EUROPE

DIANA-IONELA ANCHEŞ **Intercultural Mediation**

The central figure of intercultural mediation is represented by the intercultural mediator who, by virtue of his recognized skills and through language, works for the consolidation of the cultural identity of immigrants.

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Introduction

THE INTEREST for the proposed topic is justified by our preoccupation with the European cultural identity which, for the last few decades, has been constantly expressed through different theoretical formulas directed towards two major topics of reflection: the first refers to finding the components of a spirituality built on elements which confer it specificity, and the second is centered on the identification of the differences that distinguish it from the other cultures, in the intercultural exchange. According to an opinion expressed in the research literature, the European spirit is now different from what it was in the past, given its openness to other cultures, through a continuous effort of understanding them and of communicating with them, in order to assimilate their values, but at the same time, to offer them its own cultural values (Zăpârţan 2008, 335–352).

From the perspective of the European identity, culture represents a way of ensuring the coherence of a society, an essential instrument designed for

the assignation of meanings, an individual and a group factor of development, a complex of social values which are transforming into a complex identity that must be framed, structured and sustained in order to resist the external and internal dangers. In framing, structuring and sustaining this complex identity, a special part is played by negotiation and mediation.

References made to negotiation are essential, keeping in mind the double function of negotiation in its relation to mediation. In our work *Medierea în viaţa social-politică* (Mediation in social and political life), we have made reference to the fact that negotiation accomplishes the function of *species*, due to the fact that mediation has developed having negotiation as a starting point, but it also has the function of *genus*, because negotiation is an essential stage of the mediation process (Ancheş 2011, 322). Plus, if we make reference to the multitude of works that have approached mediation, we can easily see that mediation is usually defined through the concept of negotiation (Richbell 2008, 18; Phillips 2001, xiv; Stimec 2007, 3; Stoner 2006, 2; Acland 1990, 8). Furthermore, negotiation represents a way of structuring the social relations according to a certain value system. For a balanced society, negotiation represents a way of finding solutions for its development, functioning, and for the preservation of its identity. For a society that "is being altered by internal contradictions," negotiation is a way of achieving conflict resolution. It is only through dialogue and permanent negotiation that a society can clarify its real identity problems and can find solutions for them (Zăpârţan 2007, 11–14).

According to Stimec, negotiation is "a dialogue centered on a problem that must be solved, which concentrates on concluding a mutual acceptable agreement" (Stimec 2005, 9–11). Reflecting on the multiple definitions that were given to negotiation over time, the author considers that the nucleus of negotiation consists of the interpersonal communication and dialogue relation, because it is only through them that someone can underline the existing differences and the interdependence (Ancheş 2011, 53–54). Referring to the specificity of negotiation, Zăpârţan concludes that there are some important criteria which define it: the dialogue between the parties, established through communication; the existence of a real problem which needs to be solved; and the path to an agreement beneficial and acceptable for all parties (Zăpârţan 2007, 36). Apart from these opinions, Dupont sees negotiation as an interaction of the protagonists, a specific method of social decision (Dupont 1994, 11–13).

Along with the negotiation process, mediation has a very special role in solving identity issues. Generally, mediation is defined, as we showed above, through the concept of negotiation, as being a more structured form of assisted negotiation, a voluntary and flexible process, which takes place in a private con-

text, where the mediator helps the parties to clarify their key problems and to build an understanding agreement (Ancheş 2011).

The individual does not exist outside the manifestations that frame him, and all individuals are attached to a certain cultural context. Hence, the individual manifestation can be interpreted as a symbolic form of the expression of society (Caune 2000, 103–104). International relations imply, through their nature, an exchange of values between communities. In order to achieve any such exchanges, it is necessary to create peaceful relations between states. In their turn, states are built through their external policies, which must be directed towards maintaining peace (Zăpârţan 2001, 47).

Gamman took up the opinion of Edward T. Hall, who said that "Culture is the one which directs the physical organization which, in turn, has a profound effect over the way people see things, behave politically, decide, establish their priorities, organize their lives, and think." The incorrect understanding of the local and national cultural norms and the complexity of the political, economic and institutional aspects can defeat even the best intentioned efforts of communication. Culture affects the implementation of the public policy in two ways. First, the behavior, the habits and beliefs that people appropriate, as members of a certain society, shape the way in which they perceive the place where they carry out their activity. Second, the decision-making process and the way power is concentrated in the hand of certain individuals, the way in which political leaders react in relation to the ones they govern and civil norms determine the way in which political options are being evaluated. These two effects of culture over public policy are inseparable, but they are not always understood. The connection between culture and the decision-making process must be well understood in order see the reason why the implementation of new policies is so difficult (Gamman 1994, 70–71).

Normative conflicts are not new within history. Throughout history, people have always argued about the norms that govern public and personal life. In the case of the Western civilization, one can only remember the religious wars that took place after the Protestant reforms, which drowned Europe in an "ocean of blood," and which were mediated over many centuries. Similar conflicts can also be traced to other civilizations. Modernization has brought the globalization of those conflicts. Education and the means of mass communication ensure the rapid spread of normative conflicts, from one part of the world to another, where they reappear in a form which is different from the original one, due to the modification brought by traditions and local problems. If we turn our attention to social order, the most important consequence of modernization is the spread of values and beliefs. The way in which European religious wars were mediated

is interesting because, in those cases where violent and coercive oppression did not solve problems, mediation took the form of territorial hope, through the formula *cuius regio eius religio*—introduced by the Westphalian Peaces. Neither Catholicism, nor Protestantism were declared dominant in a certain territory, and those who did not accept this aspect were presented with the option of emigration. This formula of normative split rarely functions in modern societies. In its place, another formula must be found, a formula that represents institutional separation and diversity (Berger 1998, 352–353).

Nietzsche's' analysis on "decadence and nihilism" outlines the problem of cultural violence in modernity, raising the structure of conflict differentiation to a global vision over the history of culture, which is defined as a confrontation between opposite types. Nietzsche's' systemic focusing on cultural decadence opens up a new area of investigation placed at the intersection of the anthropological, cultural and political spheres. His work also reveals the reason why any analysis of cultural violence becomes, at least partially, blocked in the system of conflict differences which he very much criticized. As Derrida and Foucault have shown, no one can "make" the history of culture after Nietzsche, if the moments of "difference" that undermine the coherence of history are not looked up or if the re-evaluation of the present is not forced (for a full analysis of Nietzsche's, Derrida's and Foucault's conceptions, see Bogue and Cornis-Pope 1996, 3–4).

Anthropologists have defined culture in various ways. Thus, culture is "an entire complex which includes knowledge, faith, law, moral, habits and any other capacities and customs acquired by the human being, as a member of the society" (Adler 1992, 14–15). Values are profound and are part of the "internal culture" of each person because they are the fruit of the ability to learn of each human being (Lake 2000, 17).

We must also mention David Ausburger who referred to the impact of culture over the attitudes towards conflict and its mediation. According to the author, conflict is not correctly managed by Western individualist cultures. The consequences of this aspect are negative both for the individuals and for the society they live in. According to the traditional collectivist societies from the East and the South, there are two strong forces which unite groups: honor and shame. Within these societies, mediation is considered to be a common necessity. In opposition with these societies, modern Western ones are based on law, on an abstract codification system and on jurisprudence. According to Ausburger, in Western individualist societies there are a number of "conflict myths" which are the reason why people do not desire to resort to mediation, as for example: confession, repentance, restitution, reconciliation and forgiveness. As mediation has much to offer in order to re-establish the "sanity" of people, the author recommends a new perception of conflict and mediation

which would lead to the creation of an entirely new intercultural perspective on conflict and justice (Ausburger 1992; Ancheş 2011, 67–68).

Clarifying Terminology

IN ORDER to pass on to analyzing intercultural mediation, first we need to clarify the new terminology associated with this special topic. In order to do so, we must make reference to the roots of this new terminology. As Mario Ricca observed, recent migration phenomena, the ethnic diversity of the states' populations, the globalization of communication and the alteration of traditions have all lead to the formation of a family of terms and concepts, all with reference to culture: "multiculture, multicultural, multiculturalism, interculture, interculturalism, intercultural, cross-cultural, transcultural, infra-cultural, intra-cultural, intraculturalism." Each of these terms indicates a different relationship to culture, and also different possibilities to interpret it, according to different national, international, supranational, communitarian and interindividual contexts. The author also notes that, in common language, these terms are usually used in an imprecise manner, being often considered as synonymous. Their indiscriminate use depends on the fluidity of their significance and it is not just the "fruit of the ignorance of the specialists in the social sciences." The overlaps in those terms' significance is an effect of the novelty of the phenomena that they designate (Ricca 2008, 7). Due to the fact that the purpose of our research is not the exhaustive analysis of these terms, we are going to concentrate our attention only on the ones which strictly concern our approach.

Before referring to the significances ascribed to the term "intercultural," we consider that it is necessary to make a few references to the senses attributed to another term—"multicultural"—which must not be confused with the first. The resemblances which can be observed between these two terms refer to the fact that both of them have two senses, a descriptive one and a prescriptive one, but also to the fact that both of them refer to "culture."

From the descriptive point of view, the term "multicultural" generally designates the phenomenon of the simultaneous presence, on a certain territory or within a certain communicative circuit, of some individuals who belong to different cultures (Ricca 2008, 8; Cesareo 2002). The expression "multicultural society" indicates the contexts in which social exchanges are characterized by cultural difference. From the prescriptive point of view, the term indicates both multiplicity and difference. In this sense, the difference between cultures is perceived as a value. Cultures are interpreted as relatively distinct universes, united by a special promiscuity (as the territory of a state), which are unable to inte-

grate. From this perspective, the phenomenon of integration has negative connotations because it represents the loss of the cultural identity (Ricca 2008, 8).

The term "multiculturalism" emerged starting from the prescriptive significance of the term "multicultural." It provides a normative indication for the management of social policies. Hence, the term "multicultural" represents policies oriented towards the valorization and conservation of cultural diversity, with the purpose of minimizing the fusion among native cultural heritages. In other words, "multiculturalism" is the opposite of the mediation of cultural differences. As Di Rosa shows, "multiculturalism" is a process which means inserting the migrants in structures and in the social and political culture, through different procedures and in different domains. This process could cause social instability leading to conflicts that cannot be managed without eliminating the tension caused by the lack of communication and by cultural diversity (Di Rosa 2005, 67).

In order to see the meaning of intercultural mediation, first we must clarify the significance attributed to the term "intercultural." According to Ricca, in its descriptive sense, the term indicates the inevitability of the relativity of cultural factors of life within social relations. Generally, the relation with *the other* determines a relativity of the intrinsic point of view. The greater the cultural difference, the greater this relativity. In the multicultural society, the presence and the continuity of an individual who has a different culture creates different forms of conditioning which operate even over the representatives of the native culture. This conditioning can spread to some sectors of the cultural life only through interdependence. The relativity of the intrinsic point of view becomes an instrument for the involvement of *the other* within the communicative relations oriented towards the accomplishment of some practical purposes. In turn, the necessity of connecting practical purposes lifts the level of interculturality from communication to cooperation. From the relativity of the intrinsic point of view towards the communicative purposes we move to the mediation of behavioral strategies that have a collaborative purpose. The resulting intercultural mediation is exclusively devoted to the practical objectives specific to its realization. No matter how inevitable it is, in the actual multicultural social contexts, this dimension of interculturality is perceived to be significantly less considered (Ricca 2008, 8–9).

In the prescriptive sense, the term "intercultural" is considered a "project-term" used in order to indicate the creation of an organic code of communication and practical action for the management of the relationships between subjects belonging to different cultures. Defining the contents of this code of communication requires relativity and the mediation of the universes of discourse, of the contexts of meanings generated by different cultures. The media-

tion of the points of view is replaced, for practical purposes, by the attempt to shape a platform of equivalence between meanings, values and purposes which articulate the whole sphere of different cultural knowledge. The prescriptive interculturality does not consist of strategic mediation, meant to reach singular practical objectives, but it coincides with setting the context of meanings. More specifically, the term "intercultural" indicates the formation of a vocabulary for individual communication and action in a multicultural society. Hence, the term "intercultural" expresses a static reality, but also the necessity to trigger an understanding, a translation and a negotiation process through different universes of culture and through their social projection in relation to the needs, interests, values and purposes of the individuals, and the relative manner of projecting them within different relational fields. In respect to the descriptive sense of the term "intercultural," its prescriptive sense presents a major cognitive or theoretical connotation, in which it conserves, in a more opened horizon, an eminently pragmatic orientation (Ricca 2008, 9–10).

Along with Ricca, we also consider that it is useful to point out that this theoretical connotation is also present in the terms "transcultural" and "cross-cultural," but not in their usage. Either way, the knowledge of other cultural systems presents itself as a main purpose. The use of these terms does not indicate the instant elaboration, through different cultural knowledge, of the interface oriented towards supporting a practice of the relations between individuals and groups, but it emphasizes the comparison between different universes of culture and the discovery of the findings and of the uniformity (symmetry and equivalence) between structures and the manner of their internal organization (Ricca 2008, 10).

Intercultural Mediation

RECOGNIZING THAT everyone has unique traditions, values, and beliefs that are important to them (ethnic identity, language, religion and formal/informal community, neighborhood, and family connections) helps us see how we are connected with each other. For the members of a multicultural society, the activation of their own cultural identity is very important either in social relations, in a comprehensive manner, or within the relations which are legally regulated. Apart from knowing our own identity, the value system of the social group to which we desire to belong is also important. The adherence of someone to a group or to another predetermined identity can limit the subjects' liberty, because the adherence has practical consequences on the subjective interests of the individuals and on their legal relevance. The limits imposed on

personal liberty are a threat for the autonomy of the personal identity edification process. A similar danger is represented by the creation of cultural stereotypes and culture reification. In these cases, the problem is represented by the loss of interest for the identification index, because culture is "brought to the level of a caricature" (Ricca 2008, 71–72).

A possible solution to these problems would be the insurance of a certain cultural diversity through different normative previsions. Within this context, the law must allow subjects, in predefined situations, to exercise their own cultural membership, but this type of normative strategy can also generate difficulties. First of all, as Ricca pointed out, there is a problem concerning the relationships between the subjects of different cultures, relationships that must be coordinated by equality and legal parity. Hence, the excess of norms in favor of some subjects can be regarded as unfair. Second, there would be the problem regarding the activation of the prerogative of ensuring equal legal effects in all situations. Normative differentiation on cultural bases must adapt to the inter-subjective relationships through membership in a certain culture (Ricca 2008, 73).

The observation of the cultural landscape gives us the possibility to see many examples of intercultural mediation throughout history. The most frequent example of intercultural mediation is represented by the efforts made for the translation of literary works from one language to another. This example is given in order to show that the translation of any text is not made ad litteram, but through the cultural perspective in which the paper was initially written. As it is shown in the research literature, the obsession for the act of mediation and for all that it implies has served as a common ideological function for writers. The structural conditions of the act of "translation," of "mediation," and of "correspondence" between texts have their origin in an ideological complex of the "identity" which helped many writers in the act of translation. The laws of translation, of mediation and of correspondence brought about the denaturalization of the identity and territoriality discourse (Spector 2000, 195–196). The term "acculturation" is used in order to show the exchange of cultural values between nations and people, for the improvement of the "universal heritage" (Zăpârţan 2001, 221).

Intercultural mediation is frequently practiced in the problems caused by migration, poverty, social rupture and vulnerability, in which understanding is necessary for existence itself and for the recognition of the individual. According to the research literature, the main categories of migrants are: asylum seekers, working migrants, refugees, workers with temporary working contracts, victims of international people trafficking, permanent immigrants, families who accompany the workers with temporary working contracts, foreign students, detached from development and interior movements (Prevoteau and Hloschek 2008).

Intercultural mediation is a process through which "persons who come from different linguistic and cultural contexts share, through communication, their own cultural world," respecting and accepting the original cultural world, "favoring the opening of the spaces of recognition and of socialization with persons who belong to the original ethnic group" (Belpiede 1998, 84). Another definition of intercultural mediation is the one presented by Antonio Chiarenza, who refers, in an explicit way, to more than one field of intervention of the process of intercultural mediation. According to this author, intercultural mediation represents "*the recognition* of the cultural codes of those involved in communicative relationships—migrant patient/provider, providers/migrant groups—in order to overcome barriers and to facilitate self determination; *the facilitation* of exchanges between the various parties—migrant users/service organizations/migrant communities—in order to anticipate possible misunderstandings; *the identification* and *the encouragement* of opportunities for dialectic interaction between people of different socio-cultural backgrounds; and *the support* of the organizational context in the process of making services appropriate for migrant users" (Chiarenza 2011, 2). We can easily see that this is a complex definition because, unlike Belpiede, whose definition can be framed in the category of simple and concise definitions, Chiarenza defines intercultural mediation by using no less than five explicative elements of this collocation: recognition, facilitation, identification, encouragement and support, for each of these elements providing its own definition. Making reference to a pluralist society, to cooperation, reciprocity, coexistence, integration and the micro and macro levels of the society, Berhanu defines intercultural mediation as "a process of promoting a pluralist society in which all members can exercise egalitarian cooperation, reciprocity, coexistence and integration while simultaneously encouraging the diverse communities and/or cultural/ethnic groups comprising the larger system to foster 'connectedness' and identification with their primordial groups in an effort to enrich and nurture meaningful life, both at micro and macro societal levels" (Berhanu 2006, 4).

There are many fields where intercultural mediation can intervene. Among those we recall: the receiving centers, the schools, the hospitals, the social services, the courts, the prisons and the orientation centers. One of the most recent ambitions of mediation application concerns the state of conflict which derives from the meeting of different cultures with Western culture. Over the last years, the migrations faced by Western states have put them into the position of adapting, by adopting different instruments appropriate for the diversity brought up by the immigrants. As a result of this effort of classifying cultural elements was created the figure of the intercultural mediator. The intercultural mediator works for the consolidation of the cultural identity of immigrants, for restoring

the historical strength of their roots, of their belonging to a reality which, in many cases, is not the one of the industrialized Western society and does not have the same parameters of reference, the same criteria, values and ideals. The mediator has, as a first instrument, the possibility offered by language. Intercultural mediation is a process characterized by professionalism, which is based on the knowledge of the language of *the other*. Therefore, the intercultural mediator is, first of all, a linguistic interpreter who understands the necessity of favoring knowledge and of using the proper services, with the intention of agreeing on the access to the same living conditions (Tiberio and Cericola 1999, 84–85).

In order to understand the tasks of the mediator it is important to distinguish him from the interpreter. Baraldi and Gavioli have presented the interpreter's cultural task as a dialogue coordinator and interpreter. From this point of view, interpreters may facilitate or inhibit the expression of personal interest and perceptions by the active listening and appreciation of the participants' contributions. Interpreters can thus help in promoting the distribution of active participation, addressing the participants' needs and interests. The authors have noted that the interpretation of dialogue is a type of interaction that is receiving more and more interest in studies on translation and intercultural communication and represents the institutional talk involving speakers of different languages and an interpreter providing translation services. This kind of talk is referred to as "interpreter-mediated interaction" or "interpretation of dialogue" (Baraldi and Gavioli 2007, 155).

In turn, others make a clear difference between the intercultural mediator and the social interpreter. In the opinion expressed by Temmerman and Clijsters, the first has the mission *to facilitate* communication and to solve communication problems by dissolving the causes of linguistic or cultural miscommunication; *to partly interpret*; *to offer emotional support* and *to report* different problems related to racism and discrimination. On the other hand, the mission of the social interpreter is *to transfer* messages as completely and accurately as possible; *not to interfere* with the content of the information; and *to act* on site and through interpreting by telephone (Temmerman and Clijsters 2011). According to Pentini, the intercultural mediator has the following tasks: *interpretation*, *translation*, *facilitation*, *information*, *orientation*, *accompanying*, *promoting the culture* of the migrants, conflict *prevention* and *management*, *exchange* agent, *recognition* and *value* (Pentini 2009).

As we have anticipated above, after being confronted with the migrant flow, many European states have felt the obligation to adopt normative measures for the development and consolidation of intercultural mediation. Within this context, we recall the example given by Italy which has been the objective of the immigrants who, especially in the last two decades, have settled on the Ital-

ian territory. This is the reason why the Italian immigration policy has been in the center of attention. This represented a starting point in the development of intercultural mediation. The need for linguistic and cultural mediation emerged in Italy as a result of the "invasion" of a mass of people of different nationalities, which had to be integrated. As we are going to see, in Italy's case, integration has a positive sense and does not come in contradiction to intercultural mediation. The role of the intercultural mediator was shaped within this context. The purpose of the Italian strategy of intercultural mediation was to facilitate the integration of the immigrant subjects. This is a process which implied the establishment of the conditions in which the "new citizens" use and have access to services and resources on the Italian territory. Yet, it also implied much more than the recognition of the needs, and of the linguistic, cultural and religious differences of the immigrants. Intercultural mediation and the mediator have been implemented, for the first time, at national level, through Law no. 40/1998, which established the legal framework that stated the principles and the objectives in the field (Di Rosa 2005, 65–66).

The ways of intervention were multiple and ranged from a spontaneous mediation to a formal one. In the first case, the intercultural mediation was made by a member of the original community, in an unprofessional manner. In the second case, it was made by some mediators who represented the structures of the internal organizations, public or private, and their action took different forms. Thus, one can talk about intercultural mediation actions in some particular cases or about institutional actions which were part of the services ensured. The purposes, in this second case, were: the elimination of the cultural obstacles which made difficult the communication within the services and institutions destined to strangers; the quality improvement and the adequacy of services destined to strangers; the promotion of activities for conflict resolution between the ethnic communities and the native ones; and identifying the opportunities of preventing and suppressing conflicts. Thus, all associations made efforts, using the linguistic and cultural mediation, for the recognition of all fundamental rights. Starting from the existent experience, it led to a certain agreement over the functions that the intercultural mediator must have in practice: on the one hand, he must pursue the objective of solving the "dysfunctions" of the services, favoring the access to them and mediating the exclusion situations, and, on the other hand, he must pursue the objective involving the "transformation" and innovation of services, in order to open them to the "new and diverse" solicitations. At the beginning, this form of intervention was dedicated exclusively to the first contact with the immigrants. Today, one must take into consideration at least three different utilizations of intercultural mediation in Italy: intercultural mediation for the newcomers, intercultural mediation for the resident im-

migrants, and intercultural mediation as an activity of social reinsertion for the new generation (Di Rosa 2005, 67–68).

Intercultural mediation for the newcomers was developed as a consequence of the need to face the immediate needs, and to facilitate the inter-ethnic communication (De Vita and Berti 2002). The necessity of introducing the person of the mediator was first seen in the domain of social and healthcare services. Here it was first felt the need for someone who could improve the perception of the newcomers on the inadequacy of those services to their necessities. Analyzing the functions of the intercultural mediator, one can distinguish some of his main responsibilities: he must create a link between services and the new users through translation and information; he must try to maintain the mutual respect between services and their users; and he must find new ways of dialogue with the services, so that those services understand their aspirations, needs, and expectations. Within this context, the opinions on the role of the intercultural mediator are divided within the research literature. On one side, there are those who claim that intercultural mediation must be spontaneous and informal, and in this case the mediator accomplishes a voluntary activity. On the other side, there are those who argue that the mediator must have a professional role, and his work must be considered a social one, because it responds to a sum of specific needs. The dominant opinion is that the services of the mediator are complementary to the social services. From this point of view, it is considered that the mediators must be integrated within such services (Di Rosa 2005, 68–70).

Intercultural mediation for the resident immigrants refers to the peaceful inclusion of the new cultures in the Italian culture. The objective of this mediation is represented by the interest in conflict prevention by helping residents to express their demands, by translating and de-codifying their demands in legal terms. It is thought that only by adopting this policy the transition towards the recognition of the immigrants' rights can be achieved. Thus, mediation facilitates the integration of immigrants, simplifying the contact with them and with their own culture. Their integration involves the recognition of the needs, of the cultural, linguistic and religious differences of the newcomers. Law no. 40/1998 recognizes the diversity of cultural backgrounds of the immigrants, which is not in opposition with the fundamental values of the Italian society. Intercultural mediation for resident immigrants is characterized by the attempt at creating a network of belonging, in order to ensure interaction in an original way, through the institutions of the state, through communication, or in a less effective way, through political games (Di Rosa 2005, 71–73).

Intercultural mediation as an activity of social reinsertion for the new generation makes reference to the fact that the index of analysis of the strangers' integration is represented by the number of their children, who are enrolled in Italian

schools. There is no doubt that mediation represents a fundamental dimension of intercultural education, but it does not necessarily represent the single function of the mediator (Di Rosa 2005, 74–75). Through intercultural mediation within the educational system, the mediator must shape an interactive space, outlining the cultural differences. The intercultural mediator within the educational system must have the following skills: teaching skills—this includes the fact that he must have good knowledge of communication, animation, group coordination, personal identification and management techniques; he must have good knowledge of the Italian language and of the language specific to the ethnic group; he must have the capacity of communicating through relations building; and he must also have competences in conflict prevention and management (80–81).

The intervention of intercultural mediation in the European healthcare system is justified by two essential reasons. First of all, there is the context of international migrations, and second, there is the complexity of the healthcare system. In order to overcome these two obstacles, foreign patients have the following alternatives: they either turn to an interpreter, or to an association specialized in intercultural mediation. Cultural diversity must be taken into consideration in the medical policies, but this is being done differently in the European states. Thus, in Belgium and Sweden there is a national volunteer policy, while in France there are different initiatives of the associative sector. Those differences are justified both from a historical and a political point of view. Regarding the functioning of the associations specialized in intercultural mediation, differences were observed concerning the competences, the practices and the collaboration of mediators with different public services, the means of surveillance and the continuing training, and also the absence of the evaluation of interventions (Bouznah 2008).

The intervention of intercultural mediation in the healthcare system is also justified by the necessity for the medical services to be accessible and understandable for all immigrant patients. Within this context, intercultural mediation is a precious tool of the healthcare system destined for immigrants, but this does not mean that the medical institution can delegate its own responsibility. It is imperative that doctors train alongside intercultural mediators, but also that intercultural mediation "lives in a world of evidence based medicine." The role of the intercultural mediator within the mediation process in the healthcare system takes the form of helping the understanding by the patient of the theory which justifies the medical intervention, of helping to overcome the impasse of the two discourses, and also of helping to maintain the continuity of the patient's cultural world. The intervention of the intercultural mediator has some limits concerning: his capacity to convey the logic of the doctors' intervention—an aspect

which often determines the acceptance by patient of the medical project without offering him first the means to understand the functioning and the logic of the medical service; the doctors' reticence to share with the intercultural mediator the medical file; and the impossibility to question the pertinence of the health-care project—which can bring the risk of ascribing the failure of the therapeutic project to the patients' cultural difference. In order to overcome these limitations, an association has been proposed between the intercultural mediator and the doctor who works in an intercultural environment (Bouznah 2008).

Referring to the intercultural mediator as an interpreter and dialogue co-ordinator, Baraldi and Gavioli wrote that the doctors' expressions of personal interest or appreciations of the participants' experience might either be directly responded to by the interpreter, or translated for the patients. This leads to different functions of the "dialogic actions" in the intercultural interaction. While support and appreciation are expressed by interlocutors towards each others' actions and experiences, a failure to translate such support and appreciation leads to the creation of a certain distance between doctor and patient. Interpreters' formulations through the translation process promote triadic affective interactions, fulfilling two key functions in the intercultural mediation, that of giving voice to the patients' emotions and that of supporting a patient-centered medical interaction. The analysis of the triadic management of affective expectations suggests that dialogue interpreting can empower the voice of either the patients or of the healthcare providers, thus constructing and enhancing intercultural mediation (Baraldi and Gavioli 2007, 155, 172).

As a consequence of the fact that European societies have became more and more multicultural and multi-denominational, because of their history and their geographic and strategic situation, but also due to their economic and commercial traditions, the five European regions from the Alps–Mediterranean Area (Liguria, Piedmont, Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur, Rhône-Alps and Valle d'Aosta) have been the destination of the migrant flows, especially of the ones which came from the south of the Mediterranean Sea. The historic multiculturalism of these European riparian regions, close to the Mediterranean basin, has endured for a long time in Europe, without any problems related to one's belonging to the regional and national communities of reference. Thus, in a city like Marseille, the population has multiple origins, and the religious landscape comprises Jewish and Christian communities (Catholics, Protestants, Armenians), different Muslim communities from the Maghreb, the Comoros and from Sub-Saharan Africa, but also communities native of Southeast Asia (Buddhists and Hindus). This kind of diversity is considered to be an asset from the point of view of the human resources of the country, region or city. This rises many problems regarding the solutions to the problems created by the cultural diversity, in

spite of the accelerated mutations of our societies, in the context of the current economic crisis which engenders poverty and social exclusion, developing both identity withdrawal and communitarianism, but also the rejection of *the other*'s culture, in most cases without any knowledge. The risk that some members of those cultural groups, who are confronted with social and economic difficulties or who have to face the geostrategic tensions, might develop certain reactions has increased. The tendency towards cultural exclusivism is in full development. This aspect is contradictory to the social contract and endangers the principles of coexistence that are the essence of the European societies (Projet 2010–2011, 2–3). The most appropriate example which supports this theory is represented by the attacks in Oslo (Norway), from 22 July 2011, which have been qualified by French and German officials as being "a failure of multiculturalism."

Within this context, the Alps–Mediterranean Region along with the Euro PACA Region are interested in including among their objectives the guarantee of the unity in cultural and religious diversity, ensuring the benefits of multicul-turalism and social peace, but also the consolidation of social cohesion through economic development and through sharing the common values. In 2010 there occurred various exchanges between the PACA and IHEI Regions with the purpose of devising and putting into practice a multiannual action program referring to: actions of training people in the knowledge and practice of intercultural-ism; advertisement actions; and a Euro-Mediterranean intercultural, economic and social forum. In this direction we also recall: educative actions vis-à-vis the students of primary schools, colleges and high schools, in order to make them sensitive to *the others*; specific training addressed to the state's public agencies, at territorial, hospital level, which, in their work, encounter populations of differ-ent cultures, and which, in different situations, must explain to them the existing legal provisions and regulations and must clarify different misunderstandings; training actions for learning the religions and the great principles and values of the main religions which are present in Europe, and also of their history, prac-tice and internal diversity; actions of presenting the secular principles and the rules of coexistence; and also manifestations promoting art as "a link between cultures and people." Many of these actions have led to the formation of partner-ships with cultural associations.

Conclusions

IN THE context of globalization and multiculturalism, European cultural identity is facing different problems related to maintaining its specificity, but at the same time, it must accomplish a successful intercultural exchange,

through an open attitude towards understanding differences, through communication and the assimilation of new values. This complex process can only be accomplished through intercultural mediation which is steadily becoming a mainstream method to solve intercultural disputes and conflicts in Europe. We must agree with the conclusion reached by the research literature that, as a result of globalization and of the growing cultural diversity of the European population, mediations are full of intercultural elements (Stekelenburg 2009).

In the present paper we tried to analyze the main aspects of intercultural mediation, taking into consideration the multitude of works and research papers that concentrate nowadays on different aspects of intercultural mediation. In the introductory part we focused our attention on the importance of culture, negotiation and mediation for the formation of the European identity. With reference to the role of culture in this process, we defined negotiation and mediation as ways of keeping the balance within a society and of solving the identity issues, also presenting the tight relationship that the research literature has found between these two communicational procedures.

As we have already underlined, the research literature has given a lot of attention to intercultural mediation, but of real inspiration for our paper was the work of the Italian author Mario Ricca, *Oltre Babele: Codici per una democrazia interculturale* (Beyond Babel: Codex for an intercultural democracy), because there we found both a new family of terms and concepts that refer to culture ("multiculture, multicultural, multiculturalism, interculture, interculturalism, intercultural, cross-cultural, transcultural, infra-cultural and intracultural"), and the roots of this new terminology which are: the migration phenomena, the ethnic diversity of the states' populations, the globalization of communication and the altering of traditions. Starting from Ricca's work we made a short presentation of the double significance of the terms "multicultural" and "intercultural," of the "multicultural society" and of the term "multiculturalism."

The third part of our study is focused on intercultural mediation as one of the best solutions used in order to solve the problems raised by Europe's cultural diversity. Intercultural mediation is frequently present in the efforts made for the translation of literary works from one language to another, but it is also practiced in the problems caused by migration, poverty, social rupture and vulnerability. The definition of intercultural mediation was given from a triple perspective, the one presented by Belpiede who refers to intercultural mediation as a process of communication between people who belong to different cultures; the other belongs to Chiarenza who, from our own point of view, defines intercultural mediation in a more complex way, gathering for this purpose elements like: the fields in which intercultural mediation intervenes and different explanatory

elements; and the third presented by Berhanu who refers to a pluralist society promoted by the process of intercultural mediation, by cooperation, reciprocity, coexistence, and integration at the micro and macro levels of the society.

The central figure of intercultural mediation is represented by the intercultural mediator who, by virtue of his recognized skills and through language, works for the consolidation of the cultural identity of immigrants. Within this context, we considered it important to present the main features which distinguish the intercultural mediator from the social interpreter, but also to clarify that one of the main tasks of the intercultural mediator is represented by the ability to interpret different issues in the process of intercultural mediation.

The multitude of the intervention fields of intercultural mediation determined us to make reference, in a general way, to the normative measures that were taken in some European states for the development and the consolidation of intercultural mediation in the social and in the healthcare systems. For the social system, the example offered by Italy, in the context of approaching the flow of immigrants, was edifying in our approach, as we consider it the starting point in the development of European intercultural mediation. Used initially only for the first contact with the immigrants, the Italian strategy of intercultural mediation presently concentrates on the newcomers, on the resident immigrants, and on the social reinsertion of the new generation. For the intervention of intercultural mediation in the healthcare system, justified both by its complexity and by the immigrant flow, we directed our attention towards the examples offered by Belgium, Sweden and France which, from a political and historical point of view, are very different. Within this context, we directed our analysis towards the reasons that require intercultural mediation in the healthcare system, but also towards the special role of the intercultural mediator in this field.

We concluded our research on intercultural mediation with the solutions proposed in the Project named "Intercultural Mediation and Euro-Mediterranean Exchanges in PACA" for the years 2010–2011, for the European multiculturalism, by the five European regions from the Alps–Mediterranean Area which became aware of the dangers that rise from the unsolved problems related to Europe's cultural diversity, in the hope that all European countries will participate in the development of such projects and will implement such multiannual action programs with the same, if not with enriched objectives, in order to prevent intercultural conflicts, to promote interculturalism at all levels of the European society, and thus maintain peace in the European intercultural environment.

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Abstract
Intercultural Mediation

Nowadays a successful intercultural exchange requires the understanding of differences, through communication and assimilation of the new values brought up by the immigrant population in the European states. Intercultural mediation is one of the best methods used for solving the problems raised by Europe's cultural diversity, through negotiation, communication and the acceptance of the other, all of them with the help of the central figure of the intercultural mediator. In the present paper we have presented two of the most important fields of intervention for intercultural mediation, the social and the healthcare systems, through the examples offered by Italy, Belgium, Sweden and France, and some of the best solutions for its functioning, inspired by the Project proposed for the years 2010–2011 by five European regions from the Alps–Mediterranean Area which became aware of the necessity of intercultural mediation for conflict prevention and the preservation of peace in the European intercultural environment.

Keywords
intercultural mediation, negotiation, European cultural identity, intercultural mediator