# Community Interpreter and Intercultural Mediator in Slovenia

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## Community Interpreter

### The profile

At the moment, in Slovenia we have:

1. conference interpreters (for the following language combinations Slovene-English-French/German/Italian/Spanish);
2. court interpreters (they are sworn interpreters that are trained by the Ministry of Law, the candidates need to manifest knowledge of the Slovene legal system and are asked to translate a legal text into Slovene – no interpreting skills are required or tested);
3. interpreters on the list of the Ministry of Interior who are used in the interviews with asylum seekers. The prerequisites of the interpreters involved in asylum procedure are defined in Article 6 of the Slovene Asylum Law (Zakon o mednarodni zaščiti, 2016): a language certificate, an official statement that the interpreter does not collaborate with the authorities of the country whose language they interpret, and an extract from the judicial record. Their interpreting skills are not tested.

The term “community interpreter” (tj. skupnostni tolmač) is a term that is known only to a few people working in the field of Translation and Interpreting Studies in Slovenia, despite the fact that there have been several publications published on this topic in Slovenia, among them also two monographs:

Pokorn, Nike K. and Uršula Lipovec Čebron (eds). 2013. *Večjezično zdravje.* Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba FF. – a collection of articles focusing also on healthcare interpreting and community interpreting;

Morel, Alenka and Vojko Gorjanc. 2016. *Skupnostno tolmačenje: slovenščina v medkulturni komunikaciji.* Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba FF. – a monograph largely based on a PhD by Alenka Morel on community interpreting in Slovenia.

Currently, there is no profile for community interpreter defined in Slovenia – we have, however, prepared a proposal for a national occupational standard and sent it to Slovene national regulator at the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) where it is currently under review.

In this proposal, the provisioned level of education is minimum short-cycle tertiary education, the high level of language knowledge for working languages, and the fair knowledge of the culture of working languages is expected. Community interpreters should also have the knowledge of the international standards of the profession and the ability to perform interpreting service, i.e. convey the information from one language to the other as accurately and as completely as possible. They should master techniques used in consecutive interpreting and manifest highly-developed listening skills, memory skills, note-taking skills and delivery. They should also be able to perform chuchotage. Previous experience working in the field or specific training is also expected, and the candidates should pass a specific test verifying their ability to perform the tasks of a community interpreter.

### Employment

The majority of conference interpreters are free-lance and would charge from 50–90 €/hour; 450–500 €/day, 250–300€/half a day. Some work at the EU institutions or for the government.

Court interpreters: they are all employed according to the need on a free-lance basis, for the majority of them court-interpreting is an additional employment to some other employment they have. The typical fee for a court-interpreter is: 70 €/hour. The courts cover the expenses.

The interpreters on the list of the Ministry of the Interior: they are all employed according to the need on a free-lance basis, for the majority of them court-interpreting is an additional employment to some other employment they have. The Ministry of the Interior covers these expenses.

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

### Practice

Interpreters would convey the message from the source language to the target language as accurately as possible, observing the professional codes, including confidentiality. No other tasks are envisaged for this profile of a professional.

### Training

Conference interpreters are trained at the MA level for 2 years at two universities in Slovenia: Ljubljana and Maribor.

In addition to that, a few years ago the Department of Translation Studies at the University of Ljubljana introduced an elective course Introduction to Community Interpreting (30 contact hours) within the MA program Interpreting.

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

No other training is provided in Slovenia.

### Certification

The only certification in place in Slovenia is for court interpreters that is in the hands of the Ministry of Law. Knowledge of Slovene legal system is tested, the candidates have to provide written translation of a legal text.

## Intercultural Mediator

### The profile

The term “intercultural mediator” (tj. medkulturni mediator) is a term that is becoming increasingly used in Slovenia especially a) in the field of integration of different categories of migrants/refugees and ethnic minorities and b) in the field of healthcare. In the last decade, many intercultural mediators were employed by different NGOs (Slovenska filantropija, Društvo Odnos) as interpreters and cultural brokers who facilitate the migrants’/refugees’ access to different community and/or public services. In the last years, intercultural mediators were employed by community health centres as a response to an increase need to overcome language and culture barriers faced by migrants/refugees and ethnic minorities, especially Albanian communities in Slovenia. The process of implementation of intercultural mediator and its positive effects for addressing linguistic obstacles faced by the Albanian-speaking community in accessing the Slovene health-care system were analysed in different scientific articles:

Lipovec Čebron Uršula, Pistotnik Sara, Jazbinšek Simona, Farkaš-Lainščak Jerneja 2017. Evaluation of the implementation of intercultural mediation in preventive healthcare programmes in Slovenia, *Public health panorama* 3(1): 114-119.

Škraban, Juš, Oprešnik, Denis, Pistotnik, Sara, Lipovec Čebron, Uršula. 2019. Health diplomacy in the process of implementation of intercultural mediation at the primary level in preventive healthcare: Slovene case study. Santino Severoni; Michaela Told; Monika Kosinska; Ilona Kickbusch, Mihaly Kökény (ed). World Health Organisation. Regional Office for Europe. (in print)

The practice in Slovenia shows that intercultural mediator is used as an umbrella term that comprehend activities such as interpreting, facilitation of access to different community/public servicies and cultural brokering and advocacy. Besides interpreting in different contexts (administrative units, schools, hospitals, healthcare centres etc.), intercultural mediator works as a facilitator helping migrants/refugees when the lack of cultural awareness and understanding of the system becomes the main impediment for the migrant population to access and benefit from basic quality social services, quality education, primary health care, fair trial and political participation in the host country. The intercultural mediators are also a resource to inform migrants/refugees of their entitlements and the way the institutions work and how they should be accessed. Intercultural mediators play an important role in empowering migrants/refugees and ethnic minorities, by informing them and encouraging them to voice their needs and concerns.

Currently, there is no officially recognized profile for intercultural mediator in Slovenia – however, a process of preparation of national occupational standard for intercultural mediator began in 2018 at the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI).

In the current phase of the preparation of national occupational standard, the provisioned level of education for intercultural mediators is minimum high-school; they should be fluent in working languages and should have in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural and economic characteristics (including linguistic, religious, political and other) of one or more areas and countries from which migrants/refugees come to Slovenia. Moreover, they should be capable of recognizing cultural, social and other patterns of behavior and able to successfully communicate in situations where cultural, linguistic, social and other misunderstandings. They should be also familiar with the basic professional terminology in the fields of education, employment, health, administrative procedures, social security and able to efficiently help migrants/refugees to communicate in the context of community/public institutions. Previous experience working in the field or specific training is also expected, and the candidates should pass a specific test verifying their ability to perform the tasks of intercultural mediator.

### Employment

The majority of intercultural mediators are full-time employed by different NGOs (Slovenska filantropija, Društvo Odnos etc.) or part-time (as additional employment) by community healthcare centers in Slovenia. Their fee varies from 40 to 70 €/hour.

If intercultural mediators are used in hospitals, the patients carry the costs. In some cases, the local community employed interpreters or cultural mediators (especially for the Albanian language) for these services and pays them from the public funds allocated to local communities.

### Practice

In the current practice, intercultural mediators are working as interpreters, therefore conveying the message from the source language to the target language as accurately as possible. Moreover, intercultural mediators are working as facilitators that help migrants/refugees access to different community and/or public services by informing them of their entitlements and the way the institutions work and how they should be accessed. Additionally, intercultural mediators facilitate cultural dialogue both in migrants’/refugees’ contact with community/public services and in local communities themselves. In general, the aim is that intercultural mediators through their work empower migrants/refugees to play an active role in their own everyday life.

### Training

There is no systematic training for intercultural mediators in Slovenia. However, three trainings were organised:

* International organisation for migration in Slovenia organised a five-days (25-29 July 2016) and three-days (20-22 September 2016) intensive training courses on intercultural mediation with a focus on assistance provided in healthcare settings, role and practicalities of intercultural mediation in a healthcare setting, including the importance of psychological support available to intercultural mediators.
* National institute for public health in Slovenia provides a working group which meets on regular basis (from December 2018) and consists of all intercultural mediators working in Community healthcare centers in Slovenia. The working group meetings have two parts. In the first part, a professional topic is presented in the form of lectures and workshops (i.e. on recommended positioning of interpreters in healtchare, on some ethical dilemmas of interpreters in healthcare, cultural aspects of health and illness, etics of intercultural mediation, medical terminology etc.). In the second part, place and time are given to intercultural mediators to share their skills, knowledge and work experiences (in peer-support format).

### Certification

There is no certification.