

IO1 Situation Analysis; Best Practices Analysis Preparation of a TNA

**Task 1.2: Desk research including institutional analysis and
identification of best practices in regards to Cultural Mediators in the
Postal Sector**



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Introduction

“Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes and its own meanings. Every human society expresses these in institutions and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions (...)” is a possible definition of culture, written in 1958¹. Many European countries have already recognized the importance of culture, due to the fact that culture is integrated in a wide variety of fields, such as innovation, tourism, healthcare and social inclusion. By developing and implementing cultural strategies, EU countries can make a real impact on their economic development, policy coherence and social cohesion. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the need to step forward in



the consideration of cultural aspects in sustainable development. In the years leading to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, several global networks campaigned under the banner “The Future We Want Includes Culture”, in order to include one goal devoted to culture or for the integration of cultural aspects in the Agenda. Although none of the Sustainable Development Goals focuses specifically on the term “Culture”, the Agenda includes several references to cultural aspects²:

- Target 4.7 is connected with the aim to ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainability through education for global

¹ Williams, R.(1958).“Culture is ordinary”. Convictions. N.McKenzie

² United Cities and Local Governments.(2018). “Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals: A guide for Local Action”. Available at : https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/culture_in_the_sdgs.pdf. (Last accessed on: June 2, 2019)

citizenship and the appreciation for cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to the Agenda.

- Target 8.3 addresses the promotion of development –oriented policies that support productive activities.
- Target 8.9 and 12b refer to the aim of the implementation policies to promote sustainable tourism, including through the local culture and products.
- Target 11.4 underlines the need to protect the world’s cultural heritage.

The acknowledgement of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue and as a result intercultural mediation as the bridge between different cultural societies, help to eliminate tensions that may arise. However, cultural mediation as a model of societies’ development may face challenges, such as the demographic challenge. During the last decade of Europe has experienced an increase in migration flows. Integration policies have proved to be the core of the establishment of good communication and mutual understanding between different cultures to promote awareness for all parties involved. According to Eurostat the immigration flows to the EU from non-member countries reached the 2.4 million people in 2017 and as far as the migrant population, the 22.3 million non – EU citizens live in the EU on 1 January 2018³. To that point, cultural mediation has been considered the most proper low cost and win-win approach to ensure that all people will be integrated successfully in the society. In that way, it combines elements from different fields such as psychology, sociology, science of communication, legal and political science. Apart from this, the cultural mediator can foster the development of resilient cities, in order for its citizens “to adapt, survive and thrive no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks they had experienced”⁴.

In that way, this report will try to define cultural mediation as the appropriate mechanism for combating social inequality. Furthermore, it will examine the history of cultural mediation best practices in EU continent with special focus on different countries as case studies using the SMART



Criteria as the most appropriate methodology to set out more clearly what our project wants to achieve. In addition to that, it will focus on how postal sectors can use cultural mediation in order to

³ Eurostat. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics

⁴British Council.(2018).” Athens City Resilience through Culture”. Available at: <https://www.britishcouncil.gr/sites/default/files/athens-city-resilience-through-culture-full-report-april-2018.pdf>. (Last accessed on: May 23, 2019)

build resilient societies. For that purpose, it will use different approaches and good practices from the EU postal sector, in order to find the link between cultural mediation and prosperity.⁵

Definition of the Cultural Mediation

In general, Mediation is an effective instrument for conflict prevention, transformation and resolution. It is a basic feature of crisis management of inter- and intra-state conflicts. “The mediating person is an individual who serves as a link between two or more cultures and social systems. The essence of the mediating function is to shape exchanges between the participating societies so that the contact will benefit those cultures, on terms that are consistent with their respective value systems” gave Bochner a general definition of the mediator⁶. Within this broad



conceptualization, attempts also to distinguish two types of mediating functions: the mediator as a translator whose purpose is “to represent one culture to another and accurate cross-cultural knowledge” and the cultural mediator who focuses on “reconciling disparate culture practices”. To be more specific, a cultural mediator

has a synthesizer’s role, because 21st century demands “coping with unfamiliar culture and involve a degree of culture learning and behavioral adaptation as a result of which the person becomes increasingly multicultural” (Taft 1981). Last but not least, a cultural mediator highlights the importance of diversity as an equalizer in western and immigrant societies and could include mediating activities in general, rather than specific professional profiles⁷.

The issue of Cultural Mediation can be related with different contexts such as business, tourism and immigration. In line with the first one, the cultural mediator aims to enhance relationships of employees and promote diversity. As far as tourism is concerned, its objective is to support the tourist encounter. Last but not least, a cultural mediator can be related also to health problems. In addition, Cultural Mediation is combined also with the issue of immigration, in order to reduce socioeconomic gaps and tensions between different ethnic groups and minorities.

As far as the policy framework and legal status of the cultural mediators, such as the funding, the professional profile and the eligibility, it varies across Europe. However, there are certain codes of

⁵ An post. “Sustainability at the Post”. Available at: <http://www.anpost.ie/AnPost/MainContent/About+An+Post/Sustainability+at+An+Post.htm>. (Last accessed on: June 1, 2019)

⁶ Bochner, S..(1981). “The Social Psychology of Language Mediation”. Schenkman Publishing Company.

⁷ Kahlenberg, Richard D..(1996).” The Remedy, Class, Race and Affirmative Action”. New York: Harper Collins.

conduct at national level, who are used by stakeholders as an important tool to ensure the quality of the mediation process⁸:

- I. Competence
- II. Appointment
- III. Fees
(Mediators must supply the parties with complete information as far as the remuneration which they intend to apply.)
- IV. Promotion of mediator's services
- V. Independence
- VI. Impartiality
- VII. Procedure
(The mediator must ensure that the parties to the mediation clearly understand the characteristics of the mediation process.)
- VIII. Fairness of the process
- IX. The end of the process
(The mediator must undertake all the appropriate measures and actions to ensure that any agreement is reached by all parties and that all parties understand the terms of the agreement.)
- X. Confidentiality

Moreover, 17 Member States encourage mandatory training of mediators in their national legislation. In order to further promote the training of mediators, the European Commission will continue to finance various projects concerning training on mediation through its "Justice Program"⁹.

⁸EUROMED JUSTICE. European Code of Conduct for mediators. Available at: <https://www.euromed-justice.eu/en/document/eu-european-code-conduct-mediators>. (Last accessed on: May 21, 2019)

⁹ European Commission. (2016). "Report from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee on the application of directive 2008/52/ec of the European Parliament and of the Council on certain aspects of mediation in civil and commercial matters." Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2016%3A542%3AFIN>. (Last accessed on: June 1, 2019)

Cultural Mediators in the EU countries

The EU has been strongly in favor of promoting intercultural mediation as a means of bridging cultural barriers. The European Economic and Social Committee stated that “education should reflect the internal diversity of European societies” and that “Intercultural mediators should be available and teaching resources should be boosted in order to resolve linguistic and cultural difficulties”¹⁰. Moreover, promoting intercultural mediation for migrant integration the EU has undertaken several projects. For example, the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals which was established in the framework of the EU Program “Solidarity and management of migration flows” has issued several calls for the training and employment of cultural mediators¹¹.

Intercultural practices and models vary in the EU. In Belgium the need of cultural mediation is considerable, but people believe that it is well-met. Mediators who work with asylum-seekers believe that the presence of an interpreter is required by the law. On the other hand, trainers and in general mediators argue that the need is not so important¹². The job title “cultural mediator” is used for the health care sector and “social interpreter” and “social translator” for the social sector (including the health care sector). Intercultural mediators work at Belgian hospitals or are employees there and are funded with government assistance on the basis of legal provisions in Belgium¹³. One good practice of intercultural mediation include the Cultural Mediation Program in Hospitals, which was implemented by Belgium from 1991 to 2015. The aim of the program was the improvement of the Belgian migration policy through proposals from the academia, in the fields of medical sociology and anthropology. As a result, 100 intercultural mediators are employed in 52 hospitals in Belgium today. EU considered it as a good practice, because of the fact that its objective was very clear and specific. Meanwhile, task description of the intercultural mediators was formulated from the start of the 1991 and updated once in 2008 and again in 2015¹⁴. In Belgium there are approximately 20 translation and interpreting services in different areas such as telephone interpreting, the interpreting on site, where the interpreter orally translates a talk between two parties at the site of the assignment and the written translation. Generally, intercultural mediation aims to eliminate

10 EESFC. “Immigration in the EU and integration policies: Cooperation between regional and local governments and civil society organisations”. Available at: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/immigration-eu-and-integration-policies-cooperation-between-regional-and-local-governments-and-civil-society>. (Last accessed: on May 28, 2019)

11 European Commission.(). “Solidarity and Management of Migration flows(2007-2013): Success Stories from Portugal.” <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/solidarity-and-management-of-migration-flows-2007-2013-success-stories-from-portugal>. (Last accessed on: May 21, 2019)

13 EQUAL EP TransKom-gesund & sozial. “Comparative Study on Language and Culture Mediation in different European countries”.

14 Verrept, H. Coune, I. (2015). “Developing a guide for intercultural mediation in healthcare in Belgium”

inequality in health care¹⁵. A training requirement for employment as an intercultural mediator in the healthcare is either a degree in the field of intercultural mediation in the public health sector or in the social sector, such as language, literature studies or interpreting. In Flanders and Brussels there are also a three years training programs on higher secondary level¹⁶.

Besides this, Germany uses cultural mediators for the successful integration of migrants. To be more specific, the starting point of the initiative “MiMi –Migrants for Migrants” in Germany was the insufficient access of them to health care, because of the fact that they were disadvantaged groups in many fields, such as the language difficulties and the different model of health insurance. After the reunification of Western and Eastern Germany, the Ethno-medical center launched this program and between 2003 and 2004 a total of 75 migrants completed a training to become intercultural health mediators¹⁷. The EU supports this practice,

due to the fact that it combines not only basic training and language learning, but also underlines the need for migrants to broaden their expertise and improve their quality of life and so it fosters a quicker integration. In 2010, arise the need to develop a non-traditional approach to enhance cultural mediators’ educational skills. In this context,



the TIPS project (T-learning to Improve Professional Skills for Intercultural Dialogue), co-financed by the EU Leonardo da Vinci Program, and developed a blended T-learning strategy by integrating a technology platform consisting of e-learning (Internet), M-learning (PDA & Smartphones) and TV-learning (IPTV)¹⁸. In this initiative participated many EU countries (Austria, France, Poland, Greece and Italy) with main focus on maximizing the effectiveness of the cultural mediators’ training. Moreover, in Western Europe France had made serious reforms about intercultural mediation process, such as the link-women, who as cultural mediators organize and accompany encounters between individuals and institutions¹⁹. It is considered as a good practice, because has a clear

15 Le service de médiation interculturelle du CHR de la Citadelle à Liège. Available at: http://labiso.be/ebooks/labiso_65/html-n/labiso_65_brut.html . (Last accessed on: May 29, 2019)

16 Verrept, H.(2007).” Sprach- und Kulturvermittlung in Belgien. Eine Antwort auf Ungleichheit in der Gesundheitsversorgung. Interdisziplinäre Reihe”.

17 Cities of Migration. (2009) “MIMI-With Migrants, For Migrants: Intercultural Health in Germany.” Available at: http://citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/mimi-with-migrants-for-migrants-intercultural-health-in-germany/. (Last accessed on: May 29, 2019)

18 Polymeropoulou, K. , Kameas, A.(2010). “Using the TIPS platform to train Greek cultural mediators”. Social Applications for Lifelong Learning. Available at: <http://daissy.eap.gr/files/TIPS/paper3-en.pdf>. (Last accessed on: June 1, 2019)

19 Madelin, B. (2007). ” Le rôle des femmes-relais”. Informations Sociales

mission by describing in detail the deontology and intervention frames, while it sets the working conditions and the tasks of mediators. Meanwhile, this initiative promotes women migrant empowerment, starting from the late '80s, underlining their needs to overcome intercultural barriers and communication difficulties²⁰.

Another good practice of cultural mediation was undertaken in Switzerland, where the Swiss Association for Intercultural Interpretation and Mediation is the contact point for intercultural mediation and act as the main representative of all stakeholders in intercultural interpreting. The Swiss Association for Intercultural Interpretation and Mediation created also a learning platform which provides free access to subjects, such as migration and integration in the country, professional code of conduct and the appropriate links to official reports²¹.

In Eastern Europe, Romania has made improvements in intercultural mediation and offers a great set of practices in intercultural mediation, including healthcare and communication. The official Romanian mediator job description is long, but the most important elements include the promotion of mutual trust between members of the community and medical staff and the facilitation of health insurance coverage.

The correlation between intercultural mediation and healthcare started in Romania by the Romani NGO, Romani CRISS (Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies) in the '90s. Doctors without Borders issued a report informing that Roma in Romania were refusing vaccination. Romani CRISS investigated and later discovered that physicians refused to enter Romani communities, while the Roma were definitely afraid of the effects of vaccination, due to the fact that they were isolated and not informed of the procedure²². In this framework, Romani CRISS adapted intercultural education mediation model to the health context. Another good practice was the program ROMED1-Mediation for Roma which was initiated in 2011 with the aim to train mediators around the EU. More specifically, the program had three objectives²³:

1. To promote intercultural mediation and to improve the communication and cooperation between Roma and public sector.
2. To ensure the integration rights of Roma.

21 Interpret. "Lernplattform für das interkulturelle Dolmetschen". Available at <https://www.inter-pret.ch/>. (Last accessed on: May 21, 2019)

22 Cohen, B. (2005). "Positive obligations: Shifting the burden in order to achieve equality". Roma Rights Quarterly. No 1. 2005: 5

23 Council of the European Union. ROMED1-Mediation for Roma. Available at: <http://coe-romed.org/romed1>. (Last accessed on: June 3, 2019)

3. To support the work of mediators by providing tools to for planning and implementation of their activities.

From 2011 to 2016 ROMED1 trained 1,479 mediators from 500 municipalities in 22 countries. Approximately 90% of them were Roma. Furthermore, the Roma Cultural Mediation Project with leading partner the NGO Access Ireland, was an approach in 2007 to train cultural mediators from Roma Community in Romania, in order to act as a link between service providers and other members of the community. In that way, the program aims to facilitate equal and fair access of all Roma to healthcare services²⁴. In this initiative, collaborated two government agencies: the Health Service Executive and the Vocational Education Committee of the City of Dublin. The first phase of the project was guided through inputs from Access Ireland and a variety of external trainers from public and voluntary bodies. Apart from this, the training program covered three main areas: mediation techniques, cross-cultural communication, information about the Irish health and social sector and attending relevant conferences and events²⁵.

In addition, AIDRom Timisoara has trained in September 2016, for 2 days, 10 intercultural mediators from Egypt, Syria, Serbia, Russia and Moldavia. 6 of them were hired as certified social intercultural mediators with AIDRom Office.

In the south Europe, Italy and Greece also offer good practices in cultural mediation sector. In the case of Italy there are around 4.000 cultural mediators with the majority of them to be women. The Italian legislation concerning the work of the cultural mediator as “the person who works in educational contexts within social integration, with the objective to increase the measure provided for migrant’s integration, such as inclusion, interaction and exchange and not as cohabitation between divided communities”²⁶. The difficulty though is that every region in the country has identified a professional profile and a specific training program and progress for cultural mediators. In 2006 the Public Registry of Intercultural Mediators was created by the City of Rome with the City Council Resolution no. 160 of 18 July 2005²⁷. One good practice of Italy is the “MediaTo” which is funded by Compagnia di San Paolo with the aim to improve the accessibility in the information for

24 Ryan, C. (2011). “Mediating between cultures”. The Irish Times

25 EQUAL. (2010). “Training Roma as Cultural Mediators”. Available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal_consolidated/data/document/IE%20-%20training%20roma%20as%20cultural%20mediators.pdf.

(Last accessed on: June 3, 2019)

26 UNAR – IDOS (2014). “Immigration’s dossier 2014”. Available at :

http://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/docnews/file/2014_Scheda%20breve%20Dossier.pdf . (Last accessed on: June 1, 2019)

27 Rome Municipality (2014). “Informative note of the Public Registry of Intercultural Mediators of the City of Rome”. Available at:

http://www.comune.roma.it/PCR/resources/cms/documents/Nota_informativa_del_10_10_2014.pdf. (Last accessed on: June 1, 2019)

foreigners and social interpreters. The main focus of the project was the training of the cultural mediators in the Province of Turin, in order to foster the creation of a diverse community, able to use new technologies²⁸. Apart from this, the “Mediation device: Bridge between Center and Suburb” tried to increase and improve the fruition services in the field of healthcare, education and administration, according to the basic needs of foreign citizens with a special focus on women and to address territorial intervention, which is connected with the mediation device, with the aim to support the Public Sector and more specifically the Public Administration. At last, its strategy was also the optimization and the transferring of best practices of integration from Rome to suburbs. This initiative was funded by the European Commission in collaboration with the Italian Minister of Interior and was managed by CIES OnlusCentro Informazione e Educazione allo Sviluppo (IT).²⁹

The case of Greece focused on the integration of a high flow of immigrants. The definition and practice of a cultural mediator is closer to what described as community interpreting, which means that all migrants have access to public health centers. Most cultural mediators are employed in the public sector on a voluntary basis or working in NGOs. In 2004-2009 the Equal project: “Network and Monitoring structures for strengthening of economic migrants and refugees in the labor market” aimed to train fifteen cultural mediators that could provide intermediation services in seven support offices of the project in Athens, Piraeus, Patra, Thessaloniki and Volos. The training material was basically focused on the policies for the promotion of social inclusion, interculturalism, labor and insurance issues, organization structures and the strengthening of trade unions as an entity³⁰. Furthermore, Olympic Training in cooperation with the Hellenic Open University in 2012-2013 developed an online platform which enabled third-country migrants, partners and stakeholders to search for a cultural mediator in the field they are interested in. The platform is the first registry in Greece that lists intercultural mediators who work in the country³¹. Interesting initiative was also the Promotion of intercultural mediation in selected Hospitals which implemented in 2014 by the

²⁸ Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers (2009). “The intercultural mediator in six European countries”. Available at: http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/archiviodocumenti/mediazioneinterculturale/Documents/Il_Mediatore_culturale_in_sei_Paesi_europei.pdf. (Last accessed on: May 30, 2019)

²⁹ UNAR – IDOS (2014) “Immigration’s dossier 2014 “. Available at: http://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/docnews/file/2014_Scheda%20breve%20Dossier.pdf. (Last accessed on: May 30, 2019)

³⁰ Equal Greece Sub-programme Employability projects. Available at: <http://www.equalgreece.gr/subomasprogsdetail.asp?Prognum=2&Subcode=6&Omascode=130>. (Last accessed on: June 3, 2019)

³¹ European Commission. “Creating a Registry of Trained Intercultural Mediators and Networking Intercultural Mediators through an Electronic Platform”. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/intpract/creating-a-registry-of-trained-intercultural-mediators-and-networking-intercultural-mediators-through-an-electronic-platform>. (Last accessed on: June 3, 2019)

NGO METAdrasi³². Besides this, the NGO took actions to be a cultural bridge between migrants and Greek authorities as a self-funded program³³. The training material was focused on the presentations of Greek legislation and the training tips for a successful intercultural mediation process.

³² Giannarou, L. (2014 June 24) 110 interpreters for immigrants in 10 hospitals. Kathimerini. Available at: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/773102/article/epikairothta/ellada/110diermhneis-gia-metanastes-se-10-nosokomeia>. (Last accessed on: June 3, 2019)

³³METADRASI. <https://metadrasi.org/>. (Last accessed on: June 4, 2019)

The CULMED Project

The EU postal sector accounts for €91 billion or 0.72% of EU GDP (letter post alone accounts for €44 billion or 0.34 percent of the GDP, and the number of letters was 82 billion). Postal services play a key role in an effective and dynamic EU Single Market and they are of crucial importance to businesses and EU citizens alike. The European Commission works on improving the quality of delivery and access to postal services, and aims to complete a well-functioning Single Market for postal services.

However, the postal sector is currently in a period of profound change. Technological developments, challenges to the traditional economic model, liberalization, new customer expectations and significant shifts in consumption patterns are all factors that are pushing Posts to re-invent themselves. Both employers and trade unions have recognized an increased requirement for flexibility and efficiency of the workforce. However, both sides have also recalled that efficiency should also be closely interlinked with quality of service and customer orientation based on the employees' know-how. Indeed employees are an essential part of the unique selling opportunities that postal operators have and contribute to build trust in the contact with customers. The adaptation of skills and competences can be considered as an essential answer to manage the changes in and challenges for the sector.

It is also true that EU is facing a considerable migration crisis which results in a considerable increase of third country nationals and refugees living in EU member states. All member states are struggling for their integration. More effective integration of migrants can make an important contribution to the target identified by the EU 2020 Strategy to reduce by 20 million the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In order to constitute a genuine instrument for the integration into society in which they live, long-term residents should enjoy equality of treatment with citizens of the Member State in a wide range of economic and social matters. Additionally, as the Commission pointed out in its Communication of 7 April 2016, "national economic and social policies will need to cater for the recent inflow of immigrants and refugees", to provide for their immediate needs and their active participation into society. Immigrants and newly-arrived refugees face problems, including cultural and language barriers and risks of stigmatization in education and other social activities that do prevent them from a more active participation in host societies. In addition, the Intercultural Institute in the city of Timisoara started to develop a consultant mechanism among migrants, public institutions and the civil society in 2009, which was updated in 2011 as a National Network of Intercultural Mediators. In the beginning it was started

with a group of intercultural mediators from five cities in Romania with the aim to facilitate communication between migrant groups and the rest of the society³⁴.

Within this context, it becomes critical to establish initiatives that increase social inclusion and improve the quality of delivery and access to postal services. To achieve that, our proposed project aims to provide a solution establishing a multicultural environment within the post offices and design a joint curricula, aiming at training post employees to deliver services within this multicultural environment.

In any sense, immigrants in a foreign country find it difficult to live with diversity, to transact and to do business with “unknown” people in unfamiliar environments. This misunderstanding usually exists within local citizens and is generated by the lack of knowledge of the “other”.

In view of this fact, Cultural Mediators as professionals will be trained to facilitate relations between local and foreign citizens and to promote reciprocal knowledge and comprehension have the ability to promote social and working inclusion aimed at favoring a positive relationship between persons of different cultural backgrounds.

Our training program is going to include soft skills and language skills and target indirectly immigrants that will learn about the post services. This results to social and professional development of our target group, embracing migrants and refugees into our societies, through social integration.

The objectives of the project are summarized below:

1. Combating discrimination and stereotypes through “people to people” provision of postal service centered on a better acknowledgment of the richness of multicultural identity in Europe;
2. Foster social inclusion by organizing an environment where immigrants will feel “welcomed” and can have access to several services
3. Improve the quality of services provided to immigrants.
4. Enhance Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications related to the postal sector.

³⁴ Intercultural Cities. “Intercultural Profile”. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168058cda9> . (Last accessed on: June 6, 2019)

There are four main target groups that are going to be addressed:

1. Post office employees current and future
2. Local and rural societies, where social inclusion is going to be enhanced
3. Public administration and organizations that are delivering services to migrants, since they are going to be provided cost effectively within a controlled environment.
4. Immigrants' Population

Cultural Mediators in the Postal Sector

Postal Services play a key role for EU citizens and business, due to the fact that employs about 1.8 million people³⁵. The aim of the European postal policy is to ensure the affordable, permanent and high-quality postal services throughout the continent. However, 21st century is characterized by dynamic sectoral changes in European postal companies, while they have to answer new social and environmental dilemmas. According to the Europeans' Commission project "European Pillar of Social Rights", every citizen must have equal opportunities, access to the labor market and social protection³⁶. In that way the postal sector must be a major mechanism of fostering social inclusion.

Furthermore, the Universal Postal Union in its report "Postal Development Report 2018" clearly demonstrates how the postal sector contributes to SDG 8 of the Agenda of 2030³⁷, by promoting inclusive growth and productive employment. In 2016 postal operators employed around 5.32 million staff members worldwide.

Greece: current situation & best practices

Greece postal sector has made a huge improve on its connection with matters such as integration, social inclusion and solidarity for refugees. Hellenic Post (ELTA) focuses on satisfying its customers'



needs, by meeting the needs of the customers, promoting innovation, developing new products and by continuously enriching its services. Hellenic Post invests heavily in developing the skills and capabilities of its personnel, due to the fact that in a rapidly changing postal environment more challenges arise. In the direction of the continuing and certified improvement of the professional skills of both employees and executives the Vocational Training Centre (KEK ELTA) has a decisive contribution through the implementation of

contemporary training programs. Moreover, environmental protection and contribution to the

35 European Commission. Available at :https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/postal-services_en. (Last accessed on: May 21, 2019)

36 European Commission. (2017). "European Pillar of Social Rights". Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en. (Last accessed on: May 21, 2019)

37 Boffa, M., Borba, F, and Piotrowski, L.(2018). "Postal Development Report 2018". Universal Postal Union

vision of sustainable development are considered corporate strategic choices. ELTA supports environmental actions and participate in international environmental programs³⁸.

One good practice of cultural mediation is considered the fact that in the 100th anniversary of the Museum of Modern Greek Culture in 2018, ELTA focused on the presentation of its cultural heritage by presenting paintings of Theofilos Hatzimichalis as stamps. In that way ELTA tried to give meaningful substance to narratives that were silenced and ignored as non-importance, functioned as a cultural mediator mechanism³⁹. Besides this, on the International Women Day in 2018, ELTA created a Commemorative set of stamps, sending a strong message in support of equal rights of women⁴⁰.

Another good practice as a fight against inclusion was the supporting of the refugees, in cooperation with the radio station Athina 9.84 and the newspaper Athens voice. The idea was to undertaken the initiative to design, print and distribute information brochures for refugees. The purpose of the initiative was to provide refugees with useful information regarding medical assistance, hospitality centres and organisations able to accompany them during their stay, as well as information on the ways of transportation to the borders. The brochures, entitled ‘Are you a refugee? All you need to know’, available in English, Arabic and Persian, were distributed by postmen at the refugee reception centres on the islands and at post offices throughout the country⁴¹.



Apart from this, in 2015 ELTA had set up a special post office displayed at the Chocolate Factory and Museum theme park, for the purpose of encouraging visitors to post a chocolate to a person in need, by creating special packages. Visitors could choose to send a chocolate from the museum whether to a refugee child hosted at the Refugee Reception Centre, a child of the charity The Smile of the Child for protection of children’s rights or an elderly person hosted in Athens Nursing Home.

38 Hellenic Post. <https://www.elta.gr/en-us/company.aspx>

39 Hellenic Post. “COMMEMORATIVE SET OF STAMPS - FEUILLET “100-year anniversary of the Museum of Modern Greek Culture”. Available at: <https://www.elta.gr/Company/PressOffice/Pressreleases/tabid/753/newsid1179/1486/language/en-US/Default.aspx>. (Last accessed on: May 30, 2019)

40 Hellenic Post. “COMMEMORATIVE SET OF STAMPS “MARCH 8 – INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY””. Available at: <https://www.elta.gr/Company/PressOffice/Pressreleases/tabid/753/newsid1179/1421/language/en-US/Default.aspx>. (Last accessed on: June 6, 2019)

41 CSR.(2016). “The Postal Sector leading the way in Corporate Responsibility”

The company undertook the free transportation of candies to the recipients. This gesture of solidarity was also a way to introduce participants to the postal world⁴².

Another cultural practice was a specially designed space in Athens central post offices to allow new musicians to present their work, accompanied by their musical instruments and the necessary sound equipment, individually or in groups. At the same time, Hellenic Post promoted these new musicians through its corporate website and social networks. The communications campaign named 'Listen to new ELTA era - Step to new artists' made special reference to the participation of a children's musical group from Ergastiri, an association for people with disabilities. This initiative ran from the end of 2015 to the beginning of 2016.⁴³

Moreover, in 2018 ELTA undertook an initiative which in collaboration with its Cultural Center, aimed to promote "Smart Cultural" activities in order to foster solidarity for retired employees. One activity involved the Theatrical Team of ELTA's Cultural Center, in which three retired ELTA employees were enrolled as amateur actors. What is more, as a final product ten situational videos were produced in which the Theatrical Team performed actual customer service situations taking place in a real post office environment⁴⁴.

Romania: current analysis & best practices

Romania postal sector (Poșta Română) is the national operator in the field of postal services and contributes greatly to solidarity and social inclusion matters. One action was the promotion of the role of women in connection with their careers. The strategic capitalization of the relationship with women employees was not achieved through financial motivation, but on the contrary through self-motivated organizational culture of the employees themselves⁴⁵. Besides this, Romanian postal sector organized a vocational training with the target group: female employees who wanted to obtain qualification in management through grants. The working methodology was focused on the development of effective skills in planning, implementing and monitoring a project⁴⁶. In that context, the postal sector highlighted the need to "leave no one behind" in line with the Agenda of 2030 for sustainable development.

42 CSR.(2016). "The Postal Sector leading the way in Corporate Responsibility"

43 CSR.(2016). "The Postal Sector leading the way in Corporate Responsibility"

44 CSR.(2018). "The Postal Sector leading the way in Corporate Responsibility"

45 CSR.(2017). "The Postal Sector leading the way in Corporate Responsibility"

46 CSR.(2015). "The Postal Sector leading the way to Corporate Responsibility"

Other European Countries

As far as other European Countries are concerned, many good practices have been made in cultural mediation. The first case is was the educational take-off with “L ‘ Envol”, La Banque Postale campus with the objective is to give the opportunity to young talented students to attend tutoring classes, as well as cultural trips to French cities. The initiative was successfully, due to the fact that 350-400 students joined the program and a message of solidarity was spread out. In the case of Swiss Post,



and cultural diversity at the post in 2015. In order to make it easier for people to use, four events were organized in three regions (Berne, Lausanne, Bellinzona). The goal of this project was the cultivation of a culture of mutual understanding at Swiss Post and to overcome cultural barriers⁴⁷. Deutsche Post contributed also in 2016-2017 to the refugee aid, giving

special focus on their language acquisition and vocational preparation and training⁴⁸. In 2018 the concept of the integration of refugees was developed further with the initiative “Mentoring4Integration”. The goal of the project was to assist refugees to enter working world by having as mentors the Deutsche Post employees. The project operated in Bonn region and focused on students in international classes who lacked German language and soft skills and were 16 to 21 years old. The activities of the project were regular meetings of the trainer with the mediator, which included the preparation for an interview and the sharing of their own experience.⁴⁹ Moreover Austria, promoted well-being at work with setting up a welfare association “post sozial” with diverse social services and activities. The association operates from 2005 and its services included not only financial support to employees faced unusually high costs, as a result of illness or natural disasters along with discounted tickets for cultural and sport events. Overall, more than 50,000 people took advantage of the social benefits of this organization⁵⁰.

Bulgarian Posts PLC took an internship initiative for university students which was managed and financed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, in the frame of creating new job opportunities to reach young people and teach them the postal sector role. This project functioned as a link between the academia and business, supporting students to gain not only practical

47 CSR.(2015). “The Postal Sector leading the way to Corporate Responsibility”

48 CSR.(2017). ““The Postal Sector leading the way to Corporate Responsibility”

49 CSR.(2018). ““The Postal Sector leading the way to Corporate Responsibility”

50 CSR.(2017). “The Postal Sector leading the way to Corporate Responsibility”

experience but to get in touch with the labor market integration and culture⁵¹. In the south Europe, Poste Italiane has asked in 2018 22 street artists to paint exterior walls of post offices in deprived areas. The “P.A.I.N.T” initiative aimed to transform post offices into more comfortable and pleasant places, in order to foster positive reactions of post office’s employees and customers⁵².

51 CSR.(2018). “The Postal Sector leading the way to Corporate Responsibility”
52 CSR.(2018). “The Postal Sector leading the way to Corporate Responsibility”

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is true that at these times of new challenges, such as the increase of migration flows, globalization and technology, a cultural mediator has a key role, acting as a facilitator of relationships between diversity groups.

The demographic challenges affect societies both structurally and culturally, by threatening social cohesion and national identity. In this case the role of cultural mediator is not only to act as a bridge, but also to address the needs of the target groups. In that way, he must prove that his skills are adequate enough in order to function as an efficient mechanism of fostering social inclusion. He should acquire knowledge of his own and of other's behaviors and interpreting the related information based on existing knowledge and attitudes.

In this context, Postal Sector should act as a cultural mediator with the aim to disseminate not only knowledge, but also to promote the values of solidarity and acceptance of the diversity groups.

A major lesson is how little do we know about the depth of the skills a cultural mediator has to acquire. We suggest lines for future research in four categories:

1. More good practices of cultural mediation throughout the continent of the EU.
2. More cultural mediation initiatives from stakeholders, in order to foster inclusive growth.
3. More selected cultural topics for investigation and research.

Assessing the impact of the cultural mediator is crucial to sustainability and policy analysis of the current situation.

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