

TIPS Special Edition Newsletter August 2009

The Special Edition Newsletter issue is dedicated to the personal testimonies and experiences of TIPS course participants from different partner countries.

The TIPS partnership would like to thank the one hundred participants from Austria, Italy, France, Greece and Poland who partook in the TIPS distance learning course "Practising and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe" from February to August 2009. Their efforts have greatly attributed to a successful experimentation and provided valuable results for the TIPS project.

The TIPS Training Course Experience "Practising and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe"

France

Personal testimony from a potential cultural mediator



Mahgol Salemi, graduate in Economics from the University of Teheran (Iran, 2000), is at the moment in Master at the University of Evry - Val d'Essonne (France, 2008-2009). She has been involved in the TIPS project since January 2009, proposing her testimony as a foreign student (January-February) and experimenting the pilot training course (March to July 2009). She has been coordinating a special team meant to make proposals of improvement for the content of the TIPS course together with students in International Solidarity and Cooperation (University of Evry Val d'Essonne).

As you read through these lines, an obvious anticipation might be, you are familiar with the English language. Now let me ask you a question. What are the auxiliary verbs in English linguistics? You might say, easy! Do, did, is, are, was, were, etc. At this point I am encouraged enough to ask you another question; what's their function? You might as well respond making question forms out of a sentence or even negation and generally speaking giving further semantic or syntactic information about the main verb following it. Here, I would like to ask you the last question and that is, hypothetically speaking, which profession in the real world could be interpreted as an auxiliary verb. At this level you might think and make guesses for some good minutes and in the end you might (or might not) come up with the answer: cultural mediation.

That is exactly how I see cultural mediation; the growing number of immigrants in the European countries and the typical conflict situations they face – not being an exception myself - indicate the increasing need for some sort of mediation as a tool for bridging the existing gap between an immigrant and a native in their social life. In my opinion, being active in "cultural mediation" in any possible way and contributing to its expansion and generalization globally is considered so challenging. At the same time Irv and the TIPS project provided me with a great opportunity to experience a European project in this field, opening a new horizon for me to see myself as a future cultural mediator being at the same time a great opportunity of integration into the European job market especially in France.

As mentioned in the TIPS newsletter March 2009, being a student at the university of Evry Val d'Essonne with 7 years of professional background, I have the honor to be a trainee at Iriv working on the TIPS project since January 2009.

The work rendered by different partners on the TIPS project has been categorized into seven work packages as follow: WP1- Management, WP2- State of the art, WP3- Development of learning objects and lesson deliverables, WP4- Promotion, WP5- Evaluation, WP6-Dissemination, and WP7- Exploitation.

France has experienced the TIPS course through four different groups of participants consisting of social workers, professional cultural mediators, students/potential cultural mediators with relevant professional backgrounds and last but not least students considered potential cultural mediators with no specific professional backgrounds.

Following this phase, an experimentation team of experts has been assigned attentively by Iriv out of the participants in the TIPS project to reflect on the content and form of different platforms defined in the framework of the TIPS project. The French Experimentation Team of experts consists of 3 social workers and two potential cultural mediators with relevant professional backgrounds in ICT to go through the technical methodologies proposed by t-learning.

As of management which is defined in the first work package of the TIPS project (WP1), I have been in charge of the coordination between 5 other members of the French experimentation team, organization and finally integration of the suggestions made by the team regarding the TIPS project.

I made a contribution to module 4 (national and European legislation) in the e-learning platform of the TIPS project, in the framework of the second work package (WP2) - state of the art - in terms of a testimony as an international student in France highlighting my very personal experience in various measures taken to realize the expatriation project ranging from getting the visa to settlement in France.

The third work package (WP3) encompasses the learning object and lesson deliverables. As a potential cultural mediator, it was a great experience to follow all virtual classrooms directly having a close and in person encounter with all learning objects and tools utilised in the virtual classes and getting to know the points of strength and weaknesses of the project. The evaluation and suggestions made by the French experimentation team of experts could be considered as a contribution to the WP3 and WP5.

The work done in the framework of the third work package together with the suggestions made by the French experimentation team in WP3 and WP5, made it possible for me to prepare a report on the t-learning platforms containing the course summaries, virtual classes, propositions and relevant annexes about the time dedicated to each module for the e-learning platform and a module by module analysis of the content for the m-learning platform. Minutes of the meetings with Uniformation (Active French partner), the French experimentation team and virtual meetings with TIPS partners are also made available in accordance with the last work package, exploitation. (WP7)

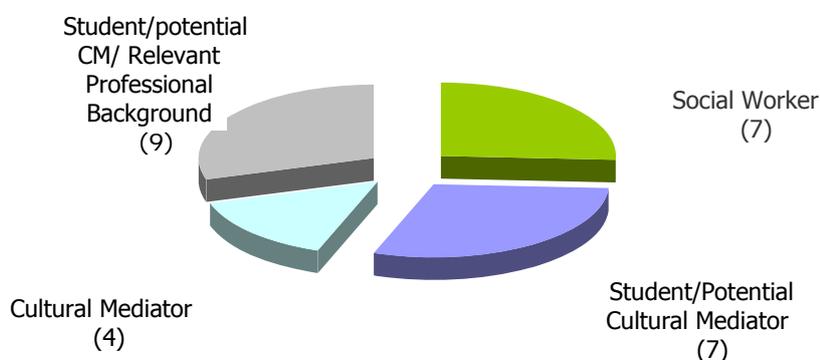
I end this testimony with my wholehearted wishes for the success of the TIPS project at a large scale in order to train more and more cultural mediators in the pluralistic Europe and I do look forward to further cooperation with the TIPS network as the first technical and pedagogical tutor trained by the TIPS project.

Analytical Overview of the French Participants in the Pilot Tips Course

The project TIPS was experimented in France with the help of 27 participants who were selected from a range of associations and educational institutes in France taking into account each member's skills and competences. A total of 27 participants were enrolled for the experimentation of the TIPS pilot course among which 7 were actual social workers, 4 professional cultural mediators, and 16 master students considered potential cultural mediators.

Among the 16 mentioned students, 9 participants are professionals with relevant experiences ranging from working with migrants in local associations to mediating migrant families with handicapped members. The professional background together with a concrete professional perspective is the main selection criterion for the admission of the students into the IUP of the University of Evry Val d'Essonne. The students taking part in the TIPS course are studying in the first year of master degree at the Professional University Institute of Evry Val d'Essonne mostly in the framework of the *Formation Continue* system (continuing education). In France's educational system, this is considered as career trainings for adult education designed for potential students with professional backgrounds.

The diagram below highlights the distribution of participants in the TIPS pilot project:



The achievement of the TIPS course according to the pilot experimentation in France could be summarized in the interest, the current potential cultural mediators express in order to adopt cultural mediation as their future career while looking at the professional aspect, the TIPS course provided to them.

Poland

"A reliable dialogue derives from a certain assumption which must be accepted, explicitly or tacitly by both sides: neither me or you are not able to know the truth about ourselves if we remain distant from each other, closed in the walls of our fears, but we must look at each other from the outside, so to speak, I - with your eyes and you - with mine, we must compare our views in the conversation and only thus we are able to find an answer to the question what we are really about"

rev. prof. Józef Tischner
(Ethics of Solidarity)

Intercultural Dialogue – A personal experience



Katarzyna Izak
Institute for Research on Civilizations
Tischner European University in Krakow

There are nine ethnic minorities in Poland: Belorussians, Czechs, Lithuanians, Germans, Armenians, Russians, Slovaks and Jews. We are witnesses to intense migration that makes our country more and more diverse, interesting and multicultural. Immigrants in Poland are not only new actors in the labor market but also represent new cultures, traditions, religions and therefore new challenges for social policies. The XXI century signifies a time of economic

change as well as social. This requires our society to be greatly tolerant, open and have the ability to seek compromises between what is deeply rooted in Polish tradition and the cultures of people who choose Poland for their new home. This is why we need to develop a new discipline – cultural mediation.

The European Parliament with the Council of the European Union set up in 2008 the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The activities realised during this year presented Polish society with different contexts and understanding of multiculturalism in Europe and focused on Polish tradition and historical experience that co-create cultural heritage of the continent. Recognition of the local context of multiculturalism promotes mutual understanding and better cooperation among inhabitants. Other important goals of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue are as follows:

- ❖ build a common ground of dialogue and cooperation with Poland's neighboring countries (deepening dialogue especially with Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities in Poland)
- ❖ support democratic movements in countries that are currently the direct neighboring countries of the European Union
- ❖ actively implement the idea of formal and informal intercultural education aimed at children, adolescents and adults to teach them about the culture and traditions of the people who create a common community and to show them the local contexts of multiculturalism: Poles, Czechs, Jews, Germans, Belorussians and Ukrainians

Thanks to the support of the European Commission, Poland and four other European countries realised the TIPS project: T-learning To Improve Professional Skills for Intercultural Dialogue. It is an innovative project based on the integration of three tools: an Internet platform, a television platform and a mobile learning portal. The TIPS project designed the TIPS pilot training course using the full potential offered by these new digital technologies. Thanks to these tools the pilot training course for people interested in working in cultural mediation was developed. Cultural Mediators play an important role in the process of social integration of immigrants in their host country and therefore need precise and personalized answers for very specific and challenging issues. Cultural mediators are often involved in the affairs of refugees that can be difficult and painful, such as human trafficking. The basic training needs of cultural mediators are to develop skills and competences to facilitate a "communication bridge" with immigrants, dealing with problems and language barriers in interpersonal relationships. All this plays a key role in the formation of a global society.

Students from the Tischner European University in Krakow had the opportunity to both work on the TIPS project on behalf of the Polish project group and be its beneficiaries. Students from TEU took part in: exploration studies, qualitative studies such as focus group interviews, worked on creating the phrasebook in Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Russian, as well as conducted monitoring and the evaluation of the project. Since TIPS is an international project, students were able to participate in local meetings that were held in their respective partner countries.

On February 26th, students from TEU began the TIPS six month training course for people interested in cultural mediation. As members of the Polish class on the T-learning platform, students had a chance to use the innovative methodology of distance learning, using the available tools, and contents including: audio-video lessons, quizzes, lecture notes and IPTV videos that were shot in Krakow and other partner countries. The TIPS training course hosted 100 participants from all partner countries, Poland, Italy, France, Austria and Greece.

The virtual classroom did not include bystanders, but rather a group of social workers who based on their experience, had certain skills relating to cultural mediation. These trainees needed current and personalized training, knowledge and tools that can be used in their daily work. The second group of trainees was people

who are interested in this field and would like to take up cultural mediation. Some of the participants from TEU conducted voluntary work in Africa and Palestine last year.

The TIPS course modules gave participants the opportunity to learn about the different dimensions of working with immigrants, such as formal and legal issues, psychological aspects, as well as the practical work of a mediator with regards to Polish and different cultural contexts. All activities under the TIPS project are designed to ensure equal opportunities for all inhabitants in the EU and the importance of opposing discrimination. In addition to supporting the idea of solidarity and social justice and promoting diversity to help build partnerships with member countries and those from outside the Community. Intercultural dialogue and multicultural integration help fight against stereotypes and discrimination. The best way to overcome prejudice is mutual understanding that can be achieved through dialogue between cultures. The TIPS project is a tangible and appreciable measure concerning difficult discussions between representatives from different nationalities. Thanks to its concept and design, the TIPS project integrates the eight priority areas of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue: Culture and Media, Education, Migration, Minorities, Multilingualism, Religion, Youth and the Workplace.

Cultural Mediators are faced with a cultural barriers everyday. It is known that these kinds of barriers are hard to overcome, however it is necessary to do so if we want to create a global society, which is based on the fight against social inequality, social exclusion, ethnic conflicts and even wars. Cultural barriers are a common element in the field of social work and people who work with refugees or migrants, but it does not stop there.

Last year, in June my friends from the Institute for Research on Civilizations from Krakow and I went to Tanzania as volunteers in the small village of Kiabakari (some of us called it the 'village in the middle of nowhere'). We were in a place where our rules or even precepts of the law weren't reflected in this new reality so we could count only on mutual understanding based on the culture. We truly noticed the differences between our European culture and theirs. The most visible difference was gender inequality – girls in this part of Tanzania have limited access to education. Instead of going to school, the majority of women work hard all their life on a farm and take care of their family. They have more or less eight to eleven children and get married very young – 'getting married' sometimes means 'being sold', usually the price is a cow or a buffalo. For families with daughters marriage is not a good exchange because they lose free hands to work. That is the main reason why boys are more accepted. Girls have to change their name after the birth of their first son with the prefix 'mother' added to it. For example I met a woman who now is named Mother Alexi because her first son is named Alex. That is one of the visible elements of the social stratification that defines the difference between girl and woman and their rights. The future of most girls I met there is well known and inevitable. Some of them don't even know that they could live in another way that they could learn, have lighter work, normal pay and better life conditions. In Kiabakari people don't have running water, plumbing or electricity – for us it is inconceivable and surprising because for some of them it is not a problem, 'just the way it is'. Another thing that was surprising to me was that the graves of their family members were next to their houses.

When I was learning Kiswahili - the official language of Tanzania my teacher told me that the word 'time' in is not a noun but a verb. In Poland I learned this but in Tanzania I felt it where I understood that for them 'time' is happening, you can not say 'I had a good time' or 'time is money'. Actually you can not arrange an appointment at 9 pm or for any certain hour because time 'becomes'. This concept, however, is a good way to describe the feeling when you are in a place where time "stops" or exists beyond us. Kiabakari is located almost on the equator, so we can say that a day lasts almost as long as the night, more or less twelve hours. It was amazing for us that people didn't care about keeping time on a watch but if they wanted to meet they went at the same time to an agreed place. Most of them don't know how old they are and what exact day it is.

In Poland we say 'every child is ours' meaning that everyone has an obligation to take care of children. In Kiabakari I saw the literal meaning of these words where women 'borrowed' children from their neighbors to take care of younger children or left them in the hands of unknown women in another city or village. For them there was nothing strange in that, they would just come back a few hours later to take them back.

Relations between people in Kiabarkari are also different than in Poland. Only friendships between men are accepted so only couples of male friends to go hand in hand in public. Inhabitants often take justice into their own hands and thieves are often severely punished. An example is this is when someone just accuses another man of stealing and then someone from the crowd put a tire around him, poured petrol over him and set fire. Absurdly, the only chance for a thief to survive is when they are a police officer.

Everywhere we went we always heard two things: 'Muzungu' which means more or less white human who is hanging around with a stick. This word is known by every child, even the very young and even if they have never seen a white person before. The second was a phrase in English 'Muzungu give me my money' – what is strange because they didn't say 'your money', they said 'my money'. Since the history of this country was extremely difficult, I'm not surprised that they have their own vision of people from Europe.

Of course these are only mine observations and feelings. Tanzania like every other country is diverse, different parts of Tanzania also have different tribes and cultures. Going to Kiabarkari taught me about culture shock which I experienced upon my arrival, but the real culture shock I felt was when I came back and I saw all things my cultural collects and never uses and I realised that we always want more, it is never too much, we are never satisfied and we can not enjoy what we have. I do not pretend this is wrong, it is our reality and represents behavior which we have internalized. Maybe because of these differences Tanzania is still considered a third world country. A fundamental basis of volunteer work is the ability to outpace, and in order to work successfully, you must detach from our perception of reality and the assessment of human behavior. Evidently things are sometimes only obvious to us and if we really want to get to know another person we have to come into a dialogue without prejudices because only dialogue provides understanding and only understanding allows us to be better human beings.

(The first part of this text is based on TIPS materials and the website www.dialog2008.pl. The second part is taken from a publication written after a conference in Kielnarowa held on May 7-8, 2009
http://www.studentcafe.pl/pl/trybuna-otwarta/okiem-studenta/811,t-learning_%E2%80%93_innowacyjna_metodologia_na_odleglosc.html)

Italy



Interview with a TIPS course participant from the Italian class

Richard Beugrè Laubouet

Rome, Italy

Interview link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkUHajk-gtY>

Q: Hi, can you tell us how long you've been living in Italy and how you got here?

A: *Hello, my name is Richard Beugrè Laubouet and I'm originally from the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa. Over two years ago, two of my very close friends, who I've been through a lot with over the years, and I left our country in a state of conflict. We traveled to Ghana, on the eastern border, and flew to Italy.*

Q: Do you have any experience in the field of cultural mediation?

A: *My first experience in the field of cultural mediation was working for an association offering social and health services to foreigners in Ciampino, near Rome. I worked initially in the medical center reception, giving information and assisting clients, especially French speakers. I was then called upon to intervene in various different situations inside and outside the facilities.*

Q: Why were you interested in participating in the TIPS course?

A: *The TIPS course was a chance to learn more about cultural mediation, to formally add, in terms of training, more to my experience in the field and its new and interesting method of distance learning presented an opportunity that I couldn't pass up. The course allowed me to continue working while studying which was very convenient.*

Q: What did you like most about the TIPS course?

A: *I can't say exactly, but definitely the fact that the TIPS course, in technological terms, was a very interesting innovation, that I had never seen before. The concept of merging learning through different types of technology is very present in today's society. It is a way to keep people, young and old, interested in learning and offers something new that breaks out from the norms of traditional and sometimes boring methods of teaching. Also, being interested in the course helps make learning easier and more enjoyable.*

Q: In your opinion, do you think the training offered by the TIPS course could help the foreign community and cultural mediators with the integration process in Italy?

A: *Foreign communities and mediators working with them should be given the opportunity to learn how to help foreign citizens, especially newcomers, integrate into their host country. The theory and skills of cultural mediation, a new concept for most, can help all parties feel like they are contributing to building a multi-ethnic society where knowledge is stronger than fear, which is an antidote to ignorance. In this context, foreign citizens and members of society in general, are given the chance to collaborate together, and more importantly given the tools that can help "place them on the right track" towards integrating into Italian society and more essentially, into a multi-ethnic community.*

Greece



The following summarizes the opinions, ideas, and proposals about future activities that Greek trainees shared with the Greek project team at the Hellenic Open University. In addition, we have chosen to include interviews with two of the trainees, Ms. Galanopoulou and Ms. Tsintoni, to give a first person account of their experience with the TIPS course. During July and August, we organized three meetings with the TIPS course trainees, in Patras, Athens and Rethimno, in order to discuss their experience with the course "Practicing and Enhancing Cultural Mediation in a Pluralistic Europe" of the TIPS project.

Generally, the content of the course was considered to be interesting and important enough for the trainees, who up to that point, were working as Cultural Mediators based mainly on their personal experience with immigration. The course, discussing in detail the characteristics and needs of the Cultural Mediator, gave them

a different perspective on how the Cultural Mediator can deal with various cases that have a strong multicultural dimension.

All trainees considered that their participation to the TIPS course gave them significant professional advantage, because Cultural Mediation is steadily emerging as a brand new field in Greece. The parallel usage of three technological platforms constitutes a very useful and effective tool for Cultural Mediators. Trainees found the modules on communication and legislation to be both interesting and informative. In general, the TIPS course helped them acquire theoretical information on European legislation and immigration, enhance their communication skills and improve a positive collaboration with immigrants. The trainees now believe that they can function as multipliers of this special knowledge in their work and social environment thanks to the TIPS course material.

Trainees faced some difficulties in using the technology, especially the IPTV and mobile phone platforms. The cost of a 3G mobile connection was high and did not justify the benefits received from the content delivered by the m-platform. Moreover, some of them had problems in studying and understanding the educational content, because all the material and the virtual classes were in English, which resulted in an incoherent group. The time allocated for studying the modules was short, given the busy schedule of the trainees (almost all of them were professionals) and the large volume of the educational material especially that contained in module 3.

Concerning the IPTV videos, some of the trainees found the quality of the picture and the sound low. They also suggested that more videos should be included in each module, as they were considered to be helpful in memorizing and understanding the theory and the relevant content.

Despite the technical problems, the trainees were active and enthusiastic about taking the course. During our meetings, they came up with various suggestions:

"The content of the fourth educational module should be continuously updated and complemented, so as to present the legislation more accurately and concisely."

"Module 5 should be expanded to include culture (art, activities, sports, exploitation of free time, workshops of creative employment etc)."

"Realize a special report containing European institutions / organisations, European projects relative to immigration, volunteerism, and social/non governmental organisations."

"The TIPS web site should also be preserved and updated after the official end of the course, so as to function as a forum/point of contact of people who have an interest in Cultural Mediation."

"The TIPS training approach could also be applied to other target groups, apart from cultural mediators, because cultural mediation is a process of resolution of conflict in the modern multicultural societies."

"The IPTV platform should be enriched with more material and also be accessible from the Internet."

Interview with a TIPS course participant from the Greek class

Ms. Konstantina Tsintoni
Patras, Greece



Q: Tell us a little about yourself, your education, interests and work experiences.

A: *My name is Tsintoni Titika- Konstantina and I graduated from the Department of Philosophy-Education and Psychology of the University of Ioannina in Greece in 2003. I am working as a teacher of Greek literature since then and I am also counting a two-years teaching experience in the educational programme "ODYSSEUS- Greek as a second language for adult immigrants". In January 2009 I took on greater responsibilities in this programme and I am the educational coordinator in the prefecture of Achaia- Patra. Side by side to my working responsibilities, I am also a postgraduate student in the postgraduate programme "Master of Arts in Education" of Roehampton University of London and I am very lucky to attend the courses with Erasmus Mundus in the Pedagogic School in Athens- Greece.*

Q: Would you like to give us some more details for "ODYSSEUS"?

A: *The educational programme "ODYSSEUS" has been planned and is supervised by the General Secretariat for Life Long Learning of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs and it is being implemented by the Institute for Continuing Adult Education. "ODYSSEUS" is part of the Operational Programme "Education and Life Long Learning" and it is co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Greek State.*

It is addressed to immigrants of all nationalities, citizens of all continents, over sixteen years old, husbands and wives of Greek citizens, as well as to all those wishing to receive the status of the "long-lasting resident" of Greece. The educational programme is structured of two learning levels, A1- 125 hours and A2- 175 hours, in which the trainees are graded further to their application form and the relevant grading test as well. Since the trainees complete a learning level successfully, they get a Life Long Learning Certificate. Learning Centers operate in all over Greece, in all the Prefectures.

Targets of the programme are definitely the smoother incorporation of the immigrants into the economic, social, as well as the cultural life of the country, the strengthening of their employment status and the participation in the certification procedure of the knowledge of the Greek language for all those wishing to do so.

Q: Why did you choose to attend the course and how it helped you?

A: *In my opinion, it is obvious nowadays that the life long adult education is important and absolutely necessary in the labour field, especially for someone who is very interested in learning always new things! I myself belong in this category and the TIPS course has to do, beyond any doubt, with and is very relevant to my job in immigrants' integration into the Greek society. I am very pleased to have learnt new things, especially in the National and in the European legislation and in the Cultural Mediation's fields of application! My choice of attending the TIPS course has been fulfilled!*

Q: What do you think about the role, needs, education and position of Cultural Mediators from your point of view?

A: ***Cultural Mediators absolutely take a hand in today's multicultural societies and their role is crucial in immigrants' social integration. A new profession is coming into the world and especially in Greece and specific education must be provided to this professional category. TIPS is a very good representative of education and such courses could be provided more frequently here in Greece.***

Q: How relative is the activity of your institution with the TIPS course?

A: ***Absolutely relative! Teaching the Greek language, the Greek history and the Greek civilization to immigrants and Cultural Mediation go together!***

Q: What are the advantages and the disadvantages of the TIPS course?

A: ***TIPS is a course which utilized new technologies with absolute success and was coincided perfectly to nowadays' needs. The distance learning was very easy and I think that it helped and accommodated those who were working at the same time or had other activities as well. It forms an extremely innovative and progressive educational programme with a very interesting and qualitative content, important and necessary to all these people who are occupied in organizations or offices that concern and have to do with immigrants. The distance learning, though, did not allow the trainees to get to know each other better. Only this, in my opinion, is the TIPS' weak point and disadvantage, which happens with all the distance learning courses.***

Q: Are you aware of any other relevant educational programmes?

A: ***As far as I know, TIPS is the unique educational programme in the field of cultural mediation, here in Greece for the time being. Cultural mediation, in any case, is a new occupation field for the Greek society and daily life.***

Q: Do you believe that the size of the target group (meaning Cultural Mediators) in which the course aims is going to increase in the next years?

A: ***Cultural Mediators are going to increase during the next years and that is because the immigration flow is not going to stop, but will continue in the future. My educational programme "ODYSSEUS" is going to continue the courses in the Greek language for at least four or five more years, till 2013, so cultural mediation is a fact and reality for the Greek data.***

Q: What is your opinion about the content of the course (quality, quantity, coherence)?

A: ***As I have already mentioned, the content of the course was very interesting and innovative and if there is more information concerning cultural mediation, it would be very useful to attend a second course on this subject.***

Q: In which way your organization could use the TIPS course?

A: *The TIPS course is very important for the staff of the Institute for Continuing Adult Education that works in the "ODYSSEUS" programme. As the "ODYSSEUS" educational coordinator, the certificate that I am going to get is very useful to me, not only as a typical qualification but as a theoretical and cognitive base as well. All the staff and educators of "ODYSSEUS", in panhellenic scale, could and should attend TIPS. My organization, so, could use the TIPS modules for a similar course in the future. I myself am very happy to be the first, among others in my organization, certified in Cultural Mediation!*

Interview with a TIPS course participant from the Greek class

Ms. Aourelia Galanopoulou
Pyrgos, Greece

Q: Tell us a little bit about yourself - your education, interests, and work experiences

A: *My name is Aourelia Galanopoulou, I have graduated in French literature at the University of Craiova, Romania. During 1998-1999 I have attended courses of Greek language and civilization at the University of Athens having a national scholarship. After my exams I have received from the American Institute of Greece the diploma level D for the knowledge of the Greek language.*

I have worked few years as a French teacher, after that I've been a Greek and French translator for an educational private company of Bucharest and simultaneously I was teaching Greek language and civilization at the Association of Greek Businessmen of Romania. Between 2002-2006 I was director at Pegasus Press – Editing House.

For the last 19 years I live between Greece and Romania learning and studying. I've prepared several students for studies in Romania. I have an important experience in teaching, translating and working with different people and managing hard situations. In 2007 we moved in Greece (following my husband) and since then I am a cultural mediator at Olympic Training Ltd. Due to the fact that I have Romanian citizenship I was funded by the Romanian-Greek Cultural Association "Filia" in order to conserve and continue the Romanian language and tradition of the Romanian people who live in Greece. That's why we started a class of Romanian language and culture for the children with Romanian origins.

In the same time we opened a Greek class for an easiest integration in the Greek society of the Romanian citizens who choose to live and work in Greece.

Q: Why did you choose to attend the course and how did it help you?

A: *First of all the institution who run the course is very appreciated in Greece and the TIPS course was exactly what I needed for more knowledge and information in the field of cultural mediation. It is very important for me to learn about the politics of the others countries of EU and about methods of mediation. Every single day I meet foreigners from several countries who try to be adapted to the Greek social conditions and to the labour market. I have to help them, giving them at least an pertinent and realistic advice. Greece is not completely ready for accepting immigrants and is still working at the infrastructure. The legislation changes often and it is very hard to be informed in time.*

Q: From your point of view what do you think about the role, the needs, the education and the position of Cultural Mediators?

A: *The Cultural Mediator has a very important role in the process of immigrant's integration. Without the help of the cultural mediator, it would be extremely hard to understand the culture, the tradition and the point of view of the immigrant in order to adapt them to the local condition. The cultural mediator has to be a high level educated person, with a good knowledge of foreign languages and cultures, increased social intelligence, a good and easy level of communication, a strong knowledge of the legal, social and economical aspects. Every public institution should have a cultural mediator because he has a basic attribution in communication, understanding and finding the best solution for every part.*

Q: How relative is the activity of your institution with the TIPS course?

A: *At the Olympic Training Ltd, we have implemented programs of cultural mediation and many programs concerning multiculturalism and tolerance and the fight against racism. So we are close enough to the object of the course.*

Q: What are the advantages and the disadvantages of the TIPS course?

A: *The basic advantage is the method of e-learning. That confers an equal possibility of studying to all people despite distance, working hours, house matters. Also, as a trainee I got in touch with an overall point of view of the immigration related matters. As disadvantage I would mention the method of m-learning because it was very expensive to download to our mobile phone all this content. .*

Q: Do you believe that the size of the target group (meaning Cultural mediators) in which the course aims is going to increase in the next years?

A: *Yes, I do. It's unavoidable, especially in Greece. The political and economic conditions in countries of Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, have amplified the immigration flow to Greece. The immigrant communities are not united, but separated from each other because of their dissimilar opinions and the varying degree of willingness to attend to the public matters. On the other hand, the native population is very cautious or even negative towards the immigrant communities. Therefore, the employment of Cultural Mediators in governmental agencies and public services seems to be a one-way road for the harmonious coexistence and respect of each other's culture and differences, which can lead to a smooth integration of the immigrants.*

Q: What is your opinion about the content of the course (quality, quantity, coherence)?

A: *The course was well structured and organized and I found the educational material very interesting. Personally I was very satisfied of it.*

Q: In which way your organization could use the TIPS course?

A: *The entire information that was provided in the TIPS course could be used in a future program by our organization, so as to educate cultural mediators in the framework of the EU projects. We could also use the material in order to inform our organization staff about legislation, social matters and statistics.*



T-learning to Improve Professional Skills for intercultural dialogue

**Join the TIPS Social Software Groups on Cultural Mediation
Group Title: "Cultural Mediation"**

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Group email: cultural-mediation@googlegroups.com

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