



# ***ONE-STOP-SHOP***

## **A NEW ANSWER FOR IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION**

**JLS/2006/INTI/148**

### **MINUTES OF THE FIRST TRANSNATIONAL WORKSHOP**

**I. DATE:** Tuesday, 26 February 2008

**ORGANISER:** Immigrant Council of Ireland – Irish Partner. National Coordinator: Fidele Mutwarasibo

**LOCATION:** Buswell's Hotel, 23-25 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2, Ireland

**II. PARTICIPANTS:**

- Catarina Reis Oliveira, ACIDI, I.P., Lisbon – Portugal, Project Coordinator
- Maria Miguel Santos Silva, ACIDI, I.P., Lisbon – Portugal, Financial Coordinator
- Marisa Horta, ACIDI, I.P., Director of the National Immigrant Support Centre, Lisbon
- Claire Healy, ACIDI, I.P., Lisbon & Country Researcher for Ireland
- Jassira Maria Veiga Monteiro, CNAI, ACIDI, I.P., Socio-Cultural Mediator.
- Maria Abranches, International Organization for Migration (IOM) - Lisbon Mission, Portugal & Country Researcher for Portugal
- Inspector José António Caçador, Head of Lisbon Region Document Issuing Office, Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (Foreigners and Borders Service), Lisbon – Portugal.
- Fidele Mutwarasibo, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Dublin – Ireland
- Brian Killoran, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Director of the Information and Support Service
- Kirsten Fjoser, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Communications Officer
- Glen Ebeh, Access Ireland, Cultural Mediator
- Ann Moroney, Access Ireland, Director
- Miguel Ángel Gil, Dirección General de Integración de los Inmigrantes, Madrid - Spain



- Gloria Pérez Arredondo, Country Researcher for Spain
- Glória Carroccio, Direzione Generale dell' Immigrazione, Rome - Italy
- Alessia Montuori, IPRS, Rome - Country Researcher for Italy
- Anila Tozaj, Cultural Mediator, Agenzia InForeigner, Gorizia - Italy
- Rainer Ohliger, Netzwerk Migration in Europa, e.V., Berlin – Germany
- Antje Scheidler, Netzwerk Migration in Europa, e.V., Berlin – Germany
- Didem Yüksel, Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland, Project Coordinator of Integration Plus Lotsen (Integration Mediators), Berlin
- Triantafyllia Avramidi, Hellenic Migration Policy Institute (IMEPO), Athens – Greece
- Theodoros Katsas, Country Researcher for Greece
- Gerry Mangan, Department of Social and Family Affairs - Ireland
- Dug Cubie, IOM – Ireland
- Anthony Pringle, IOM – Ireland
- Gerry Folan, Dublin City Council – Ireland
- Cormac O'Donnell, Dublin City Council – Ireland
- Ann Moroney, Access Ireland
- Dr Lawrence Lee, ICI/Association of Chinese Professionals in Ireland
- Ann Gilton, FAS – Ireland
- Diane Nurse, Health Service Executive – Ireland
- Dr Jean-Pierre Eyanga, Integrating Ireland
- Reginald Oko-Flex, New Communities Partnership – Ireland
- Sr. Breege Keenan, Vincentian Refugee Centre - Ireland
- Sr. Joan Roddy, Refugee and Migrant Project – Ireland
- Itayi Viriri, ICI
- Amel Yacef, Schools Cultural Mediation Project - Ireland
- Lacey Maddox, ICI
- Evelina Saduikyte, SIPTU – Ireland
- Anita Toolan, Office of the Minister for Integration Policy - Ireland

### **III. MAIN ACTIVITIES:**

1. Challenges and Experiences of Socio-cultural Mediation, chaired by Fidele Mutwarasibo, with mediators from Italy, Portugal, Germany and Ireland.
2. Socio-cultural mediation in the immigration police service – presentation by José António Caçador, Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF), Portugal.
3. Questions and discussion on theme of cultural mediation.



#### IV. MAIN OUTCOMES:

1. Presentations by cultural mediators, chaired by Fidele Mutwarasibo

##### **Anila Tozaj, Agenzia InForeigner, Gorizia, Italy:**

Hello ladies and gentleman

My name is Anila Tozaj, I was born on January 20, 1979 in Kukes in Albania near the border with Serbia. Therefore, I come from Italy but I am not Italian citizen. I'm a cultural mediator in Friuli Venezia Giulia. Friuli-Venezia Giulia is a region of northeastern Italy, bordering Austria and Slovenia, a crossroads of the Latin, German and Slavic cultures. In the North, there are the Alps, while the territory along the coasts is mostly plain. Between Trieste and the Alps there is a wide, Karts plateau, the Carso, an important battlefield in WWI, where innumerable Italian and Austrian soldiers lost their lives. The economy is largely based on agriculture and on the production of renowned wines.

This region has realised the importance of the cultural mediators. About this unknown profession, the region of Friuli-Venezia –Giulia has prepared a (Regional Law of 22/12/2006) that regulate our position in a directory. There is a lot to do for the mediators in this area, but we know that the region works with us because we have an important role in the integration and good services that this region offers to the foreigner communities.

The first time that I heard about cultural mediators I asked: What is this, what kind of job, what I have to do? That was the question that I made to myself the first time that somebody, after seen my resume said to me: “ok, you can be a good mediator near the CPT, the centre for immigrants” don't worry, I don't even know what you have to do, but the ministry has decide to create this new profile. We just follow orders.

Therefore, thanks of my previous experiences somebody decided to make me a cultural mediator.

Okay, again I ask to you to permit me to introduce myself

From 1999 time during the war in Kosovo, I have acquired about 9 years experience in the written and television news media like journalist and news speaker.

I am an Art teacher too; I have been working in an elementary school in Albania for two years. I have a Bachelor degree in International and Diplomatic Sciences, a very important faculty established in Gorizia (Italy) by Italian and European high politicians with the target to approach students from all over the countries in a strategic and historical European frontier. After that, I had a master degree in Analysis for Management and Communication. During the 4 years of the university, I have been working with the Police Headquarter as interpreter for the asylum seekers.

Before I came to Italy I had to work with poor population of my country, I was in Kosovo a few months after the 1999 war, I lived for about 7-8 months in Greece working in reception desk Hotel with other immigrants, and I was about one month in Germany, living the same situation as in Greece. Thanks of this experience I found my way and myself in this profession. I believe I could be a very superficial mediator without all this.

There is a tie between these experiences because what I needed to do the mediator was just the experience with people. Like journalist I had to work everyday outside of the



editorial office, living in Albania means to see and touch poorness and organised crime so in CPT it realised helpful for me in communicating with CPT “guests”, ospiti in Italian, that is the way we use to call them.

I had a job as cultural mediator/interpreter in the CPTA (at the beginning it was a centre just for clandestine but after the continuously arriving of clandestine refugees it became a “welcome centre” too).

My new job had nothing to do with my studies, international and diplomatic, to follow a diplomatic carrier. I tried, but I could not stand the corruption and the behaviour of my fellow-country man, or better say:

Honestly, that situation convinced me much more to search another way. Now I say, thank you.

However, let's talk about how the Temporary Permanence Centre CPT works.

One part of centre, the isolated part, is full of with irregular immigrants that live in Italy like clandestine. The police catch them, the Headquarter issue an expulsion to the clandestine with the order to leave Italy in 5 days. There is no exception to the rule, all the extra-communities can be stopped and expelled if without permit to stay in Italy.

Nevertheless, it is almost impossible to identify these persons, so trying to find at least their origin nationality the Italian state use to put these persons inside the centre, CPT to close them until finding a solution. But if the police don't find the “solution” in less of 60 (sixty) days the clandestine will be free to go out by the CPT. Free, but with another expulsion to live Italy within 5 days. This can be happen, but there are many other cases.

When the consulate or embassy of the extra-communitarian cooperates with the Italian police is easy to take back home the clandestine, the CPT – guest. That is the hardest moment for the police headquarters - what to say to a person that has no more chances to stay in Italy. In this case the problem is not just the language, the grammar, but how their react before the repatriation. There are different reactions of this. It is strange but everyone has the proper way to express the sorrow of the return home. In the medical statistic of the centre, it depends too much from the custom, the tradition and the nationality. Therefore, I had to see with my eyes young boys that cut their arms, crying, screaming just to avoid the return in their country. So, I had to do the mediator not only Albanian or Kosovo people and other European area (they never cut their arms), but with Nigerian (very rarely), Liberian (no), Algerian (very often), Moroccan (very, very often), Tunisian (very often), Senegal (no), Afghanistan (no), Iraq (no), Sudan (no), Ghana(no).

As a journalist, I should never say: the mediation could be really the answer of the integration for the immigrants, but as a mediator, oh yes, I can.

I have seen men crying as children for their babies, boys that cut at their arms with razor blade, plastic knives, and the mediators were always there trying to convince this young boys to stop going on in this way, it was the time to calm down e to find a solution. That was not easy, on the contrary, sometimes was hopeless. You enter in the centre and everybody calls you: the red zone needs a mediator, the blue area needs a mediator, and the green area needs a mediator. In addition, you run, the other mediators run. Maybe you will arrive just in time to save somebody, maybe.

This is the “last goodbye” side of the centre. Last year we welcomed many refugees from Ethiopia, Ghana, Sudan, and Nigeria in separate areas of the centre. So the CPT became a



CPA too, “the first welcome”. You can imagine that is more pleasant to say welcome than goodbye.

Today, I keep on working with regular immigrants, clandestine and refugees but currently, my main activity is managing “INFOREIGNER”, an agency of translation in different languages, advising and providing information for foreigners, translating for the law firms, but never stop collaborating with public boards, Immigration Office of the Police Headquarters of Gorizia, Judge of Peace of the Gradisca D’Isonzo (Go), and the Court of Law in Gorizia. Last year I have been enrolled in the new directory of the multicultural mediators of the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia in Italy. We are doing a lot of training to implore this new and unknown profession and I see that it needs time and a lot of work. But today permit me to thank the Immigrant Council of Ireland for this important and helpful workshop and close my speech with the invitation “next time in Italy”

**Jassira Maria Veiga Monteiro, National Immigrant Support Centre (CNAI), ACIDI, I.P., Lisbon, Portugal:**

This presentation is focused on three aspects: the socio-cultural mediator, the services on CNAI (National Immigrant Support Centre) and my personal experience.

In the first part I present the function, the role and the mission of the Socio-cultural mediator. I speak about the main characteristics that a mediator should have to accomplish the goals of socio-cultural mediation in CNAI. In CNAI mediators have to have the following characteristics: dedication, sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, pro-activity, objectivity, team-work spirit among others.

The second part is about the innovative project of CNAI, its creation, its four years of history, its schedule and average of 800 attendances per day. I also speak about the intercultural and interdisciplinary team that works in CNAI composed by 95 socio-cultural mediators, from 12 nationalities with 8 languages. Then I present the services provided by CNAI and by the public institutions delegations in this One-Stop-Shop, and I expose the procedures of our mediation.

Finally I speak about my personal experience as an immigrant who came from Africa to Europe and how it shaped the way I deal with my clients nowadays. I also speak about what I give and what I receive in this occupation, showing the positive and negative aspects of it. By showing this I underline some aspects like how the fact that I am an immigrant brings me tools to understand my clients; the empathy that I feel with them; the objectivity of my service; how I use the languages that I dominate to make sure that my clients really understand the information I am giving; the knowledge about laws (immigration and nationality); how I am more aware of the respect regarding everything that is different; how I am learning about different cultures with my own colleagues. I speak about the challenge that is working in CNAI, the reward that I have, but also the frustration and/or bad temper of some of my clients.

**Didem Yüksel, Turkish Community in Germany (Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland) – Integration Plus Lotsen, Berlin, Germany:**

Project “Integration Plus Lotsen” (Integration Plus cultural mediators)”



Introduction: The TCG is an organisation covering about 300 associations. It's an organisation that represents majority and neutral geopolitical interests of Turks living in Germany. The TCG represents integrating politics and uses legal, social as well as political equality of Non-German, especially of Turkish heritage, citizens. The services and activities of the association include advice and support to immigrants and also public relations against crime and discrimination. This way the TCG functions not only as a gate for help seekers but also as contact service for integration and also immigration-related questions.

The Turkish community in Germany has been carrying out the "Integration plus Lotsen (Integration plus cultural mediators)" project since August 2007. The project was launched in Berlin, Aachen and Frankfurt am Main and is financed by the Ministry of Immigration and Refugees. The project is carried out through the collaboration of the North Rhine-Westphalia and the Rhine-Main Turkish Community.

For the project we recruit responsible voluntary integration cultural mediators with a migration background. Participants should be interested in being further educated and at the same time helping others with support during the integration process. The cultural mediators should be able to speak German and have fundamental knowledge of dealing with authorities and projects.

Participants complete a 20 hour theoretical program that has been prepared for them including:

- Internet research and documenting
- Work and event planning
- Interview training and diversity competence
- Information on integration services
- Rights against discrimination
- Rights for immigration

Then cultural mediators support integration searching clients utilizing integration services and immigration services as well as completing projects in this area. After participating in the theoretical and practical activity of the project, cultural mediators receive a certificate.

Since the beginning of the project we have now 23 cultural mediators trained and they are working as volunteers (without money). The cultural mediators have different cultural backgrounds (Turkish, Kurdish, Romanian, Arabic, Lebanese, Palestinian, Polish-Roma, Macedonian). 50% are women / 50% are men. They have different social backgrounds (teacher, computer scientist, students, graphic designer, counsellor, cook, unemployed, network systems administrator, graduate in business management, pharmaceutical business assistant, translator in French).

We are networking with non-government organisations, with charges, other associations, schools. The Project aims to be a low-threshold service for people who have just arrived in the country and are not integrated in Germany. In fact in terms of the concept, it was intended that all mediators would be from the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district of Berlin. However in reality people from all districts take part in the training. Mediators are placed with other societies / organisations and it is important that they all work as volunteers.

I mediate between the institutions or clients and the mediators. I am also currently issuing a Volunteer Database for people with a migration background. The patron of the Project is





the Mayor of the district. The project is progressing well. The mediators and the clients learn about us through the media or through other projects, email newsletter or by word-of-mouth.

**Glen Ebeh, Access Ireland Cultural Mediation Programme, Dublin, Ireland:**

I have been training with Access Ireland and working as a mediator with Access Ireland since 2003. Access Ireland is the only organisation that has developed Cultural Mediation in Ireland; the work has been mainly focussed in the Health and Social Work area but has also included some mediation work with schools and other services. So far Access has run two training courses. In the first training programme seven people, from a number of different African countries were trained. Most of these people have moved on to other areas of work, mainly because work as a cultural mediation has been disappointingly slow to take off – which has been one of the challenges. The second training programme was specially adapted to meet the needs of the Roma population in Ireland. In this programme six Roma people received training as Intercultural Mediators. The job description of the mediator is two-pronged; it involves both training of service providers in developing cultural competence and intercultural mediation work with individual cases.

Although we have tried to promote the use of mediators throughout the whole of health and social services, the highest proportion of our work up to now has come from social workers, working in statutory family welfare and child protection services. The law in Ireland in relation to child welfare and protection is quite firm. This has meant that the stricter parenting styles of people from African / more traditional societies are often perceived as punitive and children are seen to be at risk when in many situations it is a question of misinterpretation. I will talk mainly about my experiences in this area.

The need to be flexible: there is obviously a format of working but there is also a need to tailor the approach to the particular needs of the individual with whom we are working; also each individual's take on their culture is unique so we have to judge that and be aware of it. Having a dual culture / bi-cultural perspective is not easy; of course we try to be professional but it is often hard not to make value judgements. Because service providers are slow to recognise the complexity of cultural difference, mediators are generally called in at a very late stage / in a crisis and this makes the work much harder.

Social Work culture (like all services) is 'Western'; ie it is governed by western notions of time, by regulations and laws and also by the fact that social workers are doing a stressful and demanding job. I have to mediate this culture to a client group who are coming from a very traditional cultural perspective and who need time and patience in understanding the role and the messages of the social worker. For the mediator, drawing a line or a boundary around their role is difficult – I often find myself being a bit of a social worker, a lawyer, an advocate, a family support worker. For social workers there is often an issue of setting boundaries around our role – they sometimes expect us to offer more to the client than just mediation. Individuals from our minority cultures are often highly mistrustful of services; they may be reluctant to give information to one service or agency because it will connect to another service and cause them problems.



**Presentation by the Head of the Lisbon Regional Document Issuing Office of SEF (Portuguese Foreigners and Borders Service), Inspector José Caçador:**

The role of the Socio-Cultural Mediator in services to migrant populations: Ladies and gentlemen, My name is José Caçador, I am an inspector in Portugal's Immigration Service and I am currently head of the Lisbon Regional Documents Issue Office. My main job is to coordinate the work of the organisation's front and back offices. First, on behalf of the Portuguese Immigrations' Service, I would like to thank the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, ACIDI, for their kind invitation to take part in this workshop, which is both important and topical for the integration of third-country nationals within the European Union. In 2001 Portuguese law established the role of Socio-Cultural mediators, giving them the following function: Collaborate in the integration of migrants and ethnic minorities, with a view to strengthening social cohesion and inter-cultural dialogue. In Portugal, socio-cultural mediators have worked in schools, social security institutions, health establishments, in the Social Reinsertion Institute, in local authorities and in certain public services and bodies. Most socio-cultural mediators are themselves migrants or have migrant parents. They have followed a course giving them vocational qualifications and the skills needed to promote intercultural dialogue between all citizens. My purpose today is to show the important role now being played by the socio-cultural mediators in the service provided by the Portuguese Foreigners and Border Service to foreign citizens. It was in 2006 that the Foreigners and Border Service began its fruitful work with cultural mediators.

Our first agreements with migrants' associations allowed the Service to enhance the performance of its Contact Centre, whose initial function was to provide information for foreign citizens and make appointments for interviews in our busiest offices: Lisbon, Cascais, Setubal, Porto and Faro. The mediators themselves came from many regions of the world and from a wide range of social, economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This allowed foreign citizens to enter into contact with our immigration services, through the special channel provided by these interlocutors, who were able to build bridges to the various socio-cultural systems, thus making possible easier basic communication in a strategy of reception and gradual integration of migrants into the community. With this strategy the Foreigners and Border Service has been able to develop into a public service which is better matched to the needs of the foreign population, and where relations between the various cultures are facilitated.

Within the Foreigners and Border Service, the experiment's success has led to a second phase with the placing of Cultural Mediators in our offices open to the public. Here they have played a major role in the prevention and resolution of conflict in our service to the public, making a fundamental contribution to bringing public administration closer to the citizen. Thanks to the mediators, foreigners receive clear information, enabling them to attend their interview with the documentation appropriate to their application, be it an extension of their stay or an initial application for a residence permit or its renewal. Whenever necessary, even locally, users can be given help by the mediators in completing forms, or in assembling the documentation they must submit. With their first contact with the service they thus encourage respect for cultural diversity and social insertion,





facilitating communication between the officials and the public, and reducing language constraints to a minimum.

The Foreigners and Border Service thus enhanced the user satisfaction of its clientele, but also saw a rise in the efficiency and effectiveness of its own face-to-face working with the public, and a fall in the average number of visits made by individuals to resolve any given problem – and a corresponding rise in the number of interviews conducted by each official. And there has been a fall in the number of complaints. In Lisbon, for example, complaints are down by 70%. The acceptance and integration of Cultural mediators in the SEF has been so successful that we now have 47 working with us in appointment scheduling and interviewing:

- Contact Centre: 26
- Lisbon Regional Directorate: 12
- CNAI Lisbon
- Restauradores Citizens' one-stop shop, Lisbon city centre
- Cascais Office: 4
- Setubal Citizens' one-stop shop
- Setubal Office: 4
- Odivelas Citizens' one-stop shop
- Portas de Benfica
- Reboleira enquiry office: 1
- Porto Citizens' one-stop shop
- Figueira da Foz Office
- Faro Regional Directorate
- Albufeira Regional Directorate
- Portimão Regional Directorate

Total: 47

A final note: Our success in this area has encouraged us to go further in order to offer the fullest possible cover in terms of language and geographical spread to match the needs of the migrant community, thus facilitating their integration within a broader picture of inter-cultural dialogue. Thank you for your attention.

## 2. Discussion of the presentations:

- The issue of the cultural competence of organisations was discussed
- Degree programmes in cultural mediation in some Spanish universities were mentioned
- Portugal has a large migrant council that makes public statements and influences law.
- Is there an outreach element to the One Stop Shops?
  - Answer was yes there are smaller projects in the local communities
- Are the staff of the One Stop Shops a reflection of the migrant community (breaks language and cultural barriers)?



- Answer was yes

#### *One Stop Shop information*

- Clear access to information with language skills an important feature in one-stop shops for information.
- Output of this information is a consideration. Is it to be a physical office or is there the possibility of phone services with access to information databases.
- Mediators should be regularly trained and informed on up-to-date services and information which may relate to migrants.

#### *Socio-Cultural mediators*

It seems to be the continental European experience that a substantial proportion of socio-cultural mediators have a personal experience of migration, which may contribute to understanding the position and conveying information to migrants. Portugal has a well-established information service, which has active participation from State and non-State actors.

It was important that there should be a defined career path and recognition of the professional nature of this role. There was also some discussion as to the differences and similarities between Cultural / Socio-Cultural etc. Mediators.