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Four Best Practices in Cooperation between Civil Society and Authorities with a View to the Prevention of the Violent Radicalization in Spain

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Abstract

Madrid and London terrorist attacks in 2004 and 2005, European counterparts to those carried out in New York and Washington during 2001 have steadily increased EU institutions' concern about the phenomenon of violent radicalization, specially that of Islamist nature, as a possible previous step leading to Jihadist terrorism in a context of a continuous and even growing flow of immigration, namely from Muslim origins. The European Council deems paramount to achieve a deeper cooperation between civil society and authorities towards the prevention of these radicalization phenomena.

Key Words: Best practices, civil society, integration, prevention, radicalization

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1. Methodology¹

These four in-depth assessments have been conducted through a review of the relevant literature as well as interviews with key individuals, including:

- Key individuals involved in the design and delivery of the initiative including both civil society representatives and authorities representatives.
- Additional individuals or organisations identified as important to the delivery of the scheme or study.
- Individuals or organisations with a special role in the accomplishment of the initiative, its broader perceptions and credibility, including local community stakeholders.
- Intended beneficiaries.

On the one hand, the interviews have been performed on a semi-structured basis in a spirit of open enquiry to maximise new data recovery along the principles of best practice. These interviews have been based on a data collection framework outlined in the appendix attached to this report. On the other hand, informal interviews have been carried out to those people who preferred to remain anonymous, or were simply unwilling to have their interview recorded. In this case the procedure was mainly based on spontaneous questions that arose during conversation. This approach to interviewees allows a wide flexibility and is highly adaptable to individual differences, the changes of the interviewee's speech and the emergence of new information that was not previously considered.

In-depth assessments/'reviews' of the mentioned projects are intended to generate data and understanding of how initiatives play a significant role in the cooperation between civil society and authorities. Therefore, they do not intend to evaluate and compare the outcomes of individual projects.

2. Best practice nº 1: School of Intercultural Citizenship of Valencia

2.1. Overview

Two of the most important problems which make immigrant population vulnerable are misunderstanding by local population as well as the limitations which the process of insertion in a new society implies. Being aware of this, the CeiMigra Foundation -founded in July, 4th 2001 drawing its statutory objectives from the Program "Interculturality Schools", comprising Social, Intercultural and Gender Mediation along with Co-development- considered necessary to create in 2005 the "School of Intercultural Citizenship", aiming to offer and maximize citizens' knowledge of their right and, at the same time, the duties that this condition implies,

¹ This paper presents a summary of four in-depth case studies focused on Spain researched by the national group made up by the author along as doctors Javier Jordán and Javier Rosón. This research is set in the broader frame of an on-going UE project entrusted by the European Commission to The Change Institute (CI) of London.

which constitutes a key factor for the social integration. But it specially endeavours to foster “a positive interaction based on equality of treatment, on the reciprocal opening between the receiving society and the immigrant citizens”.² The School of Intercultural Citizenship, which formally exists since the 4th of October 2005, tries to develop, within the framework of an Education for the Citizenship which emphasizes the ethical and emotional dimension of learning, a series of Workshops as an educational proposal which includes on its contents the experiences and difficulties of immigration.

A number of projects related to the intercultural promotion have been developed from this School. To begin with, it could be pointed out social and citizen participation of both newer and older neighbours of the municipal districts of the Valencian region. The School is structured in two pillars: the formation area and the citizenship, social networks and social participation area. These two work areas are complemented with other study lines from the CeiMigra Foundation, especially with the Intercultural Encounter Spaces Program.

2.2. Aims, objectives and outcomes

- To respond to the need for information about the rights that, as a person, the immigrant has and the duties that, as a citizen, are binding to him.
- To ease their adaptation to the new society they have to get inserted in, regarding their character, not their mere work force. In a word, their citizenship, which leads to show concerns about personal, familiar and collective issues.
- To contribute to cooperation between native and incoming population, fostering the opportunities migration might have for both sides.

Their actions, generally aimed to all those interested in the immigration area, are structured in three great fields:

- The inclusion of a cross-sectional module on the immigrants’ rights and obligations in all the labour insertion courses practised in the CeiMigra foundation.
- The creation of courses and workshops to ease personal, familiar and collective development. Such activities have a double approach:
 - a) Workshops of labour initiation carried out in cooperation with immigrant families, directed to the formation of technicians in contact with some of the family issues linked to the migratory process of some of its members. These workshops approach topics related to the family relationships in migratory contexts and the resolution of intrafamiliar conflicts, the challenges and

² CeiMigra (2006) “Comisión europea para la política de inmigración 2000”, *Inmigración. A la búsqueda de oportunidades, al encuentro de capacidades (2001-2006)*. Valencia: CeiMigra, Fundación de la Comunidad Valenciana, p. 86.

opportunities that the receiving society presents to young immigrants, the associationism of the immigrants, etc.

b) Practical workshops, with the same approach, directly dedicated to immigrant families with the purpose to foster their adaptation to a new society.

c) The teaching of volunteering and civic work courses directed as much to native as to immigrants on the basis of a coexistent and intercultural society.³

2.3. Authority and civil society actors

Firstly, the following organizations -which are in addition the founding organizations of CeiMigra- make up the Board of Trustees of this foundation in which the School of Intercultural Citizenship is integrated:

- The Valencian Government, Council of Immigration and Citizenship.⁴
- The Compañía de Jesús, Provincia de Aragón.⁵
- The Valencian Foundation Service of Labour (SERVEF).⁶
- The University of Valencia.⁷
- The Migra-Studium Foundation.⁸
- The University Institute of Studies on Migrations (Universidad Pontificia de Comillas).⁹
- Arrupe Centre of Valencia.¹⁰

The Board of Trustees is the organ of government, representation and administration of the CeiMigra and is composed by eight members:

- A President.
- A Vice-president.
- Three Patrons designated by the Council of Immigration and Citizenship.
- Three Patrons designated by the Compañía de Jesús.” (Interv-JMF).

The Board of Trustees appoints representatives who constitute the Permanent Commission, in charge of the control of the ordinary or administrative management of the Foundation’s activities developed by its Managing Director, as well as the accomplishment of the tasks delegated by the Board of Trustees. The Permanent

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

⁴ <http://gva.es/jsp/portalgv.jsp?br=2&re=1&co=en-US&chflash=true> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

⁵ <http://jesuitasaragon.es/> [last date accessed July 29 2008]

⁶ <http://sve.es/> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

⁷ <http://uv.es/~webuv/> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

⁸ <http://migrastudium.org/php/index.php> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

⁹ <http://upcomillas.es/pagnew/iem/index.asp> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

¹⁰ <http://centroarrupe.com/> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

Commission is integrated by four members who are not required to be members of the Board of Trustees. Two of them are designated by the Council of Immigration and Citizenship and two more by the Compañía de Jesús.

Likewise, the Board of Trustees names a Managing Director of the Foundation as a general representative to whom is entrusted the ordinary or administrative management of the activities of the Foundation, position that Mr. Joaquin García Rock currently bears.

Secondly, the organizations linked to the CeiMigra program of co-development are:

- The “Bancaja” Foundation.¹¹
- The “Sud-Nord” Board of Trustees of the University of Valencia.¹²
- The Cooperation and International Relations Office of the University of Alicante.¹³
- The Municipal Board of Trustees of the Housing of Alicante town hall.¹⁴
- The Compañía de Jesús, Provincia de Aragón.
- Hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas de La Salle.¹⁵
- The “Jovesólides” Association.¹⁶

Thirdly and lastly, the CeiMigra collaborates with the Foundation for the Ethics of the Businesses and the Organizations (ÉTNOR), the University Institute of Studies of the Woman of the University of Valencia, the School of Hotel Management and Tourism of Valencia, the General Secretary of Labour of “Comisiones Obreras” from the Region of Valencia, the Rural and International Agriculture Study Centre (CERAI), the Foundation Network of support for the Sociolabour Integration (RAIS) and the Association for the Promotion and Professional Insertion (APIP), within the framework of the “ Proyecto Equal Analogí@s”.¹⁷

2.4. Funding

The School of Intercultural Citizenship is integrated in the CeiMigra Foundation, which, due to its aims and to the growing dynamic demands, tries to diversify its funding resources on public and private institutions. The European Social Fund, Bancaja, Caja de Ahorros del Mediterráneo, Caja Madrid, La Caixa, some other

¹¹ <http://obrasocial.bancaja.es/> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

¹² <http://uv.es/psudnord/> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

¹³ <http://ua.es/es/internacional/prog07/proymagreb/convpatrimonio0506conv.html> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

¹⁴ <http://alicante-ayto.es/accionsocial/home.html> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

¹⁵ <http://lasalle.es/paternaep/> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

¹⁶ <http://jovesolid.es/> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

¹⁷ http://equal-analogias.ceim.net/proyecto_que_es.php [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

universities and the Valencian Academy of Language have joined in recent years the original contribution by the Valencian Government.

As most of these contributions have a temporary character, the CeiMigra tries to consolidate them through plurianual conventions, agreements or cooperation schemes.

Also in 2006, the CeiMigra had already established agreements with different autonomic and state departments, European organisms and other social institutions: the Main Directorate of Cooperation for the Co-development programs and Residences; the Main Directorate of Social Services for formation courses; the Main Directorate of Family for advising and family classroom; the Main Directorate of Investigation for publications; and the Main Directorate of Housing for the program of Infovivienda.

As a study centre, the CeiMigra has also signed collaboration agreements with several universities located in Valencia: Estudi General (Valencia), Alicante, Jaume I (Castellón), as well as with other similar foundations such as the Luis Vives Foundation for the formation of technicians, the RAIS Foundation or the Chambers of Commerce dedicated to emigrants' formation. Collaboration with trade unions will play an important role in order to generate good practices in the insertion in to the work market in a near future.

Specifically, "the School of Intercultural Citizenship" is primarily funded with the contributions of the Council of Immigration and Citizenship of the Valencian Government and the Bancaja bank, particularly through its "*Social Work department*" (Interv-AM).

2.5. Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the School of Intercultural Citizenship, according to their activities, could be defined as: "On the one hand, all citizens interested in receiving a specialized formation on the immigration issue. On the other hand, all the immigrants who have settled and are in the Region of Valencia, in a temporary or indefinite way, who - according to the current norms- can be receivers of the School of Intercultural Citizenship activities"(Interv-RB).

2.6. Duration

The School of Intercultural Citizenship started out with the conference of Doctor Joseba Achotegui: *The common problematic in immigrants with the Ulises Syndrome* in October the 4th, 2005. Therefore, it has already been working for two years and a half. Nevertheless, approximately a third of the fields approached by the School of Intercultural Citizenship -such as the volunteering and civic work courses- had already been going on before the constitution of the School as such. These ones were started the same year of the beginning of the CeiMigra Foundation (2001) and

five courses had already been completed at the end of 2005 with a total of 174 participants.

2.7. Management structures

The organizational chart of the CeiMigra is set out as follows:

- Direction.
- Direction Team.
- Coordination Units

Each one of these Coordination Units manages several programs. Thus, “the School of Intercultural Citizenship is one of the Programs framed within the Coordination Unit of Formation and Mediation for the Citizenship” (Interv-AM).

The School of Intercultural Citizenship has remarkable human resources for the development of its activities, because in her “are involved at least between 12 and 14 people comprising engaged personnel, volunteering, students in practices and external teaching staff, based on the activity and the period of the year in question” (Interv-AM). All of them are coordinated by Mr. Albert Mora.

2.8. The authority/civil society relationship

The School of Intercultural Citizenship is one of the best existing examples in Spain of a strong and solid collaboration between authorities and civil society. The Foundation has managed to imply all the levels of the Spanish Public Administration (municipal, provincial, autonomic and state, in addition to the European). Likewise, by means of the signature of collaboration agreements, to almost all types of existing actors within the civil society: a wide array of associations; private banks; professional schools; unions; politically independent public institutions of the Valencian Government which work autonomous or independently; festivals; public and non-profit private foundations; private companies; public educative institutions; universities and their dependent centres. Each one of them involves hundreds of actors of the Spanish civil society. Consequently, we can state that the social, economic and cultural network existing around the School of Intercultural Citizenship is extraordinary.

2.9. Assessment

The coexistence processes generated in multicultural contexts depend to a great extent on the attitude of citizens and on how these stretch their relations. The construction of an intercultural society is accomplished through the implication of those citizens who decide to work based on the articulation of diversity. The social participation of the native citizens and immigrants constitutes a central axis in all the process of integration in diverse societies. That is the reason why a number of activities from this School are developed towards the promotion of social participation, associationism and volunteering action.

For instance, it has developed courses on volunteers' formation in intercultural actions. It pays special attention to the immigrants' implication in advisory tasks, as well as in the promotion for an intercultural coexistence. It is also promoted the creation of social participation experiences in the field of immigration. The aim is to generate a forum of permanent debate between the associations that develop activities in this field.

The importance of the social networks throughout the migratory process, the reconfiguration of the immigrant culture that takes place in the receiving society and the difficulties to get adapted to a new reality could be pointed out as central elements for the process of citizen insertion. The immigrants' psycho-social well-being promotion is approached in this School from a global perspective which integrates the trans-nationalization as a fundamental element in the migratory processes. Special attention is placed on situations which *transnational families* - building their network of relations in the distance- live, marked by a high spatial mobility of their members. The accomplishment of all these activities is oriented towards the creation of mutual support experiences between the participants, trying to promote the creation of social networks that could provide support for their integration process.

The School of Intercultural Citizenship pursues the following objectives that directly "attack" the base of the processes of possible violent radicalization:

- To promote and support experiences of social participation in the immigration field.
- To foster the development of immigrant associative networks as an instrument for social insertion and intercultural coexistence.
- To sensitize the population in general on the positive aspects of immigration and interculturality.
- To ease their adaptation to the new society in which they must enrol, regarding individuals not merely as work force, but taking into account a wider concept of their citizenship, which forces to bear in mind the personal, familiar and collective fields.
- To promote the creation of social networks as instruments which may help increase the psycho-social well-being of the immigrants.
- To offer tools for the migratory process' best development, upgrading the opportunities that this one offers and diminishing the negative effects associated to the fact of emigrating.

However, as any Program framed in a foundation of this type, the School of Intercultural Citizenship must permanently try not to become any of these four things, as we will see next in the section of "conclusions":

- A bureaucratic department.
- A new "window" of mere management.
- An agency of labour positioning.
- An institute of studies alien to the reality.

2.10. Conclusions

The access to the citizenship is absolutely an administrative act submissive to legal requirements which -logically- surpasses the competences of the CeiMigra and of course the School of Intercultural Citizenship. Nevertheless, “the immigrants inclusion in the citizenship also has a sociocultural and ethical component that is acquired by means of the socialization of shared values, the understanding of cultural traditions and the civic integration, which makes being part with full rights of the welcoming society possible” (Interv-RB). The stability of the migrations requires to extend the scope of the immigrants’ formation. However, until now, this one has primarily had an instrumental character, since its primary target was the immigrants incorporation to the labour market. Thus, heretofore they would have: (i) to open new educational lines in the cultural, ethical and coexistence fields intending to foster citizenship exercise of the abiding rights and duties; (ii) to approach the new problems that arise when immigrants make contact to the receiving society; and (iii) to spread best practices in the management of the diversity.

As long as migrations transforms the social reality and their actors are incorporated through normalization processes to social life, other front doors gain importance, mainly the knowledge and the participation in the cultural and social codes unfolded in legal institutions, shared histories, social practices.

Along these lines, the School of Intercultural Citizenship makes an extraordinary work which directly affects the prevention of possible violent radicalization, mostly through three measures:

- “The incorporation of a module on the immigrants’ rights and obligations in all the courses of labour insertion” (Interv-RB).
- The accomplishment of workshops on the social impact of the new culture experienced by immigrants in the receiving society. These ones influence behaviours in their daily life, for example the problematic of transnational families, the situation of the young people of second generation (although, as we indicated in interim report of Spain, these are still little numerous), nonaccompanied minors or social networks in immigration.
- The formation aimed to technicians, professionals and leaders of associations on best practices in the management of the diversity and interculturality by means of Postgraduates in Mediation, those of Co-development and those of Mediation online.

3. Best practice n° 2: The Euroarab Foundation for Higher Studies of Granada¹⁸

3.1. Overview

The Euroarab Foundation for Higher Studies has its origins in the agreement reached by the European Parliament in 1984 for the creation of the Euroarab University. On 10th October, 1995 the Euroarab Foundation for Higher Studies was set up, an unique institution in the international arena due to its composition and its mission: to create a space for dialogue and cooperation between the EU countries and those of the League of Arab States.

Located in the city of Granada, a historical reference point in the relations between Europe and the Arab world, the Foundation is managed by a joint Board of Trustees, presided by the Spanish Secretary of State for Universities and Research of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science. This Board of Trustees, in its Articles of Association, is also composed by a representative of the EU, a representative of the League of Arab States and a representative of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

In 2005, representatives of the University of Granada and of the Andalusian Government -which actively encouraged the Project during its initial stages- joined the ex-officio founding members.

Through its activities, the Foundation aims to dedicate all its efforts to promoting Euro-Arab cooperation, supporting academic and cultural activities and spreading out new ideas and trends in Science and Humanities. By means of collaboration agreements, the Foundation has established relations with more than thirty educational, cultural, research and economic institutions.

3.2. Aims, objectives and outcomes

- To encourage teaching, research, information and technical assistance exchanges and to collaborate with institutions from other geographical areas, strengthening ties with the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean basin in particular.
- To promote postgraduate programs in universities and research centres in Europe and the Arab world, in order to foster the exchange and dissemination of knowledge.
- To contribute to economic development and to promote cooperation between Arab and European countries through training programs in human resources and executive management.
- To introduce into society the idea of respect for Science, and for the values of tolerance, objectivity, freedom, and good practice, favoring the promotion

¹⁸ Some fragments of this section have been extracted directly of <http://fundeia.net/Visual/principal.asp> [Last date accessed July 29 2008]

and practice of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights.

- To become a provider of useful, up-to-date and comprehensive information and resources through the creation of a network of institutional and social contributors.

Under the auspices of the Foundation, the EuroArab Management School was created in 1995 as a result of cooperation between the European Commission and the League of Arab States and thanks to the efforts of the Spanish Government, through its Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs, and, in particular, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation.

The EuroArab Management School is currently the hub of the only pan-Arabic and pan-European network devoted to the development of company management. By providing training and support to companies, the School offers solutions to the problems that European and Arab executives face in their management tasks.

3.3. Authority and civil society actors

The Foundation's Board of Trustees is composed by six representatives, one for each of the following institutions:

- The European Union.
- The League of Arab States.
- The Ministry of Education and Science.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.
- The Andalusian Government.
- The University of Granada.

Up to the moment, the Foundation has signed collaboration agreements with the following institutions:

- "Asociación Alcántara para el desarrollo de las relaciones entre España y Marruecos".
- Association of Political Scientist Women.
- Santander Central Hispano Bank (BSCH).
- Caja Rural de Granada.
- College of Political Scientists and Sociologists of Granada.
- The Andalusian Audiovisual Council.
- The Andalusian Ombudsman.
- County council of Granada.
- Internacional Festival of Music and Dance of Granada.
- "Business School of Andalusia" Foundation.
- "Legado Andalusi" Foundation.
- Iberia Airlines from Spain.
- "Granada" Institute of Secondary Education.

- Peace and Conflict Institute, University of Granada.
- The Ministry of Education and Science.
- The University of Granada.
- “Menéndez Pelayo” Internacional University.
- The Technical University of Madrid.

3.4. Funding

During its first ten years of existence, from 1995 to 2005, the Foundation managed a 12 million euros budget, that is to say, approximately 1,2 million euros annually. Nevertheless, since 2005 the budget was reduced to about 500,000 euros per year. Although this budget has been reduced to a half, the Foundation at the moment carries out a greater number of activities and is based upon a greater degree of organization, because it is carrying out a rational and much more efficient budgetary policy than ever before.

The Secretary of State for Universities from the Ministry of Education and Science financially funds the minimum structure of the Foundation (the President of the Board of Trustees is the Secretary of State for Universities and Research). Nonetheless, all the activities are carried out at the moment thanks to subventions associated to projects granted throughout the participation in previous public offers. These subventions are mainly provided from: (i) the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation (AECI) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; (ii) the Andalusian Agency of International Cooperation (AACI) of the Presidency’s Council of the Andalusian Government; (iii) and the Ministries of Industry, Culture, Defense and Education.

3.5. Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the activity developed by the Euroarab Foundation for Higher Studies are:

- The Interannual Program of the Euroarab Chairs, sponsored by the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation (AECI), purports to promote the scholastic and researching interchange between university professors, scientists, researchers and intellectuals from the MENA countries (the Middle East and North African region). There are three Chairs that are proposed:
 - The Euroarab Chair of the Arts and the Cultures.
 - The Euroarab Chair of Environment and sustainable Development.
 - The Euroarab Chair of Social Sciences and Governance.

With this program the Foundation pretends: (i) to foment the scholastic, research and information exchange; (ii) to collaborate with academic, researching and scientific institutions belonging to countries of the Mediterranean basin; (iii) and to encourage post-grad programs between university research centres of European and Arabic countries for the exchange and the diffusion of the knowledge, as well as

to introduce in the society the idea of respect to the Sciences and the values of tolerance, objectivity, freedom and good practice.

- The research personnel through mobility scholarships granted by the Foundation within the framework of the International Cooperation Masters proposed by the Foundation itself, also focused in the Maghrib.
- The technical personnel, since the Foundation undertakes projects to train specialized executives in governance in the Mediterranean area. An example is the “POLIBIUS Project”, whose objective is to get a deeper insight in the study of governance of the Mediterranean Public Administrations, in which Spain, Algeria, Lebanon, Belgium and Tunisia are involved.
- Post-grad students, mainly through the aforementioned International Cooperation Masters, but also of the “University Expert in Foreign Right” and of the “TEMPUS Project”, whose objective is to develop the university title of Tourism in the University Mohammed I Oujda (Morocco) and its recognition in the University of Granada, as well as to establish a set of activities related to the collaboration firm-university in matters related to the management of tourist resources. .
- The Muslim communities; in this sense a recently elaborated study by the Foundation has to be emphasized on the perception of the Muslim communities in the city of Granada, which included several discussion groups. One of them was held with imams, presidents and directors of the different mosques, aiming among other things to channel through political democratic guidelines a wide range of demands from the Muslims towards the local political power. It can be considered as an initiative that perfectly fits in what we understand like as prevention to violent radicalization in our study. On the other hand, also a discussion group between Muslim women was accomplished.
- Immigrants in general and particularly Muslim immigrants, since most of the Foundation’s activities have a public character.
- Citizens in general, for the same reason.

3.6. Duration

The Euroarab for Foundation Higher Studies was founded almost thirteen years ago. We could divide this period into two clear phases if taking into account the accomplished objectives and the direction of practical-ideological order of the Foundation in each one of them. In addition, the second one should be divided again into two sub-phases. Therefore, as we can verify in this report, the first phase lasted from 1995 until 2005, and the second from 2005 until nowadays. However, as we have already pointed out, within this last one we may make a distinction between the 2005-2007 period and the 2007-2008 one.

3.7. Management structures

1. Board of Trustees. This body is composed by a representative of each of the following institutions:

- The European Union.

- The League of Arab States.
- The Ministry of Education and Science of the Spanish Government.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Spanish Government.
- The Andalusian Government.
- The University of Granada.

2. President: Mr. Miguel Ángel Quintanilla Fisac (Secretary of State for Universities and Research of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science).

3. Secretary: Mr. Juan Montabes Pereira (Executive Secretary of the Euroarab Foundation for Higher Studies).

4.-Ex-Officio Members:

- Ms. Leire Pajín Iraola (Secretary of State for International Cooperation of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation).
- Mr. Mohamed El-Fatah Naciri (Head of the Mission of the League of Arab States in Madrid).
- Mr. Francisco Triguero Ruiz (General Director for Universities, Andalusian Government).
- Mr. Francisco González Lodeiro (Chancellor of the University of Granada).
- A representative of the European Commission.
- A representative of the European Parliament.

5.-Executive Secretariat



Fuente: <http://fundea.net/Visual/principal.asp>

3.8. The authority/civil society relationship

The Euroarab for Foundation Higher Studies is one of the best existing examples in Spain of a strong and solid collaboration between authorities and civil society. The Foundation has managed to imply at all the levels of the Spanish Public Administration (local, provincial, autonomic and state, in addition to the European one) and, by signing collaboration agreements, to almost all the types of existing actors within civil society: associations of all type; private banks; professional schools; politically independent public institutions of the Andalusian Government which work autonomous or independently; festivals; public and private non-profit foundations; private companies; public educative institutions; and universities and their dependent centres. Each one of them, involves hundreds of actors of the Spanish civil society, with which we can say that the social, economic and cultural network existing around the Euroarab for Foundation Higher Studies is extraordinary.

3.9. Assessment

An interview the current Executive Secretary of the Euroarab Foundation, Mr. Juan Montabes Pereira, granted us was specially enlightening, as it confirmed many of our previous conclusions on the operation and the results that this Foundation had harvested in its almost thirteen years of existence.

In this sense, Juan Montabes Pereira explained us that “during the first ten years of the Foundation’s existence, those comprising approximately from 1995 to 2005, its performance was more directed to a cultural, economic and business elite and in consequence the level of impact on the Muslim immigrants was remarkably smaller. In fact, around 95% of the budget was assigned to the EuroArab Management School. The new team considers that such an elitist approach was a mistake, and that it is necessary to maximize the social leadership in all aspects, to redirect the Foundation’s performance towards the practices of good government and that the Foundation serves as a test tube for society. Now the Foundation has actually begun to develop the kind of tasks it was founded for, to institutionally identify the Arab communities. The Spanish Government in those years and the European Union made a remarkable effort to establish a specialized centre that connected the academic, cultural and social levels” (Interv-JM).

Therefore, this stage of greater success initiated in 2005 and intensified since 2007, “has allowed the Muslims of Granada to have a platform of physical encounter and diffusion of their activities, throughout communities, associations, etc., as well as to develop discussion and work groups with representatives and Muslim leaders” (Interv-JM), therefore producing much better results for the Muslim immigrant population.

On the other hand, as Mr. De Cueto, Vice Secretary for Academic Affairs of the Foundation, indicates, this one “has been very receptive to the project of Alliance of Civilizations” (Interv-CC) proposed by the present Spanish Government presided by Mr. Rodriguez Zapatero. In fact, in January, 2008 the Euroarab Foundation was included in the National Plan of the Kingdom of Spain for the Alliance of Civilizations, approved in the Council of Ministers the 21st of January, and in which it is pronounced within the plan of performances the “intensification of the activities of the Granada’s Euroarab Foundation of Higher Studies to buttress the bridges of understanding and intercultural cooperation between different cultures and civilizations”.¹⁹

According to Mr Cueto “it has also been achieved the start of the University of the Two Kings. Likewise, the Foundation directly welcomed events related to the security and the defense in the Mediterranean basin” (Interv-CC), including the Jihadist terrorism problematic, without for that reason has there been no encounters between the European partners and the Arab partners. However, “a greater economic implication from the League of Arab States would be desirable, which has been perhaps excessively involved in the EuroArab Management School” (Interv-CC). This one, in spite of absorbing most of the funding of the Foundation and being a pioneering project in the European Union, developed a work that implied

¹⁹ “ORDEN PRE/45/2008, de 21 de enero, por la que se da publicidad al Acuerdo de 11 de enero de 2008, del Consejo de Ministros, por el que se aprueba el Plan Nacional del Reino de España para la Alianza de Civilizaciones”, available through <http://boe.es/boe/dias/2008/01/23/pdfs/A04447-04450.pdf> [Last date accessed July 30 2008]

too many deficiencies. In addition, it was not a top business school like others in the European Union even though it had enough resources for it. “For that reason we recently chose to suppress it and to sign [the 6th of February, 2008] new [and very important] agreements” (Interv-CC).

Rather than fully-fledged mistakes, it could be considered as unfitting policies that at the moment are being corrected with a series of specific measures, among them the signature of a Understanding Memorandum between the League of Arab States and the Euroarab Foundation of Higher Studies, the 6th of February, 2008 in The Cairo (Egypt), by the Government of Spain. The ultimate goal of this initiative is the creation of a space dedicated to the formation of professionals and directors of the Public Administration of the Arab and European States in the fields of Governance and good practice. The signature of this agreement was carried out at the Arab League’s see between the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (Miguel Ángel Moratinos) and the General Secretary of the Arab League (Amor Musa). According to the subscribed document, the Euroarab Foundation has been assigned anything related to the good practices of effectiveness and transparency of the Public Administrations, a labour which it will develop on the basis of the strategic alliance with the Arab Academy Graduate School of Business, with settled in The Cairo. This singular formative EuroArab Space of High Direction, due to start operating in the 2008-2009 course, will teach government officials of the Mediterranean and the Arab States formation in the areas of health, education, local services and infrastructures, as well as programs to judiciary - judges and public prosecutors- and communication professionals. All these courses will be held in Granada.

The agreement also establishes among its aims the participation in cooperation projects in the Arab world by trained institutions and European NGO’s in general and Spanish in particular. The agreement also comprises the design and teaching of a Post-Grad Master in Applied Political Studies which will be carried out in collaboration with the University of Granada and which will be developed in similar terms with the one which the International Foundation for Latin America of Administration and Public Politics (FIIAPP) has been undertaking for years. The agreement gathers a series of changes in so far as its structure is equally made up by the Spanish Government and the League of Arab States. In this sense a presidency and a vice-presidency are settled down, which are alternatively appointed every year, on the Spanish side, to the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, and on the Arab side, to the General Secretary of the Arab League. the President of the Andalusian Government, the Chancellor of the University of Granada, the Mayor of the City council of Granada and the President of the Provincial Delegation are also incorporated to this Board of Trustees. Another change is the new denomination that is given to this institution, which is now called Euroarab School of Higher Studies of Granada, uniting therefore the names of the Euroarab Foundation of Superior Studies and that of Euroarab School.

On the other hand, Ms. Lola Fernández - Responsible for Communication and Protocol Office of the Euroarab Foundation- considers that “the important thing is

not the available money, as demonstrated in the past, but how this is managed” (Interv-LF). For Ms. Fernández an mistake repeated by the people in charge of the Foundation until 2005 was, aside from a defficient economic management, “not to have clearly outlined the Foundation’s strategic lines” (Interv-LF), for that reason its performance was very ample. However, according to her, since 2005 the strategic lines are very clear: gender equity, Muslims’ perception and interculturality, governance and development. In addition, “it is necessary to deepen the ability to work in networks in order to involve the greater possible number of actors” (Interv-LF), which will contribute to increase and improve the Foundation’s national projection, which at sometimes lacks national influence despite this is its vocation.

3.10. Conclusions

It would therefore be very advisable to obtain a greater institutionalization of the Foundation in order to reach a greater autonomy regarding the political power. This, intense changes in the policies’ orientation of the Foundation would be avoided. It would also be advisable to reinforce the consensus between the members of the Board of Trustees, while keeping a suitable scope to defend their legitimate interests.

A reinforced scholarships’ policy within the framework of the Foundation, by increasing these ones and their economic resources, mainly aimed to the young people, would allow Arab-Muslims students to totally dedicate to their labours. This, in addition, would contribute to modify the stereotyped image of the Muslim immigrant lacking of formation, carrying out nonqualified or lowly qualified works and with limited resources at a socioeconomic and cultural level. In this sense, the social awareness labour which performs the Foundation is praiseworthy.

Indeed, at a cultural level it would be also necessary for the Foundation to develop a more market-oriented and not so restricted or elitist approach of culture, throughout the celebration of musical concerts, popular dances, etc., which would attract the majority of the Muslim immigrants, and not only small closed circles.

In this sense it is necessary to avoid the adoption of elitist approaches in favour of social leadership approaches. Also, it is mandatory to adopt and successfully carry out specific policies against clearly pre-fixed aims.

4. Best Practice nº 3: Professional Expert in Islamic Culture, Civilization and Religion

4.1. Overview

In October 2004, Germán Ruipérez (National University of Distance Education, UNED) and Mansur Escudero (Islamic Council) developed a personal, non-institutional initiative, which supposed “a challenge in the face of society and a methodological challenge, as it combined an expert teaching staff (in the scope of the course) and Muslim leaders who jointly supplied a university expert”. This

incipient proposal supposed “a degree of personal social responsibility, and also a challenge in methodological and proposal innovation at all the levels” (Interv-GR), “unifying the academic experience with the existential one of Muslim leaders” (Interv-ME).

A year later (2005), the UNED offered for the first time the pioneering course of Professional Expert on “Islamic Culture, civilization and religion”. Three years later,²⁰ this post-grad course,²¹ based on the blended-learning methodology,²² has been able to train around 500 students (through 500 teaching hours distributed from December until June), introducing them in the “Muslim world”, the Islamic civilization and religion from within and as a personal lived experience, aside from the historical-cultural context within the Spanish framework. This course was designed, coordinated and established by the Didactic Engineering Laboratory of the UNED and the Islamic Council, with the intention to offer a multidisciplinary vision of the Islam and to teach experts on this issue, thus meeting an objective demand of formed personnel in this field.

The teaching staff, composed by educational experts of different Spanish universities and Muslim leaders of recognized prestige -the latter ones appointed to the Islamic Council organization- has been delivering the course to very heterogeneous groups of students: with an average age of 38 years (students of 18 to 65 years) and belonging to a wide range of professions: intercultural mediators, lawyers, journalists, liberal professions, professors -some of catholic religion in public Spanish and foreign centres-, security forces, etc.

4.2. Aims, objectives and outcomes

The main goal of this university expert is the formation of different social actors able to know and value the Islamic world and its traditions, since the Spanish culture is pretty entangled with the Islamic civilization (language, art, toponymy, customs, etc.). Nonetheless, a great ignorance about it still exists, not only about its historical relevance, but, very specially, in the present Spanish context with more than a million Muslims who reside in Spain. The mutual knowledge is the first step for the Muslim communities’ integration, as well as the positive interaction between the different communities at an equal level.

²⁰ During three school courses (2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008).

²¹ Exclusively taught on an e-learning basis by Cátedra Toledo of the University Camilo José Cela.

²² Blended Learning is the combination of multiple approaches to learning. Blended learning can be accomplished through the use of ‘blended’ virtual and physical resources. In this case, the course is given through Internet, using the LMS (Learning Management System) from the UNED, WebCT, during the two first editions, and the ‘LMS E-Ducativa’ of the virtual campus of e-learning’s Cátedra Toledo from the third edition, and with some eyewitness voluntary encounters.

Also, the primary target of this initiative is to form specialists in Islamic culture and religion who, guided by prestigious experts academic and famous Muslim leaders in this issue, will gain knowledge on: (i) the historical vision of the Islamic culture, religion and thought; (ii) the Islamic religion's Fundamentals; (iii) the Sufi; (iv) the Islamic thought: Sunni and Shiite; (v) the Islam's legal frame in Spain; and (vi) the Islam and the democracy in the present world.

The three academic sessions since 2005 results have been very positive both from the intended beneficiaries (students) reception and the institutional and civil society reaction. In this sense, "standardizing the discussion on the subject of Islamic religion in a laic public University" was achieved; it was managed to involve "security forces of the State, civil employees of different ministries, with high professional profile"; "giving a totally academic vision while including the voice of Muslims about what the Islamic religion is"; Also, the students' high cultural level who have participated in the expert and their implication at a social level in different decision making and responsibility positions, at a business or State institutional level, has supposed diminishing the small cultural problems that could exist, avoiding prejudices on the Muslim population, since the mutual knowledge is a departure point in order to avoid 'the cultural' shock and favouring integration in an equal level in all the aspects: "I believe that formation is the most important instrument in order to create a coexistence environment, within the constitutional framework, among all members of the Spanish society an all registered students alike. In addition our main interest was to work with people of high cultural level, because they really are opinion multipliers" (Interv-GR).

4.3. Authority and civil society actors

The Public Administration has *de facto* supported all the proposed initiatives by the organization of the course, although not economically. The institutional support at a University level, as much from the UNED as from the Camilo José Cela University (in its third edition), has been absolute. There has never been any problem with other institutions at the time of developing the expert course, articulating a social network which includes professionals from the corporative world (directors of human resources, commercials, etc.); from the institutional levels (formation responsables and educators of primary and secondary education including the Islamic and catholic religion educators, State security forces, etc.); as well as liberal professionals (lawyers, consultants, journalists, etc.), sociocultural entertainers, intercultural mediators, professors and instructors in general.

4.4. Funding

On the one hand, the initiative was exclusively financed by the students' registration income. With these registration fees the teaching staff and the materials that have been distributed were paid: "No subvention from anybody has been received". The great advantage of this course has been the demand and the interest of the students, which supposed that its "survival has been guaranteed, without having to depend on any financing source".

On the other hand, the students have been occasionally financed (throughout the three editions) by different institutions, such as the World Islamic Call Society, the Halal Institute, the Islamic Council (for students of this course with good academic performances and willing to attend a new initiative of the course voluntarily: an Academic Seminary of immersion in the Islamic culture and religion, during three days, in Chaouen (Morocco). This scholarship includes the inscription and expedition of the supporting title, as well as the lodging, maintenance and transport in Morocco, and the Ferry Spain-Morocco-Spain.

4.5. Beneficiaries

This expert course, “conceived as a totally different course from what it had been offered up to that moment by institutions or Spanish public universities” (Interv-GR) is directed to any person that is interested in knowing the Islamic culture and religion, because in its work it habitually has contact with Muslims groups (directors of human resources, intercultural mediators, Islam teachers, primary and secondary education teachers, judges and public prosecutors, security forces of the State,²³ etc.) or encouraged by their personal interests (journalists, consultants, etc.).

The groups of attending students have been very heterogeneous. All of them have shown a high level of interests during both theoretical and practical teaching.

Also, with the purpose of simplifying the registration process, as well as giving capacity to a maximum number of “beneficiaries”, no previous degree is demanded. However more than 90% of the students already had it. Therefore, the level of this course could be considered equivalent to a university post-grad, since the great majority of the pupils have a university degree.

4.6. Duration

This expert course started in 2005. Since then, it has been edited for three times. For its good reception and obtained results, the course intends to be indefinitely renewed

Some future prospects point towards the extension of the course, specializing on the formation of imams. That is to say, to design a second year in which more contents on Islamic religion are addressed: “It would be a proper degree with the character of a two-year master. The first would be a more general and cross-sectional year, and the second a more specific year directed to the religious formation (Koran, legal subjects, intercultural mediation, etc.”. As being a degree, there will not be academic requirements (degree, titles), but only to pass the first year of the expert. Also, it has been considered the possibility of creating a specific new line of courses specialized for journalists, inspectors on halal feeding,

²³ Guardia Civil, National Intelligence Centre (CNI), Local and National Police, with around 15 pupils in the present edition.

intercultural mediators, teachers for state schools, assistants in prisons, attendants in hospitals, international relations delegates, etc., all of them included within the framework of the Cooperation Agreements between the Spanish State and the Spanish Islamic Commission (1992).

4.7. Management structures

The expert course is a nonregulated education degree based on online tuition, which has the support and infrastructure of the UNED (at the moment in charge of the educational and methodologic collaboration) in which more than 600 courses of nonregulated lessons are distributed. As any University both the UNED and the Camilo José Cela University have a centre direction, as well as a specific chancellorship, and vice-chancellorship in different areas of performance, management and a general secretary. Also, we must emphasize that the UNED, at the moment, has the greater number of students of the country, more than 180,000 (146,980 in the different degrees). With more than 30 years of experience, this institution is leader implementing vanguard technologies applied to the learning, with the greater supply of virtual courses of the country; it is also a pioneer in the methodology based on the principles of distant learning, focusing on the student's necessities.

The Camilo José Cela University (Cátedra Toledo of e-learning) has been recently added to the university infrastructure of the UNED. It is in charge of the direction, organization and certification. Thus, the course has become a clear example of interuniversity implication, which implies the collaboration between universities as stated in the new European Space of Higher Education (EEES).

The academic structure of this expert has been modified from the initially proposed in its first edition, adapting the contents, as well as the pedagogical profile of teachers and experts. In its last edition (2007-2008) it has incorporated important new features compared to other editions, welcoming Dr. Juan Ferreiro (University professor of State Ecclesiastical Right and General Subdirector of Coordination and Promotion of the Religious Freedom - Ministry of Justice); with Dr Antonio Manuel Rodriguez Branches (Professor of Civil Law at the University of Córdoba); and with Dr Carlos Andrés Segovia, a prestigious islamologist.

4.8. The authority/civil society relationship

This course is a clear example of best practice, efficiently putting into contact civil society and the religious and academic fields. Also, the course responds in an exemplary way to the objective demand of people and organizations that need to be trained on Islamic religion and culture.

Thus, it is possible to note how civil society begins to organize itself independently from the established political power, generating proper initiatives with the intention to replace those aspects that are not developed by the institutions, although they do present an increasing demand.

Issues such as the interreligious dialogue -within civil society-, the mutual knowledge, and the need for objective information on the ethnic and religious minorities whose members are currently growing in our country, in both a macro and micro standard as observed in the Spanish civil society, within the expert course's framework here displayed and in the students' number and profile: "The 80% of non-Muslim students in the course are a reflection of the Spanish civil society. In fact the great problem which we have with the Islamic world is that we have a great majority of Christian and Catholic traditional population with many prejudices regarding the Islamic religion. Therefore, the course is the reflection of the representativeness of both positions" (Interv-ME).

Also, we must observe the increasing demand of objective information which is presented by the employers (who begin to employ Muslim population) and also the security forces of the State (in its labour to guarantee the rights and duties of the civil society).

Another aspect to be emphasized is directly related to the profile of the "pupils" who have accomplished the expert course, since the pupils' high qualification and the authority positions which they carry out in the different institutions that they represent, will have a greater impact for the civil society. In this sense, the future expectations that present the people in charge of this experience, intend to respond to a greater specialization of the social actors related to the knowledge of the Islamic culture and religion.

4.9. Assessment

In order to assess the structure of the good practice presented here, it is necessary to consider the contents as much as the suitability and intention of them. Also, it is necessary to observe how this expert course is institutionally articulated in the Spanish civil society as a result of the experience of the implied students themselves, observing the successes and the "failures" of them.

The course has been structured in the following modules, with minimal changes throughout its three editions: Module I: Islamic culture and history, whose main objective is to provide the student basic knowledge on the main historical facts and the evolution of the Islamic culture throughout more than thirteen centuries of existence; Module II: The Koran and Muhammad,²⁴ which tries to approach the Koranic fact to the student, through the study of some fragments of the Revelation, and to the circumstances in which the one who was trusted this Revelation lived, to the prophet Muhammad. Both themes - the Koran and Muhammad- are not studied from the believer's standpoint, but as part of those texts and founders of great religions; Module III: Legal frame of the Islam in Spain, which mainly undertakes the study of the Cooperation Agreement signed in 1992 between the Spanish State and the Spanish Islamic Commission. Module IV: Islamic thought, whose objective

²⁴ These modules are joined together, because initially there were specific modules on the Prophet and other on the Koran.

is to approach and introduce the student in the two major currents of the Islam (Sunni and Shiite); Module V: Islam and democracy, whose objective is to offer the student an actual vision of the main subjects that are discussed in the Spanish society regarding the Islam: the Islam and terrorism, the woman's liberties and rights, the challenges of the organization of Islam in Spain, the Islamic feminism, islamophobia, the freedom of expression, the veil, etc.

This structure aims to meet both the demand of knowledge and the ignorance of the civil society alien to the Islamic and Muslim world, as an answer to the new social necessities (from the administration) in such aspects as education, work, interreligious and interethnic security, relations, etc.

This online course supposed an important challenge and a step forward, for the following reasons among others:

- For the first time in Spain a Muslim organization (Islamic Council) has offered a university course on Islamic religion and, in addition, in a public University of national scope.
- The religious contents have been presented from a personal lived experience point of view from Muslims, an unusual fact up to now in the Spanish university, which gives an added value to the future understanding and conflicts' resolution between the heterogeneous civil society.
- Since 2004, when the Spanish Government began to finance Islamic Religion teachers in the public educational centres of the Spanish State within the frame of the Cooperation Agreement between the State and the Islamic Commission, the course has become a model for those Islamic religion teachers who intend to work in the public education field.
- So far, the course is a de facto formation centre of the teaching staff, guaranteeing their pedagogical knowledge and resources necessary to deliver Islamic religion lessons in the face of a lack of a "specialized centre" in this matter. Also, this course will be considered at the time of selecting the candidates who will occupy the future seats of professors, since the evaluation and the proposal of teaching staff is carried out by the different represented Muslim communities in Spain: "To obtain the expert is an added point in order to accede to the position of Islamic religion teacher, it is not a "key" course, but it obviously is an element to have into account" (Interv-ME).
- The initiative heads towards training and consolidating of Spanish imams, since the sociocultural context must be the same from the one of its country of origin: "thus, we avoid to have to make a "re-conversion", which is a great challenge some countries have: foreigners who have lived in other movements, in other cultural and social contexts, which is not the religion issue, but what really shocks is that they come from other political contexts accustomed to another thing".
- Also it will form those foreign Muslim leaders (imams) who have not been taught in Spain. It affects de facto to the Spaniards who profess this religion. Through this expert course they will be possible to found a specific

formation which deeply contextualize the legal and cultural frame of the country in which they develop their professional activity.

On the other hand, in relation to the course's evaluation, we will consider two aspects: the internal evaluation of the course and the external evaluation expressed by the users and/or beneficiaries of it.

- Internally, the beneficiaries/pupils, have positively valued the methodology, the type of teaching and the contents of which the expert course consists.
- The followed methodology (blended-learning) displays a series of advantages regarding the "presential education". In the first place, the participation of the pupils is much greater (almost 10,000 interventions registered in the course's forums). Also, the different interventions/opinions from the students are written, which supposes maximizing the type of "discussions", as well as the themes that were treated (terrorism, Islamic veil, polygamy, ablation, gender questions, etc.), misspelling taboos and prejudices: "the most rewarding experience is that in the forums it has been possible to speak of all type of subjects, which in other contexts (presential discussions face to face) would have been very difficult to carry out" (Interv-GR). That is to say, "that people who are ideological "adversaries", in religious and/or cultural aspects, have been able to coexist and to learn from one another" (Interv-student1).
- The students' contributions, in the online forum, framed in the different subjects and modules that are offered in the expert course. Thus any aspect about Islamic culture and religion, are used "as a complementary material, sometimes, much more interesting than the lines proposed by the professor of the module, having being published online on the Islamic Council's web page (webislam.com)" (Interv-student2).

The contents have been readaptated to the students' heterogeneity and the necessities of formation. Although throughout the three editions the same themes have been developed, the students value positively its suitability and adaptation to the actual reality: "the materials that were offered are very present and they always try to adapt, including the continuous changes and debates that at the moment are developed on Islamic religion" (Interv-student3).

- Most of the students consider that the course is "a good contribution to the alliance of civilizations".
- The new initiatives developed by the educational staff and by the course coordinators, have been positively valued. In this case we would emphasize what could be one of the main problems of education (e-learning), the non-direct interaction between the pupils. However, this handicap has become a new and pioneering initiative for the socialization and interaction face to face, between the different students who want to participate in the seminary in Morocco (Chaouen): "in an online course we have the academic socialization subject, which is an important part. That is to say, many students who know each other and have much empathy through the forums, want to know each other in person, and for that reason this activity is

developed. The idea has been very well welcomed by the pupils and is a pioneering initiative in the field of the course and the Spanish State”. “There they will have the opportunity to see in situ all the framework of Islamic religion teaching in a Muslim country” (Interv-GR).

Methodologically it is not easy to teach online, because the pupils’ profile heterogeneity implies that the motivation of each student is very different:

- Most of the students (approximately 80%) are not Muslim, and even some of them sceptical to any subject related to the religion in general.
- An important number of them intend to extend their knowledge in the Islam by personal or professional curiosity
- Between the minority group of Muslims, some of them want to deepen their knowledge in the Islam, since, in some case, they are educational staff of Islamic religion in public centres.

Also, the heterogeneity of the pupils implies that each one has a different level or knowledge of the reality studied. This implies making a continuous adaptation of the contents, which is quite difficult to carry out:

- For the aforementioned reasons, the expert course has initially had to reduce the weight of religious contents (in the different modules that have been delivered) and to increase the weight of cultural historical contents: “as there was a high percentage of non-Muslim, the only vision from the strictly religious point of view (“theological”), was not understood by some students more interested in contextualizing their prejudices and ignorance, than being formed “theologically” in a religion. For that reason, the contents have had to be adapted to the profile and expectations of the students. In this sense the future expectations of the course, (its specialization as master, in which the religious contents will be merely extended) will try to give capacity to the heterogeneity of the “beneficiaries”.
- Methodologically, the educational staff bore some doubts on how the foreseeable unease issues discussions and possible dialectic confrontations could be managed in the forums which could cause an unsuitable atmosphere learning.
- Likewise, for administrative reasons, the creation of the profile of Islamic religion professor has been delayed. This profile was outlined in the Cooperation Agreements between the Spanish State and the Spanish Islamic Commission (1992): It seemed to be a boom, but in the end there are no more than 40 Islamic religion professors, protected by the State’s administration in the nonuniversity education. Therefore we are talking about a very small group made up by some of these teachers who have enrolled the course. Therefore, such a small group is not enough to create a specific course directed towards them. We are talking about more than 100.000 Muslim students who have the right to Islamic religion lessons, allowing for the fact they are previously requested by the parents. In turn, the

administration has just these 40 teachers nationwide. We continue addressing them, but it is not the real demand”.

- Not all the professors initially implied in the course have been able to carry out their pedagogical work within its framework. “It is a matter of teaching staff’s profile. Within this profile, there is the expert side in the matter, which were the key criteria at the time of selecting, and then, another matter was the pedagogical criteria. This is where we have had more difficulties. An expert in the matter does not mean that he is good teacher. In the virtual world and the online formation this aspect is very important, and for that reason, we have considered to make a specific formation for the professors of this course in online formation. Mainly, when managing the forums, how they are directed, how to answer the students, how to intervene in cases of discussions or offensive speech, etc.”.

4.10. Conclusions

The course of Professional Expert in “Islamic Culture, civilization and religion”, that has been developed since 2005, is a clear example of Best Practice, since the civil society is efficiently combined with the religious and academic/educative fields. This initiative, intending to teach different social actors - coming from the corporative world, from institutional fields, people who exert liberal professions, sociocultural entertainers, intercultural mediators, professors and trainers in general - responds in a exemplary way to the objective demand of knowledge on the Islamic religion and culture, represented historically and socioculturally, by the different Muslim communities that are beginning to consolidate in the Spanish State.

Such aspects as the development of the interreligious dialogue - within civil society -, the mutual knowledge and the necessity of objective information on the ethnic and religious minorities that at the moment are establishing in our country, can be observed at a macro level in the Spanish civil society and administration, and at a micro level, within the expert course’s framework here presented and in the number and profile of the students.

The course, on the one hand, efficiently responds to the increasing demand of objective information demanded by the employers (who have started to include Muslim population as part of their staff), the Administration and the government, the security forces of the State (on their responsibility to guarantee the rights and duties of the civil society), etc., contributing to a better knowledge of the Islam, thus avoiding stereotypes and false conceptions which turn Islam and the Muslim communities object of islamophobia - identifying “the terrorists” with the Muslim population, immigrant or “converted”, who dwells in our country. On the other hand, it responds to the necessity to create a formative “centre” for Islamic religion professors and imams (native and immigrants), training them in aspects related to the religion, configuration of the citizenship, etc.

Another aspect to be emphasized is directly related to the profile of the “pupils” who have accomplished the expert course, since the high qualification of the pupils

and the authority positions that they carry out in the different institutions that they represent will have a greater impact for the civil society. In this sense, the future expectations by the responsables of this experience, intend to respond to a greater specialization of the social actors related to the knowledge of the Islamic culture and religion.

Externally to the course's organization, it has been valued as a first step to avoid fundamentalism and Islamic radicalization: "It is not possible to pretend that this will be simply solved, but perhaps this [the expert course] could, with time, be a positive aspect to stop the advance of the Islamic fundamentalism among Muslim communities in Europe".²⁵

In conclusion, the task of the course is to merge civil society, specially from the university, also choosing a very select high-profile teaching staff, so that, throughout the information and the formation, certain radical positions are completely excluded.

5. Best practice nº 4: The Association of Intercultural Mediators (ASMIN)

5.1. Overview

The Association of Intercultural Mediators ASMIN began its career in Granada as a result of the first course of the University Expert in Intercultural Mediation carried out by the University of Granada in 1999. Since then, it has developed its work of intercultural mediation in a number of local, regional, national and international projects.

However, it was the 20th of November, 2000 when it was registered in the Associations' National Registry with national number 167167, section 1, under protection of the 22nd article of the 1978 Spanish Constitution, the Associations law 191/1964 of 24 of December, the Real Decree 304785 of 6th of February and other legal dispositions. It is a non-partisan, lay and independent association, with a social non-profit character, opened to all the intercultural mediators who wish to work under their principles and aims. ASMIN has a national coverage, although its social address is in Granada and its area of performance is mainly Granada, its province and the Autonomous Community of Andalusia: "ASMIN was founded eight years ago, in 2000, as a result of the accomplishment of an expert in intercultural mediation in the city of Granada, although it was two years later, in 2002, when the association really began to work, specifically as a result of the "Cult and social cohesion" project. Although it is an association of state coverage, ASMIN acts mainly in the province of Granada, and also more and more frequently in the seven

²⁵ Interview on TV by Vicente Vallés -Assistant Director of Informativos Tele 5 to Germán Ruipérez (effective Project Coordinator of the course). For more details cfr.: http://ciberuniversidad.com/islam/upload/Tele5_entrevistaGermanRuipelez_VersionWeb_Mayo06.pdf [Last date accessed July 31 2008]

remaining provinces of Andalusia, and is extended towards the rest of Spain” (Interv-AB1).

ASMIN is an organization which strives to approach the diverse social and cultural realities that at the moment coexists in Andalusia, especially with the immigration, harnessing and developing new methods of intercultural intervention between the receiving society and the incorporation of immigrant people; buttressing, through its associative principles and formation, the values of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights; improving the intercultural competences of our citizens and workers in Andalusia; and positively developing the intercultural communication. “ASMIN has mediated in the resolution of cultural and social conflicts between the receiving population and the immigrant population and supported the scholastic, social, sanitary and labour integration of the immigrant population, ethnic minorities and refugees” (Interv-EH). Since its creation, through its statutes, it promotes the cultural diversity in Andalusia as the best example to advance in European integration and in the Alliance of Civilizations.

5.2. Aims, objectives and outcomes

The goals that ASMIN targets, under the principles of the intercultural medication, are the following ones:

- To represent the Association’s intercultural mediators before the governmental, university authorities and the public opinion.
- To defend the general interests and to develop the organization members’ rights.
- To promote the mediation as a pacific mean for conflict resolution.
- To foster and participate in those activities whose aim is to spread favourable values, attitudes and practices for intercultural coexistence in any social and/or political environment.
- To research, publish and divulgate topics related to the interculturality.
- To establish relations with organizations and associations that have similar objectives on mediation and immigration and with which it is possible to collaborate in national and international cooperation actions.
- To promote intercultural coexistence.
- To take part in those situations in which the mediation in intercultural contexts is needed when it is considered opportune by the association.
- To prevent the sprouting and development of conflicts that damage the intercultural coexistence, to denounce attitudes and practices that affect the pacific coexistence in intercultural fields.
- To promote new ways and spaces of coexistence in the intercultural diversity.

Likewise, the association’s aims are intimately related to the concept of cultural mediation, understood as: a mode of intervention from third (neutral) parties, between social or institutional actors in social situations of significant multiculturality. On these contexts an intercultural mediator tries to establish

nexus between those different actors or social agents with the purpose to prevent and/or solve and/or reformulate possible conflicts and to maximize the communication, but mainly with the ultimate objective to work in favour of the intercultural coexistence.²⁶ As a result of this, some of the characteristics that the labour and the objectives carried out from the intercultural mediation view must involve are:

- The aim of any intercultural mediator, and therefore, of the intercultural mediation, is to act neither as a judge nor a referee of a situation, but as a conciliator without decision authority, intending to modify the attitude of the different implied social actors, as well as that of the administration.
- By ensuring the communication between both parts (ie. social actors, administration, etc.), the mediator will generate a flexible context in which both can see their positions (ie. ideological, social, cultural, religious, etc.) represented. Avoiding and/or diminishing possible conflicts is possible within this flexible framework.
- In addition, the mediator's objective is not to diminish or erase the differences between the different "adversaries", but to make them flexible with the intention to pose alternatives to the conflict. For that reason, the mediator must be impartial, without forgetting to carry out a sensitizing role against inequalities or social or institutional discrimination.
- Easing reflection between the different parts improves the relation among them and as a consequence conflicts are reduced. Thus, the interaction between the opposed parts is transformed, since both will be conscious of the truth/reality of the thoughts and positions defended by the "others".
- Finally, the mediation labour contributes to the construction and reconstruction of new rules and coexistence norms.

The results expressed from the different members of the Association, as well as from the groups with which it has been worked (particularly the Muslim communities and the local administration), recognize that the ASMIN work (of intercultural mediation) has supposed:

- To involve civil society (Muslim communities, Spaniards and immigrants) and the local and regional institutions, trying to favour the intercultural coexistence.
- Their work has enlightened the fact of local diversity and cultural differences, not as an exclusive model and which separates and encloses the specificity of

²⁶ This is according to the Service of Social Intercultural Mediation (SEMSI): http://carabanchelsemueve.org/conocenos/red/servicio_de_mediacion_social_intercultural_semsi.html [Last date accessed July 31 2008]

each of the implied ones, but as an enriching model that bets for cultural diversity.

- It has been possible to note and analyze the social inequalities shown by the different Muslim groups. Likewise spaces for encounter, communication and cultural interaction have been set, spaces where the demands of the different groups can be transmitted (developing a neutral labour between both parts).
- A specific mediation labour has been developed between the demands of the Muslim communities and the local administration.

Considering the different objectives, goals and results, the intercultural mediator can undertake an important work in different fields. Among others: social services, family, minors, house, health, justice, work, mass media, education, culture, etc.

5.3. Authority and civil society actors

The different practices and projects carried out from ASMIN, have implied a number of social and local administration actors from its inception (2000). Therefore, in this point, we will emphasize the authorities and social actors implied in the projects related only and exclusively to Muslim population (immigrants and converts).

The target-actors (Muslim people of Granada), immigrants and converts: They are organized in “Islamic religious entities” based on a venue devoted for the exercise of prayers (a mosque or oratory). They have taken into account the Muslims who manage the mosques and those which take part in all kinds of activities started on these places of worship. Men and women, adults and young people are included. These religious entities are:²⁷

- The mosque “At-Taqwa”.
- The “Omar” mosque.
- The foundation “Mosque of Granada”.
- The “Assalam” or “La Paz” mosque.
- The “The Islamic Centre / oratory of Granada”.
- The “Masalikal Yinan” or “Jinan” mosque.

Public (local government) are mainly representatives of the Municipality of Granada. Among other collaborations, we must emphasize the support that received from the Spanish Workers’ Socialist Party, the United Left until 2003 and the regionalistic Andalusian party managed the commune. The two municipal departments directly involved in the initiative as co-financiers were the department of education and the labor and social welfare department. These departments

²⁷ Raya Lozano, E. (2005) “Respect, fair treatment and Community power: working with the Muslims of Granada”, *Migration Letters*, Vol.2, No.3, December, pp. 239-264.

changed their political colors in May 2003, after the local elections gave the majority to the Popular Party. Likewise, the association has kept relations with the Andalusian Government at a regional and autonomic level, especially with the General Direction of Migratory Policies. Within this framework, it has actively participated in the immigration provincial forums, which ease communication between the immigrant collective, the receiving society and the provincial and central administration. At the moment, it is going to develop activities at a state level collaborating with the Ministry of Justice, specially with the Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation.

The civil society actors are essentially involved in the different actions. Namely, associations and non-profit organizations which have a direct relation with the Muslim communities or have manifested an interest in the integration of the Islamic religion in Spanish life (ecumenical associations, anti-racist associations, etc.).

The work with the associative world is very intense pursuing the objective of creating a network to tackle religious discrimination. Among other we must emphasize:²⁸

- The Albayzín neighbors association brought the citizens of this historical district together with an important Muslim presence.
- The “Granada Acoge” association belongs to a network of Andalusian support associations devoted to immigrants.
- S.O.S-Racismo Granada is an association against racism.
- Spanish Red Cross renders humanitarian services (for instance, welcome service for immigrants “without papers” -“irregular” immigrants-), orientation services for immigrants, with socio-professional integration offers.
- The Caritas organization is a body for social action of the Catholic Church.
- Trabajadores Sociales Sin Fronteras (TSSF) brings together several social workers in the framework of an active non-governmental organization in the field of cooperation and development and interethnic and intercultural relations.

5.4. Funding

The ASMIN association has received, during its different development phases and projects both internal and external funds. It is possible to emphasize, apart from the self-financing initiatives, the aids received by:

- The European Social Fund. Equal Initiative.
- The European Union’s Action Plan to fight against discrimination (European Social Fund).
- Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation.

²⁸ Raya Lozano, E.: *op. cit.*, pp. 250-251.

- National Formation School of Children Villages in Spain.
- Subvention of the General Direction of Migratory Policies, Andalusian Government.
- Funds from the different local City councils in which a specific formation labour and intercultural mediation has been accomplished for the civil employees who work with immigrant population (not only Muslims), as it has been the case of the City council of Loja, the City council of Alhama de Granada, the Delegation of Granada, the Delegation of Almuñecar, personnel of the City council of Cenes de la Vega, the City council of Baeza (Jaén), the City council of Girona (Catalonia), etc.

5.5. Beneficiaries

Throughout the different projects carried out by ASMIN, we must emphasize as main beneficiaries:

- Immigrants and mosques associations of the city of Granada. For instance the “At-Taqwa” mosque; The “Omar” mosque; The “Mosque of Granada” foundation; the “Assalam” or “La Paz” mosque; The “Islamic Centre/oratory of Granada”; the “Masalikal Yinan” or “Jinan” mosque.
- Children who belong to Maghrebian families, with the objective to socially integrate them
- Immigrant population in general.
- Intercultural Mediators in Spain and intercultural mediators and professional who work in immigration.
- Workers of the NGO Infantile Villages at a national level.
- Organizations that work with immigrant population, disabled women, gipsy population, and former drug addicts.
- Population in general, specially those interested on immigration subjects.
- Personal of public institutions of the Provincial Delegation of Granada.
- Professionals and population in general, of different city councils. Among them, it is possible to emphasize: social workers, sanitary personnel, psychologists, labour agents, people related to the immigration world, etc..²⁹

5.6. Duration

The ASMIN Association, is a recognized best practice for the work it has been developing since 2000 by mediating between the underprivileged groups and the different local regional and national administrations. Throughout this trajectory, this association has developed activities and works intimately related to immigrant population and converted Muslim.

²⁹ ASMIN (2008), *Memoria de Trabajo 2000-2007: Dossier de Asociación de Mediadores Interculturales* [Internal document].

The future expectation of the Association, is “to reinforce the presence of the mediators in the intercultural work by applying for new projects to the Andalusian Government, focused on the qualification of the civil employees in the interculturality field” (Interv-EH).

5.7. Management structures

ASMIN is a non-political, lay and independent association, with a social, non-profit character, opened to all intercultural mediators. The association is made up by three founding members (minimum requirement for its legal constitution): Mohamed el Haddad (current person in charge for Coordination), El Hadji Ahmadou Faye (coordinator of the organization during the 2003-2005 period and spokesman of ASMIN in Catalonia at the moment), and Aurelio Blanco (Secretary General of the Association). Also it has been backed by Helga Flantermesky (coordinator of the Association of Intercultural Mediators ASMIN, during the period 2001-2003).

The founding members are also involved in other initiatives and works that relate the association with other organizations as: the Seminary of Studies for the Social and Educative Research (SEPISE), the City council of Granada (in different levels), the Delegation of Granada and Trabajadores Sociales sin Fronteras (TSSF), among others. Also, they count “with the collaboration of other intercultural mediators who reinforce the team” (Intrev-EH).

5.8. The authority/civil society relationship

This association is a clear example of Best Practice, efficiently combining civil society and the local and regional administrative authorities. Likewise, both (in this case) the different Muslim communities represented at a local level and the different administrative estates and local authorities need external experts knowledgeable on the internal diversity of the society, in order to overcome the linguistic and cultural difficulties which these groups present. Thus, ASMIN settles down as a participation system or organ devoted for consulting and mediation, in which the different organizations and civil actors can be supported when generating a fruitful relation with the different authorities who are empowered to make and manage the integration policies. Among others we must emphasize the collaboration with:

- Provincial Delegation of Granada.
- Trade unions (Formation School of Comisiones Obreras).

In order to achieve this goal, ASMIN has participated in different initiatives, whose last aim has been to meet the demands and necessities of population at risk of social exclusion. Among others, we must emphasize the labour undertaken in a number of forums and consultative councils where both civil society organizations and immigrant associations take part. The Provincial Forums initiative is promoted by the Andalusian Autonomous Community, and constituted as organizations of

legal character with a participative, consultative and representative character that open up communications between the immigrant collective and the receiving society in order to influence the provincial and central administration. Being established its work within the decentralization policy of the government, ASMIN acts as a bridge between the immigrant population and the administration need to hold a clear knowledge of the specificities of the migratory phenomenon in each one of the Andalusian provinces. Other activities in which ASMIN has participated with its mediation work has been:

- The Immigration Municipal Council of the City council of Granada.
- The Social Movement Granada for Tolerance.
- The Granada Network for Social Inclusion.
- The Provincial Forum for Immigration (Andalusian Government).
- The Study group of the Migration in the Strait Observatory and Prevention of the unwanted (OMEPEI) (Andalusian Government).

5.9. Assessment

In order to assess the structure of the good practice presented here, it is necessary to consider both the kind of labour that they have specifically developed in relation to the Muslim population as well as their suitability and intention. It is also necessary to observe the principles and good practices abided for in the mediation process between the Muslim population and the administration. In the other hand, the failures and/or possible improvements should be also pointed out.

Among other activities in the field of the intercultural mediation between 2000 and 2008, we must highlight those that have had special involvement with the Muslim population (immigrant and converted), mainly accomplished in the city of Granada:

- ASMIN has participated in the “Granada: Patrimonial city of the Equality and New Uses - Equal-Granada” project, developed between 2002 and 2004 and whose results were the creation of local support networks to the socio-labour insertion of underprivileged groups, Muslim immigrants among them. It also gave birth to the Granada Network for Social Inclusion.
- Organization of the “Intercultural Workshops for children of immigrant families: Arab teaching and Knowledge of Spanish Culture. 2005/2006”, whose result was to provide children from immigrant Moroccan families with a greater knowledge on the Arab-Maghrebian languages and cultures and the Spanish one, thus facilitating their social integration.
- Organization of the “Service of Intercultural Mediation for the immigrant population in the Northern Zone of the city of Granada. 2004, 2005 and 2006”, whose aim is to welcome, inform, advise and stay with immigrant population, Muslim among others, in one of the poorest zones of the granadian geography.
- Organization of a “School of Mediation and Intercultural Competitions”, in 2007, whose aim was to train Public Institutions personal willing to gain

knowledge and skills in intercultural mediation, and increase their concern on the migratory subject. “Through formation modules (of 60 hours), the different city councils, delegations, etc., which have demanded the training choose the type of contents that they want to receive in the different modules, depending on the social specificity that they have in their surroundings” (Interv-EH).

- -Participation in the “Cult and Social Cohesion: construction of the social participation in religious difference” project.³⁰ It was developed from July 2002 to July 2004 including Islamic and local immigrant associations working on religious education along with their federative structures among other collaborators. The overall outcome of this initiative was a deeper sensitization for the institutions in charge of the worship venues belonging to the Islamic community in Granada so as to regulate and visualize their practices according to the Spanish community. Some specific results were the creation of a Council of Mosques for Granada and several arrangements signed by the City Council and the different mosques on the uses and structures of the cemetery and gardens of the Albayzín Great Mosque. This project is a praiseworthy example framed in the wider context of the “EU Action Plan against discrimination”.

All these practices, and in special the project of “Cult and social cohesion: construction of the social participation in the religious difference”, have set up a group of successful tenets, through their mediation work between the Muslim communities established in the city and the local and autonomic administration.

With regard to the successes, we have to point out:

- The religious communities empowerment. The fight against discrimination and for integration or respect of fundamental human rights implies the empowerment of people, groups and communities. However, if this action is taken over by the concerned people, who are in situations of fragility, institutional and sociocultural discrimination, internal conflicts or there is an unwillingness to move out of one’s own culture, supervision or help from legitimate actors can be a determining factor to increase inter and intracommunity cohesion and to overcome obstacles.³¹ “The main principle of Best Practice” was to achieve that the established Muslim community in Granada becomes a valid interlocutor for the city council of Granada by itself” (Interv-EH).
- Media Visibility of religious aspects. In a context of latent racism, xenophobia or spreading islamophobia, visibility of actions, explanations of practices in worship and the significance of religious worship, as well as

³⁰ Project coordinated by Dr. Enrique Raya Lozano, with the participation of ASMIN.

³¹ For more details cfr.: Raya Lozano, E.: *op. cit.*, pp. 250-251 and Interv-ER.

cultural practices bear a paramount importance. Therefore local means media must be used.³²

- Increasing concerns on religious and ethnic discrimination. In the Spanish situation, it must be pointed out that anti-discriminatory awareness is not very developed within the population. It is not present either in the legislation, or in public policies, or even in research practices, especially with regard to discrimination of an ethnic or religious nature (the first initiatives of this kind date back to the Nineties). An anti-discriminatory project in research-action in the religious field must make researchers, field personnel, decision makers and social mediators aware of this, as well as the Muslim communities themselves. In this matter, the spreading of information on the legal framework and the realities in other countries is necessary, as well as personal experiences by people who have been victims of discrimination.³³
- Social Participation of the religious leaders. A research-action project for social participation and non-discriminatory treatment of the Muslim communities must stress direct participation of the concerned communities, as well as the participation of its institutional and religious leaders or Community leaders. This process is complex and difficult, involving distortion risks of the scientific work carried out during ideological or theological debates bearing on religious dogmas. But these steps are enriching and feasible in so far as a “translation” of the religious principles is put into context. It would turn possible to separate the social and institutional contents while each person keeps an independent mind but respecting diversity. On the basis of these tenets the “Faiths and Social cohesion. The Muslim communities of Granada” project has been developed in several contexts, such as the mosques of Granada, for nearly three years.³⁴
- The “Faiths and Social cohesion” project made possible to legitimise the mosque in the eyes of the local authorities, civil society and the media, as an entity for worship and culture. “Starting to recognize the central role mosques play regarding the existing Muslim civil society in Granada, was one of the main successes of our work” (Interv-EH). “Paradoxically, it was also necessary to carry out the same efforts of valorisation within the Muslim communities. Thus, intercommunity dynamics were created: it raised contradictions and debates within the Muslim communities themselves, which turned into tensions, but also in reflections on the various roles that Islam could play in Granada, Spain and Europe. If we saw positions appearing which challenged the interference of the Spanish State or civil society which is in a majority position, in the life of Muslims” (Interv-ER).
- The “Faiths and Social cohesion” project and the work of ASMIN also opened the way to found the “Granada City Council of Mosques” benefited from an increased assistance and also to strengthen their visibility as legitimate and qualified actors and citizens. Four mosques decided to set

³² *Ibid.*, p. 250

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

- themselves up as a federation, creating mechanisms for representation between the Muslim communities and the local authorities.
- It has also been possible to mediate in the internecine divisions within the Muslim communities themselves with the intervention of ASMIN. Therefore, an agreement between the different implied parts (Islamic communities, the local administration and businesses that work for this last one) was outlined. It pointed at the issue of the creation and management of a Muslim cemetery that existed since the Francoist period without a formal regulation.
 - We must also emphasize that within the framework of the project “Faiths and Social cohesion” a resources guide of the Muslim population in Granada was developed in which “all the information about the existing mosques in Granada, the interlocutors who existed in those mosques, the external resources that the immigrants and any Muslim could need on their day to day life regarding the local administration” was included (Interv-EH).
 - The accomplishment of Intercultural workshops for children of immigrant families, with the intention to teach Arab and knowledge of the Spanish culture, has favoured the social integration of the children, as much at a neighbourhood level, as in terms of academic insertion, diminishing possible ‘conflicts’ between these and the receiving society (Interv-MH).
 - Since the creation of the Immigration Provincial Forums, created and regulated by 202/2005 of 27th of September Decree for the the eight provinces which the Andalusian Autonomous Community comprises, the Andalusian Government recognizes the invaluable and necessary work of the associations of intercultural mediation (ie. ASMIN), as organizations of participative, consultative and representative character that ensure communications between the immigrant collective, the receiving society and the provincial and central administration. It is possible to point out that the creation of Provincial Forums aims to put into practice the Immigration Provincial Plans of Granada, Jaén, Málaga, Córdoba, Huelva, Almería, Cádiz and Sevilla “that mainly respond to the need of answers related to the management fields of the programs and measures the Andalusian Government develops”³⁵. It will have the II Integral Plan for Immigration in Andalusia 2006-2009 as basic framework.

With regard to the gaps, failures and areas for learning, we have to note:

- The aforementioned internecine divisions between the different Muslim communities have been one of the greater obstacles to achieve an effective intercultural mediation. In so far as neither unified criteria (socio-religious) to gather different positions, nor a common representative or representative organ of the Muslim diversity and heterogeneity exist, the mediation among the administration has been very difficult.

³⁵ ASMIN (2008), *Memoria de Trabajo 2000-2007: Dossier de Asociación de Mediadores Interculturales* [Internal document], p. 140.

- Although the “Granada City Council of Mosques” has been effectively created it is not carrying out a representative work of all the Muslims established in the city, since the particular interests of each one of the communities and its particular representatives influence negatively at the time of making a joint work (Interv-AY). “Not all the communities that exist in Granada have been allowed to be represented by the “Granada City Council of Mosques” and many of them do not even agree in working in the same action line” (Interv-P).
- Likewise, depending on the representative organ at local level (constituted by right winged parties, more conservative, or by left winged parties, more liberal and open to make agreements with the representative organ of the Muslim community) and its eagerness regarding the represented religious minorities in the city of Granada, the type of answer and/or support is different: “The main handicap in order to continue working in mediation between the Muslim communities and the city council is that the popular party is reluctant to speak with us”.
- Another of obstacle to be emphasized is that, even having being constituted and legally recognized and promoted by the Andalusian Government, the Immigration Provincial Forums “have still not called any of the associations represented in them” (Interv-AB2).
- In relation to the internal assessment of proper Association, problems of coordination and spreading in the accomplished works by the different members have existed: “we should have worked more by means of a network team, also using Internet as a platform for our work” (Interv-EH).
- Also, as depending on external financing, most of the formation activities (workshops), have not had the proper and necessary continuity: “in most cases, the people, the city councils, did not employ us so that we distribute all the modules that we considered essential. In many cases they have only employed us to distribute two modules. That is to say, we only can develop half of the work and a further supervision of results does not exist” (Interv-EH).

5.10. Conclusions

As resource and way of conflict resolution, the intercultural mediation is being used in many fields as an instrument to respond to different necessities that present different ethnic groups, religious minorities, etc.

In multicultural contexts, as the Spanish case is, the use of mediation is relatively recent and has a limited theoretical-practical legacy, nevertheless, its practice and evolution must be positively valued since it directly affects the articulation of measures to prevent and solve conflicts, that are starting to be generated between a minority population (the Muslim immigrant) and a majority one (the receiving population and its legal frame).

The frequency and seriousness of the conflicts, from the point of view of the good practice studied, would depend, to a large extent, on the people and the

implied group capabilities to solve the problems and/or conflicts the moment they rise, taking advantage of the interaction and caution as a way to advance in the mutual knowledge and the improvement of the social situation of the different implied groups.

The intercultural mediation and the example displayed here, does not intend to carry out an action that prevents in any case the possible radicalization of groups and/or represented ethnic minorities in the Spanish State. However explicitly, it does affect the previous social structures to this possible radicalization, constituting, in its work of mediation, a bridge between two cultures that for different reasons collide.

In this preventive aspect and related to the socioeconomic vulnerability of certain groups and religious ethnic minorities, it would be interesting to note the importance of the Intercultural Mediation and the work of ASMIN, as mean and mediator which is able to equate certain social inequalities. The ignorance from the receiving society and its structural socio administrative frame, the limited access to public services due to the ignorance of its functioning or the linguistic limitations that the heterogeneous groups of immigrants meet, makes the mediating intervention necessary and essential to compensate that inequality. This aspect also contributes to reduce the marginality of people from minority groups, to favour its autonomy and the equity in a State of Law, ultimate aim of the work developed by the intercultural mediators.

This labour, which is generated between “people who belong to different sociocultural and ethnic groups that share the same social space”, will be developed by means of a wider knowledge, as much of the original culture, as of the receiving one, really respecting the particularities of both contexts. Thus, the action of the intercultural mediator (ASMIN) good practices presented here, aims to affect as much at a socioeconomic level (improvement in basic aspects on an everyday basis such as housing, health care, education, work, etc.), as at a exclusively social level (understanding, handling of the particular cultural codes, both from the minority to the majority society, and inversely).

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