Beyond the pandemic: digital and multilingual practices in third sector organisations

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Language in third sector organisations

- Language plays a vital role in bridging all operators involved in crisis scenarios (Moreno-Rivero 2018) and lack of appropriate linguistic and cultural awareness in crisis communication may lead to catastrophic consequences (O'Brien and Federici 2019)

- For humanitarian aid workers and teachers, language presents one of the main obstacles to effectiveness in their work with refugees and migrants (Ghandour-Demiri from TWB in Moreno-Rivero 2018)

- 'Multiplicity of professional, semi-professional and non-professional language mediation practices (Delgado-Luchner, 2018; Sanchez Ramos and Rico Perez, 2020)

- Cutting of funds (Foulquié-Rubio and Sanchez-Pedreño Sanchez, 2019)

Digital development

- Reliance of refugees on ICT (Marić 2017; WPP 2017) and the potential of ICT to facilitate integration (AbuJanour et al., 2019)

- Third and public sector lacks digitalisation (Caceres et al, 2019)

Technological solutions could make up for the lack of financial resources to manage the large numbers

- Accessibility can benefit displaced populations

Bring together community interpreting and accessibility (Anssari-Naim 2020; Orero, 2020)

- 'While technology has great potential to advance inclusive development it can also be at the root of national and international **exclusion and inequality**' (Committee for Development Policy, 2018)

Research questions

- How are NGOs using technology to support their CALD beneficiaries?

- How do they deal with the multilingual needs of their beneficiaries?

- Are they using any translation technologies to overcome the linguistic barriers?

Methodology

- Questionnaire to 53 organisations between June and July 2019 (non-profit, private, public organisations)

- In-depth interviews with 7 NGOs staff working with refugees from May to September 2020

Locations: Italy, Greece, Spain and UK

Participants of the questionnaire

	Greece	Italy	Spain	Total
Non-profit organisations	7	7	5	18
Private	1	15	2	19
Public body	8	3	5	16
Total	**16**	**25**	**12**	**53**

Questionnaire results

**Linguistic services: cultural mediation
and interpreting**

	Cultural mediation	%	Interpreting	%
Greece	5	31%	2	12%
Italy	22	88%	1	4%
Spain	4	33%	1	8%
Total	31	58%	4	7%

Questionnaire results

Linguistic services: language courses and written translation

	Language courses	%
Greece	10	62%
Italy	13	52%
Spain	7	58%
Total	30	56%

	Translation	%	Materials in different languages	%
Greece	0	0	1	6%
Italy	2	8%	13	52%
Spain	0	0	2	16%
Total	2	3%	16	30%

Questionnaire results

- Drop out from the services or issues providing and accessing services due to linguistic difficulties

- Health services refuse to employ interpreters/cultural mediators (Greece)

- Lack of resources to manage all cases

- No digitalisation

ICT use

Type of use	N.	%
Internal only	16	30%
External	22	41%
No ICT use	7	13%
Yes (no details)	4	7.5%
No answer	4	7.5%

Interviews

1 in Greece

1 in Italy

1 in UK

2 in Spain
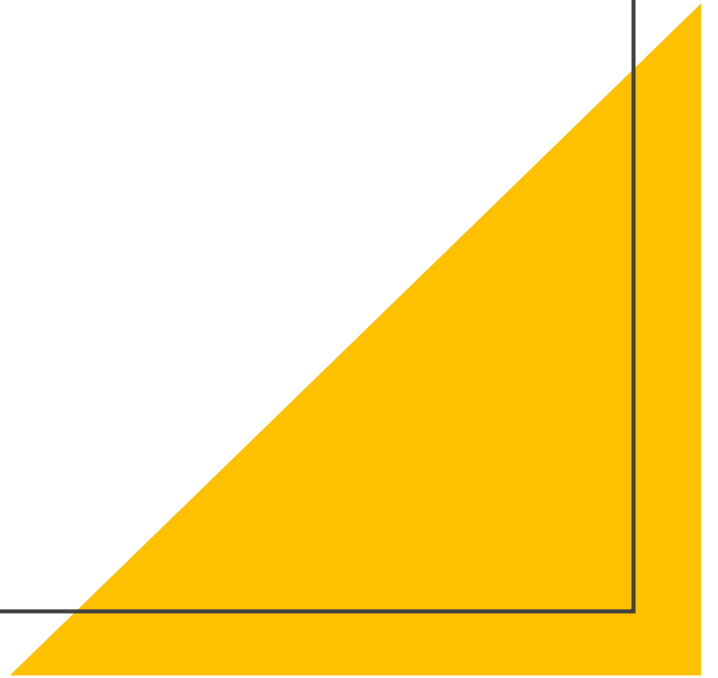
Preliminary interview results

- **ICT use**

Low use of ICT and digital tools

WhatsApp and e-mail

No ICT use (internal or external) prior to COVID

- **Linguistic practices and translation**

Budget for translation but not used

No budget for linguistic services anymore

Comprehensive database of cultural mediators that they use regularly (person in charge of the coordination of the cultural mediation services)

Nine in-house interpreters

Volunteer interpreters

Translation technologies: Google Translate

- **Changes during the pandemic**

Move to digital (within 2 weeks)

Online workshops to teach digital skills

Benefits of digitalisation

Face-to-face interaction still desired

No changes in terms of their multilingual practices

Diverse multilingual practices

NGOs that use language professionals do not conceive working without them

Similar levels of digitalisation: in most cases it has been a result of COVID-19

Multilingual practices

Cultural mediation extended in Italy

Spain the country with less provision of T&I

Conclusions

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