues.<sup>6</sup> Since these mediators are the main figures who are acting as a bridge between the vulnerable communities and the relevant institutions, the lack of other responsible organs available on site makes them act as an intermediary person for services in other areas – social assistance, etc. At the same time, healthcare mediators act as a channel for influence on behalf of different institutions towards certain communities which makes the role of the healthcare mediator very important but also pressuring.

#### - Educational mediation

The main goal of the educational mediator is to be a mediator between families, local communities, children, students, kindergarten and school, through which it promotes the coverage, social inclusion, integration, including the improvement of quality preschool and school education of children and students from vulnerable groups in the educational institution and the full involvement of the local community and parents in the development of education and personal progress of their children.

#### Main responsibilities:

- Assists in the retention of children in kindergarten and students subject to compulsory schooling.
- Visits the families of children who are subject to compulsory pre-school and school preparation, and organizes meetings with them in order to be informed and to register and regularly attend the kindergarten / school;
- Organizes and supports the processes related to obtaining the necessary documents for admission to kindergarten or school; by filling in the applications of the parents for admission and explains the circumstances of the application, ranking and receiving the result; Informs the families of children and students and the local community about specific rules and requirements in the kindergarten / school;
- Supports the formation of a positive attitude towards the learning process and works for full integration of students in the educational environment, according to their specific and age characteristics and needs;

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.nccedi.government.bg/sites/default/files/2018-07/Mediatori\\_analys\\_final\\_21\\_02.pdf](http://www.nccedi.government.bg/sites/default/files/2018-07/Mediatori_analys_final_21_02.pdf)

- Promotes mutual acquaintance of children and students from different ethnic groups and religions, to create an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance and to respect the rights of the child;
- Facilitates the process of communication between pedagogical specialists and children / students;
- Actively participates in dispute resolution, and its activities are focused on the interests of children and students; Carries out preventive activities in relation to conflict situations;
- Provides assistance in communication and interaction between all units of educational institutions and children and students, families and the local community;
- Supports activities that facilitate the participation of parents / guardians and the community in the life of the kindergarten / school;
- At the beginning of the school year, develop an annual work plan and, if necessary, update it during the school year;
- Respects and protects the rights of every child in accordance with the Law on Preschool and School Education, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Law on Child Protection in the Republic of Bulgaria and related regulations;<sup>7</sup>

### **Courts, Hospitals, Special homes for foreigners**

Mediators are not specifically tasked with providing services to foreigners within courts, hospitals, police bodies. The only figures that are engaged to assist foreigner and most specifically foreigners under protection such as refugees are translators/interpreters. Translators are appointed, especially when a foreigner is taken into custody in the police. If a lawsuit has been initiated, a judicial translator would accompany the foreigner in question.

### **Special Homes for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners (SCTAF) at the Migration Directorate (DM), Ministry of Interior**

The foreigners placed in these facilities are granted with a range of services such as hospital care, security, aid in case of emergencies, consultations with psychologists at the Institute of Psychology at Ministry of Interior. Medical help to the foreigners staying at the Special Homes is provided by the services of Medical Institute at Ministry of Interior. Upon arrival at the home, foreigners are informed about their rights and obligations. It is important to point out that there is conflicting information about the full-time availability of translators/interpreters for foreigners at Special Homes. Thus, it is not clear how fast foreigners are provided with such help and if they are adequately informed about certain rules, etc.<sup>8</sup>

### **Case study: Creation of an Integration Centre at Ovcha Kupel Registration and Reception Centre**

<sup>7</sup><https://coiduem.mon.bg/2018/02/01/%D0%B4%D0%BB%D1%8A%D0%B6%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%85%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0/>

<sup>8</sup> Ordinance № IZ-1201 Of 1 June 2010 On The Procedure For Temporary Accommodation Of Foreigners In The Special Homes For Temporary Accommodation Of Foreigners And In Their Units And Regulations ., in force from 30.06.2017), <https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2135684112>

A special area for social contacts and activities for international protection seekers was established in Ovcha Kupel at the only existing Registration and Reception Centre at the time under the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers (SAR with CM). At first, it was established as a place for women living in the centre and seeking international protection to spend time and overcome their isolation. With time, the Integration Centre further developed and adopted a more stable structure, programmes and licensed for professional training. The Centre was financed by the State Agency for Refugees. Courses in different areas such as hairdressing, cosmetician, fashion design, computer literacy and for learning Bulgarian language were conducted.

International protection seekers at the Centre were secured with aid in their everyday life activities as well as professional orientation. A system for providing free services to those in need was also established. For example, foreigners challenged financially and experiencing difficulties with communication in Bulgarian were taught by the more advanced residents at the Centre in the spheres of language education, hairdressing, cosmetic services, sewing, clothes repair services, making knitwear and decorations.

The Center founded play rooms for mother with children in which the kids were provided with services by experienced specialists including games, drawing of art objects, etc. Volunteers from non-governmental organizations were included in order to conduct activities connected with social adaptation and orientation of the asylum seekers. Various trips and camps were organized for children who are disadvantaged and have difficulties with mastering Bulgarian language. With all those initiatives, the Center grew very popular and attracted not only women of different nationalities seeking protection but men too.

This good practice of social adaptation and initial integration has been recognized by many foreigners who have gone through the Centre. Its success is proved by the fact that certificates awarded by the Centre are put on walls of beauty parlours and hairdressing salons of migrants who were ones placed in the Centre. Part of the people also used their certificates to open businesses not only in Bulgaria but all around the world.

### **Case study: Caritas Sofia Mentoring Program**

The mentoring programme implemented by St. Anna Centre for Integration of Refugees and Migrants under Caritas Sofia is aimed at enhancement of the communication between the local population in Bulgaria and the internationally protected people in order to strengthen their integration into the Bulgarian society. The programme was founded in 2016 in Sofia.

The mentors who are volunteers (specific profile: locals who have undergone pre-service training on how to mentor, teach Bulgarian through a conversation, establish effective communication and facilitate participation in different cultural events) and mentees (the internationally protected people) are paired considering their interests, talents, skills, etc. They usually meet once a week to have a conversation through which mentees learn Bulgarian language, gain knowledge about the Bulgarian culture, lifestyle and customs and how to adapt effectively. Mentors, on the other hand, learn about the mentees' experiences as representatives of other countries and cultures, their life, exchange practices and knowledge breaking stereotypes and prejudice.

### **Case study: St. Anna Centre for Integration of Refugees under Caritas**

St. Anna Centre for Integration of Refugees and Migrants under Caritas Sofia provide social counselling, psychological support, Bulgarian language courses, services such as address registration, registration with a GP, home and work assistance, art activities, mentoring programme and other activities which



are facilitating the integration process of people who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status in the Bulgarian society. St. Anna Integration Centre in Sofia supports 65 people seeking or having received international protection monthly.<sup>9</sup>

## Conclusion

In Bulgaria, engagement in the sphere of intercultural work is not officially recognized as a profession but there are plenty of social mediators who are working in the field and doing a commendable job. Unfortunately, social mediation activities are mainly financed under concrete programmes and projects which are over at some point and after that, these mediators follow other occupations. This leads to the lack of consistency in the field. Despite that, there are a few good practices that have been established over time and well-appreciated by foreigners. There are also other similar positions to the one of intercultural worker such as healthcare mediator and educational mediator but they are not focused primarily on foreigners but on ethnic communities in Bulgaria.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.refugee-integration.bg/en/%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8/>

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## IO2: Comparative map of approaches to the intercultural work in the Czech Republic

This intellectual output aims to provide a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in the partner countries on a national level.

It will further describe the approaches to the intercultural work in these partner countries in comparison to the national approaches within Europe.

### Target Audience

The target audience will include 1.5 and 2nd generations' migrants who would like to pursue the career of an intercultural worker will have an overview of options. In addition, this module will provide knowledgeable information about gaps and dead spots.

Thus, this intellectual output will serve as a training module for the partners in the training program under the intellectual outputs (IO4) and the MOOC (IO5).

### Introduction

The IO2 of the GEM2-project provides a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in each partner country, creating a map of intercultural work in Europe with case studies from different countries.

### Aims and objectives

The aim of this intellectual output (IO2) is to explore the approach to intercultural work in the Czech Republic as social support system for the integration of migrants with diverse backgrounds in the host country.

Therefore, this comparative work is based five premise questions and case studies of intercultural work approach in the Czech Republic.

### General introduction: Development of the profession of intercultural worker in the Czech Republic

Involving migrant interpreters and mediators who do not have the proper formal education in counselling and working with migrant populations has existed in the Czech Republic since the 1990s. Their services were used by NGOs, the police, local governments, schools, hospitals and other public institutions. Efforts to professionalize these services and ensure adequate education have led to the formation of the profession of intercultural worker. The intercultural worker was for the very first time named and defined within the project of the non-governmental organisation Inbáze "Forming the profession of socio-cultural mediator - inspiration drawn from the Portuguese model". This is a completely new work position that generally aims at mediation of effective communication within an intercultural environment. It is implemented mainly in the projects of migrants assisting NGOs, several integration centres and municipal authorities. The majority of projects take place in the capital city of Prague, which is inhabited by the largest number of migrants. Here, the intercultural worker services are offered in various scopes by non-governmental organisations, e.g. Inbáze, Integration Advisory Centre (Poradna pro integraci), Migration and Integration Association (Sdružení pro migraci a integraci), Integration Centre Prague (Integrační centrum Praha). The Association for Intercultural Work (Asociace pro interkulturní práci) (AIP) was founded in 2014; its specific mission was to establish the profession of intercultural worker in the Czech Republic. Yet, the Association was forced to suspend its operations due to insufficient human resources. The platform for sharing experience in the field of intercultural work has been provided by the

Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations in the Czech Republic (Konsorcium nevládních organizací pracujících s migranty v ČR) since 2017. Intercultural workers found their way even to the local self-government bodies and public authorities. Municipal district authorities in Prague outsource the services of intercultural workers, primarily within various projects of NGOs. Some municipal authorities (such as Prague Municipal Districts 14, 13, 12, 7) have already started to employ workers from a migrant background as specialists in intercultural communication and integration. The innovative project "Increasing the intercultural permeability of public institutions and authorities in the City of Brno" (Zvyšování interkulturní prostupnosti veřejných institucí ve městě Brně) has been implemented by the Brno City Council from 2017 to 2019. The project objective is to reduce the barriers to the integration of foreigners in public institutions and authorities. In practice, the position of intercultural worker is established within the staff of a Social Care Department along with the implementation of education activities for the purpose of supporting cultural diversity across the self-government authority. This support is also incorporated within strategic documents. The project is based on the transmission of good practice in cooperation with the cities of Vienna and Malmö. The Prague City Council supports the development of intercultural work in Prague, both in terms of funds and strategic documents. (Dohnalová, Danyljuková, 2019). As regards the job description of intercultural workers in the aforementioned organisations, it primarily includes: contacting migrants, provision of basic social and legal counselling, interpreting, accompanying and attendance to public institutions, implementation of cultural and integration activities and networking (Čech Valentová, 2018). The employment of intercultural workers was also tested by the Labour Office through the Fund for Further Education between the years 2014–2018. Yet, this contributory organisation was disbanded in the year 2018 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. At the level of school education facilities, efforts have been documented to apply certain elements of intercultural work. Schools endeavour to manage the integration of pupils with a different mother tongue and communication with their parents by involving bilingual assistant mentors and intercultural workers, too. The non-governmental organisation META plays an important role in this sphere as it – on a long-term basis – specialises in the education of children with different mother tongues and offers accredited courses for the bilingual assistants (Čech Valentová, 2018; Dohnalová, Danyljuková, 2019).

**In relation to the first premise on the coordination of intercultural work in the Czech Republic, it is important to find out the specific system (national, regional, local) approach to the intercultural work. Therefore, this section will provide a list of actors such as educational providers, NGO, vocational institutions, higher education institutions involved in intercultural work in the Czech Republic.**

An intercultural worker was originally a project-based job position. The first people to struggle for the systematic establishment of the intercultural worker profession were the implementers of the Inbáze project, 2012–2014. A work team was formed, comprised of 19 representatives of the key organisations from the state administration, local self-government and non-profit sector. The team intended to find the paths to recognition of intercultural work as a profession. In close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Social Service Department and the Ministry of Interior, Department for asylum and migration policy, possibilities were sought for a systematic anchorage of the intercultural worker profession. The Ministry of the Interior arranged for the incorporation of the profession within the Foreigner Integration Concept; and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs proposed to enlist the profession in the public occupational registers. Since April 2018, the qualification of intercultural worker is enlisted under the code "75-020-R" in the National Qualification System (Národní soustava kvalifikací) and as an actual position in the National Profession System (Národní soustava povolání). These systems delineate the competences and activities performed by the intercultural worker. The National Qualification System also offers the possibility to pass a profession exam. In reality, the exam is not accessible as it is not provided by any recognised professional entity. The use of these available registers for systematic incorporation of intercultural work as profession has brought forth only a partial success. These tools do not set out any obligation for the educator or the employer.

**For the second premise on the recognition of intercultural programme, the main question explores the recognition of intercultural work as a profession, and if so, how is it regulated (e.g. mandatory education,**

**official job description, etc.); What are the pre-conditions to enter the course? ( e.g. length of the course, main subjects taught)**

Intercultural work profession can be seen as a tool of the integration policy as well as a helping profession closely related to social work or as part of social work. In the concept conceived by Baláž, Čemová (2019:102), with reference to Bartlett (1970), Washington, Paylor (1998), social work in its socio-ecological perspective is a specific supportive or control activity performed by helping professionals (social workers, intercultural workers, mediators, counsellors, etc.). Thus, social work is perceived as a metadiscourse covering multiple professions. In the Czech Republic, an intercultural worker is “only” a project-based position and intercultural workers do not need to have formal education of social workers. It can be said that there is a tendency to develop intercultural work as a distinct profession closely related to social work and community interpreting. The question of the interconnection between intercultural workers and social work is particularly important in the context of further establishment, as evidenced in the case study. As the social work definition has no legislative support in the Czech environment yet, the question remains unanswered. Discussion is still taking place as to the categorisation and inclusion of intercultural work into the social services. Dohnalová (2014:84) points out that the Inbáze project implementers in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs aimed at including the profession in the Social Services Act within the so called Major Amendment in 2015. This Articles 66 would have brought forth the incorporation of the qualification requirements into the law as well as the financing from the social service subsidies. Similar efforts were evident among the sign language interpreters. These efforts however were in vain.

**The third premise focuses on the institutional roles in the coordination of intercultural work: What authorities (if any) take the role of intercultural workers; Which authorities hire intercultural workers?**

Involving migrant interpreters and mediators who do not have the proper formal education in counselling and working with migrant populations has existed in the Czech Republic since the 1990s. Their services were used by NGOs, the police, local governments, schools, hospitals and other public institutions. Efforts to professionalize these services and ensure adequate education have led to the formation of the profession of intercultural worker. The intercultural worker was for the very first time named and defined within the project of the non-governmental organisation Inbáze “Forming the profession of socio-cultural mediator - inspiration drawn from the Portuguese model”. This is a completely new work position that generally aims at mediation of effective communication within an intercultural environment. It is implemented mainly in the projects of migrants assisting NGOs, several integration centres and municipal authorities. The majority of projects take place in the capital city of Prague, which is inhabited by the largest number of migrants. Here, the intercultural worker services are offered in various scopes by non-governmental organisations, e.g. Inbáze, Integration Advisory Centre (Poradna pro integraci), Migration and Integration Association (Sdružení pro migraci a integraci), Integration Centre Prague (Integrační centrum Praha). The Association for Intercultural Work (Asociace pro interkulturní práci) (AIP) was founded in 2014; its specific mission was to establish the profession of intercultural worker in the Czech Republic. Yet, the Association was forced to suspend its operations due to insufficient human resources. The platform for sharing experience in the field of intercultural work has been provided by the Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations in the Czech Republic (Konsorcium nevládních organizací pracujících s migranty v ČR) since 2017. Intercultural workers found their way even to the local self-government bodies and public authorities. Municipal district authorities in Prague outsource the services of intercultural workers, primarily within various projects of NGOs. Some municipal authorities (such as Prague Municipal Districts 14, 13, 12, 7) have already started to employ workers from a migrant background as specialists in intercultural communication and integration. The innovative project “Increasing the intercultural permeability of public institutions and authorities in the City of Brno” (Zvyšování interkulturní prostupnosti veřejných institucí ve městě Brně) has been implemented by the Brno City Council from 2017 to 2019. The project objective is to reduce the barriers to the integration of foreigners in public institutions and authorities. In practice, the position of intercultural worker is established within the staff of a Social Care Department along with the implementation of education activities for the purpose of supporting cultural diversity across the self-government authority. This support is also incorporated within strategic documents. The project is based on the transmission of good practice in cooperation with the cities of Vienna and Malmö. The Prague City Council supports the development of intercultural work in Prague, both in terms of funds and strategic documents. As regards the job description of intercultural workers in the aforementioned organisations, it primarily includes: contacting migrants, provision



of basic social and legal counselling, interpreting, accompanying and attendance to public institutions, implementation of cultural and integration activities and networking (Čech Valentová, 2018). The employment of intercultural workers was also tested by the Labour Office through the Fund for Further Education between the years 2014–2018. Yet, this contributory organisation was disbanded in the year 2018 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. At the level of school education facilities, efforts have been documented to apply certain elements of intercultural work. Schools endeavour to manage the integration of pupils with a different mother tongue and communication with their parents by involving bilingual assistant mentors and intercultural workers, too. The non-governmental organisation META plays an important role in this sphere as it – on a long-term basis – specialises in the education of children with different mother tongues and offers accredited courses for the bilingual assistants (Čech Valentová, 2018; Dohnalová, Danyljuková, 2019).

**The fourth premise focus on the regulation and qualification of the intercultural workers: What are the education options for intercultural workers (formal, informal), and how to qualify as an intercultural worker;**

The establishment of the intercultural worker profession is inseparably linked to the provision of tailor made training and certification. The goal of such training and certification is the betterment of the practice, as well as the recognition and advancement of the occupation in terms of status and salary. The first education course for intercultural workers was given by the non-governmental organisation Inbáze between the years 2013–2014. It was a qualification course for social service practitioners aimed at counselling and assistance to migrants. The accreditation holder was the Education Centre CARITAS – College of Social Work in Olomouc. Comprised of 250 lessons this accredited course offered its participants a professional qualification entitled “Social Service Practitioner” which opened up ample job opportunities in the field of social services. The course took place only once, and the accreditation validity expired in 2017. Various projects offer courses with a smaller number of lessons which focus on specific topics and as such do not allow its attendants to perform their activity within the framework of social services. This situation is predominantly due to the financial demands of the courses as well as to the absence of adequate projects which would finance them. It is very important to emphasise that the preparation not only includes training but also life experience. Course participants are migrants who have an expertise, based on their membership in the target communities they are supposed to serve. Secondly, it is necessary to mention that the project funded courses are intended only for migrants as a target group of social funds. In the field of tertiary education at specialised colleges and universities, specialised subjects are starting to emerge within the discipline of social work. These subjects aim at the specific features of social work with migrants and refugees and intercultural competence. The minimum standard for social work education, as set out by the Association of Educators in Social Work (ASVSP) at the level of college and university education includes this topic in the discipline “Minority Groups” (Lukešová, 2015; ASVSP, 2019). The social work field of study does not include the key skills of intercultural workers, which is - according to the National Profession System - community interpreting, and according to the National Qualification System; mediation of effective communication in negotiations between migrants and public institutions and other entities. Generally speaking, there is no field of study or continuously implemented accredited education course of further professional education which would prepare the intercultural workers pursuant to the standards required within the National Qualification System.

**The fifth premise focuses on the approach to intercultural work: What is the approach used in intercultural work? What are the main tasks intercultural workers perform there? /Elaborating separately for every authority, such as court, hospital, police, reception centres etc**

The strategic document Procedure for implementation of an Updated concept for the integration of foreigners – In Mutual Co-existence (Postup při realizaci aktualizované Koncepce integrace cizinců – Společné soužití) (Vláda ČR, 2015:17–16) first mentions the intercultural workers. The document defines the priorities of the Czech integration policy. The priority of Mutual relationships between the foreigners and the majority of society mentions among other measures the use of intercultural assistants and community interpreters from the group of foreigners. Their involvement is supposed to facilitate and improve the communication between the



foreigners and institutions. The Updated concept for the integration of foreigners – Respect for each other (Vláda ČR, 2016), speaks of the profession of intercultural worker referring to two priorities: (1) economic subsistence within active support of services of community interpreters/intercultural workers in working sites at the Labour Office; and (2) mutual relationships between the communities in the draft measure concerning adequate use of the intercultural workers’ services, community interpreters, and assistant mentors who come from the group of foreigners and facilitate and improve the communication between the foreigners, institutions, and the general public. In the most recent version of Procedure for implementation of the Concept for integration of foreigners – Respect for each other (Vláda ČR, 2019) the intercultural workers area mentioned – in addition to two aforementioned priorities – also the priority of the foreigner’s self-orientation in the society, in the proposed measures through the subsidy proceedings and/or the calls within the European union funds to actively support the use of community interpreters and/or intercultural workers while attending to the issues and matters of the foreigners. This primarily concerns the Departments for the residence permit at the Ministry of Interior. Another concept material within the integration policy at the local level is Concept of the Capital City of Prague for the area of the foreigner integration (Koncepte hl. m. Prahy pro oblast integrace cizinců) which was formed in 2014 and updated in 2018. The concept perceives intercultural work as a follow-up service to social services. The objective in the measure 1.2 aims at the provision of financial support for the intercultural work for migrants in the territory of Capital City of Prague (Magistrát hl. města Praha, 2014; 2018).

### Case studies

**Non-governmental organisations x Municipalities from the online survey on intercultural workers in Prague and Brno [Eva Dohnalová: <https://socialniproace.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-1-1.pdf>]**

Non-governmental organisations	Municipalities
Archdiocesan Charity Prague, church legal person (Arcidiecézní charita Praha, církevní právnická osoba) (ACH Praha)	Municipal district authority Prague 14 (ÚMČ Praha 14)
Integration Advisory Centre Prague (Poradna pro integraci, z.ú., Praha) (PPI)	Municipal district authority Prague 13 (ÚMČ Praha 13)
Integration Centre Prague (Integrační centrum Praha) (ICP)	Municipal district authority Prague 12 (ÚMČ Praha 12)
InBáze, z. s., Prague (InBáze)	Municipal district authority Prague 7 (ÚMČ Praha 7)
Migration and Integration Association, Prague (Sdružení pro migraci a integraci o.p.s.) (SIMI)	Brno City Council (MMB)
Diocesan Charity Brno, church legal person, Brno, (Diecézní charita Brno, církevní právnická osoba) (DCH)	

The non-governmental organisations started to employ the intercultural workers over the years 2010–2014. The first intercultural workers were hired by Inbáze, the position was then entitled “socio-cultural mediator”. Local self-government authorities started to employ the intercultural workers from 2017. ÚMČ Praha 7 was the very first pioneer in this context. ÚMČ Praha 13, 14 and MMB are now implementing their first project, within which they employ their own intercultural workers. The name of the profession “intercultural worker” has been used by the organisations since 2014 thanks to the outputs of the Inbáze project and involvement in the Regional counselling platform in Prague. Nevertheless the municipal district authorities in Prague prefer the title “community worker”. ACH Praha uses the title “outreach worker”. The number of intercultural workers employed varies from 1 to 12. ICP employs the most intercultural workers (12). The employment is predominantly based on the contracts for work (61.5%). The intercultural work is offered in Russian, English (5 organizations), Vietnamese (6 organizations), Arabic (3 organizations), Ukrainian (3 organisations), Spanish (3 organisations), Romanian, Bulgarian, Articles 70 Mongolian, Chinese (1 organisation). All 11 organisations finance the intercultural work service from grants and subsidies. In the self-government authorities (5 organisations), subsidies by the Ministry of Interior for the support of the integration of foreigners prevail. In non-governmental

organisations (6 organisations) it is a combination of subsidies for social services and for integration of foreigners (MICR), ESF and AMIF. The work activities of intercultural workers are similar in all 11 organisations. These mainly aim at searching for clients from individual language groups within a migrant group; assistance and interpreting, basic counselling (legal, social, socio-cultural), providing the contact data to other organisations and the implementation of integration policies. The municipal district authorities in the list of activities also mention the involvement of migrants in the events that take place in the district and collaboration with schools. The efforts to involve the intercultural workers in the setting of the municipal integration policy are mentioned by ÚMČ Praha 13 and MMB. Only ICP points out that its intercultural workers do not provide social and legal counselling and do not work as mediators. Inbáze, on the other hand, endeavours to bring the profession closer links to social work. A generalised profile of intercultural workers in all 11 organisations is of 85% formed by migrants with university education in humanities (but not necessarily in social work) who have a history of work in non-governmental organisations and informal help to their compatriots. Only 11 out of 61 intercultural workers comply with the qualification as per Act No. 108/2006 Coll. on social services, i.e. approx. 18% of total amount of employed intercultural workers. Formal education in interpreting and command of foreign languages is documented in 5 of 61 workers, i.e. approx 8%. According to ICP an “intercultural worker is – ideally – an integrated migrant who has command of the Czech language and knows the Czech environment, as well as the language and environment (culture, customs) of other groups/communities”. Although 95% of intercultural workers are migrants, the experience of migration is considered an important part of qualification by 6 of 11 employers concerned. The mapping of the importance of interconnection between intercultural work and social services implied that 7 out of 11 organisations consider it important. The interconnection is preferred by the non-governmental organisations rather than the self-government. The arguments for the inclusion of intercultural work into the social services treated intercultural work as part of social work; and as an opportunity to standardise the activities and requirements for qualification of intercultural workers and ensuring the sustainability of the profession within the system of social services. The respondents also see the subsidies for social services as possible resources for financing the intercultural work. Arguments against interconnection with social services mention the potential reduction of intercultural work both in terms of employing “the right people without proper education” and actual performance of the intercultural work. “Intercultural work should be an independent original profession specialising in various areas, including social services, civil participation, development of communities, etc”. Two respondents have no clear opinion on this issue. As regards the inclusion of the profession to the National Qualification System and National Profession System, all 11 organisations agreed that its meaning at a practical level is zero. At a theoretical level, it forms a reference framework for setting the competences of the profession, and it serves as support for defending the importance of the profession (e.g. in project applications and strategic documents). All 11 respondents agreed that they completely lack the education courses for intercultural workers. As one respondent put it: “The absence of quality education leads to a state where the intercultural work is mostly performed by people with informal experience of helping their compatriots. While helping their friends or working with the clients, they draw upon their own experience which may differ considerably from the current practice. They often encounter the absence of education in the field of social work (professionalism, limits, work with clients, burnout prevention)”. The discrepancy between the ideal and the practice has been expressed quite succinctly by a respondent from ICP: “It is far more practical for us to employ well motivated migrants who know the language and culture and subsequently teach and train them in social work than it is to employ social workers having a vision that they will learn the language and culture afterwards.” 8 of 11 respondents state that they must rely on their own system of intercultural worker training. One respondent has also mentioned the need for the language education of intercultural workers. “Particularly within the Vietnamese community we feel the need to receive education in the Vietnamese language (2nd generation) or the Czech language (1st generation).” All 11 respondents see the major challenge in the field of education in ensuring the systematic education in intercultural work that would be partially independent of the projects. The respondents agreed that it should cover various types and levels of education. They speak of specialised qualification courses within the framework of social services, lifelong education; specialised courses in selected topics (e.g. support for inclusion of children and pupils with different mother tongue at schools, work with foreign families, and support for civil engagement/ community work). 5 respondents see as necessary the need to open the relevant field of study in colleges and universities. This is linked with the challenge to ensure a sufficient number of experts in intercultural work education. In the sphere of employment, according to 7 respondents the paramount challenge is the necessity to ensure a sufficient number of qualified intercultural

workers who would be adequately paid. This also calls for continuous systematic financing. The municipal district authorities mention the need to verify the functionality of engaging intercultural workers in the operation of the organisation. Challenges in the field of systematic establishing and recognition of the profession concern the extension of the practical usability of intercultural workers in the public administration and self government sphere (5 respondents), involvement of intercultural workers in the coordination of migrants integration at the municipal level (8 respondents), promotion of the profession among the professional and wider public (5 respondents), establishment of professional platforms (3 respondents). One of the respondents said "it is necessary to overcome the methodological shortcomings and related ethno-centric definitions of their position as interpreters or outreach workers without their proper inclusion within the structure of the organisations".

In the context of establishing an intercultural worker profession in the Czech Republic the concept of expert by experience has not been applied. The aspiration is to shape a special profession of intercultural worker defined by formal education performed not only by migrants. The case study results imply that intercultural workers remain primarily a project-based work position. The main activities intercultural workers perform are assistance and interpreting, basic social counselling, community and outreach work. Intercultural workers closely cooperate with social workers, legal advisers, psychologists, pedagogical workers, immigration officers, health workers etc. The main systematic support is represented by the conceptual documents of the integration policy. They ensure the financing of intercultural worker activities. Nevertheless, they cannot ensure the systematic education or guarantee the quality of the intercultural work performed. Searching for new paths to the systematic establishment and anchorage of the intercultural work and ensuring the proper education has been a concerted effort of non-governmental organisations nowadays represented by the Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations. The trend of involving the well-motivated migrants, who often lack adequate formal education, in the helping professions, corresponds to the situation in the traditional EU countries. Priorities of the integration policy – particularly at a local level – include continuous support and professionalization of services performed primarily by people with migration history and command of multiple languages and cultures. Those services include in particular interpretation and assistance in public institutions, negotiation and prevention of conflicts within communities and neighbourhoods. The most frequent areas of action are in schools, hospitals, state administration and self-government institutions, housing cooperatives, hostels, reception centres, social housing, refugee camps, etc. Definitions of competences vary between community interpreting, social counselling, intercultural mediation and community work. The designation of these professions is heterogeneous, "community interpreter" and "intercultural mediator" prevail. In many cases migrants start their professional careers as volunteers who work with professional social workers. They interpret and facilitate contact between migrants and public institutions. Gradually, they are completing specific training and gaining paid work. In the pioneering project of the organization Inbaze, practice in several EU countries was mapped. Portugal, with the state organization ACIDI (Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural, I.P), is a model where the state plays a major role. ACIDI is the main employer of socio-cultural mediators who recruit from NGOs. In other countries, we see very good cooperation between local governments and NGOs or educational institutions.

## Conclusion

In the Czech Republic, the approach to social work includes cooperation with interpreters, education in intercultural competences, legislation concerning foreign nationals, migration studies as well as the involvement of migrants as intercultural workers. The conclusions of the case study lead into the following statements regarding the current state of the profession of intercultural worker:

1. The profession of intercultural worker represents a dynamic, variable/heterogeneous professional concept which stands the closest to social work and community interpreting. The competences of an intercultural worker are defined and delineated in the National Qualification System and the National Profession System of 2018. The acknowledgement of intercultural worker as a distinct occupation in the National Qualifications System speaks to the growth of their practice and the need for a unique job title for these workers. This competence model is however optional only. The qualification requirements, as issued by employers, primarily accentuate the intercultural competence, interpreting skills and migration history. The profession is predominantly practised by

migrants working in non-governmental organisations; nowadays it starts to develop in local self-government bodies, too. The activities of intercultural workers are financed from grants and subsidies. A systematic continuous financing is absent.

2. The title “intercultural worker” for work positions performed mostly by migrants is only used by some organisations. Other names used are as follows: outreach worker, intercultural assistant, community worker. The name of the job is often derived from the setting of the project. There is no mandatory tool that would require the use of the term “intercultural worker”.

3. Training for intercultural workers is not ensured at any systematic level and is felt as lacking considerably. There is an increased demand for various forms of education and finances from public resources. The qualification course for social service workers is unsatisfactory in its contents.

4. Systematic legitimacy of intercultural workers is provided by the strategic documents of the integration policy. At the national level, the Updated concept for integration of foreigners – Respect for each other (Vláda ČR, 2019), works as a strategic document, whereas its local counterpart is the Updated Concept of the Capital City of Prague for Foreigners Integration (Magistrát hl. Města Praha, 2018). In the field of social work, the profession may only be codified within the Act No. 106/2008, on social services. Intercultural workers may also be defined as an autonomous helping profession practised primarily by people with a migration background. It is possible to use the concept of expertise by experience (Collins, Evans, 2002) to further discussion on the professionalization of intercultural workers. Its adequate recognition definitely requires further tools for proper anchorage in the system.

#### Resource Links:

DOHNALOVÁ, Eva. Development of Intercultural Work in the Czech Republic: Premises and Challenges in Establishing an Intercultural Worker Profession, Allied to Social Work that Promotes the Use of Skills that Migrants Have. *Czech and Slovak Social Work: Reviewed scientific journal for fields of social work*. Brno: Czech Association of Educators in Social Work, 2020, (Winter), 61-67. ISSN 1213-6204.

## IO2: Comparative map of approaches to the intercultural work: Italy

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter of the intellectual output (IO2) is to explore the approach of intercultural work in Italy, as social support system for the integration of migrants with diverse backgrounds in the host community. It presents the intercultural work approach based on five premise questions, that makes it possible to compare the results with the approach of other partner countries.

#### 1. Coordination of intercultural work

What is the specific system (national, regional, local) approach to the intercultural work; List concrete educational providers (e. g. NGO, vocational institutions, higher education institutions).

#### 2. Recognition of intercultural work as a profession

Is it officially recognized as a profession, and if so, how is it regulated (e.g. mandatory education, official job description, etc.); What are the pre-conditions to enter the course? (e.g. length of the course, main subjects taught).

#### 3. Institutional roles in the coordination of intercultural work

What authorities (if any) take the role of intercultural workers; Which authorities hire intercultural workers?

#### 4. Regulation and professional qualification of the intercultural workers

What are the education options for intercultural workers (formal, informal), and how to qualify as an intercultural worker.

#### 5. Approaches to intercultural work

What is the approach used in intercultural work? What are the main tasks intercultural workers perform there? /Elaborating separately for every authority, such as court, hospital, police, reception centres etc.

## Professional intercultural worker's profile development, Italy

Intercultural mediation plays a central role in the process of integration and represents a precondition for the effective enjoyment of fundamental rights of foreigners in the host society.

The term 'intercultural mediation' greatly expresses the nature of this role: on the one hand, it is based on the activity of 'mediation', which signifies the creation of a bridge between different identities, cultural, religious and ethnic components. On the other hand, the term "intercultural" includes all those aspects that form the identity of individuals. Acting both individually and collectively, on the foundation of a deep knowledge of all the parties involved, the intercultural mediator actively intervenes in the social dialogue, encouraging and strengthening it. Starting from these premises, the figure of the intercultural mediator has progressively specialized and qualified, fulfilling multiple functions which include linguistic interpreting, communication, information, guidance, assistance, training, research, consultancy and conflict management.

Considering Italy being an important entry point to the continent due to its geographical position, the country has experienced growing migratory flows that became significant around the end of 80's and remained a constant and progressive phenomenon since then. Therefore, both in the area of 'emergency' and of 'stability and integration' of migrants, immigrants and the host society developed the need for specific services supporting the changing social and economic fabric of the society, which is characterised by an increasing ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious pluralism<sup>10</sup>.

The roots of the earliest recognition for the need for intercultural mediation can be found in the 1990s, when in the field of interpretation (dominated by the simultaneous and consecutive conference interpretation) it was realised that the basic principles of *Conference Interpreting*, namely neutrality and invisibility, could not be applied to *Community Interpreting*, a service provided in communities with large numbers of ethnic minorities, enabling those minorities to access services where the language barrier might be hindering the integration process<sup>11</sup>.

The key differences between conference and community interpreting have been identified. According to this, in community interpreting, the participants in the interaction do not belong to the same social group (e.g., doctor and patient, immigrant and civil servant, etc.), unlike in conference interpreting, where the interests, social status and knowledge of the participants (both speakers and audience) are mostly homogeneous.

Another difference concerns the format of interpretation. Community interpretation is predominantly dialogic in nature, as the interpreter may interrupt the discourse in order to clarify meanings and ask for more details. While on the other hand, conference interpreting, is monologic and the interpreter clarify meanings or to request clarifications because there is no possibility for the interruption of the speaker. Last, a final difference concerns dependency of the parties involved in the communication on the interpreter: in community interpreting the 'clients' are dependent on the interpreter's translation in order for the interaction to move forward. Unlike in conference interpreting, in which the monological discourse can basically continue regardless of the interpreter's translation, and the audience which predominantly remain silent and listens.

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<sup>10</sup> Gruppo di Lavoro Istituzionale per la promozione della Mediazione Interculturale. (2009, December). Linee di indirizzo per il riconoscimento della figura professionale del Mediatore interculturale.

<sup>11</sup> Amato, A. (2012). L'interprete nel contesto medico. CLUEB



As mentioned, the roots and antecedents of intercultural mediation can be dated back to 1990, specifically in C.M. No. 205 of July 26, 1990, 'Compulsory schooling and foreign students' Article 6 of "Intercultural Education" described mother-tongue mediators as being useful for facilitating communication, foster school-family relations and enhance the language and culture of origin.

Intercultural mediation, as a tool to promote integration and the enhancement of diversity, was first recognized in Legislative Decree no. 286/1998 (Consolidated Act on Immigration). Article 38, dedicated to the 'Education of foreigners and intercultural education' states that a special regulation shall be adopted to the provisions relating to the "criteria for the recognition of qualifications and studies carried out in the countries of origin for the purpose of school integration, as well as the criteria and methods of communication with the families of foreign students, also with the help of qualified cultural mediators"<sup>12</sup>. The regulation implementing the Consolidated Law, also referred to as 'Testo unico' (Article 45 of Presidential Decree n. 394/1999) points out that the board of teachers shall formulate proposals regarding the criteria and modalities for communication between the school and the families of foreign students. Where necessary, even through agreements with the local authority and with the help of qualified cultural mediators.

The Ministerial Decree no. 21 of January 21, 2000, "Training and refresher courses", in the priority lines of intervention, indicates the need for training of teachers and language mediators in schools located in areas with a strong migratory process. Therefore, the presence of intercultural mediators was foreseen, in the first place, in the educational and scholastic field, as a support tool for the educational role of the school. Starting from these premises, with Circular n. 24/2006, the Ministry of Education, University and Research has defined the tasks of the professional figure, indicating the following areas of intervention: reception of foreign students, facilitation of the relationship between school and families, facilitation of communication, school guidance and promotion of intercultural education, enhancement of the language and culture of origin of foreign students<sup>13</sup>.

Provisions concerning the role of the intercultural mediator are also found in health regulations, where they concern both the training of specialized mediators and the presence of the same in hospital facilities in order to facilitate the removal of socio-cultural barriers and easy access to health care. In this context, the presence of intercultural mediators in the social-health contexts that work with immigrant communities from countries with excision traditions is particularly significant (see Law n. 7/2006 and the Decree of the Ministry of Health of 17th December 2007)<sup>14</sup>.

## 1. Coordination of intercultural work

Despite the fact that the references contained in the legislation on immigration and integration of foreign citizens refer specifically to the activities of intercultural mediation, at the national level there is no organic legislation defining the profession of intercultural mediator.

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<sup>12</sup> Conferenza delle Regioni e delle Province Autonome (2009, April 9). Riconoscimento della figura professionale del Mediatore interculturale".

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



One of the most important documents contributing to the recognition of the professional figure of the intercultural mediator has been drafted during the *Conference of Regions and Autonomous Province*, which was held in Rome in April 2009.

The document refers to the reform of Tit. V of the Constitution (2001) confirming art. 117 paragraph 3, the 'regional competence for education and vocational training, includes the professions among the subjects of matters of concurrent legislation, with the attribution of legislative power to the regions, subject to the fundamental principles of state legislative competence. Regulatory power, however, belongs to the State only in matters of its exclusive competence, in other matters it is up to the Regions.'

The Conference recognised that at the regional level, important normative references regarding the definition of the professional profile of the intercultural mediator have been produced between 1997 and 2006. There are numerous types of courses implemented by local and regional authorities: they range from training courses of 150 hours, up to 1200 hours. There is, furthermore, also the 'problem of recognizing skills acquired by foreign citizens in the various regional training courses, especially in view of their significant mobility on national soil, as well as the recognition of skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts by all mediators who have not attended any kind of training course, but who have developed situated learning, strictly derived from practical experience in the field'<sup>15</sup>.

The issue of the recognition of the professional figure of the intercultural mediator, crucial in the context of the social integration policies of foreign immigrants, raises, among other things, the need to achieve a coherent integrated governance between State, Regions and Autonomous Provinces and local authorities in the field of foreign immigration. By date the State has exclusive competence for all immigration policies, while integration policies, including those of intercultural mediation, are the competence of the Regions.

Due to this controversial situation, the Autonomous Province of Bolzano has launched an inter-regional project entitled "Interventions aimed at the qualification of skills and professional figures operating in the humanitarian area - Peace worker and Intercultural mediator" together with the regions of Campania, Marche, Piedmont, Tuscany, Umbria and Sardinia with the technical coordination of Tecnostruttura per le Regioni and succeeded in the definition of the professional figure of the intercultural mediator as following:

*'The intercultural mediator is a social worker who facilitates communication between individual, family and community in the context of actions aimed at promoting and facilitating the social integration of immigrant citizens. He/she carries out activities of mediation and between immigrant citizens and the host society, promoting the removal of cultural and linguistic barriers, the valorization of the culture of belonging, promoting the culture of reception, socio-economic integration and the enjoyment of rights and observance of duties of citizenship'<sup>16</sup>.*

Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, besides agreeing on the definition of the figure of the intercultural mediator, also established common guidelines in reference to areas of activity and

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<sup>15</sup> Conferenza delle Regioni e delle Province Autonome (2009, April 9). Riconoscimento della figura professionale del Mediatore interculturale".

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

competences of the mediator. Last but not least, the Conference also represents the milestone in which the need was recognised to define the national training standard for the figure of the intercultural mediator.

Besides the Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces that was organised in April 2009 an inter-institutional working group coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior was established (the work of the group was supported by the European Fund for Integration 2007-2013). The working group, entitled as 'Gruppo di Lavoro Istituzionale per la promozione della Mediazione Interculturale' included the following institutions: Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, Ministry of Health Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ministry of Justice, Department of Regional Affairs and Local Autonomies/Presidency of the Council, Department of Equal Opportunities/Presidency of the Council, CNEL, ANCI, UPI and ISFOL. At the end of its work, in December 2009, it identified *the Guidelines for the recognition of the professional figure of the intercultural mediator*. This document, while not having normative validity, offered a synthesis of the institutional legislative framework and of the experiences underway on the national territory, acting as a reference both for the definition of regional policies, and for the future regulation of the subject.

It is also important to mention that this document highlight the potential role of a mediator, that can be 'seen as a virtuous agent and personal example of positive integration, which can help to counteract those negative stereotypes about the immigrant population, which are at the root of racism and discriminatory behavior'<sup>17</sup>.

After decades of growing importance and need for professional services of intercultural mediation, till today, in 2021 there are still only initiatives to arrive to a national legislation and official framework on the professional field of intercultural mediation. The recent law proposal<sup>18</sup>, presented by parliamentarian Jessica Costanzo on 20 February 2020 reminds the legislators for the necessity to standardize the methods for acquiring the professional qualification of an intercultural mediator, defining the competences, the fields of activity and the training required for accessing the profession. She also calls for the establishment of a national register of mediators, the membership of which could be the sole and necessary condition for accessing and practising of the profession.

## 2. Recognition of intercultural work as a profession

The Institutional Working Group on intercultural mediation: *The qualification of the intercultural mediator. Contributions for its inclusion in the future national system of certification of competences (2014)*<sup>19</sup> proposed the definition of the qualification and related certification procedures as following:

*Profile references: ISTAT 3.4.5.2.0 - Social reintegration and integration technicians [EQF level: 5]*

\*Brief description of the professional profile:

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<sup>17</sup> Gruppo di Lavoro Istituzionale per la promozione della Mediazione Interculturale. (2009, December). Linee di indirizzo per il riconoscimento della figura professionale del Mediatore interculturale.

<sup>18</sup> Costanzo (2020, February 21). Delega al Governo per il riconoscimento della professione di mediatore interculturale. [Proposta di legge (n. 2397)]. Camera dei deputati, Rome, Italy

<sup>19</sup> Gruppo di Lavoro Istituzionale sulla Mediazione Interculturale. (2014, June). *La qualifica del mediatore interculturale - Contributi per il suo inserimento nel futuro sistema nazionale di certificazione delle competenze*

The intercultural mediator is a social worker capable of carrying out linguistic-cultural mediation, non-professional interpreting and translation and social mediation; promoting intercultural mediation as a system device in integration policies; optimising the network and improving the organisation and delivery of services; enhancing the professional role of the mediator and transferring the know-how to junior mediators and service operators.

\*Description of activities:

- Implementation of linguistic-cultural mediation interventions
- Implementation of non-professional interpreting and translation interventions
- Accompaniment and direct support to the immigrant in carrying out administrative and bureaucratic procedures
- Optimisation of relations between foreign users and institutions in emergency (first reception, landings, public safety) and ordinary (health, school, public administration, justice, etc.) contexts
- Orientation of users in the network of services and opportunities and offers of the territory, for the fulfilment of citizenship rights of immigrant communities
- Implementation of social mediation interventions, prevention and management of individual and social conflict situations - Information and orientation on rights, duties and opportunities (work, housing, health, training, administrative) in immigrant communities
- Facilitation of dialogue processes and mutual intercultural understanding between immigrant communities
- Designing intercultural integration interventions between foreign and indigenous communities
- Supporting institutions and operators in the sector in planning and reorganising services in a migrant-friendly way
- Participation and care in the experiences and processes of learning and professional development of junior intercultural mediators
- Assistance in cognitive surveys on the reality of migration and the needs of social and cultural integration of immigrant communities.

The law proposal of Costanzo (20 February 2020)<sup>20</sup>, which suggest the listing of intercultural mediators in a national registry and would define the membership in this registry as the requirement for practising the profession. The conditions to apply for membership is planned to be based on:

- Age of majority;
- a language proficiency of level C1 level according to the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR) of one's mother tongue;
- knowledge at A1 level of at least one vehicular language (English, French or Spanish)
- as well as knowledge of the Italian language at B1 level.
- good knowledge of the Italian institutional system;
- interpersonal skills;
- previous experience in the social sector and in the field of immigration.
- no criminal convictions and no criminal proceedings in progress.
- In case of citizenship of a state not belonging to the European Union: possession of a valid residence permit.

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<sup>20</sup> Costanzo (2020, February 21). Delega al Governo per il riconoscimento della professione di mediatore interculturale. [Proposta di legge (n. 2397)]. Camera dei deputati, Rome, Italy

Having mentioned the great diversity of regional frameworks throughout the national territory on the recognition of the professional figure of the intercultural mediator, we are examining the case of the Sicily, where the regional government approved the decree law D.A/21 on 9th January 2018, establishing the legal recognition for and the profile of the intercultural mediator, within its jurisdiction. The decree was administered by the Department of Education and Vocational Training, therefore the profession of the intercultural mediator has been included in the Repertory of Qualifications of the Sicilian Region the official regional qualification<sup>21</sup>.

It has identified 4 main competences necessary for carrying out the professional activity:

- Analyze the needs and resources of the foreign citizen and the context of intervention
- Understand the language and codes of different cultures and facilitate communication exchange
- Carry out mediation interventions between the foreign citizen and the different reference contexts, facilitating the exchange between immigrants and operators, services, institutions, companies in the reference area
- Designing guidance interventions and intercultural integration paths in different life contexts

### 3. Institutional roles in the coordination of intercultural work

Intercultural mediation is/can be carried out in the following contexts:

- educational services for children;
- schools of all levels;
- hospitals and family counselling centres;
- social services;
- first reception centres for immigrants;
- housing communities for immigrants;
- offices for foreigners at police headquarters;
- prisons;
- offices for foreigners of trade unions, local authorities and voluntary organizations;
- employment centres;
- companies and commercial services that provide for the presence of foreigners.

The key activities of a mediator in relation to the following areas are:

(a) in the social field:

- linguistic-cultural interpreting;
- reception
- information on home, work, legislation, access to public and private services and school;
- counselling;

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<sup>21</sup> Mediatore Interculturale. (n.d.). Repertorio delle Qualificazioni della Regione Siciliana. Retrieved April 28, 2021, from <https://repertoriodellequalificazioni.siciliafse1420.it/Mediatore+Interculturale/aWRwcm9maWxvPTM1MQ==>

- Involvement in projects for the protection of women and minors;
- Contacts with embassies, consulates and police headquarters;
- mediation of family conflicts;
- mediation between minors and their families and school bodies;

**(b) in the police headquarters:**

- Information on cards and residence permits;
- Compilation of documents
- Clarification of procedures and requests made by the police;

**c) in schools:**

- Facilitation of relationships among pupils and with teachers;
- Intercultural education;
- Linguistic-cultural interpretation in relations between teachers and the parents of students;
- Counseling on the school, family and social history of the minor;
- Reception and insertion
- Literacy in Italian;
- Entertainment of relationships with other territorial services;
- Linguistic help to students;
- School and extra-school support;

**d) in health facilities:**

- Reception;
- Support, upon request, during obstetric gynaecological consultations, paediatric and psychotherapeutic consultations;
- Information and explanations on prescriptions for examinations, ultrasounds and methods of contraception, as well as on infertility, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV-AIDS;
- Information and explanation on breastfeeding, infant feeding, and postpartum diets;
- Legal information on current legislation and access to public and private services in the area.
- Orientation to the services of the territory
- Translation of information materials into other languages;
- Interviews with residents;
- Specific attention to the understanding of informed consent in cases where it is required;
- Guided tours for pregnant women to the delivery rooms in order to allow them to make contact with these facilities;
- Relations with local health institutions;
- Intercultural education interventions aimed at health workers and citizenship.

Intercultural mediators play an important role in the assistance and protection of Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs), which is regulated by the so-called Zampa-law, Law n. 47 of 7 April 2017 and is an integrated but particular element of the field of migration management and integration. The Zampa

law defines that foreign minors entrusted with formal provision to relatives within the third degree are to be considered accompanied, while they are to be considered unaccompanied in all other cases<sup>22</sup>. The law laid down the rules concerning the protection and assistance of UAMs, in aspects such as placement, custody and guardianship, and in the process of introducing UAMs to the rules, rights and procedures, the presence of intercultural mediators is crucial.

Some of the main tasks of mediators include<sup>23</sup>:

- Linguistic interpreting starting from disembarkation: taking part in the provision of psychological support, and in facilitation of the communication among operators such as police, social services, reception centers, health workers and so on
- Guidance of the minor: in the preparation for the judicial interview in which the committee makes its decision related to the state of the UAM, and also in the follow-up period explaining him the contexts of placement, transfers, rules to follow, and possibilities for travelling, studying and training.
- Introduction to the cultural codes: the mediator facilitates the process of understanding of traditions, eating habits, and helps in the understanding of informal communicational contexts.
- Assists the minor to the school context and can also follow his/her schoolwork, while facilitating the communication between the educational institution and the minors and their guardians.
- Conflict prevention and management: mediators play a huge role in explaining possible misunderstandings on both sides that are rooted in different cultural and personal characteristics and customs. They help to develop good relationships among the minors and professionals and locals during the time of the assistance, contributing to the successful long-term integration.

#### 4. Regulation and professional qualification of intercultural workers

As mentioned earlier, the Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces (2009) recognised that at the regional level, important normative references regarding the definition of the professional figure of the intercultural mediator have been produced between 1997 and 2006. There were numerous types of courses implemented by local and regional authorities: they range from training courses of 150 hours, up to 1200 hours. There is, furthermore, also the 'problem of recognizing skills acquired by foreign citizens in the various regional training courses, especially in view of their significant mobility on national soil, as well as the recognition of skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts by all mediators who have not attended any kind of training course, but who have developed situated learning, strictly derived from practical experience in the field'<sup>24</sup>.

It is important to note that starting from the 1990's most often it was the civil society representatives, members of voluntary associations who provided language mediation services to immigrants in Italy, who were not trained interpreters, but mainly other fellow migrants<sup>25</sup>. They recognised that newly

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<sup>22</sup> Law n. 47 of 7 April 2017

<sup>23</sup> Mediatore Interculturale e MSNA (n.d). Mediatore Interculturale. Retrieved April 28, 2021 from <http://www.mediatoresinterculturale.it/mediazione-interculturale-e-minori-non-accompagnati/>

<sup>24</sup> Conferenza delle Regioni e delle Province Autonome (2009, April 9). Riconoscimento della figura professionale del Mediatore interculturale".

<sup>25</sup> Amato, A and Garwood, C. 2011. "Cultural mediators in Italy: a new breed of linguists". inTRAlinea 13. <http://www.intralinea.org/archive/article/1673>



arrived migrants do not only need the interpretation of the language in various public and private settings, but also their advice and advocacy to claim and practise their rights. It is said that initially this linguistic and cultural mediation began as a 'creative and self-organised solution to help public sector workers (in education, health and social services) look after foreign public service users'<sup>26</sup>. The use of cultural mediators began to spread all over Italy as a result of the growing influx of non-EU citizens as well as women and children arriving through family reunification. According to Albertini et al. (2010) the training (if any) that the cultural mediators received and the tasks they were called upon to perform differed enormously 'from region to region, between cities within the same region and sometimes even between different services within the same city'. Moreover, the trainings organised were provided almost exclusively by the organisations that supplied the public services with these cultural mediators. There were various conferences and publications concerning cultural mediators, with wide range of ideas expressed. 'The main players remained the Italian NGOs and local authorities, with central Government a more or less distant onlooker.'<sup>27</sup>

Among the many conferences, Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces (2009) also represented a milestone in which the need was recognised to define the national training standard for the figure of the intercultural mediator. Till today this hasn't been achieved, but continuous guidelines, recommendations and law proposals have been following each other since then. The last law proposal of Costanzo (20 February 2020)<sup>28</sup> outlines an educational pathway valid throughout the national territory, for the purpose of acquiring the professional qualification of intercultural mediator divided into the following levels:

1) first-level training course: lasting an average of 500 hours per year, of which at least one third spent in internship activities in the reference territory, carried out by educational institutions, regions or bodies accredited by them, within the framework of the regional plans adopted in the field of vocational training with the help of university lecturers and civil servants from the regions and local authorities. This first-level training course aims at 'developing the competences in mediation, guidance, accompanying, information service, interpreting and reception, to build relational skills, listening and understanding, communication and recognition of needs, conflict management and resolution, and to pass on knowledge of migratory phenomena, the basic elements of socio-humanistic topics, interpreting and cultural mediation, as well as codes of conduct, ethics and basic notions of human rights.'

2) specialist training course: 'in-depth training course, lasting an average of 200 hours per year, divided by sector of intervention, aimed at individuals who have passed the training course mentioned in point 1), carried out by the universities identified by a specific decree of the Ministry of Universities and Research and aimed at conferring the specialised skills of planning initiatives; the tools of cultural and social integration; the validation of mediation projects; the promotion of the role of immigrant foreigners as a resource; the training of operators and practitioners; as well as the development of specialised skills in analysing the contexts of intervention, planning individualised pathways, designing

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<sup>26</sup> Albertini, Valentina and Capitani, Giulia (2010). "La mediazione linguistico-culturale. Stato dell'arte e potenzialità". I Quaderni del CESVOT, No. 47.

[http://www.cesvot.it/repository/cont\\_schedemm/5495\\_documento.pdf](http://www.cesvot.it/repository/cont_schedemm/5495_documento.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Amato, A and Garwood, C. 2011. "Cultural mediators in Italy: a new breed of linguists". inTRAlinea 13. <http://www.intralinea.org/archive/article/1673>

<sup>28</sup> Costanzo (2020, February 21). Delega al Governo per il riconoscimento della professione di mediatore interculturale. [Proposta di legge (n. 2397)]. Camera dei deputati, Rome, Italy



projects, consultancy and teaching, community mediation and behavioural models for social inclusion, fight against discrimination, provision of specialised knowledge of the regulations and codes of the sector, design of interventions, counselling and training of tutoring, and a specialisation in social-humanistic subjects and social research.'

3) lifelong learning pathway, including in-service training and re-training through supplementary and specialised courses in the various areas of intervention who have completed the courses referred to in (1) and (2) and is engaged in their professional activity.

The proposal is building on previous recommendations, of which some has been outlining even more details related to the course contents of the basic and specialist courses. The law proposal of 21 March 2013<sup>29</sup> presented by Murer and his colleagues, suggests the following thematics to be covered during the educational programmes.

Basic training courses:

- area of communication and intercultural relations: psychology of the self and relational psychology; cultural and social anthropology; theories and techniques of analogical verbal communication; interpreting techniques;
- normative area: European Union and human rights; Italian Constitution; social organization and institutional arrangements of the Italian State; Italian immigration legislation with elements of labour and social law; Italian labour and social legislation;
- area of organization and services: models of organization of public and private services and institutions; basic computer skills;

Second level training courses shall provide disciplinary modules divided by sectors, according to the areas of use of the intercultural mediator, which are identified as:

- Educational-scholastic area;
- Social-health area;
- Security and justice area;
- Emergency and first reception area;
- Employment area;

Today, according to the latest access (18.04.2021) there are 46 higher educational programmes in Italy in the field of linguistic mediation, provided by the so-called 'SSML's (Scuole Superiori per Mediatore Linguistici) which literally stands for High Schools for Linguistic Mediators. The status of SSMLs is different from universities; these bodies are private institutions that are authorized by the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). The currently offered courses can be consulted at <https://www.universitaly.it/index.php/public/cercaSsml>.

Training course provided by the SSMLs cover at least two foreign languages in addition to Italian. Particular attention is also paid to the cultures of the countries in which the languages being studied are spoken. The study courses last three years and correspond to 180 university credits. At the end of the course of study, a diploma equivalent to a three-year or first level degree ('laurea') is obtained. The degree awarded allows graduates to carry out linguistic mediation activities in various areas and,

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<sup>29</sup> Murer et al. (2013, March 21). Disciplina della professione di mediatore interculturale" [Proposta di legge (n. 384)]. Camera dei deputati, Rome, Italy.

through an agreement with the universities in the region where the schools are located, to continue their studies to obtain a second level or master's degree in specialist translation and interpreting<sup>30</sup>.

During the cooperation of the Institutional Working Group on Intercultural Mediation, coordinated by the Ministry of Interior that took place with the contribution of various key actors, Ministries and Regions, their final dossier (2014)<sup>31</sup> has also published very valuable working documents that detail which personal attitudes and skills are desirable to be achieved through the formal and nonformal learning opportunities in which the intercultural mediator is taking part during its learning path:

- *Working in a team*
- *Predisposition to social work as an intervention on discomfort*
- *Acceptance of psychological supervision*
- *Good elaboration of one's own transcultural identity*
- *High understanding and ability to express the language of origin*
- *Ability to manage interpersonal relationships, especially in conflict situations*
- *Management of relational stress and resistance to burn-out*
- *Ability to operate in a multidisciplinary environment*
- *Ability to operate in different relational contexts*
- *Ability to maintain a third-party position between communicating parties.*
- *Considerable historical and current knowledge of the language and culture of origin as a whole, including religions.*
- *Knowledge of the language and culture of origin, including religions and the functioning of national public services.*
- *The dynamics of interpersonal relationships carried out in different work environments.*
- *The dynamics of interpersonal relationships carried out in emergency contexts.*
- *Adequate knowledge of the sectors/services in which the intercultural mediator is employed.*

## **5. Approaches to intercultural work**

In the common understanding of the meaning of mediation to which we want to refer in the case of intercultural mediation, emphasizes the aspects more properly of "bridge" and synthesis between two different polarities.

In the concept of intercultural mediation, the term culture must be understood in its broadest, anthropological sense (cultural and religious dress, traditions and experiences), including language as a primary factor that is evident in the languages and metalanguage of the body and proxemics. The concept of identity, especially cultural identity, is not called into question by the practice of mediation: identity solidity must be considered a value and not a hindrance. Dialogue between diversities, with the help of mediation, does not give rise to forms of deconstructing relativism or fragile identities. On

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<sup>30</sup> Titoli equipollenti alle lauree triennali o di primo livello in scienze della mediazione linguistica. MIUR - Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca

<sup>31</sup> Gruppo di Lavoro Istituzionale sulla Mediazione Interculturale. (2014, June). La qualifica del mediatore interculturale - Contributi per il suo inserimento nel futuro sistema nazionale di certificazione delle competenze

the contrary, it allows for enrichment and confrontation aimed at developing the capacity for intercultural relations useful in the context of global citizenship.

The activity of the intercultural mediator is aimed at:

- Mediate between the culture of origin and that of the host society or between the different cultures of migrants;
- Promote processes of integration of immigrants;
- Countering racism and xenophobia;
- Contribute to better understanding between foreigners and natives;
- Enhance differences and similarities;
- Promote equal opportunities in the enjoyment of rights and access to public services;
- Encourage communication between natives and foreigners, both interpersonal and collective<sup>32</sup>.

According to the law proposal on the Discipline of the profession of intercultural mediator (presented 21.03.2013)<sup>33</sup> a systematic level regardless of the field of employment the intercultural mediator shall perform the following functions:

- social, meta-linguistic and cultural interpretation;
- dissemination of information and orientation;
- support in conflict prevention and resolution;
- accompanying;
- promotion of networking;
- sensitization of natives to intercultural issues;
- support in the training of intercultural skills of Italian operators;
- consultancy to operators for the improvement of services;
- collaboration in the training of other mediators;
- collaboration in research activities on issues related to the social and economic target of foreigners;
- collaboration in the planning of interventions in favour of immigrants;
- collaboration in the training of other foreigners regarding the basic requirements of integration processes.

In particular, the intercultural mediator contributes through the following tasks:

- Guides and promotes the access of foreigners to territorial services, informing them about their fundamental rights, through listening and dialogue, promoting their autonomy;
- Facilitates communication, information and cultural exchange between foreigners and natives;
- Prevents potential opportunities of conflict, fostering conditions for social integration, and promotes equal opportunities in access to public services and the enjoyment of rights, enhancing also the cultures and values of foreigners;

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<sup>32</sup> Gruppo di Lavoro Istituzionale per la promozione della Mediazione Interculturale. (2009, December). Linee di indirizzo per il riconoscimento della figura professionale del Mediatore interculturale.

<sup>33</sup> Murer et al. (2013, March 21). Disciplina della professione di mediatore interculturale" [Proposta di legge (n. 384)]. Camera dei deputati, Rome, Italy.

- Facilitate the integration of foreigners into Italian society by informing them of their rights and duties and by stimulating institutions to disseminate precise and useful information for this purpose;
- Assist foreigners in their relations with public institutions, such as educational, health, administrative and judicial institutions, and with private institutions;
- Promotes encounters between foreigners and natives, as well as between foreigners themselves through the function of linguistic-cultural mediation, which is expressed in the ability to translate the different communicative codes of the subjects and to enable them to understand each other;
- Promotes and enhances the role of foreigners as a resource and opportunity for the socio-economic reality in which they live;
- Promotes information services addressed to the native population and to the operators of the services of the cultural and religious systems to which foreigners refer.

Areas of intervention and related activities of mediation include<sup>34</sup>:

#### **Educational-scholastic area**

- Support to teachers in the procedures of initial reception and initial tutoring of newly arrived students;
- Facilitation of school/family dialogue (also through interpretation and translation of notices, messages, documents, as well as assistance and mediation in meetings between teachers and parents);
- Facilitation of dialogue between native families and foreign families;
- Assistance in intercultural education;
- Updating of teachers and information support about the context of origin of the student, his school and personal history;
- Collaboration in the teaching of Italian (not as a substitute for the teacher, but in a role that supports the decoding of culturally determined linguistic learning structures, in order to better define strategies for teaching Italian as a L2);
- Assistance in the recovery of learning;
- Support in the recovery of psychological distress;
- Orientation of students and families for the next level of study;
- Animation and proposals for extracurricular intercultural initiatives in the school environment and connection between the school and the territory.

#### **Social-health area**

- Support for reception in hospital facilities;
- Assistance with communication;
- Facilitating the relationship between institution and families;
- Accompaniment to services;
- Facilitation, assistance, accompaniment in health care paths (paths of birth, gynaecology, paediatrics, long-term care, emergency rooms, counselling, mental health departments);
- Awareness and information in prevention;

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<sup>34</sup> Gruppo di Lavoro Istituzionale per la promozione della Mediazione Interculturale. (2009, December). Linee di indirizzo per il riconoscimento della figura professionale del Mediatore interculturale.

- Intercultural training of healthcare personnel.

### **Security and justice area**

#### a) Adults (in prisons):

- Information on first reception (registration interview and medical examination, first interview assistance, orientation on legal situation, interview support to explain and mitigate discomfort)
- Facilitation of dialogue between prisoners and prison staff and between prisoners of different ethnicities and conflict management
- Accompaniment, personal assistance, liaison with families in the implementation of the mental healthcare program in connection with the work team
- Facilitation of educational and recreational activities (participation in school activities, intercultural activities)

#### b) Minors (in First Reception Centres, Penal Institutes for Minors, Social Service Offices for Minors, Communities):

- Information for first reception
- Accompaniment and personal assistance in the implementation of the treatment program
- Educational support and assistance support, with educators, psychologists, teachers, social workers, social workers
- Facilitation and support in the implementation of rehabilitation programs
- Promoting intercultural dialogue
- Promote recreational activities
- Facilitate the phase of service termination and the eventual exit from the penal service

### **Public administration area**

- User information and orientation
- Intercultural communication
- Conflict resolution
- Assistance in understanding and filling out forms and their translation into various languages
- Assistance and accompaniment to other offices
- Facilitation of access and orientation to local services
- Support in the procedures for citizenship rights (such as residence permits, reunification, etc. ...)
- Assistance for intercultural training and updating of operators

### **Emergency and first reception area**

#### a) First level reception

- Support and facilitation and assistance in identification processes
- Facilitation of understanding of needs of guests in reception centres
- Support and facilitation for guests and operators in the functioning of reception services
- Facilitation of intercultural communication
- Conflict resolution
- Information and orientation on services provided in the reception systems (medical, psychological and legal assistance)
- Accompaniment in accessing services within and/or outside the reception systems
- Support for the start of asylum and humanitarian protection procedures
- Training support (L2 training courses for migrants and intercultural refresher courses for reception staff)

b) Second-level reception

- Information and orientation to second level reception
- Accompaniment and caretaking (medical, psychological and legal assistance)
- Assistance and accompaniment to services in the territory
- Facilitation of communication and intercultural communication
- Conflict resolution
- Support in making contact with the user/territory aimed at autonomy
- Animation of recreational and training activities
- Assistance, training and updating of reception staff

**Social services area**

- Information and orientation to services
- Facilitation of access and accompaniment to local social services
- Linguistic and cultural mediation
- Conflict mediation

**Employment area**

- Information, orientation and accompaniment
- Job placement
- Training and professional qualification
- Conflict mediation
- Information and orientation to services
- Facilitation to the access and accompaniment to the social services of the territory
- Linguistic and cultural mediation
- Conflict mediation

## Conclusions

Till date, the legislation and practices applied in Italy in the field of intercultural mediation has some major gaps that are waiting to be filled by the upcoming years, since the needs by the actors involved in the process are only increasing while the gaps are leaving deepening cracks on the socioeconomic system.

The major characteristics that can be critiqued and expresses as a need:

1. **State has exclusive competence for all immigration policies, while integration policies, including those of intercultural mediation, are the competence of the Regions.**

This paradoxical situation can no longer be sustained, which is obviously presented and reported by stakeholders, experts, working groups and by the parliamentarians themselves. The cooperation of the national legislators are needed to take this very necessary step forward, which is also depending on the actual political climate of the country.

2. **To build a system capable of reconciling emergency-related needs and the long-term needs of integration.**

While it is also a challenge to provide the necessary human resources in the situations of emergency – in any specific territory and with any linguistic competence -, the ultimate aim of intercultural mediation – as to support the successful integration process – can only be maximally reached if the services are widely available and accessible in diverse public and private contexts. A possible way of realization could be if intercultural mediators would be centrally hired by local municipalities, with various linguistic and cultural background; and their support could be utilised by Third Country Nationals on a basis of needs and expresses of interests.

3. **To harmonise training outputs and the mediation needs in practice.**

By digging deep into the curriculum of available intercultural mediator courses, we can see great variety and also often a major discrepancy compared to the real needs in which settings mediation is or shall be primary used. The training curriculum shall be frequently updated and enriched with contents that better respond to the regional and national context, keeping in mind that as a social service, it represents the minimal condition towards the full provision of human rights.

4. **To homogenise the recognition and equivalence of all qualifications on Italian territory.**

While the wide range of training offers are great in terms of choice from the side of learners, it also means a system that is hardly comprehensible and the employers and clients have very few knowledge on the quality and type of education and the level of competences of mediators who they work or plan to work with. Therefore the national classification of the available educational programs would be highly necessary.

5. **To measure prior and non-formal competencies besides formal qualifications**

In the field of intercultural mediation, immigrants who have been settled since couple of years / or even decades have been often in the position of a mediator for friends and community members. And although their understanding of the local / regional / national reality, services and procedures, with no formal recognition of their experience as 'volunteer mediators', they have also very few chance to land in jobs that actually they are very competent in.

Last but not least it shall be also noted that the services provided by intercultural mediation, are wiser to be seen as an investment rather than a passive cost. Mediation has a major role in prevention,



intervention and problem solving, therefore its lack can cause more significant errors that needs to be helped in other ways. To acknowledge the necessity and dignity of the profession of the intercultural mediator, it would also mean a valuable difference if the professionals could be engaged in long-term occupation and much less to be called on the basis of short-term projects and assignments. But quite often, the same institutions that hire mediators are subject to the same precariousness, and can only foresee their activities and budget possibilities linked to the limited duration of projects they are engaged in.

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**2GEM Second Generation of European Migrants**

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**KA204 - STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR ADULT EDUCATION KA204-35C3B97C**

## IO2 - Comparative map of approaches to the intercultural work in the United Kingdom

This intellectual output aims to provide a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in the partner countries on a national level.

It will further describe the approaches to the intercultural work in these partner countries in comparison to the national approaches within Europe.

### Target Audience

The target audience will include 1.5 and 2nd generations' migrants who would like to pursue the career of an intercultural worker will have an overview of options. In addition, this module will provide knowledgeable information about gaps and dead spots.

Thus, this intellectual output will serve as a training module for the partners in the training program under the project intellectual outputs 'Training Program for Intercultural Workers with Migrant Background' (IO4) and the 2GEM MOOC "How to valorize and use 1.5 and second generation unique culture" (IO5).

### Introduction

The IO2 of the GEM2-project provides a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in each partner country, creating a map of intercultural work in Europe with case studies from different countries.

### Aims and objectives

The aim of this intellectual output (IO2) is to explore the approach to intercultural work in the UK as social support system for the integration of migrants with diverse backgrounds in the host country.

Therefore, this comparative work is based five premise questions and case studies of intercultural work approach in the UK.

**In relation to the first premise on the coordination of intercultural work in the UK, it is important to find out the specific system (national, regional, local) approach to the intercultural work. Therefore, this section will provide a list of actors such as educational providers, NGO, vocational institutions, higher education institutions involved in intercultural work in the UK.**

Intercultural skills are a clear need in today increasingly globalized world. Being able to live, operate and communicate in new environments and in complex and changing multicultural contexts is fast becoming the definitive global skill in today's interconnected world.

With its over 80 years of experience in cultural relations and intercultural engagement, the British Council pointed out the main areas where intercultural workers can perform their role:

- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Public sector institutions
- Educational institutions
- Businesses.

In the UK, cross-cultural issues have been a topic to take care of since decades ago, especially due to the long experience with Commonwealth countries and, overall, with the many ethnic minorities from literally all over the world living in the UK. For instance, it's often possible to find translators (in Arabic, Farsi, Chinese, Tibetan, Turkish and many more languages) to help migrants arriving to the country and approaching public offices such as Job Centres and medical centres. However, this kind of help is not always guaranteed and does not resolve basic issues of integration for migrants who need to relocate in the UK which may show a very different socio-cultural approach to life.

Here it comes the necessity of intercultural workers, and today this important aspect of the social work is under the spotlight as never before.

Intercultural workers are needed for migrant communities to train migrants and natives to live and work in increasingly populated multicultural realities, in education as much as in business.

Many universities in the UK offer MA in intercultural studies. Some examples:

i) Manchester University - MA Intercultural Communication /

<https://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/masters/courses/list/08815/ma-intercultural-communication/>

ii) University of Sheffield, School of Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts and Humanities - MA Intercultural Communication September 2022 (start)

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/courses/2022/intercultural-communication-m>

iii) University of Reading - MA Migration and Intercultural Studies

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/ready-to-study/study/2021/languages-and-cultures-pg/ma-migration-and-intercultural-studies>

iiii) University of East Anglia – MA Global Intercultural Communication

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/course/postgraduate/ma-global-intercultural-communication>

iiiii) University of Edinburgh – Language and Intercultural Communication

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/degrees/index.php?r=site/view&id=1006>

iiiiiii) Newcastle University - Cross-Cultural Communication MA

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/degrees/4133f/>

We wish to mention also the International Centre for Intercultural Studies, Department of Education, Practice and Society, UCL Institute of Education, University College London.

The International Centre for Intercultural Studies (ICIS), originally established in 1979 as the Centre for Multicultural Education, is at the forefront of the development of innovative thinking in relation to intercultural education and the study of diversity, equity and social justice. They undertake activities across different fields and domains of knowledge as well as all sectors of formal and non-formal education. This includes work on issues of multilingualism, curricular issues, citizenship education and educational policies in this field. They also promote studies and initiatives in schools, universities and teacher education institutions to address xenophobia and racism.

To be trained as an intercultural worker there are, however, different options that range from the British Council to private institutes.

The British Council has courses to give participants the knowledge, tools and techniques that help them

build rapport and fruitful relationships with diverse clients, partners and co-workers, adapt their approach, and avoid potential misunderstandings and common pitfalls of engaging across cultures. They call these courses 'Intercultural Fluency' courses, designed to support a wide range of individuals and organisations.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/skills-employability/intercultural-fluency/value-benefits>

Examples of private institutes:

**Commisceo International** founded in the UK in 2004, provides localization and language services as well as cross cultural training. If anyone wish to become an intercultural worker operating in the work place, Commisceo has a great deal to teach. They state that the 7 reasons why cultural awareness is important in the workplace are the following:

- It helps you understand and appreciate your own culture
- It minimises the impact of cultural myopia
- It allows you to empathise with the people you work with
- It stops you making quick judgement calls on others' behaviour
- It reduces mistakes, wasted time and unwanted errors at work
- It improves communication and collaboration between colleagues
- It fosters creativity and innovation within the workplace.

They say: "An important learning point, that we must stress, is that being culturally aware is not about compromising your own culture or sacrificing your values or identity for 'another's'. It is simply about helping us understand how we can best adapt our approaches, thoughts and decisions to ensure we create positive outcomes in cross-cultural interactions. It is about respecting others' cultures as well as our own."

### **LTS Training and Consulting**

LTS has been a leader in the field of intercultural trainer training since 2005, when they launched a 5-day course called 'Developing intercultural training skills'.

Since 2005, they have run more than 70 sessions of the course in Bath, with groups sizes ranging from 4-12, as well as other sessions elsewhere in Europe. In 2021, they stated to run the course online.

This course is designed for experienced trainers from fields such as language training, communication skills training and management training, who wish to learn more about the theory and practice of intercultural training, both to integrate intercultural topics into their current training and also to deliver their own intercultural training courses. Exchange of experience with other participants is also a valuable part of the course. By the end of the course, participants will:

- have a good understanding of the key concepts and theories of the intercultural field
  - be aware of how culture forms an integral part of international communication
  - be able to incorporate intercultural elements into their own areas of training
  - be familiar with the main types of intercultural training
  - be able to design different types of intercultural training courses
  - have experience of using different training techniques, activities and materials for intercultural training
- 
- be familiar with different tools to assess intercultural competence
  - be familiar with different ways to evaluate the success of intercultural training
  - have ideas to further develop their career in the intercultural field.

All participants who complete the course successfully will receive the LTS Certificate in Intercultural training.

A meaningful intervention where intercultural skills are needed is performed from the many migrant associations, NGOs across the UK that welcome and help migrants to find their ways into the new environment. Knowledge of the cultural and social organization of life in the UK is required and therefore 1.5 and second generation migrants working in these NGOs are a very useful presence to help in appropriate ways as they come from a mixed cultural background and have an in-depth knowledge of another culture (belonging to newly arrived migrants).

These organizations deliver an essential service and can be a valuable source for developing intercultural competence and acquiring modalities of to apply cross-cultural skills through real life situations and first-hand knowledge.

We mention here some of the most active and well developed UK NGOs.

Refugee Council: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/our-work/helping-refugees-to-rebuild-lives/>

British Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/how-we-support-refugees>

The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants: <https://www.jcwi.org.uk/Pages/Category/our-work>

Praxis for migrants and refugees: <https://www.praxis.org.uk/>

Migrants Help: <https://www.migranthelpuk.org/>

Asylum Welcome: <https://www.asylum-welcome.org/>

Migrant Organise: <http://www.migrantsorganise.org/>

Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network: <https://www.lrmn.org.uk/>

**For the second premise on the recognition of intercultural programme, the main question explores the recognition of intercultural work as a profession, and if so, how is it regulated (e.g. mandatory education, official job description, etc.); What are the pre-conditions to enter the course? ( e.g. length of the course, main subjects taught)**

In the UK, National Occupational Standards (NOS), also known as professional standards, specify UK standards of performance that people are expected to achieve in their work, and the knowledge and skills they need to perform effectively. NOS, which are approved by UK government regulators, are available for almost every role in every working sector in the UK.

From 2007 to 2008, CILT (Centre for Information for Language Teachers) developed a set of National Occupational Standards for Intercultural Working in the UK. The document outlining the Intercultural Working National Standards is available here:

<https://instructus-skills.org/wp-content/uploads/Intercultural-Working.pdf>

They studied how these standards are distinctive from others, how they realise intercultural competence and how they meet workplace expectations. The standards reflect a multi-dimensional approach to competencies which include personal qualities such as reflection, self-development,

critical thinking and ethics, and how they can be achievable in the workplace. For example, one pivotal unit of the standards focuses on self-exploration and performance improvement around the areas of inclusive working practices, effective communication and challenging stereotypes.

An aspiring intercultural worker may want to get a Master Degree at a UK university because this qualification can help finding a job in various working contexts where intercultural workers are needed. As an example, the Cross-Cultural Communication MA at the University of Newcastle will suit anyone intending to work, or are already working, in international and cross-cultural environments.

Cross-cultural communication is an essential aspect of the work in roles such as:

- communications consultants
- interpreters
- social workers
- international sales representatives
- journalists



- medical and healthcare professionals
- humanitarian aid staff
- teachers
- local government officials.

Academic entry requirements are a 2:1 honours degree, or international equivalent, in the following disciplines:

- Anthropology
- Communication
- Ethnography
- Intercultural Communication,
- International Relations
- Linguistics
- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Politics
- Social Anthropology
- Social Psychology
- Sociology
- TESOL
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Translation.

MA in intercultural communication can be obtained in one year full-time (2 years part-time) with a final dissertation.

Subjects taught, generally, may cover the following:

- migration
- memory
- media
- translation
- language contact
- English as a global language
- communicative interaction
- intercultural relations
- intercultural competence.

A MA specific on migration at the University of Reading, MA Migration and Intercultural Studies includes:

- language studies
- applied linguistics and sociolinguistics
- politics and international relations
- human rights and philosophy

- international refugee law.

However, companies, public services, migrant NGOs, may recruit intercultural workers because of their years of experience in the field even without university qualifications. Certificates of completion of courses run by specialized training institutes such as British Council, Commisceo, LTS Training and Consulting can provide a valid document to increase employability as intercultural worker. Finally, knowing the local culture and one or more diverse cultures in-depth is surely an asset.

**The third premise focuses on the institutional roles in the coordination of intercultural work: What authorities (if any) take the role of intercultural workers; Which authorities hire intercultural workers?**

There are no authorities that take the role of intercultural workers in the UK, except for NGOs working within communities across the UK and dealing with migrant issues on daily basis. However, there are authorities that hire intercultural workers.

Intercultural workers or mediators, or even community interpreters who extend their service towards a broader range of service rather than just translations, and therefore becoming agents for migrants' fair integration, are needed in many areas. They are needed within the health system, in social services, education, legal issues, and virtually in any kind of environment connected to business, work and leisure. This because, as it is well known, the UK society is increasingly multicultural, hosting individuals and families from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially in big cities.

**The fourth premise focus on the regulation and qualification of the intercultural workers: What are the education options for intercultural workers (formal, informal), and how to qualify as an intercultural worker;**

Education options and qualifications vary from higher education, as mentioned in the second premise, to certifications obtained from private institutes.

How to become intercultural trainers? Commisceo, a company (already mentioned in this report) that specialises in training and consultancy work to find solutions, building programmes, courses and content that help give people the skills needed to work across cultures, says that unlike with many other professions, there is no simple answer. Trainers working within the cross-cultural field come from many differing backgrounds and can do very different things. Not all are trainers per sé, and not all are involved in the same fields of work. Once one understands the type of training s/he wants to do, or maybe the sector s/he wants to work in, that will help guide him/her in terms of steps to take. For instance, focus may be primarily on:

- Relocation training – helping expats settle into new countries
- Doing business – focusing on practical business issues such as etiquette, protocol, dos, don'ts
- Working with different countries – addressing challenges, issues and the potential of working with specific countries/cultures.

Intercultural or Cross-Cultural Trainers tend to specialise in one, or several countries and it is not necessary that the aspiring intercultural worker has a diverse cultural backgrounds, although an asset; alongside this some may also be specialists in other areas such as management or negotiation.

Areas in which trainers tend to be in most demand include:

- Developing Cultural Awareness
- Multicultural Team-Building
- Expatriate Relocation
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Management
- Conflict Resolution
- Mergers and Acquisitions.

Commisceo delivers:

1. traditional, classroom based training courses whereby a trainer/facilitator is physically teaching people.
2. online training which has become more and more relevant within education and learning with a large amount of training now taking place digitally.
3. blended learning which may use elements of any sort of training delivery, whether that be mobile, face-to-face, Skype or a face to face training environment.

Participants obtain certifications.

As mentioned above, LTS Training and Consulting also offers intercultural worker training and all participants who complete the course successfully receive the LTS Certificate in Intercultural training.

Worth mentioning is the mission of ACIS, the Association of Community Interpreters (definitely another way of calling an Intercultural worker) that is to represent the interests of Community Interpreters and to develop, promote and safeguard high professional standards in the field of Community Interpreting. The organization is therefore dedicated to promoting professionalization of community interpreters by means of training, support, creation of standards, as well as activation for policy developments and legislative recognition for minimum pay rates. ACIS works also towards the creation of a social network of community interpreters.

Full membership is possible for community interpreters who hold a Community Interpreting Level 3 or above awarded by a recognized awarding body.

ACIS organizes regularly training courses and workshops, which are free for full members.

Other resources available to members include information on best practices, a forum and professional support allowing for collaborative learning.

ACIS has a directory where Intercultural workers can apply to be included so that they can be recruited from authorities, public offices, councils, hospitals, business, stakeholders in education.

To be included in the ACIS directory one needs to have:

- a DBS (Standard or Enhanced) and other Vetting (a DBS check is an official record stating a person's criminal convictions and is particularly important for those who work with vulnerable groups);
- education and training history (any English qualifications, such as ESOL, if any MA)
- experience as a community interpreter/intercultural worker in the UK (having been working or volunteering in a migrant NGO, for instance)
- community and cultural knowledge (highlighting the knowledge one has of his/her language community in his/her local area in the UK and keeping abreast of news and with the public service developments in the native country).

Finally, the United Kingdom provides for systems of professional recognition of the intercultural mediator qualification, however, we also should notice that the UK intercultural mediation is considered as an extension of civil mediation and only recently is starting to grow as a distinct professional activity, namely from 2008 when National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Intercultural Working in the UK were set.

**The fifth premise focuses on the approach to intercultural work: What is the approach used in intercultural work? What are the main tasks intercultural workers perform there? /Elaborating separately for every authority, such as court, hospital, police, reception centres etc**

In terms of quality of approach, in general terms, we may refer to the Intercultural Working National Occupational Standards set in the UK, specifically we mention here the CFAIWS5 'Manage delivery of a service to people from different countries or diverse cultures':

#### Overview

#### **The Intercultural Worker might do this:**

1. when managing service delivery to people from one or more different countries or cultures;
2. when managing service delivery to people from other countries or cultures whether they were born, educated or work here, have just arrived in the country or live abroad;
3. when managing service delivery for a free or paid-for service, that is delivered inside or outside your organisation and interacts with users face-to-face, by telephone, letter or email;
4. when working in the public, private or not-for-profit sectors;
5. when working in voluntary, aid or humanitarian work;
6. when providing a service, information or advice, carrying out market research, working collaboratively with non-UK partners to provide a service or working in education with students from other countries or cultures.

#### **The benefits and business case for doing this effectively:**

1. services are delivered sensitively and appropriately to all users
2. people are satisfied with the service they have received
3. organisational performance and reputation improves
4. strengthened diversity and equality policies and procedures

Encourage the others involved in service delivery to respect customers' cultural conventions, deal with stereotypes, deliver a consistent high standard of service to all service users, adapt service delivery practices, deal with intercultural tension or misunderstanding.

These standards describe working with people from different countries or diverse cultures in ways that promote open and respectful interaction, better understanding and improved performance.

#### **Performance criteria**

*You must be able to:*

P1 expect those involved in service delivery to respect and understand service users' values, beliefs and cultural conventions and to value them as customers;

- P2 identify any language skills needed and where they can be sourced most effectively;
- P3 encourage those involved in service delivery to continually assess their interaction with service users from different countries or diverse cultures and make sure they have the skills to do so;
- P4 encourage those involved in service delivery to respond flexibly and positively and solve problems so that the service meets the needs of service users from different countries and diverse cultures;
- P5 maintain the same high standard of service for each service user;
- P6 check that service users are satisfied with the service and resolve differences between their needs and the service offered so that it attracts and does not discriminate against the people you are providing services for;
- P7 challenge any stereotypes, prejudice or racism expressed by other people about yourself or others;
- P8 deal with things that go wrong that are caused by different cultural expectations, miscommunication, misunderstanding or racial tension and minimise their impact on ongoing service delivery, getting support when you need it.

Examples of intercultural workers' tasks in several intervention areas related to migrant integration:

**health care:** introducing migrants to the national health care system, i.e. how to register to NHS, modules and modalities, how and when to use emergency services, child immunization plans, pregnancy and delivery options (dealing with women implies gender sensitivity besides knowledge of culture issues, and it is important to transfer this knowledge to doctors and practitioners at hospital and care services), helping with mental health issues by addressing the appropriate doctors, helping with prescriptions at pharmacies. Important is also translating at doctor visits, especially for difficult and delicate health issues. An intercultural worker needs to know the norms and rules his/her clients used to have in their native country.

As a matter of fact, intercultural workers are employed to resolve linguistic and cultural barriers in a variety of health-care contexts. Developing training programmes and accreditation systems into the effectiveness of intercultural workers in health care, and the development of strategies that guarantee their access in health care, will enormously improve the quality of health care for refugees and locate migrants and will enable them to make informed decisions about their and their families' health.

**Education:** informing and introducing to the national educational system, i.e. helping to locate schools, helping to get a place in a school, liaising with the teachers especially at the initial contact with the school at the start, ideally talking with teachers about specific situations (i.e. trauma, unstable living, no housing, ect.).

**Reception/social services:** explaining procedures to get visa, to get a job, to find a house. Informing on the social security benefits and accompanying migrants to the offices to get housing benefits if needed, accompanying to job centre to get job seeker allowances if needed.

**Work:** helping to understand employment rules and situations, how to find a job, how to use job research tools, how to use skills and qualification gained in the native country, salary and taxes schemes, where to meet lawyers able to help in legal issues.

**Social life and civic participation:** introducing and mapping the territory highlighting NGOs where to find compatriots and other migrants active in civic actions, helping newly arrived migrants to know and engage within the community by valorizing migrant social and art skills; explaining the electoral system, government and authorities, civic rights and ways of advocacy for one's own right, how to make complaints, when calling and involving police.

## Case studies

*The volunteering sector has some of the most advanced and effective methodologies for intercultural work in the UK.*

### Case 1: CULTURAL MEDIATION

An inclusive solution to help reduce the cultural and language barriers experienced by survivors of trafficking

Authors: Blodina Rakovica & Dr. Sara Ianovitz

March 2021

Cultural mediation is a concept that ensures women's voices can be heard. The idea of cultural mediation is to create a space where women can use their own words and languages to express what they are going through.

The women supported by Hibiscus are faced with day-to-day barriers, one of which is often undermined: language. We have identified that interpretation alone does not suffice to reach comprehensive, full and clear understanding.

One of the main purposes of cultural mediation is to ensure integration in the host society; this is crucial as it acts as a bridge between institutions and migrants. We can overcome these cultural barriers and obstacles by introducing cultural mediation to fill in the gap of understanding between institutions and migrant women.

We have seen how cultural mediation is applied across Europe within different services such as: healthcare, education, public services, rehabilitation centres, and at immigration office to facilitate better understanding with migrant communities.

From July 2020 to January 2021, a Hibiscus Project Worker applied cultural mediation techniques to their casework with sixteen Albanian women in the community to help them navigate through the systems they were in contact with and to support them in their recovery journey.

Hibiscus found during the course of this research that interpretation is not enough and that with cultural mediation we can increase understanding and help women navigate the systems they find themselves in, improve communication between survivors and their support structures, and that a survivor-centered approach can achieve better outcomes for these women.

The following steps are important when working with female trafficking survivors through cultural mediation:

Create a safe space > Listen to women's needs > Apply a non-judgemental lens > Build trust.

Recommendations following Hibiscus' Cultural Mediation report:

Improve understanding and communication between survivors of GBV and statutory and non-statutory bodies by adopting cultural mediation as a primary approach to working with this community;

Ensure those working with GBV survivors are also trained in and apply trauma-informed and survivor-centred approaches;

Improve knowledge and good practice in working with survivors of GBV within service providers;

*This project is funded by The Bell Foundation. The Bell Foundation is a charity that aims to overcome exclusion through language education by working with partners on innovation, research, training, and practical interventions.*

Report available here: [https://hibiscusinitiatives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Hibiscus\\_Cultural-Mediation-Report\\_A4\\_Final\\_digital.pdf](https://hibiscusinitiatives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Hibiscus_Cultural-Mediation-Report_A4_Final_digital.pdf)

## **IO2: Comparative map of approaches to the intercultural work in Poland**

This intellectual output aims to provide a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in the partner countries on a national level.

It will further describe the approaches to the intercultural work in these partner countries in comparison to the national approaches within Europe.

## **Target Audience**

The target audience will include 1.5 and 2nd generations' migrants who would like to pursue the career of an intercultural worker will have an overview of options. In addition, this module will provide knowledgeable information about gaps and dead spots.

Thus, this intellectual output will serve as a training module for the partners in the training program under the intellectual outputs (IO4) and the MOOC (IO5).

**KA204 - STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR ADULT EDUCATION KA204-35C3B97C**



## Introduction

The IO2 of the GEM2-project provides a basic overview of available solutions in the field of intercultural work in Poland, creating a map of intercultural work in Europe with case studies from different countries.

## Aims and objectives

The aim of this intellectual output (IO2) is to explore the approach to intercultural work in the Poland as social support system for the integration of migrants with diverse backgrounds in the host country.

Therefore, this comparative work is based five premise questions and case studies of intercultural work approach in Poland.

### Introduction to the situation in Poland:

There is no specific system of intercultural work on a national level. Poland is still on the stage of creating national migration policy. The reasons for this state are multifold: Poland is still a homogenic in terms of multiculturality, and up to recent years it was rather a country of transit for people migrating to Western Countries, especially to Germany. But from the half of 2010's the situation begun to change, as the number of economic migrants had rapidly grown up. It was, and still is, connected with the specification of labor market: Polish workers migrated to Western Europe, and the gap in the labor market was filled by workers from Eastern countries: especially from Ukraine, but also from Far East – Vietnam mainly. This created the two types of migration environment: Ukrainian – which was “short term” type, and Vietnamese – which was very closed, generating the type of closed subculture. It is very important fact regarding the main, real challenges in Poland:

1. How to keep and integrate economic migrants – so they could stay in Poland and develop their entrepreneurship (Ukrainians)
2. How to integrate close social environment of far East migrants (mainly Vietnamese)

Second reason for the state of art is that Polish right-wing government had withdrawn existing policy and begun to prepare the new one, unfortunately without a priority. Thus, the diagnosis is up to now officially ready, and the rest of the policy is still in progress.

### 1. Coordination of intercultural work

Polish government is focused on legal and technical issues, mainly system of issuing visas and work permits as well as controlling the illegal immigration, and there's no even a discussion about intercultural work on the field of intercultural workers or using this type of work on other fields than schooling. This was the topic for local governments as well as NGOs, who undertook an effective collaboration with local governments. The only consistent policy for the integration of migrants has been prepared by the city authorities of Gdańsk, elements of them is prepared by municipalities of Lublin.

The only exception in legal system that mentions about the assistance for immigrants is Educational Law. According to the law, the foreign child that is legally staying in Poland has the right (according to educational obligation) to be admitted to regular school and is provided with additional language course. There's also a possibility of hiring an assistant teacher for such child, or children for the period of 12 months. Customarily such a person is called a cultural assistant.

Supporting activities, mainly in the field of information, are carried out by the agencies of international institutions. The example of such activity is a web page of International Organization for Migration (IOM) ([www.migrant.info.pl](http://www.migrant.info.pl)). The web page presents all necessary legal information about staying, working, or marrying in Poland, and provides information in Polish, English, Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Chinese and French languages.

Most of the activities carried out by institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, are project-based, most of them are European projects financed from various programs. The examples can be found in governmental actions: The project "Social adaptation and integration support system for foreigners staying on the territory of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship", and non-governmental: The project "Integration, adaptation, acceptance. Support for third-country nationals residing in Lower Silesia " led by Foundation Ukraine.

But the most important work is done by NGOs. Foundations and associations run local activities, most often project activities, but it happens that they operate in the national area. One of the most known is PFM (Polish Migration Forum).

## 2. Recognition of intercultural course

As the only one regulation concerns school assistants, this is the only profession with specific requirements, however, officially this is the position of teacher assistant. There are no specific requirements for this position, except speaking Polish and the language of a migrant child, and being without crime-record.

## 3. Institutional roles

As it was stated before, the most important in the system of intercultural works are NGOs. Their work however is based on the needs and have no processual type. Their functioning is based on two pillars: environmental, often based on volunteers and migrants themselves, and cooperation with local authorities. The success of many initiatives depends on the latter. From a legal point of view, it is local authorities who decide to employ cultural assistants in schools. This happens at the request of the headmaster of a given school. Fortunately, local authorities are usually interested in integration processes for many reasons: both economic and social. An excellent example of a coherent policy in this area is Gdańsk, which started work in 2015 and presented a complete vision of the migration policy in 2017. It assumes support of the municipalities in integration activities in eight areas: education, culture, local communities, violence and discrimination, health, work, social assistance, and housing. The document specifies the forms of implementation and additionally provides good practices in the field of migrant integration.

## 4. Regulation and qualification of the intercultural worker

The school system requires specific qualifications, however, the only qualifications indicated for a cultural assistant are knowledge of the Polish language and the language of a migrant child. The remaining competences are not compulsory and formal. However, the applicant is required to have an

impeccable reputation and psycho-pedagogical knowledge, at least basic. Other competences and requirements derive from specific needs of a case.

There is an extensive, commercial market for intercultural training in Poland, but it is almost exclusively in business area. In particular, these are trainings in intercultural communication, focusing on the development of communication skills, sales techniques and learning the mentality of other cultures for marketing purposes. There are few examples of postgraduate studies for intercultural workers, such as studies at the Jagiellonian University under the name "Intercultural competence specialist" or the studies for cultural assistants at school. The form of short trainings for people learning in an intercultural environment is more and more popular, but there is still no wide range of such trainings, especially outside large urban centers such as Warsaw or Krakow. Meanwhile, there is a great need in smaller towns and even villages, where immigrant families very often settle down.

## 5. Approach to intercultural work

As previously mentioned, in Poland there is no clear policy or even direction for determining the qualifications of intercultural workers. Actions are ad hoc, focusing on formal and informational issues, or are generated by specific needs. However, many local solutions use patterns developed in work with minorities, such as the Roma. This mainly applies to state offices, schools and hospitals.

There are no specific guidelines for intercultural work in government offices. There is also no intercultural worker as a position. The competences are the same as in the case of working with Polish citizens: personal culture, courtesy, and, what is basically a novelty in Polish offices: empathy (of course within the law).

Education area has the relatively best developed issue of working in a multicultural environment. As compulsory education applies to all children living in Poland, regardless of nationality, schools are required to work with children from different cultures. The characteristics of an intercultural teacher are well described, but regarding each teacher working in multicultural environment, not as the specific intercultural assistant. These are: open and flexible attitude, willingness to learn about other cultures, knowledge of the local community, high communication skills (Wiśniewski, 2016).

Health facilities also have certain standards, especially when it comes to nursing staff. The statutory educational standards refer to multicultural competences, which means in particular knowledge about the specificity of caring for people from different cultures, especially in the religious perspective.

Social work is a very neglected area, with no standards at all, and no support. Social workers have virtually no knowledge of working in a multicultural environment. Research shows that they learn about it from the media and their own experiences (Bandach, 2018). Meanwhile, they work in an increasingly multicultural environment.

## Case study

The case study deals with a separate issue, with which the Polish school is also struggling, albeit to a lesser extent. In the last decade, nearly 100,000 Chechens have applied for refugee status in Poland. Many such applications were rejected, but according to estimates, around 20,000 Chechens

settled permanently in Poland. In the case of this nationality, there is an additional problem of religious differences, as Chechens are Muslims. Poland is a predominantly Catholic country, so certain customs are a source of misunderstandings that lead to conflicts. An example of dealing with the integration of the Chechen community through a school community is the Primary School in the small town of Coniew. It is about 50 kilometers away from Warsaw. There is a refugee center in the nearby town, so a large group of Chechen children goes to a small school in Coniew.

The basic problems faced by the school can be summarized in the following points:

- ⇒ Unfamiliarity with the Polish language;
- ⇒ Lack of material support - the children did not have textbooks or school supplies;
- ⇒ Lack of knowledge of the principles of Chechen culture by teachers - it was manifested, for example, by the fact that children went to school without sleep during Ramadan;
- ⇒ Absence of children at school due to family reasons.

The solutions that have been made went in two ways. First, the social environment was prepared. Thanks to the foundation Vox Humana trainings for teachers working in the school were conducted. Additional Polish language lessons were organized, but Russian was also introduced as a second foreign language at school.

The second level is the integration of Chechen children: a series of events were organized, during which Chechens could show their culture to the community, talk about customs, and present their cuisine. The school also took part in all possible competitions in which both children from Poland and Chechnya could participate. A Chechen citizen was also employed as an assistant teacher (cultural assistant). His task was to mediate contact between the school, and children and their parents from Chechnya. But in practice, his tasks turned out to be beyond this standard scope.

The assistant took on the role of encouraging participation in classes, in particular gym classes, but also in Polish language classes. He explained that learning the Polish language is a condition to feel more confident in the new reality. It was he who visited the refugee center and talked many times with both children and parents. As he was from Chechnya, his contact was much easier, as there was no deep distrust of the refugees, what normally occurs towards strangers.

As an older man, the assistant became an authority for Chechen children, especially boys, and explained to them the rules of behavior and the unfitness of certain behaviors to which they were accustomed in their own culture.

The assistant turned out to be irreplaceable thanks to the excellent knowledge of both languages and both cultures, as well as high communication skills. It seems that these, as well as psychological competences and basic knowledge of the specificity of the school environment - these are the most important competences that a person working on integration should have.

Source: B. Lachowicz, Asystent międzykulturowy – nowe rozwiązanie starych problemów. Przykład z Coniewia, Forum na rzecz różnorodności społecznej, Maieutike 14/2010

## Conclusions

1. There's no system of intercultural work in Poland, especially on the field of social work or working in open social environment. The only solution that exists concerns schools with the institution of a

cultural assistant, although it is not so explicitly named. The job of such an assistant is limited to 12 months, and his qualifications are not clearly defined, although knowledge of the migrant's language and the language of the destination country must be the basis for the activity, and knowledge of both cultures and communication skills are highly desirable.

2. By far the greatest burden of work in multicultural environments rests on the shoulders of NGOs. They organize events, training and support for migrants and migrant communities. They are also active in bottom-up activities - helping migrants to create their own associations and foundations.

3. There is an urgent need to identify sector-specific qualifications and training for intercultural workers. This applies in particular to people dealing with social work and social assistance: social workers, street workers, family assistants.

4. Because of the slow pace of creating a national migration policy, actions should be bottom-up. It is important that every initiative, even the smallest one, is widely disseminated.

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Project Partners

