

# State of the art research



## Common report on the current demand and supply of language interpreting and cultural mediation provision

**SMIIM – “Skills to maximise inclusion through interpreting and Mediation”**

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## Introduction

### About the project

There are 23 official languages, 60 dialects and many other languages spoken by migrants and asylum seekers in Europe. This diversity brings a cultural richness but at the same time potential barriers for speakers who are not fluent in the language of the country where they are living.

In the absence of fluency, it is important that there is support and assistance to access public services and achieve a sense of being settled in the local community. With recent migration patterns, there is an increased need for services such as interpreting, translation and community mediation to address the needs of those experiencing a language gap.

This project is therefore designed to help reduce the social barriers and economic obstacles faced by immigrants or refugees. Providing interpreters and cultural mediators with improved training means they are better placed to reduce communication barriers and draw public services and citizens closer together.

Over a period of two years (2017-2019), Community Action Dacorum will lead a partnership involving NGOs and other non-profit organisations in six European countries, utilising the partners' skills to produce training materials to support interpreters who find themselves at the forefront of problems involving social isolation among migrants.

The project will improve training provision for learners in the field of Interpreting and Cultural Mediation. It will start with in depth research and will be followed by the creation of a web portal with training materials, videos and a speech repository to enable learners to practice their speech and pronunciation with their peer learners. A manual and two training activities will complement the portal, and a badge system will be created to recognise learner achievement.

Lastly, the sustainability and legacy of the project is a priority, and forward planning will ensure that communication and dissemination plans create awareness of the project and the materials available.

### About the research

The general aim of the State of the art research is to provide a detailed overview of each partner country's approach to addressing the needs of the immigrants and refugees in terms of overcoming language barriers when they interact with various public sector agencies and bodies, local communities and the general society in their new home countries.

The State of the art research will be the basic stepping stone for the creation and delivery of the next project products and it aims to ascertain what is the current demand for, and

provision of, interpreting services and cultural mediation in each country with specific emphasis on the impact of recent migration waves in Europe.

In addition to mapping the current situation in each country, the research will provide added dialogue with individuals with key engagement roles with the target group to seek their views on the current gaps and how these are best addressed.

Before the start of the research phase all the partners conducted small desk researches in their countries in order to create a list with stakeholders to contact with and to get more detailed picture of the immigrant communities; the organizations dealing with immigrants and refugees; the current translation/interpreting services at local and national level; the public bodies dealing directly with the target group. These contacts were included in a dissemination database and will be used for future project engagement in terms of delivery, dissemination, attendance to events and providing expert opinion on the project local implementation.

The State of the art research was conducted by using a mixture of methods: desk research and face-to-face interviews. The groups of respondents who were addressed were discussed and defined at the kick-off meeting in Hemel Hempstead, United Kingdom (January 2018):

- Key public sector agencies working in the areas of Immigration; Health; Law enforcement; Education; Benefits; Social services and Housing (*depending on the country those agencies/institutions vary, so a brief explanation of which ones were chosen to participate in the research is included in this document*)
- Politicians
- NGOs working with migrants and refugees
- People who already work as interpreters and mediators
- Representatives of local immigrant and refugee communities

The research within the SMIIM project was conducted in six partner countries: United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Greece. Each partner undertook the research in their local area and after that wrote the findings into a report. A common report format and questions were created and agreed by all the partners also during the project kick-off meeting in January 2018. That ensured a consistency of approach and enabled the results from each partners' report to be meaningfully and objectively compared and summarized.

The questions used in the research were designed to provide pointers to the answers the research is looking for. They were not, however, exclusive, should other relevant information be available that also informs the subject matter.

## Findings

### Current migrant situation

#### Facts and figures

In recent years, millions of people have fled to Europe from conflict, terror and persecution in their own countries. In 2016, Germany alone received nearly 700,000 asylum applications. In total, European Union countries received nearly 1.2 million asylum requests that year. Of the 1.2 million first-time applications for asylum in the EU in 2016, over a quarter came from war-torn Syria, with Afghanistan and Iraq in second and third place respectively. In all these countries civilians face threats from extremist insurgent groups.

In 2017, 650,000 first-time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the EU. 538 000 of them were granted protection status in one of the Member States of the EU. Syria was the main country of citizenship of asylum seekers in the EU Member States in 2017, a position it has held each year since 2013. Iraqis accounted for 7 % of the total number of first-time asylum applicants and Afghans for 7 %, while Nigerians and Pakistanis accounted for 6 % and 5 % respectively.

According to the results from the desk research the migrants and refugees in the UK come from all around the world. The refugees under resettlement programmes are mainly from Syria. Other resettlement refugees and asylum seekers come mainly from Albania, Afghanistan & Vietnam (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) Syria, Pakistan, Sudan, Iraq, Iran, China and Afghanistan (adults).

UK government research shows that Poland, India and Pakistan are the main three foreign countries of birth of immigrants to the UK. Poland is the most common non-UK country of birth (an estimated 911,000 residents) and Polish the most common non-British nationality in the UK; in 2016 the number of Polish nationals resident in the UK reached 1 million people.

According to the German Federal Statistical Office there are around 10 million people with a foreign nationality currently living in Germany. The most common countries of origin are: Turkey, Poland, Syria (~ 450.000), Afghanistan (~ 190.000) and Iraq (~ 190.000). Since the end of 2014, the number of people coming to Germany to seek asylum has increased by 113%.

In Greece the large number of immigrants beginning since 1991 is from Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Poland who are mostly well integrated in the economic and social life of Greece. In the event of the recent migrant crisis in Europe, currently in Greece there are almost 80.000 refugees and asylum seekers mostly from Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan and many African countries.

In 2017, 119 369 migrants arrived in Italy. Till the 15th February 2018, 4731 new migrants arrived by boats. The tree main arrival points in 2018 are all in Sicily. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who arrived in Italy, by boat in 2018, mainly come from these ten countries:

Eritrea, Tunisia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Libya, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Guinea, Algeria and Morocco. Many migrants, who arrived in the last 2 years, come from Bangladesh and Gambia.

During 2015 almost 163,000 people sought asylum in Sweden (*Migrationsverket, 2016*), whilst in 2016 there were 28,939 asylum seekers and in 2017 25,666. Of those that sought asylum under the last three years, the largest group has been from Syria, followed by Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Stateless and Somalia (*Migrationsverket, 2015,16,17*).

Bulgaria was largely "spared" from the recent inflow of migrants into neighbouring Greece or Macedonia - but nevertheless migratory pressure reached a historic high over the past few years. A total of 61 958 have applied for status since the first surge of the migrant crisis in 2013, making up the majority of 83 225 people who have sought international protection with the Bulgarian refugee agency from 1993 till March 2018. The peak was in 2015, when 20 391 migrants and refugees applied for protection. These figures involve people of all nationalities, but the top 5 countries in the period 1993-2018 are Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan and Iran.

The distribution of first-time asylum applicants by sex shows that more men than women were seeking asylum. Among the youngest age group (0–13 years), males accounted for 52 % of the total number of applicants in 2017. There was a greater degree of gender inequality for asylum applicants who were 14–17 or 18–34 years old, where around three quarters of first-time applicants were male, with this share dropping back to just over three fifths for the age group 35–64. Across the EU-28, female applicants outnumbered male applicants in 2017 for asylum applicants aged 65 and over, although this group was relatively small, accounting for just 0.6 % of the total number of first-time applicants.

According to the data provided by Eurostat the most popular and desired destination country among migrants and asylum seekers is Germany, followed by Italy, France, Greece, UK, Spain, Sweden, Austria, Belgium and Netherlands.

The desk research in all partner countries showed similar reasons for migration. The migrants and refugees who originate from countries like Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan mainly name personal threats of war and persecution as the reason for leaving their home countries. Refugees from Eritrea and other African countries mainly fled from political persecution and economical reasons, while refugees from the Western Balkans mainly leave their home countries for lack of economic perspectives and discrimination against minorities. The migration of EU citizens within EU-28 is mainly due to economic and educational factors.

### National specifics: First steps and integration in local society

Unlike immigrants, refugees do not leave their country voluntarily and on their own will for economic, family or education reasons. Refugees flee wars, violations of human rights and risks to their life or security.

It is not possible, however, for the EU states to tell whether a person is an immigrant or a refugee right away. This is why, all European states have introduced a procedure by means of which it examines each individual case and assesses if the person concerned tells the truth and if he has the right to settle in the state as a refugee or does not have this right, as the reasons indicated do not conform to the law. While a decision is being made on this issue, those who have applied for recognition as refugees in any EU country have the right to remain on its territory without being returned either to the neighbouring country from which they entered or to their own country. Meanwhile and pending the final decision on their issue, these persons are called “asylum-seekers”, as it is not known yet if they will be recognized as refugees in Europe.

The procedures for obtaining a refugee or humanitarian status is more or less similar in each partner country. The details and specifics are described below, as well as information about the first steps after receiving an official status:

#### 1. Bulgaria

The law allows any foreigner to lodge an application for asylum in Bulgaria and to request protection and status in order to settle in Europe. The border police officers conduct an interview with all the foreigners whom they have detained. The interview is recorded in a written transcript. The transcript is read out to the foreigner by the interpreter and must be signed by the three parties – the foreigner, the interpreter and the police office conducting the interview.

Asylum can be requested before the Bulgarian authorities in an oral or written form. An oral application may be made by persons who are illiterate and cannot write. The application for asylum, protection and status in Bulgaria can be lodged before any state authority. Such applications are most often lodged before the police authorities of Border Police or the Migration Directorate. The immigration police have the right to detain foreigners who do not have regular documents and a residence permit in the special detention centres for irregular immigrants while their readmission or deportation is being organized.

As the immigration police, however, do not have interpreters available on the spot, in most cases assistance for writing the application is provided by the free-of charge lawyers of the Helsinki Committee who also ensure interpreters. The lawyers of the Helsinki Committee work for the United Nations, and regularly visit the police detention facilities.

The State agency for refugees is the Bulgarian state authority which is competent to examine each individual case and make a decision on whether a person will be granted asylum and status in order to stay in Bulgaria and Europe. During that time:

- the asylum seeker has the right to stay in the country, irrespective of whether he entered legally or illegally and whether he has regular national documents for travelling abroad;
- the asylum seeker has the right to be accommodated in a camp with the Agency for Refugees and receive food, health care and other social assistance;

In order to grant a refugee status or humanitarian status, the Agency for Refugees will ask the asylum seeker to appear for an interview where the individual case is thoroughly discussed. During the interview the asylum seekers are entitled to have an interpreter speaking a language that they understand. They can ask for another interpreter, if they do not understand the one designated for the interview. They also have the right to ask that the interview is conducted by an interviewer and an interpreter of the same sex – a man or a woman. The transcript of the interview must be read out to them in a language that they understand before it is given to them to sign it. The interviewer must make a decision on the case within 3 months from the registration.

After obtaining a status the refugees in Bulgaria are entitled to many rights, among which:

- Employment - Beneficiaries of international protection have the same employment rights as Bulgarian nationals. Asylum seekers have the right to work 3 months after the filing of their application for protection, as stipulated in Art. 29 (3) Law on Asylum and Refugees. Applicants are issued an official notice for their right to work by the State Agency for Refugees.
- Access to the labour market - With a view to facilitating the access to the labor market, beneficiaries of international protection have the right to register with the Employment Bureau Directorate with jurisdiction over their residence address on the grounds of Art. 18 (3) Employment Promotion Act. The rights under this chapter may be exercised by: persons who have been granted asylum and persons who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status

Beneficiaries of international protection have equal access and enjoy all the employment and training rights laid down in the Employment Promotion Act; any direct or indirect discrimination, privileges or restrictions for reasons of nationality, origin, gender, race, etc. are prohibited in the process of employment mediation.

- Validation and recognition of professional qualifications
- Vocational education and training
- Pre-school education - Minor beneficiaries of international protection are enrolled in kindergartens or schools under the terms and following the procedure for Bulgarian nationals laid down in Chapter Five, Section IV of the Pre-school and School Education Act and in Ordinance No 5 on Pre-school Education issued by the Minister of Education and Science.

- School education - in terms of inclusion in the education system of beneficiaries of international protection of school age have the same rights as Bulgarian nationals laid down in the Pre-school and School Education Act. The persons of school age are provided free education in state and municipal schools of the Republic of Bulgaria under the terms and conditions of the Bulgarian citizens.

- Access to higher education and lifelong learning

- Pension rights - Beneficiaries of international protection have the right to receive a pension under the terms and following the procedure for Bulgarian nationals upon the completion of a certain age and years of contribution. Beneficiaries of refugee or humanitarian status have the right to receive pensions that are not related to labor activity, such as social old-age pension and social disability pension.

## 2. Greece

Greece's legal system on asylum is based on the Geneva Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol, and on European Union (EU) legislation on the Common European Asylum System. In 2011, the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the EU found that Greece's asylum system suffers from "systemic deficiencies," including lack of reception centers, poor detention conditions, and the lack of an effective remedy. Greece adopted two action plans and legislation to address the problems. Significant gaps still remain, as exposed by the extraordinary migrant crisis of 2015 and as noted by the European Commission, which monitors closely Greece's compliance with EU asylum standards.

Greece has experienced the brunt of migratory flows during the refugee crisis due to its geographical location and as first country of entry pursuant to the Dublin Regulation. The crisis has also jeopardized the functioning of Schengen, a free area of movement and travel, as some EU countries have re-imposed border controls. Other Schengen Member States are considering reintroducing border controls if Greece fails to control the current migratory flow. Two relocation plans to transfer 66,000 refugees from Greece to other EU Member States are slowly being implemented. The European Commission has recommended a number of remedial measures for Greece, including efficient border management and implementation of the "hotspot" areas for the proper registration and fingerprinting of migrants.

Greek law grants a number of rights and benefits to persons granted refugee status or subsidiary protection.

- Family Unity: Greek asylum authorities are required to ensure the family unity of those who are recognized as refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. The families of such persons acquire the same status as the applicant, unless they do not wish to have such status.

- Residence Permit: Those who have been recognized as refugees or beneficiaries of secondary international protection are granted a residence permit for three years, which is renewable at the request of the person concerned, except for those who pose a threat to national security or to public safety due to conviction for an especially serious crime. The family members of refugees or beneficiaries of international protection are also granted a residence permit. Issuance and renewal of residence permits are subject to the same rules.
- Travel Documents: Recognized refugees are given travel documents to be able to travel abroad pursuant to the sample contained in the Annex of the Geneva Convention, unless reasons exist for banning the travel of the person concerned. The passport is granted by the Passport Office of the Greek Police and the required documents, duration, and renewal are determined by Law 3103/2003.

In Greece Third Country nationals are granted a number of rights and benefits:

- Education - Minors who have been recognized as refugees must have access to education. In addition, adults have access to educational training and development under the same terms and conditions as nationals.
- Social Welfare - Beneficiaries of international protection have access to social welfare under the same conditions as nationals.
- Access to Employment - Those who are recognized as persons in need of international protection have access to employment, either salaried or independent, pursuant to Presidential Decree 189/1998. The existing legislation on remuneration, terms of employment, training, and educational opportunities also apply to those who have been recognized as refugees. In practice, asylum seekers face a stark reality in Greece with regard to access to the labor market, due to the economic crisis and the overall absence of available job opportunities.
- Health Care - Recognized refugees or persons with subsidiary protection status have the right to health care on the same basis and conditions as nationals. Those who have special needs, such as pregnant women, the elderly, unaccompanied children, people who have been subject to torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment, or persons with disabilities, as well as trafficking victims and those who come from conflict areas, are entitled to sufficient medical care, including psychological care and support, under the same conditions as nationals. Presidential Decree 220/2007 provides for free healthcare services for all asylum seekers regardless of whether they are hosted in the reception facilities or not. However, access is conditioned depending on the economic status of the asylum seekers. In the case of asylum seekers with disabilities, a monthly allowance is granted subject to Health Committee approval.
- Unaccompanied Minors - Unaccompanied minors are provided with extra care and protection by the appropriate Greek authorities. Greece has allocated 402 reception facilities to accommodate unaccompanied minors. A joint ministerial decision, which was adopted in

February 2016, provides the procedure to determine whether an applicant is a minor. A guardian or a representative is appointed to represent the interests of the child and accommodations are provided either with family members, foster families, or special hospitality centers for minors. The European Commission's 2016 Recommendation to the Greek government asserted that the current guardianship system is problematic, since public prosecutors are appointed to represent minors and do not have appropriate resources to handle the large number of minors who need a guardian. The Commission also noted the lack of a guardianship system within the Greek legal system to enable prosecutors to appoint permanent guardians.

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- Repatriation - The appropriate Greek authorities are required to provide assistance to those refugees and those who possess subsidiary protection to return to their countries of origin, if they so wish.

### 3. Italy

If migrants want to follow a protection for procedure in Italy they follow this path.

- Application (Police, port, hotspot) following Dublin procedure
- Registration process
- Regular procedure (interview with territorial commission) or prioritized procedure (for manifestly well-founded claims, vulnerable applicants, CIE and CNDA applicants).

The application can obtain 4 different answers

- Refugee status (5 years permit)
- Subsidiary protection (5 years permit)
- Humanitarian protection (2 years permit)
- Rejection

These 3 last answers can do the object of a first appeal at the judicial civic court or a final appeal at the cassation court.

Regarding accommodation and assistance there are 3 steps:

- First aid and assistance: principal places of disembarkation
- First reception phase: in collective centers or in case of unavailability of places in temporary structures. Include CPSA, CARA: centers for accommodation of asylum seekers and CDA, CAS are temporary reception centers
- Second reception phase: carried by SPRAR: assistance and integration services provided. Asylum seekers already present in the territory may have access directly to the SPRAR.

Every migrant is allowed to work 6 months after filing the asylum form if the procedure is still going on or delayed. Otherwise he can start working within 60 days from the moment he

lodged the application. However, the stay permit cannot be permitted in a work permit. The SPRAR has implemented lots of integration programmes for migrants such as vocational training while the municipality can finance internships and specific employment bursaries.

The data provided by their latest annual report show that access to work is improving: Over 29689 migrants in the SPRAR welcomed in 2015 in Italy, 26000 training courses were launched. It's also 21000 of them that have followed Italian language courses. Overall, in 2015, it's 1972 migrants that managed to get a stable employment contract in several sectors: tourism, agriculture, services to the person. However, the possibility to attend vocational trainings is limited. The language barriers, the remote location of accommodation and lack of specific support focused on their needs are factors that do not help migrants finding a job. More generally, the ISTAT states that 59,6% migrants (including established migrants) are employed in Italy. If 70,9% of men have a job, only half of women (49,6%) do.

Regarding education, every minor in Italy, Italian or foreigner has the right and obligation until the age of 16 to take part in the education system. Asylum seeking children have access to the same public schools as Italian citizens and have the same assistance and arrangements in case they have special needs. They also follow Italian courses. But children face some issues: reluctance of school to have a high number of foreign students, refusal from family to attend classes, lack of places in schools near the accommodation centers, language barriers.

#### 4. Sweden

Once arriving in Sweden, asylum-seekers have a first meeting with the migration board to enter their application for asylum and are then later called for an interview, both of which should have an interpreter present. In October 2017, the time taken to process asylum cases was on average 14 months (Migrationsverket, October 2017). Prior to 20th July 2016 many asylum seekers were granted permanent residency. However, persons who receive a decision after this date are now granted a temporary residency permit, for three years if assessed to be a refugee and 13 months if assessed to be in need of subsidiary protection under a new temporary law. One can receive permanent residency if one has a job which meets the requirements of the migration board.

While waiting for their decision, asylum-seekers are invited to an initial health check-up where they are also given information about access to healthcare with the presence of an interpreter. The lack of language and societal knowledge can be seen as a hinder to newly arrived refugees wellbeing and thus their integration into Swedish society.

Once an asylum-seeker is granted residency, they enter the Swedish Public Employment Service's Establishment Programme (Etableringsplan), which is a two year programme that aims to support migrants' integration into society and the labour market. It includes a range of labour market activities, such as Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), validation of their qualifications, experience and competences. Newly arrived are also offered a civic orientation course, which covers 8 areas of knowledge: Coming to Sweden, Living in Sweden,

Supporting oneself and developing in Sweden, Individual rights and obligations, Caring for one's health in Sweden, Having a family and living with children in Sweden, Having influence in Sweden and Growing older in Sweden (SFS, 2010: 1138), which should preferably be offered in newly arrived's mother tongue.

However, even after completing these programmes, unemployment among foreign born inhabitants is still high at 15%, compared to 5% for native born Swedes according to the Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Sweden (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2016). Whilst the unemployment rate for foreign born inhabitants from outside the EU rises to around 22.5%. According to the National Audit Office (Riksrevision, 2015, s.10), 7-10 years after coming to Sweden, only 50% of new immigrants are in work. This time is shorter for men, as it takes between 3-7 years to find work, whereas, for women, it takes 9-11 years.

## 5. UK

After the asylum seekers arrive in the UK They "need interpreters to help with asylum claims (and are) housed in initial accommodation where they are screened. Those who look as though their asylum claim has a prospect of success are dispersed to asylum accommodation – those not into immigration detention. Those claiming to be children are age-assessed by social services/children services – those assessed as children enter supported housing or foster care depending on their age – adults as above.

Individuals can currently apply for a permanent residence document if they have lived in the UK for 5 years. They don't need a permanent residence card to confirm residence status in the UK unless:

- They have an extended family member of someone from the European Economic Area or Switzerland and are not an EEA or Swiss national
- They want to apply for British citizenship
- They want to sponsor a partner's visa application under the Immigration Rules

The residence card won't be valid after the UK leaves the EU

Resettled refugees have an employment rate of about 2% after two years in the UK. With intensive ESOL most should reach entry level 3 in 2- 2.5 years, the level at which paid work should be possible. EU workers have to work or not exercising treaty rights so have to be flexible and resilient workers.

## 6. Germany

The system of settling down in Germany is very complex and the steps to be taken by migrants depend on their country of origin and reasons for coming to Germany and can differ considerably.

All asylum seekers arriving in Germany must report to a state organisation on arrival or immediately thereafter. They can do so as soon as they reach the border or later within the country. This authority then sends asylum seekers on to the closest initial reception centre. Anyone who does not make a request for asylum until they are in Germany can report to a security authority (such as the police), an immigration authority, a reception facility or directly to an arrival centre. All individuals reporting as seeking asylum in the Federal Republic of Germany are registered. After registration, they receive a temporary identification document. Only then can the asylum procedure begin.

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Asylum seekers and asylum applicants receive benefits in kind at subsistence level during their stay and a monthly amount of money to cover their everyday personal needs. The nature and amount of the benefits are regulated by the Asylum-Seekers' Benefits Act. These include basic benefits for food, housing, heating, clothing, healthcare and personal hygiene, as well as household durables and consumables, benefits to cover personal daily requirements, benefits in case of sickness, pregnancy and birth, as well as individual benefits which depend on the individual case.

All asylum seekers have to file a personal application for asylum at the branch office of the Federal Office or at an arrival centre. An interpreter is available for this appointment to help applicants understand their rights and duties within the asylum procedure. They furthermore receive all the important information in writing in their native language. The personal interview is the applicant's most important appointment within his/her asylum procedure. The objective of the interview is to learn of the individual reasons for flight, to obtain more information and to resolve contradictions. The interview will be held by a 'decision maker'. Apart from the applicant and decision maker there will also be an interpreter booked by the Federal Office. In the case of unaccompanied minors their legal guardian will also be present during the interview. The Federal Office decides on the asylum application on the basis of the personal interview and of a detailed examination of documents and items of evidence. According to the German Asylum Act there are four forms of protection – entitlement to asylum, refugee protection, subsidiary protection, or a ban on deportation. If the conditions for one of these forms of protection do not apply, applicants will receive a negative notice together with a notice of intention to deport against which they can appeal. The final decision of the Federal Office – the conclusion of the asylum proceedings – is followed either by a right of residence or by a right to remain, or by an obligation to depart.

Asylum seekers who are entitled to asylum, refugee protection or subsidiary protection have full access to the German labour market either on an employment basis or as self-employed. For asylum seekers with a ban on deportation, some restrictions apply. All four are entitled to the same benefits as German nationals.

Citizens from non-EU countries who have a work permit also have access to the German labour market. However, they are not entitled to social benefits until they have worked in Germany for five years. The same goes for citizens from EU countries.

Once adult migrants are registered in Germany, they are entitled to an integration course. These courses consist of a 600-lesson language course and a 100-lesson orientation course. Both courses end with an official test. For children aged 6 years or older it is mandatory to attend school. In order to obtain a place in a school, parents need to register their child with the school board. In Berlin, each child has to participate in a German language test carried out by the coordinating authority and must undergo a school health examination.<sup>10</sup> In most schools there are preparatory German classes for migrant children.

## Language interpreters vs. Cultural mediators

### Difference

Although not officially recognised professions in most countries, in the last few years there is a huge demand of language interpreters and cultural mediators in Europe. The concept of cultural mediation wasn't present in Europe up until recently when the intensive migrant flow from the Middle East and Africa provoked many countries to search new ways to cope with the huge cultural and social differences and barriers during the integration process of the newly arrived within the local communities.

The desk research in the partner countries led to similar conclusions. Both types of services are used in similar contexts but there is a significant difference between a language interpreter and a cultural mediator. The roles of both specialists are very clearly distinguished in Germany, while in Greece the difference between the language interpreter and the cultural mediator is still indistinct and blurry.

In Germany, apart from the conventional interpreters, in terms of the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers exist language and integration mediators as well as cultural mediators. The language and integration mediators are almost always bi-lingual and bi-cultural. They are fluent in their mother tongue and the host country language. Language and integration mediators usually have a migrant background and are deeply connected with the migrant community. Thus they build the connection between the migrants and people working in the public sector, mainly in education, health and social services. The cultural mediators moderate the conflict resolution process by facilitating a structured and open dialogue. During this process, they also look at the complex conflict situations through an intercultural perspective.

In UK and Bulgaria and often in Sweden the term 'cultural mediator' almost always is interpreted as an 'advocate', such has a 'health advocate' and these professionals work primary in the health care services. It is usually the person who can act on behalf of a patient, and takes responsibility in ensuring that the needs of the patient are expressed and taken on board by medical staff. They help, through demanding further clarification from public staff when communicating about matters that may not be clear to patients due to cultural and/or language barriers.

In Italy, as well as in the other partner countries the main difference of the cultural mediator with the language interpreter is the cultural awareness, and the deep understanding of the sector he is working with: law, education, health administration. Besides, the cultural mediator has a perfect knowledge of the services offered by the country/city: accommodation, work, social and health services, schools, specialized lawyers... He tries to reduce the local barriers while helping migrants to integrate in the country they moved to, telling them their duties, rights and possibilities. The cultural mediator is also a communication master, who knows how to work within a team and to implement trust with the migrants.

The essential difference between both specialists could be summarised as follows: the language interpreter is just a ‘messenger’ between two parties, absolutely neutral, impartial and should only interpret exactly what is said in the room, even when it is obvious that one of the parties experience difficulties in understanding what the other party meant. The interpreter could not interfere in any way in the conversation with personal clarifications and further comments. His job is to translate communication from one language to another.

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The cultural mediator from other side, plays a completely different role. He tries to reduce the language and cultural barriers and improve the understanding between the two parties. The cultural mediator is empathetic, sociable and flexible. His main task is to ease and improve the communication and understanding between a migrant/refugee and public authorities or other institutions using his deep cultural and social awareness about the local community.

The language interpreter interprets solely the language while the cultural mediator, apart from the language, interprets all other signals from a cultural and social perspective. In all partner countries the vast majority of cultural mediators are people with migrant background, who are bi-lingual and bi-cultural, while the interpreters are not necessarily bi-lingual or bi-cultural, just fluent in their mother tongue and at least one foreign language.

### **Educational level or professional qualifications**

Given the massive migrant waves floating Europe during the last years, the role of the language interpreters and cultural mediators is crucial and it is extremely important that these experts have comprehensive and highly professional education and training.

#### *Cultural mediator*

Considering that ‘cultural mediator’ is not a formally recognised profession in most countries, in Greece and Bulgaria there are no courses or specialised trainings for those professionals. As a result, public authorities and other institutions tend to employ cultural mediators simply based on their origin or their interest and desire in working as mediators, and not according to their education/academic background or previous relevant experience.

In Greece a basic training is offered only by certain NGOs, and it lasts only a couple of weeks before the mediators could start their job. Except for that, seminars of short duration are also provided from time to time through voluntary private initiatives. No such initiatives are organised in Bulgaria. Although the basic trainings give some idea about interpreting, the whole effort remains incomplete, as it can only focus on the very basics and cannot offer an in-depth analysis to give candidates all the necessary elements required to perform the task. And, as might be expected, such fragmented training cannot lead to a proper certification, accreditation, or professional stability.

In Germany, the education and training of cultural mediators varies considerably from workshops organized by big companies for selected employees to formal trainings with a standardized curriculum finishing with an official exam. In order to obtain the official job title of an intercultural mediator, training courses are a mixture of e-learning and face-to-face workshops consisting of 450 lessons. Topics include intercultural communication, diversity,

understanding conflicts, mediation & legal background and intercultural mediation in practice. This type of training course is also funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

There is not a unique path to become cultural mediator in Italy. Indeed, Italian cultural mediators graduate in different subjects such as Social Sciences, Education Sciences or Psychology with a special focus on professional education. Some universities, though, offer bachelor's and master's degrees called "Linguistic and cultural mediation". One of the best alternative ways is to follow a specialized training, which is offered by certain regions or municipalities.

In Sweden there is still no formal professional qualification or educational programmes for the profession 'cultural mediator'. However, the individual initiatives which offer cultural mediation services have some requirements for mediators and also provide them with training. One of the initiatives we interviewed emphasised that they see cultural mediation as a career development for interpreters and prefer that their cultural mediators have also completed the Basic Training qualification in interpreting, though some emphasised that no formal education level is required and that they have excellent cultural mediators who haven't completed secondary school.

### *Language interpreter*

Formal interpreting training in Greece is offered by two state universities (Ionian University and Aristotle University) and a couple of private colleges or institutions. Formal training is a basic step leading to interpreter certification and admission to a professional association, such as the Panhellenic Association of Professional Translators Graduates of the Ionian University (PEEMPIP), the Panhellenic Association of Translators (PEM), and the Hellenic Association of Conference Interpreters (SYDISE). However, existing training programs focus mainly on European languages, namely English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, etc., in combination with Greek, and they do not cover the so-called "rare" languages of refugees.

Even though there is a huge demand for interpreters in Germany, there are relatively few education and training providers. Currently, there are ten universities offering study programs for translators and interpreters. However, none of the programs focus on community or public service interpreting. Furthermore, there are ten private academies offering similar training programs. In addition, there is a network of organizations providing training courses for language and integration mediators all over Germany. The training courses have a duration of 18 months and consist of 2000 lessons and 3 internships of 12 weeks at health, social and educational institutions in total. The theoretical part of the training is divided into 3 parts of 6 months each. The topics include social and communicative competence, interpreting practice, migration, introduction to the three sectors education, health and social services, professional German and other related subjects. The training course is aimed at people with a migratory background who receive social benefits and have a level of B2/C1 in German. In certain cases it is possible to cover the costs through the Jobcenter or 'education vouchers' issued to eligible persons by the Jobcenter or Employment Agency

In the UK, the national benchmark for public service interpreting is the DPSI (Diploma in Public Service Interpreting) level 6. The Level 3 community interpreting certificate is the

nationally recognised qualification for people who are fluent in English and another language. This is usually up to 160 hours on a course using guided learning, involving assessment, role play and a mix of blended, distance and classroom learning.

In Sweden, anyone who has mastered two languages and can verbally convey messages from one language to the other can work as an interpreter. A large proportion of those working as interpreters have no formal authorization and, therefore, are under no formal regulations or supervision. The minimum requirement from most interpreter service providers to work as an interpreter in Sweden is having an understanding of the ethics and etiquette of being an interpreter laid out in the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency's (Kammarkollegiet) Code of Conduct for Interpreters (God folksed, 2018). Most providers offer introductory courses in this for new employees. Additionally, the Swedish Public Employment Service also offers a basic training course for interpreters equivalent to 25 weeks full time studies, however, provides no formal qualification. In order to gain a formal qualification, interpreters can take the Basic Interpreter Training Course, which is regulated by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (MYU) and conducted by a number of approved adult education centres across Sweden. The course is comprised of 545 hours of study, which includes, an introduction to interpreting, language proficiency, interpreting ethics and techniques, as well as courses in interpretation in the fields of social, health, law and migration (MYH, 2014). Through completing this, interpreters gain the title Basic Trained Interpreter.

The highest level of qualification is authorization, which interpreters can gain through fulfilling three criteria: the applicant must be the age of majority, known for their integrity and suitability for the profession, as well as having passed the Legal, Financial and Administrative Service Agency's authorization examination in language proficiency, realia and interpreting techniques (Kammarkollegiet, 2017: 62). Following this, interpreters can further specialise in law or health through further examination.

In Bulgaria a person can attend courses for interpreter/translator only at the universities, but but none of these courses is highly specialized in the field of immigration. Some of the departments in Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (the biggest Higher education institution in the country) offer Master's degree programs partly related to the subject. The faculties that offer education in the field of interpretation and translation are The Faculty of Slavic studies and The Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologies

Usually in Bulgaria, the people who work as interpreters/translators have degree in Philology. Almost all the universities in the country offer such kind of education – English/French/Italian/German/Spanish/Greek/Scandinavian/Romanian/Portugese/Arabic/Chinese/Japanese/Turkish/Korean/Armenian/Indian/Iranian Philology. All of these specialties have "Translation section" in the syllabus and the students who have successfully taken the exams in the subjects under the translator's section are awarded the additional qualification "Translator in the respective language". The students, successfully graduated from these courses have a broad knowledge of the language and are prepared to work in the field of translations and interpretations. The most desired (and well paid) interpreters/translators are

the people with a degree in “exotic” languages like Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Iranian.

### Employment status

Language interpreting and cultural mediation are relatively new professional paths and due to this reason the official recognition of those professions is still pending in most of the countries.

The profession cultural mediator is widely spread in Italy (Sicily in particular), as well as in the UK and Germany. This is not the case in Sweden, Greece and Bulgaria where this profession is not legally defined or strictly regulated. The only partner country where ‘cultural mediator’ is an officially recognised profession is Germany.

In all partner countries the cultural mediators usually work as freelancers. In UK some find employment within public organisations or interpreting agencies. In Italy, some cultural mediators work in international department of municipalities, schools, hospitals, police stations, tribunals or even prisons. In Sweden, cultural mediators are employed by Västerås local council or regional authority in the fields of Social Care, Healthcare, schools and civic orientation through Folkhälsobyrå and are available in 15 languages (Al Adhami, 2015: 28).

Interpreters and cultural mediators do not have permanent positions in Greece. Instead, they are employed with fixed-term contracts, usually for 6 or 12 months. Besides the pure interpreting assignments, their role may involve other tasks as well, such as translation, secretarial or driving duties. Their salary amounts to 650-700 Euro per month and overtime work is often not paid.

. According to a study conducted by MYH, in Sweden only 20-30% of interpreters were working full-time, whilst others worked as an interpreter on side another job in order to survive/provide for themselves (MYH, 2015). Those that are employed by interpreter service providers are often working as distance interpreters from the providers’ call centre. The results from our face-to-face interviews also confirmed that most interpreters worked as freelancers for interpreter providers.

Most interpreters in Germany work as freelancers. For assignments at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees the fee is between 25 and 35 € per hour. In contrast, a sworn interpreter receives approximately 70 € per hour.

The interpreter is a recognised profession in all partner countries but in its most general concept – a person with fluency in at least two languages who is using it as an income source. When it comes to providing services to migrants, refugees or asylum seekers when they deal with local authorities the language interpreters usually work as freelancers.

### Personal qualities and soft skills

Viewing the results from the desk researches and interviews conducted in the individual partner countries, it is evident that the most important qualities that a good interpreter or cultural mediator should possess are excellent foreign language skills and deep knowledge of

specific terminology. All the respondents, regardless the country, indicate as very important qualities and characteristics also:

- Being neutral, unbiased, objective and impartial
- Communication and listening skills
- Social skills and deep knowledge of the cultural specifics of the hosting country, as well as the origin country of the refugee
- Deep knowledge on the national procedures for acquiring refugee or humanitarian status
- Deep knowledge of the system of work of governmental institutions and public bodies and the ability of appropriate and fast reaction in complicated situations
- Empathy, honesty, loyalty, reliability, discretion and open mindedness
- Know how to keep the right distance with the migrants
- Negotiation skills and flexibility
- Stress and emotion management skills
- Excellent body language and facial expression reading
- Not afraid to ask for clarification when in doubt
- Self-discipline
- Constantly seeking ways to improve their skills and qualifications

## Public authorities and interpreting and mediation

### National approach and access to the services of language interpreters and cultural mediators

In all partner countries there is some kind of legislation which requires the public and social services to be available and accessible to all people and in case there is a language barrier the public authorities and institutions are under the obligation to use interpreting services. This is regulated, for example, by law under the Equalities Act in the UK, the Constitution and the Law on Asylum and Refugees in Bulgaria and by Swedish Administrative Law in Sweden.

In reality the situation is different. As in most countries there are no funds for paying for interpreting or mediation services when needed, public authorities and institutions very rarely use professional interpreters or mediators even though they consider them necessary. Another reason for this is also the lack of professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform community interpreting and cultural mediation which lowered the bar a lot resulting in people with little or no training and with insufficient language fluency to act as interpreters. For example, in Sweden the Migration Board only use authorised interpreters in 17% of the cases, whilst the Swedish Public Employment Service only uses them 5% of the time.

The access to interpretation and mediation services is regulated the best in the UK. Public bodies tend to access interpreters (not cultural mediators) through the Language Line or Big Word. Many services access (Herts Interpreting and Translation Services – HITS) for in-person interpreting. There are usually some kind of services based in the big cities where the institutions can access the language interpreters however the trend is to use telephone to access interpreters which makes it more cost effective for institutions. Statutory services are required to provide interpretation, i.e. Job Centres and National Health Service. This is primarily through contracts with large telephone interpreting services like Language Line/Big Word. Although written in NHS and DWP guidance, this is not always followed in practice and the majority of staff is unaware of these policies.

In Sweden, all public authorities are obliged to employ an interpreter when the individual hasn't mastered the Swedish language. The provision of interpreters is coordinated through service agreements between the authority and interpreter service providers, which stipulate the conditions for the employment of interpreters. However, the Swedish Migration Board, the Swedish Public Employment Service, as well as regional authorities and health services have drawn up their own agreements with interpreter service providers. These agreements are largely negotiated between public authority administrative officials and interpreter service providers, meaning that often those that use the service are not consulted in this process. In regards to the educational background or competences required, the agreements often state that authorised interpreters should be used in the first hand, followed by basic trained interpreters and lastly other interpreters. However, it is often the case that interpreters used are of the latter two categories.

In Germany, there is no standard procedure for accessing interpreting services. For this reason, it is impossible to make a general statement about the procedures and the following

can only be considered as examples. The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees for example, has its own list of interpreters that they contact whenever their interpreting services are needed. The same goes for the Jobcenter. The hospitals also have a list of bilingual members of staff that can be called whenever needed. There is also the SprInt Service Center, a network of organizations providing training for language and integration mediators and interpreting services all over Germany. In addition, the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators provides a list of their members and embassies may also be able to provide similar lists. Furthermore, translation agencies and freelance interpreters can be found through migration advice centres, on the internet and on the telephone directory.

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As most of the times, in Italy, community interpreters and cultural mediators do not have a permanent employee contact and the public institutions can have access to a list of interpreters and cultural mediators available the area with as well as the languages spoken by them. However, there is no such list at national level.

In Bulgaria the situation is similar. There is no database with available interpreters and cultural mediators in the area, nor the languages they are fluent in. The State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers which is the main authority dealing with refugees and asylum seekers has a common internal database with interpreters and mediators but unfortunately these contact information is not shared with the other authorities. Most public authorities and institutions have their own databases created with the help of private contacts, word of mouth or another non-official way and when necessary contact them directly. This means that the people acting as interpreters or cultural mediators have different educational background and experience which for sure affects the quality of interpretation provided.

Like in Italy and Bulgaria, in Greece there is no official authority or association in which someone can look for professional cultural mediators and interpreters. This gap is filled in a fragmentary manner, with many NGOs usually undertaking the role of the official employer. Whenever an authority needs a community interpreter, they just post newspaper notices and usually find someone to occupy as an interpreter through word of mouth. Recently 9/3/2018 The Ministry of Immigration has made an announcement for the creation of list of certified language interpreters and cultural mediators who are going to be certified in order to work in the arrival centres. The announcement indicates that:

*“Citizens interested in enrolling in the network of translators and the provision of transmission and transfer services to the regional offices of the substation and Identification, as they submit a claim linked to the justifications referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article, namely a) satisfactory knowledge of Hellenic language (proof of proficiency); b) good knowledge of mother language (lyceum); c) foreign citizens and foreigners legally residing legally in the country.*

The primary public sector bodies that deal with migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, and, therefore, need and use community interpreters and cultural mediators are border police structures, migration offices, specialised detention centres for illegal immigrants and asylum seekers (Bulgaria and Greece), job centres, county and district councils, criminal justice

agencies, social housing providers, hospitals and other health care facilities, NGOs, voluntary associations providing support, police authorities, educational providers.

The list with public authorities and institutions which deal with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is practically unlimited but the ones with the most important role are:

- The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and Jobcenter in Germany
- The State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers and the Migration Directorate with the Ministry of the Interior in Bulgaria
- Migration Board, Swedish Public Employment Service, the Regional Health Services, Swedish Police Authority, Swedish National Courts Administration, Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Tax Agency in Sweden
- The Border Agency and the Home Office in the UK

### Availability of interpreters and cultural mediators

In 2017, there were a total of 1,112 valid authorizations in Sweden, of which 231 were in Arabic, Dari, Persian, Somali and Tigri, the most common languages requested for interpretation. These languages represent 65% of Språkföretagens bookings and 84% of Tolkservicerådets bookings, who are two large interpreter service providers. However, Tolkservicerådet expressed that only 8% of their interpreting work in Arabic is carried out by authorised interpreters, only 7% of interpretation in Persian and 1% in Dari, Somalian and Tigrin. This is compared with interpretation in Russian and Polish of which 93% and 91% of state interpretation respectively is carried out by authorized interpreters or specialised legal interpreters (Kammarkollegiet, 2017: 44-45). Interviewees from public service bodies expressed that they have had difficulties finding interpreters, especially authorised interpreters in smaller languages or dialects, such as Moroccan Arabic, different Swahili dialects and Hazaragi dialect from Afghanistan. Public authorities' interviewees expressed that they would always like to have an authorised interpreter, but there just aren't enough of them.

The desk research in Sweden also indicated that there is little use of cultural mediators by public authorities in Skåne, apart from as health communicators. This was also confirmed by the public services who had no experience using cultural mediators, however, expressed that this could greatly benefit their work and reduces communication barriers.

The desk research in Italy showed that the respondents have different opinions: some of them think there is not availability of interpreters and mediators especially in school's environment and regarding the current needs while others consider that the availability is good. Many people want to become cultural mediators but it's sometimes difficult to find mediators able to understand some dialects.

Statistics show that in Greece after 2015 there is a great need of language interpreters and cultural mediators and at this point at least 700-800 interpreters and cultural mediators are required to cover the current needs of the country. These needs are covered by using people who could know at level B the Greek language and the language of another country.

In Germany, there is currently a huge demand for interpreters. At the same time, universities like the Humboldt University of Berlin and the Saarland University have closed their faculties of interpreting and translation. In addition, universities who continue to offer courses for interpreting and translation focus on languages like English, French, etc. Consequently, there is not only a lack of trained interpreters in general but also a lack of interpreters speaking the refugees' languages like Arabic, Farsi or Pashto. Among the 8000 interpreters and translators who are members of the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators (BDÜ), only 150 speak Arabic.

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The results from the desk research in the UK demonstrated that the availability of interpreters and cultural mediators in the Hertfordshire area is still limited. Among the reasons for this we can distinguish several: often the interpreters suffer from a lack of sufficient professional training; there are significant transport expenses which create additional barriers. Some specific languages have many different dialects and accents and sometimes this causes many difficulties and misunderstanding during the interpreting process. Other fact which should be taken into consideration is that there are much more female interpreters than male, which could also sometimes be a complication. There are some voluntary organisations who have created a network of bilingual volunteers who may be asked to do some cultural mediation. However, they are usually untrained and do not follow any professional code of ethics. There are professional interpreting services run by the big companies and locally based services i.e “Herts Interpreting and Translation Service”. Other areas also have services run by CVS or local councils/municipalities.

In Bulgaria there are many professionals who work as interpreters but few of them have the specific knowledge and skills to act as a “bridge” between the public authorities and the migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. The lack of trainings and specific courses in this area combined with the recent increase of the migration flow left the public institutions with no choice but to use the services of regular interpreters or other people with some fluency level of both languages. The current availability of interpreters and cultural mediators in Sofia could be characterised as satisfactory, which could not be said about the other parts of the country.

### **Most common languages/dialects in which interpretation and mediation are required**

In the UK the most common specific languages/dialects in which interpreters are required are those spoken by the most vulnerable people in society - asylum seekers and refugees as well as people suffering from safeguarding issues. They include Polish, Urdu Punjabi, Bengali, Arabic, Tigrinya, Kurdish, Dari, Pashto, Bengali-Sylheti, Indian dialects and Twi. There are number of languages and dialects but the need of interpreters vary on the on the area where the migrants are based and what are their nationalities.

The desk research in Germany suggested that there is a huge demand for Arabic, Farsi, Pashto. In addition, there is also a demand for Azerbaijani, Armenian, Georgian, Chechen, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Nepali, Khmer, Tamil and all African languages and dialects (for example Tigre, Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Tigrinya, Yoruba, Igbo, Fula, etc.)

Currently, in Greece the most needed languages/dialects are Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Burmese, Sorani, Bengali, Swahili, Amarinia, Hindi, Somali, Turkish, Tigrinya.

In Italy most of cultural mediators and interpreters are required to speak English, but also French, Arabic and Bengali. Other dialects that are very popular in Italy are: the Mandinka, the Wolof, the Fula and Nigerian pidgin.

The research conducted in Sweden showed that the most common languages/dialects in which interpreters and cultural mediators are needed are Arabic, Dari, Persian, Somali and Tigrinya.

In Bulgaria, according to the desk research the most popular languages in which interpretation is needed are: Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Turkish, Spanish and specially French, because many of immigrants come from ex-colonies in Africa. Recently in Bulgaria there are many refugees from Africa and there is a need for interpreters of rare languages like Somali, Tamili and Sinhali. There is high level of searching of Chinese, Russian, Armenian and Kurdish too.

### Common problems and challenges

Naturally the most common problem which migrants, refugees and asylum seekers face when they deal with public services in their country of residence is the language barrier. Sometimes when it comes to rare languages or very specific dialects it is almost impossible to find a person with fluency good enough to act as an interpreter. Another problem is little or no access to information regarding the public institutions' structure, availability and procedures which causes frustration, confusion and very often fear. Migrants and refugees are facing a lot of problems regarding their registration at arrival points appeals, getting to know their rights and obligations, unite with family members who live in other countries, use of health and legal services etc. The most common problems could be summarized as follows:

#### Legal Services:

- Registration
- How to find where to stay
- Renewal of the cards (permits) for asylum seekers
- TAX office registration
- Issue of work permits/unemployment cards
- Communication in entry points (border) and get asylum seeker status
- Need to go in person in public organizations because of lack of telephone services
- Enroll their children to school
- Statutory services claiming interpretation is too costly/time consuming to use and therefore do not provide the service
- The connection and dealing of police within their own country and lack of language is the most common problem because they fear they will get the same treatment
- Bureaucracy and not understanding the procedures

### Health Services:

- Is very difficult to communicate with the doctors especially when there are serious health problems
- Problems to book an appointment with doctors
- Psychological support cannot be offered without communication in the same language
- Children vaccination
- Some patients can become attached to the cultural mediator who is often their only link between their home country and the new community where they now reside and wants to have continued contact and support from the mediator even after the job has been completed

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The desk research in all partner countries led to one general conclusion – all public institutions and authorities experience difficulties in terms of providing interpreting and mediation services when dealing with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The roots of these problems are mostly financial but also professional – there aren't many available fully trained interpreters and cultural mediators who could render specialised and quality services and even when such professionals are available the issue of payment for their work is problematic.

Great number of interviewed authorities claimed that they experience huge difficulties with finding interpreters and mediators in a number of rare languages and dialects which causes huge delays in the procedures and inadequate interpretations.

Another serious problem that emerged from the desk research is that very often the “professionals” acting as community interpreters and/or cultural mediators are lacking crucial professional competences and in some cases even language skills. The reasons for that tendency could be defined as short and insufficient training programmes; little or no national regulations and supervision; no availability of trained specialists.

In Italy, Greece, Sweden and Bulgaria the lack of comprehensive legislation on the services of a community interpreter and cultural mediator leads to confusion between the two types of specialists, which is also considered a problem. In all countries, except Germany, the profession “cultural mediator” is not legally defined or strictly regulated which produces a negative impact on the mediation services.

Many public structures don't understand the essence of an interpreter's job and don't know how to work and cooperate with them. Very often their time is limited and they rush sessions with interpreters (who by the nature of having an interpreter double the session times), provoking the clients to go away, missing important information and feeling insecure and unable to ask questions.

Rather than book an interpreter or cultural mediator, which is their duty, many authorities rely on bi-lingual members of staff or, if these are not available, on other non-official contacts and even sometimes on family members or friends of the migrant/refugee to interpret. This is considered as a bad practice because even if the family member or friend

has higher level of the local language, he would not be able to properly interpret the highly specific and complicated language/jargon used in structures like police, hospitals and job centres.

## Summary and conclusions

The drastic increase of the migration waves into Europe during the last several years caused a great need for community interpreters and cultural mediators. The desk research and face-to-face interviews conducted in all partner countries led to similar conclusions and showed that though there are many working in the field of interpreting, the numbers of authorised interpreters are considerably lower, which has contributed to a decline in the quality of interpreting provided. Each country is in different stage regarding the provision of interpreting and mediation services but in general the partner countries experience common problems and face similar challenges.

It could be concluded that in all partner countries there is a lack of community interpreters and cultural mediators with good enough language fluency, professional qualifications and personal qualities needed in order to perform their job in the best possible way. Of course, there are many professionals who are fully trained and have all necessary knowledge and skills, but often their profession is not officially recognised or regulated which affects their realisation on the labour market.

These facts have a significant negative effect on newcomers' interaction with public services and the new community they now reside in. In order to secure that all those facing communication barriers receive fair treatment and equal access to public services in Europe there is a need for more qualified interpreters, both authorised and basic trained, as well as, better regulation of and demands put on those already working in this field, by both interpreter service providers and public authorities, to ensure the quality of interpretation given.

Additionally, the findings from the desk research and interviews indicate that expanding the training and use of cultural mediators in the local area could significantly contribute to reducing communication barriers. For many, arriving to Europe to seek support and having to navigate the complex web of bureaucracy and support services provided is very difficult and foreign to what was in place in individuals' country of origin. Therefore, having a mediator who is able to counsel one through this is vital to accessing these services and achieving a sense of being settled in the new community.

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[www.hertsinterpreting.org](http://www.hertsinterpreting.org)

<https://en-gb.thebigword.com/>

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### **Bulgaria:**

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Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants <http://www.bcrm-bg.org/>

State Agency for Child Protection with the Council of Ministers [www.sacp.government.bg](http://www.sacp.government.bg)

President of the Republic of Bulgaria <https://www.president.bg/?lang=en>

Ministry of the Interior <https://www.mvr.bg/>

International Projects Directorate [www.mvr.bg/dmp](http://www.mvr.bg/dmp)

The Migration Directorate [www.mvr.bg/migration](http://www.mvr.bg/migration)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs [www.mfa.bg](http://www.mfa.bg)

The Directorate “Consular Relations” [consular@mfa.bg](mailto:consular@mfa.bg)

Ministry of Labor and Social Policy [www.mlsp.government.bg](http://www.mlsp.government.bg)

The Agency for Social Assistance [www.asp.government.bg](http://www.asp.government.bg)

The Employment Agency [www.az.government.bg](http://www.az.government.bg)

Ministry of Justice [www.justice.government.bg](http://www.justice.government.bg)

Ministry of Healthcare <https://www.mh.government.bg/>

Commission for Protection against Discrimination [www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com](http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com)

National Statistical Institute <http://www.nsi.bg>

Refugee Integration in Bulgaria Informational Platform <https://www.refugee-integration.bg/en/>

Other informational platforms, prepared with the financial support of UNHCR:

<http://zakrila.info/>

<http://asylum.bg/home-dashboard-eng/>