



Social Mediation Conference & Social Mediation Network Launch

Outcomes and Suggestions

12 September 2020

Pyla, Larnaca

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Introduction

On Saturday, 12 September 2020, the **Social Mediation Conference and Social Mediators' Network Launch** was held in Pyla, Cyprus. This was the last activity under the **2019-2020 Social Mediation in Practice** workshop series, which took place from October 2019 to March 2020, with the collaboration of the University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus and the support of the British High Commission in Cyprus. The workshops were of an inter-communal character, open to individuals from all over Cyprus, across the divide. They were organized under the long-term Social Mediation project of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Law, Alternative and Innovative Methods (ICLAIM).

The Conference was initially scheduled for April 2020, but it had to be postponed to a new date, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Despite the partial removal of most restrictions, the conference was re-scheduled for September 2020, employing a hybrid in person/ virtual format. The interactive session on the effect of COVID-19 on social relations in Cyprus, and the two parts of the Interactive Workshop were attended by Social Mediators trained under the project, including the pilot workshop which took place in July 2018. The discussion was based on the feedback and the insights we received during the four 'Social Mediation in Practice' workshops, in the previous months.

The event closed with a public session, attended by general members of the public, including an international audience, where the results of the Conference were presented.

The present report offers a detailed summary of the discussions which were held on the day, by way of an initial introduction to the future work of the **Social Mediators' Network**.

Useful links:

www.social-mediation.org

www.icclaimcentre.org

For more information on the project please contact: social-mediation@icclaimcentre.org

Pyla, Larnaca
CYPRUS

October 2020



Social MEDIATION CONFERENCE

PROGRAMME

SATURDAY

12 September 2020,

- 10:00-10:30** Arrivals
- 10:30-11:15** **Welcome from the Trainers**
Keynote Speech on COVID-19 by Dr. Pinar Ioannides
- 11:15-11:30** Break
- 11:30-13:30** **Interactive Workshop: *How can we apply Social Mediation through a Network of Social Mediators?***
Part I: Social Mediation and the Cyprus Question
- 13:30-14:30** Lunch break
- 14:30-16:00** **Part II:** Social Mediation in our professional environments (schools, office, civil society organisations)
Conclusions and Action Plan
- 16:30-17:30** **Public Session**
Findings and Launch of the Social Mediators Network

Reception to follow.

RSVP social-mediation@iclaimcentre.org (by 4 September, 2020)

Social MEDIATION CONFERENCE

MEET THE CONFERENCE TEAM



DR PINAR ZUBAROGLU-IOANNIDES
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Pinar Zubaroglu-Ioannides is a lecturer at Suleyman Demirel University, Isparta, Turkey. She holds a bachelor's degree (Hons) in social work from Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey, master's degree in Social Work/ Social Policy from Columbia University, New York, U.S., and completed her PhD in Social Work/Social Policy at Fordham University, New York, U.S. She taught social welfare policy, research methods and international social development courses in the U.S. and Haiti, and most recently, she co-taught "Social Work with Refugees and Displaced Persons: Turkey Experience" course at Columbia University. She conducted independent and collaborative research on various topics. Her research interests include refugee resettlement policies, refugee wellbeing, social work education (international and interdisciplinary), women and youth empowerment. Her doctorate dissertation examined the impact of refugee resettlement policies in the U.S. on refugee wellbeing. Dr. Zubaroglu-Ioannides was granted in 2015 with the Generation Jobless award by International House and Ford Foundation to implement Job, Training, Connection Project addressing the youth unemployment in Haiti. Currently, she is studying the impact of COVID-19 on social work education and writing a book chapter on challenges faced by refugee host countries.



DR KATERINA ANTONIOU
FACILITATOR/TRAINER

Dr Katerina Antoniou holds a BA in Political Science and Economics from Clark University, Massachusetts, an MSc in International Relations Theory from the London School of Economics, and a PhD in International Peacebuilding from the University of Central Lancashire, Preston. Dr Antoniou specialises in peacebuilding and conflict resolution research, and has particularly examined group membership and interaction among peacebuilding professionals in Cyprus. Her recent publications include peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on the desecuritization of identity through intergroup contact, the patterns of intergroup interaction and visitation in post-conflict societies, and the politicisation of dark tourism sites. Additional research interests include the contribution of tourism to peacebuilding, and the examination of peace-

building projects as liminal sites. Dr Antoniou has been involved with the ICLAIM Social Mediation initiative (2018-present). She acted as a reviewer for the ICLAIM Social Mediation Handbook, has written about Social Mediation and the Cyprus conflict in various media, and has been involved in the delivery of social mediation training throughout the island, and in the development of a nationwide Social Mediators Network. Dr Katerina Antoniou is a lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire Cyprus and a course leader for the BA (Hons) in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Dr Antoniou has received training on higher education and cross-cultural facilitation. She has also been involved in a variety of non-formal education initiatives, including youth empowerment workshops and intercommunal activities, and is a Fulbright Alumna.



MS NADIA KORNIOTI
FACILITATOR/TRAINER

Nadia Kornioti is a qualified lawyer in the Republic of Cyprus, holding an LLB from the University of Leicester, UK and an LLM in Public International Law from University College London, UK. Currently, she is a Researcher and Trainer at ICLAIM and a PhD candidate at the University of Central Lancashire (Cyprus Campus). She has previously worked and collaborated with a number of international, regional and Cypriot institutions, including numerous Non-Governmental Organisations, in the areas of Migration, Asylum, Reconciliation, Transitional Justice and Peace Education. She has both received training and facilitated workshops in these areas, involving diverse groups of participants, in terms of age and background. She is one of the reviewers of the 'Handbook on Social Mediation' published by ICLAIM, while she is also a Social Mediation trainer as of July 2018. Building on previous and current experience, her research areas of interest range from general Public International Law, with an emphasis on International Humanitarian Law, to legal history and theory, Refugee and Migration Law, Transitional Justice and Memory, and the Law's interaction with the Social Sciences, with a focus on vulnerable and under-represented groups.

COVID-19 and Social Mediation

COVID-19 is impacting 214 countries and territories around the world. All of these countries and territories have been tackling with physical, psychological, economic, and social outcomes of the pandemic. The consequences of the pandemic in countries that have protracted disputes, like Cyprus, are even more complex. An interactive session, with Dr. Pinar Zubaroglu-Ioannides, on COVID-19 and its impact on Social Mediation addressed these consequences with the Social Mediation conference participants, who represented both communities of Cyprus.

When the participants were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on themselves and their immediate social circle, they mentioned the lack of access to the other community, family separations, loss of accommodation, loss of work, fear of job security, difficulty in receiving payments from employment in the other community, changes in the load of work for employees in the northern and southern sides of Cyprus and the work overload of employees who are able to work during the pandemic.

Next, the participants were asked about alternative solutions to avoid the present impacts of COVID-19. The participants suggested that supervising access to the other community, working from home, transitioning jobs to accommodate life with- and post-pandemic, assigning individuals to take actions on behalf of the people affected by COVID-19, and creating unified lockdown measures across the divide in Cyprus were all suggested as potential measures that could prevent the current adverse impact of COVID-19.

Interactive Workshops: How can we apply Social Mediation through a Network of Social Mediators?

Part I – Social Mediation and the Cyprus Question

One of the key areas for the application of Social Mediation in Cyprus is, according to Social Mediation in Practice participants, the Cyprus Question. This stance was reinforced at the Conference, where participants expressed the confidence that Social Mediation can be a tool to generate political change, specifically in a country experiencing an intractable conflict, and which has a record of multiple failed attempts for a peace settlement.

According to the workshop discussion, there are three **key stakeholders** that the Network should involve in Social Mediation in this regard:

- i. authority figures and policy-makers,
- ii. non-profit organizations and civil society (CSOs), and
- iii. the people of Cyprus more broadly.

Engaging these stakeholders with Social Mediation and enabling them to apply it or merely support it can occur through the following proposed Network actions:

- Training CSO professionals and authority figures (stakeholders (i) and (ii))
- Delivering educational workshops for youth audiences and the general public (stakeholder group iii)
- Reaching out to all respective audiences to raise awareness on Social Mediation
- Reaching out to the general public to also secure government support
- Organising conferences and other activities to assess the applicability of Social Mediation, particularly in reference to the Cyprus peace process

The aim of this framework of action is to create a broader, more democratic and more inclusive process with regard to a future peace settlement for Cyprus, enabling citizens and stakeholders from both communities to collaborate on the issues at hand, through the tool of facilitated dialogue that Social Mediation can offer. This of course can be more effective if the first steps taken are to raise Social Mediation awareness and skills amongst the identified stakeholders. A course of action that was introduced and overwhelmingly reiterated by the conference participants.

The conference participants also identified a set of success criteria for effectively reaching out to these stakeholders:

- To secure the approval of authority figures and their willingness to engage,
- To draw public attention,
- To secure stakeholder support and willingness to contribute to Social Mediation in practice,
- To assert public pressure to potentially reluctant authority figures to apply Social Mediation,
- To increase the participation of organisations as an indication of success,
- To increase the level of engagement by organisations as an indication of success.

The Network's target stakeholders are represented through a pyramid, indicating Track I – authority figures – at the top, civil society organisations in the middle, and the people at the bottom – including targeted groups such as youth. The pyramid stakeholder representation enables the Network to apply a bottom-up approach that is as inclusive as possible.

The following groups were identified as **supporters**:

- Engagement with Media, including Social Media platforms, for effective outreach, through representatives of social mediators from both communities of the island,
- Schools and universities as supporters of Social Mediation
- Receive support/endorsement from the UN
- External supporters outside of Cyprus
- CSOs not related to the Cyprus peace process, to support Social Mediation and its application in the context of the Cyprus question

Timeframe: Achieving the aforementioned objectives would need an initial 4 to 8-month preparation stage, and a long-term commitment of tentatively 5 years, according to the estimations of conference participants.

Points to be further discussed:

1. How does the Network effectively prioritise?
2. How does the Network structure itself?
3. How do we secure enough resources for the Network?

Part II – Social Mediation in our professional environment

In this session, participants were invited to join the discussion by sharing information on how they would usually describe Social Mediation to their personal environment, if asked. The vast majority of participants referred to Social Mediation as a method to build empathy among individuals that disagree, so as to find a commonly-accepted solution to an existing or developing social conflict. When asked whether they did have the chance to apply Social Mediation in practice, participants shared examples from their professional and their private/social environments, including social conflicts between neighbours and between friends. Whereas their efforts usually had a positive impact, one participant had difficulties with convincing their superior at work about the benefits of employing Social Mediation, while another informed that they had to withdraw from an intervention, due to concerns over their personal bias over the situation.

The discussion gave the opportunity to share a number of difficulties observed in implementing Social Mediation, ranging from skills, to terminology, to level of experience. Specifically, difficulties identified include:

- Issues of confidence in one's level of skills/experience as a Social Mediator to handle a situation effectively.
- Concerns with identifying personal bias by the Social Mediator, before unintentionally exacerbating a given situation, despite best efforts to alleviate the conflict.
- How to handle situations that directly affect the Social Mediator's personal beliefs and values.
- Sometimes the parties to the conflict are unwilling to 'listen to reason'.
- The effective implementation of Social Mediation in professional environments, where the conflict in question concerns persons at different levels of the hierarchy within an organisation.
- Language difficulties in translating and using the term 'Social Mediation' in Greek and Turkish. Whereas there is a formal term in Greek, there is a difference in the term employed in the Republic of Turkey and within the Turkish Cypriot community.

In examining ways through which the Network could address the above difficulties, the following ideas were shared:

- To receive new/additional training, depending on identified needs.
- To offer opportunities to refresh existing knowledge and skills (e.g. Network members to work on hypothetical scenarios among themselves).
- To establish a platform through which Social Mediators can share ideas and experience with each other.
- The Network to become a pool of 'common knowledge' that will be available to all members.
- To receive more training on how to apply Social Mediation according to different personality types and cultures

Then, the discussion turned towards concrete ways in which the Network could address the above challenges within, but also through its position within society:

- The Network should share resources on Social Mediation and information on forthcoming training sessions.
- The Network's platform could allow internally (for members) and externally (for organisations/companies) to submit information on recurring problems, so as to guide the Network on current needs. Shall external organisations/companies wish to do so, they could request a Social Mediator to be put in touch with them, in order to resolve an existing issue directly.

Logistical needs:

- ICLAIM will continue supporting the coordination and development of the Network, through projects, infrastructure and by the offer of its premises for the needs of the Network.
- Network members are required to show commitment, and contribute to the expansion of the Network and the promotion of Social Mediation as a conflict resolution tool.
- The creation of a public page and a private group/application/other platform for the members of the Network. The existing www.social-mediation.org website can be used as a starting point.
- Make a working schedule for periodical, face-to-face (if possible) meetings of Network members, to discuss issues relevant to Social Mediation and to receive additional training, following prior consultation among members.
- Funding
- All planning to have an outlook towards the next 5 to 10 years.

The next face-to-face (and/or virtual, if necessary) meeting of Network Members has been tentatively scheduled for **February 2021**.

In the meantime, **ICLAIM** is tasked with:

- i. Explore ways to improve the structure of the Network;
- ii. Look into different platforms to facilitate communication among Network members;
- iii. Finalise and activate the Action Plan, as discussed at the Conference.
- iv. Inform all trained Social Mediators, to update them on the results of the Conference and offer them a final invitation to join the Network, even if they did not have the chance to attend the event.

All Network members need to undertake individual research in terms of the needs for Social Mediation in our communities, professional and social circles, and bring new points for discussion at the next meeting.

Social Mediation Network Launch

Network Objectives

- Overcoming the difficulties of being a Social Mediator (bias, equality, authority support)
- Providing opportunities for practice (peer-to-peer-training)
- Awareness Raising to key stakeholders (authorities, civil society, individuals, youth)
- Promoting the culture of Social Mediation and its benefits broadly

Network – Next Steps

1. A follow-up email to all Social Mediators
2. Establishment of an online group for continuous communication
3. Establishment of a Network platform for long-term communication and future synergies
4. Organisation of a face-to-face/blended meeting in February 2021 to finalize the Network's structure and activities