

Does 'inter' really matter?

The Italian government's redefining of the *cultural mediator* as an *intercultural mediator*

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Introduction

Intercultural mediation has **fundamental role in bi-directional process of integration.**

Motivation – Who cares?

“Integration is a **dynamic, long-term, and continuous two-way process of mutual accommodation, not a static outcome.** It demands the participation not only of immigrants and their descendants but also of every resident. The integration process involves **adaptation by immigrants**, both men and women, who all have rights and responsibilities in relation to their new country of residence. **It also involves the receiving society, which should create the opportunities** for the immigrants' full economic, social, cultural, and political participation. Accordingly, Member States are encouraged to consider and involve both immigrants and national citizens in integration policy, and to communicate clearly their mutual rights and responsibilities.”

Definition of Mediation: Preventing

“Intercultural mediation promotes social integration processes, reducing problems and barriers of communication between foreigners and services throughout the evaluation of immigration resources.” (Balsamo, 1997, p. 18)

Communicative feature, decoding needs and questions, prevention of discomfort and conflicts, effective execution of rights (health, medicine, services)

Definition of Mediation: Repairing

“Mediation is a process with two or more parties that ask freely to a third neutral party, the mediator, to reduce a serious conflict. The goal of mediation is to begin anew the dialogue process between the parties so they can reach a concrete objective: The realization of a relationship that can be the most satisfying to everyone.” (Castelli).

Reparative feature, repair/regulation tool for dysfunctional interactions

Regulation: A Beginning

Law 40/1998.

“Regulation on immigration and rules on foreigners” transformed into the Legislative Decree July 27, 1998, n. 286 “The document for the disposition regarding the immigration regulation and norms on the condition of foreigners.”

Art. 36: Education of Foreigners. Intercultural Education.

For the first time the law provides the possibility to ask for the intervention of *qualified cultural mediator* in case there is a need to communicate with the families of the foreigner students.

Art. 40: Means of social integration.

The article includes the *intercultural mediators* as a way to facilitate communication between the administration and the foreigners belonging to different ethnic, national, linguistic, religious groups.

Regulation: Today

On February 2009

A law proposed to institute an intercultural mediator's **Register**. The Proposal 2138 “Proxy to the Govern for the Institution of the Intercultural Mediator's Register” aims to give an **adequate professional recognition**, based on **criteria and rules nationally valid**, to the intercultural mediator instituting a **professional register and an adequate formation that is deliverable nationally.**

On April 8, 2009

All Italian Regions established **common parameters** in a document written by the Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces 09/030/CR/C9 “Recognition of the intercultural mediator as a professional figure” in which they recognize the professional figure of the mediator and its importance in the Italian context. The document defines **common lines of action** in reference to: Areas of activity, competencies and roles.

On December 21, 2009

The Institutional Working Group for the Promotion of Intercultural Mediation published **guidelines for the recognition of professional intercultural mediators.**

Intervention Services

Mediators are agents of change and their primary role is the facilitation of “governance.”

This role take place in contexts that relate to the following **main areas**:

- (1) Communication
- (2) Information/Guidance
- (3) Conflict Management
- (4) Monitoring/Support
- (5) Formation
- (6) Consultancy and Projects
- (7) Research

Training Guidelines

Training is most often done in reference to a model that divides the field into a **Basic** and **Specialized Level**

Fields Included

- (1) School
- (2) Health
- (3) Adult and juvenile justice
- (4) Public Administration
- (5) Emergency
- (6) Social Services
- (7) Labor and Employment

Remuneration Guidelines

The guidelines are not clear about how to deal with remuneration, but they say that is necessary to **provide** at national and territorial levels, **resources** devoted to the mediation that must be seen as an **investment** rather than a cost. Mediation can contribute directly and indirectly to solve employment problems. Can be a **means to improve the integration** of immigrants in the **social and economic** fabric of the country.

Work Undertaken

The Working Institutional Group undertook several measures, one of which is the **name** of this professional: **Intercultural Mediator**

“In fact, the concept of Mediator with all its corollaries was impartiality fixed as its primary meaning. The broad concept of culture introduced by the suffix “**inter**” focuses on the **dynamic sense of dialogue, interactions and relationships**, all inaccessible areas without the primary means of communication – i.e., language, which is thus implicitly incorporated as the lintel of the founding words. ”