

# The Profiles of a Community Interpreter and of an Intercultural Mediator in Greece, Italy, Norway and Slovenia

Nike K. Pokorn, Simos Grammenidis, Anthi Wiedenmayer, Maurizio Viezzi, Caterina Falbo, Antonio Chiarenza, Anna Ciannameo, Tatjana Radanović Felberg, Hanne Skaaden, Uršula Lipovec Čebren, Juš Škraban, Nataša Hirci

## ABSTRACT

The chapter provides an insight into the existing situation and describes the profiles of community interpreters and intercultural mediators in four different European states: Greece, Italy, Norway and Slovenia. In Greece, professions of community interpreters and intercultural mediators are not certified, and some training for these profiles is provided by governmental bodies and NGOs. In Italy, there exists a terminological fuzziness since the term “mediator” is used for both community interpreters and intercultural mediators. The profile description for the profession of intercultural mediators exists in some Italian regions: the chapter provides the description of the profile and training provided for intercultural mediators in Emilia-Romagna. In Norway, community interpreters are called public service interpreters and also cover court interpreting. The chapter provides the description of Norwegian national register of interpreters and the training of public service interpreters in Norway. In Slovenia, both professions, that of community interpreters and that of intercultural mediators, were certified in July 2020. The chapter also provides English translations of the Slovene occupational standards and vocational qualifications for the national certification of the professions of intercultural mediator and community interpreter. The trainees are asked to discuss the relevance of the professionalisation of community interpreters and intercultural mediators.

## 1 GREECE

**Simos Grammenidis and Anthi Wiedenmayer**

### *Conference Interpreting*

In Greece, students have been studying conference interpreting at the undergraduate level at the Ionian University (Corfu) since 1991, and at the MA level at the Aristotle University (Thessaloniki) since 2003. Additionally, in the last four to five years, some private schools have started offering interpreting courses in Athens and Thessaloniki. In the last decade, the first PhDs in the field of interpreting have also been successfully defended at the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki: in 2015 a PhD on conference interpreting (Z. Resta), and in 2016 on court interpreting (A. Ioannidis) in Greece. In addition, the Aristotle University organised an international conference on training conference interpreters in 2016 and a symposium on community interpreting in 2018.

Besides in Greece, professional conference interpreters based in Greece may also have studied conference interpreting abroad. Some conference interpreters are members of the Greece-Cyprus Region of AIIC or of the Hellenic Association of Conference Interpreters (SYDISE). SYDISE, founded in 2014 with the aim to regulate the profession of conference interpreters in Greece, currently has 42 members and continues to grow at a steady pace. Its admission criteria are quite stringent, which makes it difficult for young interpreters to join. For example, SYDISE requires interpreters to be registered with the tax and social security authorities and not to practice the profession on an occasional basis. Interpreters also need to prove work experience in form of a certain number of work days practicing conference interpreting (and not community or court interpreting), in order to be eligible for full membership in the Association. According to the amended Articles of Association of SYDISE from 2019, a new category is added to the existing "full member" category; a great number of young interpreters unable to meet the criteria for full membership will now be able to join as "non-voting members". SYDISE and AIIC Region Greece Cyprus have been working together for the past few years and their collaboration is expected to be of significant benefit for the profession of conference interpreters.

So far, conference interpreting has not been a regulated profession in Greece and there are no national standards for the profession. They do exist, however, for sign interpreters. Thanks to constant efforts, mainly by SYDISE, the government (including the ministries, regions and local authorities) has started including SYDISE or the membership of an equivalent professional association of conference interpreters as a requirement in public tenders for conference interpreting. In general, conference interpreters based in Greece work as freelancers at a daily fee of €300-400 for a full day and approximately €250-300 for up to 2 hours, although these rates are not officially defined.

Regarding interpreting for public services and for court, conference interpreters would take on a job only if the assignment comes from the clients who are able to pay a full fee, e.g. journalists visiting refugee camps.

### ***Court Interpreting***

#### ***Appointment of court interpreters/proof of qualification***

According to the Greek Criminal Procedure Code (Article 233), the judges have to resort to a List of Court Interpreters in order to appoint an interpreter. The appointment of someone who is not on the official list is allowed only in exceptional cases. However, the Greek law does not impose any requirements or qualifications for court interpreters, nor does it provide any mechanisms to qualify them. As a result, *anyone* can declare to be a court interpreter and request that their name and their working language(s) be included on the list, without having to provide any proof of qualifications. This lack of accreditation and certification procedure has often resulted in a compromised quality and breach of human rights (for instance, there was a case when a woman was appointed as an interpreter by the criminal courts of Thessaloniki in trials involving Albanian witnesses or defendants, despite her not knowing the Albanian language)<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, in Greece, there is no educational programme specialising in court interpreting, no professional association of court interpreters, and no specific Code of Ethics. Court interpreters in Greece are represented through a professional association or a trade union. However, their working conditions, as well as their rights and obligations, are not regulated by any collective agreement. Their remuneration is defined by the law and amounts to €11.74 for each interrogation procedure, and €17.64 for each court case, and this amount remains the same even if the case, in which their services are needed, is extended over several court sessions. In addition to that, court interpreters who are given an interpreting assignment are obliged to present themselves at the court at 9 a.m., without knowing when they are needed or whether their services are required at all. The scheduling of court interpreters depends on the number of cases assigned to a particular interpreter and on the length of the trial. In case a trial is postponed, interpreters receive no remuneration, although they were already at the court. There is no provision in the law regarding additional charges for overtime work; moreover, the interpreters receive the remuneration for their services with significant delays, sometimes even after more than a year.

#### ***Community Interpreting and Intercultural Mediation***

At present, Greece bears the heaviest load of migration inflow of all southern European countries. It has gradually turned from a traditionally emigration country

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1 See <http://www.iospress.gr/ios2005/ios20050626.htm> (Accessed October 10, 2020)

(emigration from Greece was particularly intense in the early 1920s, 1950s-1960s and during the economic crisis between 2009 and 2017) to an immigration country. As a result, the Greek society has transformed into a multicultural community. This transformation triggered the need for trained and qualified community interpreters and intercultural mediators. This being said, there is no clear distinction between the two professions in Greece. Usually, community interpreters are called to provide cultural mediation services and vice versa. In fact, in Greece the understanding of intercultural mediation is closer to what is internationally described as community interpreting, i.e., interpreting services offered in the public service settings in order to ensure migrants the access to healthcare and legal services of the host country, and as such it is usually practiced in hospitals, police departments, public offices, and in intercultural education and training.

In Greece, the concept of intercultural mediation has not been officially introduced in the Greek Law. However, the 3386/2005 Law refers to the integration of Third Country nationals into the Greek society, but does not specify the measures of such integration, and, as a result, does not refer to intercultural mediation either. The only indirect implication of intercultural mediation could be found in the same Law where integration is defined as a two-way process, where the migrants adapt to the new country while the country adapts to the newcomers, which leaves some space for a future introduction of the concept of intercultural mediation.

### *The profile*

The unprecedented humanitarian crisis in 2015 that initially originated mainly in the countries of the Middle East led to a massive migratory influx of people with a multicultural and multilingual background to Greece. In order to respond to the needs, the stakeholders working in the field of the refugee crisis management, hastily recruited native speakers as community interpreters (or intercultural mediators) aiming to bridge the communication gap between the refugee population and Greek service providers. The criteria for recruitment set by the NGOs have been the knowledge of the source language, good command of Greek or English and some relevant experience in the field (if any). Consequently, community interpreters based in Greece are basically native speakers of the languages of newly arrived migrants that may also master certain dialects of their country of origin (for example, some Iraqi citizens may, apart from Arabic, also have a command of Kurdish languages such as Kurmanji, Sorani, Palewani, etc.) or may lack the knowledge of different language variants (for example, some Lebanese interpreters have experienced difficulties when communicating with Algerian beneficiaries and vice versa). Furthermore, most of the interpreters are not familiar with the legal or medical terminology mainly due to the fact that they either lack relevant education or experience (or both).

Currently, community interpreters based in Greece have the advantage of the in-depth knowledge of cultural background of the service users. This is a specific feature that is of vital importance since they can provide useful input either in court or healthcare settings, in particular as far as the traditions, the beliefs or the history of a specific ethnic group, minority or political group are concerned. Nonetheless, in some cases that kind of input might not be beneficial for the service user since an interpreter may also be prejudiced towards the beneficiaries because of their origin. A proper educational programme would have to be implemented to set the boundaries and to frame the services provided by the interpreters in order to avoid such implications.

As far as the education level of the interpreters is concerned, there are many variations. Since a university degree is not a prerequisite for getting a job of a community interpreter, interpreters tend to either have completed high school in their country of origin or have started their studies at the university but were unable to finish because of war. Only a few community interpreters based in Greece have graduated from the Faculties of Arts (for example, studying English, French, etc.). Others have just been in Greece for a long time, working as housekeepers, receptionists, plumbers, or are asylum applicants themselves, having a good command of English yet, in general, lacking the relevant professional experience and training.

Currently, working conditions are harsh: community interpreters tend to work from nine to five in refugee camps, where they are exposed to harsh weather conditions, they also interpret in hospitals in emergency medical situations, and also often witness fighting between members of different ethnicities<sup>2</sup>. A research carried out in 2013<sup>3</sup> on a sample of 75 intercultural mediators in Greece, trained in the framework of the SONETOR project, has also shown that most intercultural mediators work informally and are usually contracted for a limited period of time. Often, they are also not paid for the job. The research showed that there is a great need for intercultural mediators and community interpreters in the market, despite the fact that migrants are not always aware of their right to ask for a cultural mediator, and often they do not trust the interpreters recruited by others.

### ***Employment***

At the beginning of the refugee crisis, UNHCR has been called to Greece to provide expertise in the management of the needs resulting from it. Nowadays also various NGOs, both national and international, provide mainly legal, medical and psychosocial assistance, recruiting a great number of interpreters for such services. The funding for these activities predominantly comes from the European

2 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/09/moria-refugee-camp-doctors-story-lesbos-greece> (Accessed October 10, 2020)

3 <https://www.sonetor-project.eu/> (Accessed October 10, 2020)

Union, and from international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration. Gradually, the Greek state (namely the Ministry of Migration) will undertake this task, and the control over refugee camps and other accommodation facilities will pass to state agencies.

In order to cater for the needs of various NGO's and other institutions, the Registry of Trained Intercultural Mediators was created in 2013 ([www.intermediation.gr](http://www.intermediation.gr), EIF 1.1.b/11 project). The registry offers all institutions in need of interpreters the opportunity to search for the mediator for the language and the specialisation in question and contact them directly. The terms of cooperation are made by the parties involved. No data is available on the extent of the use of this registry. Of the 586 interpreters that had been trained in Greece by 2013, only very few reported working regularly for NGO's involved in migrant issues<sup>4</sup>. Some reported that they were recruited by migrant organizations or were directly contacted by the local authorities. Others reported that they would occasionally offer their services voluntarily. Of the 417 mediators that could be contacted, 36 (8.6%) stated that despite still being present on the list, they are no longer interested in working as intercultural mediators.<sup>5</sup>

Recently, the Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (*KEELPNO*) opened an invitation to tender for interpreting<sup>6</sup>; this is the first time that 160 interpreters will be recruited by a state agency within the refugee crisis management framework. This is a great opportunity for the community interpreters as well as an open window for the integration of the interpreters who are either asylum seekers or have already gained the status of refugees.

### *Training*

Although community interpreting has become a topic of research recently<sup>7</sup>, higher education institutions have not introduced any certified educational programmes for training community interpreters or intercultural mediators.

The individuals practicing community interpreting and intercultural mediation can, however, receive some sort of training at the Policy Academy, government

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4 [http://mediation-time.eu/images/TIME\\_O1\\_Research\\_Report\\_v.2016.pdf](http://mediation-time.eu/images/TIME_O1_Research_Report_v.2016.pdf)  
(Accessed October 10, 2020)

5 [http://mediation-time.eu/images/TIME\\_O1\\_Research\\_Report\\_v.2016.pdf](http://mediation-time.eu/images/TIME_O1_Research_Report_v.2016.pdf)  
(Accessed October 10, 2020)

6 <http://www.odigostoupoliti.eu/proslipsi-1575-ptyxiouxon-diaforon-eidikotiton-sto-keelpno/> (Accessed October 10, 2020)

7 For example, in the last few years, several monographs in Greek appeared, all focusing on different aspects of community interpreting: Apostolou (2015) published an e-book on translation and interpreting for public services in Greece, Resta (2017) wrote a monograph on community interpreting in Greece, and Ioannidis (2018) on interpreting in asylum hearings in Greece.

bodies and NGOs. For example, the Police Academy offers a course, entitled *Interpretation and Cultural Mediation*. This course caters for different humanitarian programmes and introduces interpreters to a specific terminology and the code of conduct with which they have to comply. Furthermore, the interpreters are trained how to cooperate with other colleagues. These training sessions usually last only a few hours and offer a superficial training.

Between 2006 and 2009, several training programmes (250 hours each) for intercultural mediators were organized by the Department of Social Inclusion of the General Secretariat of Immigration and Social Integration Policy. The programmes were carried out by two private vocational training centres (more than 100 persons were trained). In addition, as part of the EU-funded Programme *Professional and Social Inclusion Actions*, the AKMH Private Vocational Training Centre organized a 300-hour programme for the training of 20 intercultural mediators.

And finally, a Greek NGO, Metadrasi, provides some training to future community interpreters. Metadrasi is not recognized by the state as a formal educational institute; however, in 2010 it started training interpreters in response to the need in the market and society. Since then it has been offering “seminars for training interpreters” which last 10 days and are followed by written and oral exams. Those who pass the exams can be registered at the organisation’s “Register for interpreters”, an internal pool of community interpreters who are obliged to work only for Metadrasi. In this capacity, Metadrasi acts as a subcontractor for several NGOs. The validity of the certificate of the interpreter lasts for a year, then a new assessment is required.<sup>8</sup>

### **Certification**

The professions of community interpreters and intercultural mediators are not officially defined or recognised by the state in Greece. The profiles of intercultural mediator and community interpreter have not been recognized yet as independent and legally self-standing professions in Greece. For example, the profile of intercultural mediator is considered mainly as a supplementary qualification and skill of a professional in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences. Timid steps have been made in the direction of certifying the profession of a community interpreter since some workshops have been organized by the Panhellenic Association of Translators. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether a certificate of attendance in such workshops shall be considered as an official proof of knowledge and mastery

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8 “Metadrasi has carried out 53 Interpreters’ Training Seminars, has created a pool of 350 interpreters for 38 languages and dialects and has been providing quality interpreting services in the following contexts: Asylum Procedures, First Reception & Identification Procedures, Hospitals, NGOs and Agencies involved with the Target Group, as well as the embassies of other European countries by locally based teams in Athens and 23 other points in Greece or missions of interpreters.” <https://metadrasi.org/en/campaigns/training-of-interpreters/>

of interpreting techniques and skills. It seems that we are in the uncharted waters as far as certification is concerned and it is imperative to effectively respond to it. It will certainly improve the provision of interpreting services and better facilitate our communication with the beneficiaries of these services.

## 2 ITALY

### Maurizio Viezzi and Caterina Falbo

*Community Interpreter and Intercultural mediator*

#### *The profile*

Interlingual communication in Italy is characterised by some confusion as to the names of two professions and the roles of those who practice it. The term *interprete* (i.e. interpreter) is generally only used for conference interpreters and legal interpreters. In public service or community settings, *mediatore linguistico-culturale* (i.e. linguistic-cultural mediator) is probably the most widely used term (Falbo 2013a), but *mediatore* (i.e. mediator), *mediatore linguistico* (i.e. linguistic mediator), *mediatore culturale* (i.e. cultural mediator), *mediatore linguistico-culturale* (i.e. linguistic-cultural mediator) or *mediatore interculturale* (i.e. intercultural mediator) – the term that will be employed here in line with Chiarenza et al. (see below) – are also used.

Intercultural mediators operate in the field of intercultural mediation, as is obvious, but they also operate to ensure communication between public service users and public service through translating and interpreting (Luatti 2010, 164; 2011, 94). Thus, as a matter of fact, they serve as interpreters in public service or community settings – they are not called (community or public service) interpreters, but they (also) work as such.

Norms officially recognising intercultural mediators and regulating the way in which the qualification may be obtained exist in several regions and provinces and are valid for the relevant region or province only. Many regions and provinces also keep an official register of linguistic-cultural mediators (see also Chiarenza et al. below)

Requirements as to the education level, training or accreditation are not always consistent and very often training courses organised by local institutions do not include appropriate interpreting training. Furthermore, anyone may claim to be a “mediator” and public service providers may (and often do) resort to untrained and non-professional mediators. Mediators may be Italian or not; they are typically freelancers working through agencies in all public service settings.

In terms of perception and irrespective of training or qualifications, intercultural mediators working as interpreters are often regarded by public service providers



as being better than *mere* interpreters. The reason lies in the misconception that interpreters confine themselves to language and do not deal with culture. It is a rather widespread attitude in Italy which, by distinguishing between language and culture in interpreting settings, clearly shows a lack of awareness of the nature and functions of interpreting.

### ***Employment***

An intercultural mediator is someone who practices a profession that has been mentioned in legal and administrative texts since the 1990s and may or may not be regulated at the local level by regional or provincial authorities.

Intercultural mediators are expected to facilitate relationships between authorities and foreign residents; to serve as a bridge between migrants and the host society; to dismantle barriers related to language and culture; to favour the socio-economic integration of migrants and to promote the enjoyment of rights and the fulfilment of duties and obligations (Luatti 2010, 2011).

### ***Practice***

Typically, an intercultural mediator is a long-time foreign resident, often with a good education level (secondary school) and a good knowledge of the Italian language, society and institutions. To face communication needs brought about by new migration flows, however, newly-arrived migrants who do not always have a sufficient command of Italian may also serve as mediators.

### ***Training***

Several regions and provinces organise *ad-hoc* courses for aspiring “linguistic-cultural mediators”. There are considerable differences in terms of course structure and length. The emphasis, however, is generally on areas such as legislation, rights, and services. They are typically attended by foreign residents with some experience in the field. The language and language mediation aspects are largely neglected or play just a minor role (Merlini 2005, 2007; Falbo 2013b).

Degree programmes or postgraduate courses in language and cultural mediation are also offered by several Italian universities. The emphasis is generally on language, but the languages offered are generally not those that are most needed in public services. They are typically attended by Italian students.

## **Antonio Chiarenza and Anna Ciannameo**

### ***Intercultural Mediator in Emilia-Romagna***

To date, there is no officially recognized profile of intercultural mediator at a national level; furthermore, mediation activities themselves and how they are carried out (from recruitment to training) are far from clear and are often taken

from circulars, interpretations and guidelines arranged individually by different Ministries (in particular Ministries of Justice, Education and Health). This occupation, although called upon by several parties, is neither regulated nor well defined either in terms of denomination (several competing terms in use are “cultural mediator”, “intercultural mediator”, “linguistic-cultural mediator”) or in terms of content and tasks. In the *Testo Unico sull’immigrazione* (Consolidation Act on immigration - Legislative Decree 286/1998 and subsequent amendments), both “cultural mediator” and “intercultural mediator” are mentioned without specifying the profiles and differences between the two. Cultural mediators are first mentioned in Article 38, Paragraph 7, with reference to the scholastic integration of foreign students and the facilitation of communication with their families, whereas intercultural mediators appear in Article 42, among the measures of social integration, where it is envisaged that local authorities may “employ within their own structures [...] foreigners holding a residence card or residence permit with a duration of no less than two years as intercultural mediators in order to facilitate relations between individual administrations and foreigners belonging to different ethnic, national, linguistic and religious groups.” In 2009, the *Consiglio Nazionale dell’Economia e del Lavoro*, CNEL (National Council of Economy and Labour) on the one hand, and the *Conferenza delle Regioni e delle Province Autonome* (Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces) on the other, tried to define a common profile. This proved to be impossible due to a strong opposition of different suppliers of training. Two opposing camps were formed: one group supports training within the framework of higher education institutions - and for this reason such training would be much more open to Italian mediators, and the other group promotes professional training and training in the field, which would offer more opportunities for the aspiring mediators of the foreign population.

### ***The profile***

Emilia-Romagna is one of the few Italian regions to have defined the areas of intervention of intercultural mediators as well as their characteristics and profiles (Regional decree of Emilia-Romagna, N.152, 10 November 2004 and further developed in the Emilia-Romagna Regional Council Resolution No. 141, 16 February 2009). In the Regional decree, an “intercultural mediator” is described as a person “able to identify and convey the needs of foreign users, assist them and facilitate their integration in the host country, act as a link between the user and the network of services available in the area and promote interventions intended to spread interculturalism”. The Regional decree places intercultural mediator in the professional area of “social, health and socio-health care”. All 15 local health units of the Emilia-Romagna region employ intercultural mediators to support communication of migrant users with healthcare and social care providers.

Since 1998, the Local Health Unit of Reggio Emilia (AUSL RE) has coordinated a *Servizio di mediazione linguistico-culturale* aimed at reducing the negative consequences of linguistic and cultural barriers both in clinical communication between migrant patients and healthcare professionals, and in institutional communication between migrant groups and healthcare services (Chiarenza and Chiesa 2018). In the AUSL RE intercultural mediators assist the organisation in the process of offering their services to migrant users (Chiarenza 2008), helping them access and navigate through the health system; accompanying them to various services and departments; providing information on migrants' rights to healthcare and other services available and fostering their active participation in meetings organised in the community.

### **Employment**

Intercultural mediators working in the AUSL RE are employed by an external agency (a social cooperative) that is appointed through a national bid and renewed every three years. A total of 43 intercultural mediators (8 men and 35 women) in the AUSL RE cover the most common languages: Chinese (six); Arabic and French (seven); Ukrainian and Russian (four); Albanian (two); Romanian (one); Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and Creole (eight); Bengali (four); Ghanaian (two) and Nigerian (three). It is also possible to expand the programme to offer less commonly spoken languages. The most commonly requested languages are Chinese (26%), Arabic (23%), Indo-Pakistani languages (23%), Russian (9%), Ghanaian (9%) and Albanian (6%). Less-frequently required languages include Spanish, Portuguese, Macedonian, Turkish, Tagalog and Tamil. Intercultural mediators are employed full-time or part-time, with a permanent or fixed-term contract. Their fee varies from €20 to €40 per hour.

Different types of intercultural mediation services are available, including onsite interventions, scheduled interventions, urgent interventions (within 40 minutes), face-to-face; over-the-phone and video-remote interventions, sight and written translations. In all hospitals of the AUSL RE, intercultural mediators are available on site, for telephone consultation, for translation upon request from the wards, and to inform, listen to and support the patients. Intercultural mediators are also available on site in community-based facilities, in particular for antenatal care services. In other services, intercultural mediation interventions are scheduled upon request on a weekly basis.

Given the large geographical size of the province, a service coordination at the central level establishes links with each health district. The central coordination system comprises the booking system, the list of intercultural mediators and the languages available, evaluations of intercultural mediators and a log of the number of hours per intercultural mediator, per district and per facility. A clear organizational policy sets out how intercultural mediation is defined in order to ensure effective access to and utilization of services. This includes written procedures and

guidelines on interpretation, translation and intercultural mediation; staff guidelines for organizing interpreters or communication support; training courses for staff on how to work with an intercultural mediator; and a documentation system to control the budget and the quality of the service. Socio-linguistic research is regularly undertaken in collaboration with the Department of linguistic and cultural studies (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia) in order to investigate the dynamics of mediated communication between patients and healthcare providers enabled by intercultural mediators, and to provide scientific insights for the improvement of the quality of mediation service.

### ***Practice***

Intercultural mediation, as understood in Emilia-Romagna, is the facilitation of linguistic understanding and acceptance of cultural differences in communication, which allows for an effective and satisfying care relationship (Baraldi and Gavioli 2013). Core knowledge and skills of intercultural mediators working in the Local Health Authority of Reggio Emilia are described below.

### ***Core knowledge***

- 1) Comprehension of medical terminology and concepts in the local language and in all languages to be used for interpreting. Knowledge of commonly used terms and concepts related to the human body; symptoms, illnesses and medications as well as other healthcare related issues and treatments in each language.
- 2) Familiarity with common, relevant socio-cultural circumstances that may impact the provider-patient interaction, including a knowledge of specific cultural concepts as well as an understanding of biomedical culture.
- 3) Understanding “untranslatable” words which represent source language concepts for which there is no comparable referent in the target language.

### ***Core Skills***

- 1) General proficiency in speaking and understanding the languages in which the mediator is expected to work. Capability to interpret from and into each language pair that is being interpreted. In the case of intercultural mediation, interpreting must take into account variables and nuances that must be sought in interpersonal communication in cultural, ethnic, religious, gender and lived differences, particularly migration.
- 2) Ability to produce oral translations or, where appropriate, brief written translations of written texts such as application forms, informed consent forms, discharge instructions or medical labels and drug leaflets.

- 3) Capacity to manage the flow of communication between the patient and the healthcare provider, including the ability to pay attention to interpersonal dynamics between the patient and the healthcare provider, as well as managing the triadic relationship so that the patient and the healthcare provider relate primarily to each other.
- 4) Ability to anticipate and recognize misunderstandings that arise from different cultural assumptions and expectations of patients and healthcare providers, and to respond to such issues appropriately. Ability to serve as a cultural broker, if necessary, between the patient and the healthcare provider, also sensing if and when culturally based beliefs are affecting the perception and presentation of the illness, as well as being able to articulate these cultural differences or practices to patients and healthcare providers.

### ***Training***

The training of intercultural mediators in Emilia-Romagna is roughly divided into two types: a basic and a specialist level. The levels are described in the document *Linee di indirizzo per il riconoscimento della figura professionale del mediatore interculturale* (Guidelines for the recognition of the profession of intercultural mediator) developed by *Dipartimento per le Libertà Civili e per l'Immigrazione. Direzione Centrale per le Politiche di Cittadini di Paesi Terzi dell'Immigrazione e dell'Asilo del Ministero degli Interni* (Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration. Central Directorate for Citizens Policies of Third Countries of Immigration and Asylum of the Ministry of the Interior).

Basic training on average lasts about 400 hours, and is divided into 40 hours of introductory courses, 160 hours of extensive courses, and 200 hours of internships. Admission requirements stipulate that the candidates should be at least 18 years old, have at least a high school or university degree. If the candidates are foreign citizens, they have to have a temporary residence permit – which is supposed to guarantee a good knowledge of the country system and the effective choice of integration into the Italian society. As far as the knowledge of working languages are concerned: the candidates should master one language at mother tongue level, and should have the knowledge of at least one vehicular language, and the competence of Italian at level B. They should possess appropriate relational attitudes, have previous experience in the social and immigration field, while migratory experience is desirable.

Specialized training lasts from a minimum of 40 to a maximum of 200 hours, of which at least half of the training is held in the working environment. Only those candidates who have already completed the basic training can apply.

The *Linee d'indirizzo* also reports that higher education institutions provide several BA courses (three-year) in languages (especially in vehicular languages), and provide students with skills that can be used primarily in the areas of interpreting,

commerce, tourism and international relations. The existing MA degrees which focus on the socio-humanistic subjects (cultural anthropology, psychology, sociology, etc.) provide internships in the field and are useful especially in the field of research and social services.

The critical issues, outlined in the *Linee d'indirizzo*, related to higher education training are:

- low marketability in areas where the need for mediation is relevant;
- lack of in-depth linguistic skills, especially with regard to the so-called “rare” languages;
- lack of internships and placements;
- few students with migratory background due to the length of study and high fees;
- previous qualifications of the candidates with migratory background are often not recognised due to the fact that they had obtained these qualifications in the country of origin.

The report *Linee d'indirizzo* by the Ministry of Interior concludes that universities could provide education to intercultural mediators, providing that they open their courses to migrant population and ensure a closer connection between the contents of the courses and the needs of intercultural mediation in practice.

### ***Certification***

Many Italian regions have defined a professional profile and specific training for intercultural mediators, but these certifications are valid only in specific regions and not in the whole country.

## **3 NORWAY**

### **Tatjana Radanović Felberg and Hanne Skaaden**

*Community Interpreter*

#### ***The profile***

In Norway community interpreters are called public service interpreters. Public service interpreters in Norway are interpreters working in institutional discourse, that is they enable encounters between an institution or the professional representing it and the person(s) seeking the institution's services (Agar 1985). Norwegian official documents thus define public service interpreting (PSI) as interpreting that enables professionals and official servants to hear, guide and inform their clients in the case of language barriers (NOU 2014, *Interpreting Act*

under hearing 2019). The Norwegian definition takes on the perspective of the professional in charge of the institutional encounter, who is considered to be responsible for bridging the language gap and does not ascribe this responsibility to the speaker of the minority language. Public service interpreting in the Norwegian context also embraces courtroom interpreting, since the same interpreters work in courts and in community settings.

Since 2005, the public service interpreters practicing in the Norwegian public sector have been listed in Norway's National Register of Interpreters. The register which contains information on interpreters' qualifications and contact details is accessible at [www.tolkeportalen.no](http://www.tolkeportalen.no). The register has five categories: the top category, category (A), is reserved for practitioners who have passed the accreditation exam and completed a BA in PSI; category (B) includes practitioners with a BA in PSI or those who have passed the accreditation exam and have completed a minimum one semester (30 ECTS) of university-level training; category (C) lists practitioners who have passed the accreditation exam; category (D) includes practitioners who have completed one semester (30 ECTS) of university-level training; and category (E) lists practitioners who have passed an exam consisting of written translation or an oral bilingual vocabulary test and have participated at a weekend course on interpreting ethics.

According to the current register, license and mandate for serving as an interpreter in the PSI setting is (a) documented basic bilingual skills and (b) documented knowledge of the interpreters' code of ethics or area of responsibility in the public sector (Felberg and Skaaden 2012; Skaaden 2018).

### ***Employment***

The majority of PSI practitioners are freelancers and are hired directly from the register or via interpreting service providers, which are municipal or private agencies or generic in-house services of large hospitals and asylum seeker centres. The practitioners' remuneration is not regulated except for the courts and asylum seeker centres. Therefore, interpreters' hourly fee varies from €20 (when hired via agencies) to €90 (when hired directly by the court). Interpreting expenses are covered by the Norwegian state in all institutional encounters, in both legal and medical settings.

### ***Practice***

All interpreters listed in the National Register are obliged to follow the code of conduct as defined by Norwegian authorities, that is to render as accurately as possible one person's speech into another language at the time the speech is made, while observing an impartial role and absolute confidentiality. The Norwegian interpreters' code of conduct explicitly states that the interpreters are not to act as cultural mediators or cultural advocates. In the Norwegian market,

interpreters are not specialized to work in specific settings, and mainly work in the ‘community’, in courts or in conference settings.

### ***Training***

Since 2007, approximately 1,000 students covering 57 working language (in addition to Norwegian) have completed a one-year university level basic course (30 ECTS) in the consecutive interpreting of institutional dialogues at Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet). Through blended learning the course accepts students living all over Norway and in other European countries, but the students must have Norwegian as one of their working languages. In addition, approximately 500 students completed up to 90 ECTS in add-on courses on individual and cultural variation in interpreting and on different interpreting tools, setups and modes, such as note-taking, remote interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, and sight interpreting.

Since 2017, Oslo Metropolitan University has been offering a full-time BA Public Sector Interpreting. The BA is organized as blended learning over a four-year trajectory, and includes the aforementioned courses.

### ***Certification***

In 1997, Norway established a National Interpreter Certification Exam – NICE (Mortensen 2012). The NICE is an independent exam that tests the candidates’ practical skills in consecutive interpreting of institutional encounters, both medical and legal. To be admitted to the oral test, the candidates must first pass a written component. Hitherto, approximately 3,000 candidates in 40 language combinations (where one working language is always Norwegian) have taken the test, whereof fewer than 300 candidates in 30 languages have passed it. The certification exam’s pass rate is accordingly 10%.

### ***Intercultural Mediator***

#### ***The profile***

There is no officially recognized definition for intercultural mediators in Norway. Consequently, a variety of terms appears in reports (Holm-Hansen et al. 2007, 127-131): *naturlig hjelper* (“natural helper”), *minoritetsrådgiver* (“minority advisor”), *kulturveileder* (“cultural guide”), *kulturtolk* (“cultural interpreter”), *kulturfortolker* (“cultural construer”), *linkarbeider* (“link worker”), *helsekommunikator* (“health communicator”). The individuals identified with these names seem to perform a plethora of different tasks, sometimes including interpreting or even serving as “role models” to service users from their own country of origin (PROBA 2003).

The function of *linkarbeider* (“link worker”) is defined (albeit vaguely) in some official documents as someone paid to help migrants find their way in the Norwegian



society, predominantly in the domains of the social and healthcare systems and the child welfare services.

### ***Employment and Practice***

In Norway, cultural mediators seem to be often associated with Child Welfare Services and with some social and healthcare settings, where their services are often combined with other tasks. They predominantly work part time.

The costs of these services are covered by the Norwegian state and municipal budgets, but are often outsourced to private agencies that specialize in the “asylum and migration business”. Remuneration to the “cultural mediators” varies, and depends on who hires them: for example, when hired directly by the municipality, they gain between 350,000 NOK to 465,000 NOK (i.e., ca. 33,200 € to 44,100 €) per year, depending on the practitioner’s qualifications.

A brief case description serves to illustrate the situation: In a recent employment announcement from the social services of an Oslo suburbs (retrieved online 01/01/2019), the following work description was provided for “cultural interpreter” (*kulturfolk*) in combination with “administrative assistant” where the main qualifications sought are quite vague:

- completed secondary school,
- service minded,
- some experience from work within the field of cultural sensitivity,
- good cultural knowledge.

### ***Training***

There is no systematic training for intercultural mediators in Norway. However, OsloMet offers specialization courses for professionals working with people with different cultural backgrounds. The aim of these courses is to raise awareness, knowledge and understanding of the complexity of identities in the labour market and social life in general in a society characterized by diversity. These courses tend to discuss problems related to cultural diversity as problem constellations created by or influenced by individual, social and political factors (e.g. class) and avoid slipping into *culturalization*, that is a practice where certain situations, problems and issues related to cultural difference are construed as culturally-rooted phenomena which need cultural mediation, since such an understanding might lead to othering and segregation (Rugkaasa and Eide and Ylvisaker 2015).

### **Certification**

There is no certification procedure for intercultural mediators in place in Norway.

## **4 SLOVENIA**

### **Nike K. Pokorn**

*Community Interpreters in Slovenia*

#### **The profile**

There are currently four kinds of interpreters in Slovenia:

#### **a) conference interpreters**

According to the register of members available on the website of the Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters (<https://www.zkts.si/en/register-of-members>), conference interpreters based in Slovenia interpret between Slovene and 13 foreign languages: Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, English, French, German, Italian, Macedonian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish.

#### **b) court interpreters**

There are 481 sworn or certified interpreters listed in the register of court interpreters (<https://spvt.mp.gov.si/tolmaci.html>) published on the official website of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Slovenia in 2020. They work between Slovene and 37 different languages; however, only eight of the languages on the list are not European: Arabic (8 interpreters), Chinese (n=6), Persian (n=3), Japanese (n=2), Turkish (n=2), Kurdish (n=1), Punjabi (n=1). Sworn interpreters are trained and certified by the Ministry of Justice. The certification exam consists of a written and oral part: the written part is a translation of a legal text, while during the oral part, the knowledge of the Slovene legal system is checked. Since interpreting skills are not tested, the majority of court interpreters tend to translate written texts only.

#### **c) interpreters on the list of the Ministry of the Interior**

These interpreters are appointed *ad hoc* and are used in the interviews with asylum seekers. The prerequisites for the interpreters involved in asylum procedures are defined in Article 6 of the Slovene Asylum Law (*Zakon o mednarodni zaščiti*, 2016): a language certificate, an official statement that the interpreter does not collaborate with the authorities of the country whose language they interpret, and an extract from the judicial record. Their interpreting skills are not tested.

#### **d) community interpreters**

The term “community interpreter” (i.e. *skupnostni tolmač*) has been used in research in the field of Translation and Interpreting Studies in Slovenia in the last

two decades: for example, apart from various articles, in 2013 a collected volume, entitled *Slovene Interpreting Studies* (Gorjanc 2013), included some chapters on community interpreting, and in 2016 a monograph entirely dedicated to community interpreting (Morel and Gorjanc 2016) was published by the University of Ljubljana Press (Faculty of Arts). In 2019, the same publishing house published a collected volume, entitled *Multilingual Health* (Pokorn and Lipovec Čebren 2019, 173-177), which included several guidelines for healthcare workers when working with interpreters, in particular: “Guidelines for healthcare workers when treating a user of healthcare services who does not speak the societal language”, “Recommended behaviour when working with an interpreter who does not know the patient”, “Recommended positioning of the interpreter in interpreter-assisted communication in healthcare settings”, and “Recommended behaviour when working with an *ad-hoc* interpreter (e.g., a relative of the user of healthcare services)”.

In July 2020 the profile and a national occupational standard of a community interpreter for Albanian, prepared by Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, was approved by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia (available at: <http://npk.si/katalog.php?katalogid=80483271>, for the English translation see the Appendix). The profiles and standards for community interpreters for Persian and Arabic are currently in preparation. The profession is classified in the field of language acquisition and translation studies.

In the standard for a community interpreter for Albanian, the expected minimum level of education is high-school, while a high level of language knowledge for the working languages (at least level B2 in Slovene as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, at least level C1 in Albanian for reading, listening and speaking skills, and at least level B2 in Albanian for writing skills) and a fair knowledge of the culture of the working languages is expected. Community interpreters should also be fully familiar with the international standards of the profession and have the ability to perform interpreting services, i.e. convey the information from one language to the other as accurately and as completely as possible. They should master techniques used in consecutive interpreting and manifest highly-developed listening, memory and note-taking skills. They should also be able to perform *chuchotage*. Previous experience working in the field or specific training is also expected, and the candidates are required to pass a specific test verifying their ability to perform the tasks of a community interpreter.

### ***Employment***

The majority of conference interpreters are free-lancers and charge from €50-90 per hour; €450-500 per day, €250-300 per half a day. Some work at the EU institutions or for the government. Recent research has shown that some of them also

occasionally work in public service settings, but only for clients who are willing to pay the conference interpreters' fee (Pokorn 2017).

Court interpreters are employed as needed on a free-lance basis; for the majority, court interpreting is an additional employment to some other employment they have. A state-defined fee for a court interpreter is €75 per hour. The courts cover the expenses.

The interpreters on the list of the Ministry of the Interior are employed as needed on a free-lance basis; for the majority of them interpreting is an additional employment. The Ministry of the Interior covers their expenses.

If interpreters are used in healthcare, the patients carry the costs. In some cases, the local community employs interpreters or cultural mediators (especially for the Albanian language) for these services; they are paid from the public funds allocated to local communities.

### ***Training***

Conference interpreters are trained at the MA level for 2 years at two universities in Slovenia: Ljubljana and Maribor. Up to now, conference interpreters have been trained for Slovene in combination with English or German or French or Italian or Spanish.

Court interpreters have to enrol in a course for court interpreters that consists of lectures on the Slovene legal system. Following the Directive 2010/64/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings, Slovene court interpreters have to provide evidence of continuous education if they wish to renew their license: they have to submit relevant documents to the Ministry of Justice proving that they have participated in at least 5 different workshops over the last 5 years – the quality of the workshops is not taken into consideration.

A few years ago, the Department of Translation Studies at the University of Ljubljana introduced an elective course Introduction to Community Interpreting (30 contact hours) as part of the MA programme in Interpreting, and in the academic year 2018/2019, a short specialisation course (worth in total 17 ECTS credit points) was introduced, which focused on providing training for interpreters working in court and public administration (Maček and Schlamberger Brezar 2019).

### ***Certification***

Interpreters can obtain certification as court interpreters. The certification procedure is in the hands of the Ministry of Justice. Knowledge of the Slovene legal system is tested, and the candidates have to provide a written translation of a legal text.

Interpreters can also obtain national vocational qualification for community interpreters for Albanian. National vocational qualification is a certificate whose form and content are defined by the Minister of Labour. Assessment and certification of national vocational qualification include portfolio assessment and practical performance assessment.

## Uršula Lipovec Čebtron and Juš Škraban

### *Intercultural Mediator*

#### ***The profile***

The term “intercultural mediator” (i.e. *medkulturni mediator*) is a term that is becoming increasingly used to describe the professional profile whose aim is to assure equity and reduce language and cultural barriers in access to public services for people who do not master societal language (Cattacin, Chiarenza and Domenig 2013; Lipovec Čebtron et al. 2017). In Slovenia, intercultural mediators have been introduced in the last decade mainly through international and national projects, especially a) in the field of integration of different categories of migrants or refugees and ethnic minorities (Platform for intercultural mediation<sup>9</sup>, Inclusion of Migrants in Local Environment<sup>10</sup>) and b) in the field of healthcare (e.g. Together for Health<sup>11</sup>, MoST<sup>12</sup>, INTEGRA<sup>13</sup>).

Apart from the introduction of intercultural mediators in practice, there has also been research done in this field. First, the need for language and cultural support was described in the collected volume *Multilingual Health* (Pokorn and Lipovec Čebtron 2019), and *Needs Assessment of Users' and Providers' of Preventive Health Programs for Adults* (Farkaš Lainščak 2015, 24) and other articles or monograph chapters (Bofulin et al. 2016; Lipovec Čebtron and Pistotnik 2018). Second, studies on the practice of intercultural mediation and experiences of its introduction in

9 “Platform for intercultural mediation and art collaboration« (2013 – 2014) was carried out by Slovene Philanthropy, financed by Ministry of Culture of Republic of Slovenia and European Commission.

10 “Inclusion of Migrants in Local Environment«, for more see: [https://www.pina.si/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DELOVNI-DOKUMENT\\_online.pdf](https://www.pina.si/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DELOVNI-DOKUMENT_online.pdf)

11 The project “Towards Better Health and Reducing Inequalities in Health – Together for Health” (2013-2016) was carried out by the Slovene National Institute of Public Health and focused particularly on a greater inclusion of marginalized, vulnerable groups in preventive healthcare, reducing health inequalities and strengthening health in local communities. For more information see <https://eeagrants.org/archive/2009-2014/projects/SI05-0002>.

12 “Model Community Approach to Promote Health and Reduce Health Inequalities in Local Communities – MoST” (2017-2020) was carried out by the Slovene National Institute of Public Health, for more information see: <https://www.nijz.si/sl/most-model-skupnostnega-pristopa-za-krepitev-zdravja-in-zmanjsevanje-needakosti-v-zdravju-v-lokalnih>

13 “INTEGRA: A cross-border network for migrant women: social integration, and sexual and reproductive health” (2017-2019), for more information see: <https://www.ita-slo.eu/en/integra>.

healthcare have been carried out (cf. Lipovec Čebren et al. 2017; Škraban et al. 2020; Škraban 2020). Third, the National Institute of Public Health published a *Guide for intercultural mediation in healthcare*, in which the roles of the profile are explained, and standards of their execution are explicated (Huber and Lipovec Čebren 2020).

Moreover, the profile of intercultural mediator is discussed in various university courses, e.g. at the Faculty of Social Work and the Faculty of Arts (Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology) of the University of Ljubljana, as well as in the professional training “Developing cultural competences of healthcare professionals” organised by the National Institute of Public Health from 2016 onwards as an additional training for healthcare professionals working at the primary level of healthcare. Additionally, intercultural mediation features in various trainings for different professional profiles employed in public services and NGOs.

In July 2020, the profile and a national occupational standard of an intercultural mediator, prepared by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, was approved by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia (available at: <http://npk.si/katalog.php?katalogid=20871151>, for the English translation see the Appendix). The profession is classified in the field of social work and counselling.

In order to receive certification, the candidates should meet the following requirements: the minimum level of education for intercultural mediators is high school; they should have language proficiency in Slovene at least at CEFR level B1 for reading, listening and speaking skills, and at least at level A2 for writing skills; they should be proficient in at least one other language (proven by a letter of reference from relevant organisations, associations or institutions), they should have an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural and economic characteristics (including linguistic, religious and political aspects of a culture) of one or more areas and countries from which migrants/refugees come to Slovenia. Moreover, they should be capable of recognizing cultural, social and other patterns of behaviour and be able to successfully communicate in situations where cultural, linguistic, social and other misunderstandings might arise. They should also be familiar with the basic professional terminology in the fields of education, employment, healthcare, administrative procedures and social security, and be able to efficiently help migrants/refugees to communicate in community/public institutions. Previous experience in working in the field or specific training is also expected, and the candidates should pass a specific test verifying their ability to perform the tasks of intercultural mediator (for more see the appendix).

### ***Employment***

Some intercultural mediators are employed through various projects full-time or part-time by Adult Education Centres (Ljudska univerza) and different NGOs (Slovene Philanthropy, Peace Institute, IOM, Association Up, etc.) as well as com-

munity healthcare centres in Slovenia. Since the fee is not regulated, it varies considerably, depending on the type of employment and the sector in which intercultural mediators work.

Over the last few years, intercultural mediators have been employed by community health centres in response to an increased need to overcome language and culture barriers faced by migrants or refugees and ethnic minorities, especially Albanian speaking communities in Slovenia. The pilot introduction of intercultural mediators in 2015 proved to have positive effects on addressing linguistic obstacles (cf. Lipovec Čebren et al. 2017; Škraban et al. 2020) and led to a growing recognition of the profile and a series of employments of intercultural mediators in primary healthcare (Škraban 2020). However, the need of introducing the profile at hospital-level healthcare has remained mainly unaddressed.

### ***Training***

There is no systematic training for intercultural mediators in Slovenia. However, two training courses have been organised so far: first, the International organisation for migration in Slovenia organised a five-day (25-29 July 2016) and three-day (20-22 September 2016) intensive training on intercultural mediation focusing on the assistance provided in healthcare settings, the role and practicalities of intercultural mediation in healthcare, including the importance of psychological support available to intercultural mediators. The second, more extensive training was provided by the National Institute of Public Health in Slovenia within the MoST project (see above). It lasted from December 2018 to July 2020 and provided training for a working group which met 15 times and consisted of intercultural mediators working in community healthcare centres in Slovenia. The working group meetings had two parts: in the first part, a professional topic was presented in form of lectures and workshops (i.e. on spatial positioning in interpreting, cultural aspects of health and illness, the ethics of intercultural mediation, medical terminology, etc.). In the second part, place and time were given to intercultural mediators to share their skills, knowledge and work experience (in a peer-support format).

### ***Certification***

Intercultural mediators can obtain a national vocational qualification, i.e., a certificate whose form and content are defined by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Assessment and certification of the national vocational qualification include portfolio assessment and practical performance assessment.

## ACTIVITIES

Look at the Appendix where you will find English translations of the occupational standards and vocational qualifications for the national certification of the professions of intercultural mediator and community interpreter, which were developed within the framework of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

- 1) When you assist someone who does not speak societal language to access any of the public services, do you help as a community interpreter or as an intercultural mediator?

Work in pairs: describe your work experience to your colleague.

- 2) Do you think it is important to make a distinction between the profile of a community interpreter and that of an intercultural mediator?

Work in pairs: list pros and cons and defend each position.

- 3) Do you see an advantage in the fact that the professions of a community interpreter and an intercultural mediator are registered? If yes, in which way? If not, why not?

## FURTHER READING

Martín, Mayte C. and Mary Phelan. 2010. "Interpreters and Cultural Mediators – different but complementary roles." *Translocations: Migration and Social Change: An Inter-Disciplinary Open Access E-Journal* 6 (1).

One of the first articles that thoroughly analysed both profiles and defined the difference between them.

Pokorn, Nike K., and Tamara Mikolič Južnič. 2020. "Community interpreters versus intercultural mediators: is it really all about ethics?" *Translation and Interpreting Studies* 15, no. 1: 80–107. Accessed August 25, 2020. <https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.20027.koc>. DOI:10.1075/tis.20027.koc.

The article discusses the differences between the profile of a community interpreting and that of an intercultural mediator in Italy and focuses on differences in codes of ethics for both profiles.



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