Intercultural communication in a globalized world: realities and perspectives

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Communication is a central dimension
of our cultural life;
without it, any type of culture dies. Consequently,
the study of communication involves the study
of the culture in which it is integrated.
(John Fiske)

1. Correlation between communication and culture in a diverse world
2. Promoting cultural diversity through communication
3. Methods of increasing the effectiveness of intercultural communication at the current stage
4. Promoting intercultural dialogue in the Black Sea Basin

1. The correlation between communication and culture in a diverse world

I would like to begin this lecture with Eugen Ionescu's statement „There are many things that separate us in the world, but there is also one that brings us closer: culture". Culture sums up all the values, norms, meanings, intentional actions and behavioral attitudes, as well as material supports, which ensures their dissemination and dynamism.

Currently, in the context of cultural pluralism and globalization processes people from different cultural backgrounds live together in an intercultural society characterized by diversity of values and ways of thinking, cultural and promoted educational practices. There is a high degree of social interaction, mutual respect for language, traditions, symbols, values and norms facilitated by direct communication between people with different backgrounds and cultures distinguished from a cultural standpoint.

In this context, we are talking about the desirability of promoting intercultural communication, which involves not only the message transmission and reception by persons belonging to different cultures, but which might also serve as support for further development of a sustainable cultural process.

Nowadays, ***intercultural communication*** is a major topic discussed in academia, as well as in politics. This concept is closely correlated with the terms ***'culture'*** and ***'communication',*** which record various interpretations in specialized literature. The large number of functional descriptions attributed to culture can be explained by the extremely wide character of the cultural sphere. The author of one of the first definitions given to the cultural concept is the Englishman Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917). Analyzing the concept of culture, the anthropologist notes that „**culture** is

a complex, which includes knowledge, faiths, arts, morals, law, traditions and other production and ways of life created by man who lives in society." According to the French writer and politician André Malraux, culture is the sum of all forms of art, love, thinking which over the centuries helped man to be less enslaved. Respectively, a person finds himself in a culture survives and evolves spiritually through it.

According to the classification of N. Hidalgo, the following levels of culture are distinguished:

- the concrete level - expression of all culturally associated characteristics through visible items, such as clothing, food, music, games, etc.;

- the behavioral level - recognized through social roles that exist in a culture, the way of communication, especially nonverbal language, behavior towards representatives of other cultures or the opposite sex, different social status, etc. .;

- the symbolic level - involving values and beliefs characteristic of a culture.

Speaking about the culture of a nation, we refer, first of all, to *language, values, symbols, norms* and *traditions*:

- *Language*, the most important component of the national culture and represents the means of communication of the community by developing its own phonetic, grammatical and lexical structure.

- *Values* are fundamental concepts of culture, deriving from human specific issues and topics and constitute part of the culture or of the cultural environment. The values underlying the EU are based on three concepts: freedom, solidarity and mutual respect.

- *The Symbol* is defined as a sign, object, image, etc., which represents indirectly (conventionally or by virtue of a correspondence analogue) an idea, a quality, a feeling.

- *Norms* contain an amount of rules, recognized by the majority of a community as required.

- *Traditions* include a set of concepts, customs, traditions and beliefs that are historically established within social or national groups and which are transmitted (orally) from generation to generation and represent specific features for each social group.

A defining element of cultures is **communication**, human behavior form that arises from the need to relate and interact. The classical system of communication implies the existence of the following essential components: emitter, the person who generates the message; receiver - the person who receives the message; code - the system of signs by which the emitter encodes and the receiver decodes the information; the channel through which is the message is sent and received.

Interpersonal communication rarely makes use of a single channel, it typically operates with a complex set of stimuli broadly set of the following categories of language: v*erbal, para verbal and body language*. *Verbal language*, as Thomas Scheidel states, aims to exchange information and ideas, intellectual and emotional contact between speakers, influence structured with the help of words, *paraverbal language* is focused on intonation, rhythm and emphasis, *body language* is expressed through movements or body position. *Paraverbal language and body language* represent an aggregate of messages that are not expressed through words and can be decoded by creating meanings. These signals can repeat, contradict, replace, supplement or enhance the message rendererd by words.

To communicate efficiently means:

- to convince;

- to develop your thinking, affectivity and personality;

- to inform intelligibly and understand the correct meaning of the message;

- to notice and realize the reactions, attitudes and behavioral changes of the

audience. [Highlights of intercultural education, p. 42]

Examining closely what is happening in a communication, Alex Mucchielli, epistemologist and specialist in communication sciences, notes that through this action we assume an identity because communication has as general aim to express the identity. Communicating, you can only assert your own being and position the „personality" in relation to the other.

The general aim of communication has been described in a more concrete form by the American sociologist E. Goffman, who believes that people communicate in order to assume the desired identity when they are interacting. Indeed, any interpersonal communication situation puts each actor in the position to play an intended role, and finally, to ensure mastery of situation, i.e. to be able to be recognizable in the role that belongs to him.

Culture and communication are closely interrelated, the latter representing a structural and defining element, without which we cannot understand any form of culture. On this line of ideas, John Fiske claimed „communication is a central dimension of our life, without it any kind of culture dies; thus the study of communication involves the study of the culture in which it is integrated.„

Communication means a permanent exchange of information, messages and meanings between individuals and groups, which gives consistency and richness to the cultural phenomenon. It is the essence of social life, since living together, data storage and transmission of social heritage to new generations would not be possible without the existence of multiple forms of signification and communication. Culture and communication create a strange couple, says the esthetician Jean Caune. None can be explained without the other. The two phenomena are not perfectly tight, do not contain or cannot

be located in the parallel reflection plane through analogue correspondence.

All human cultural arrangements that take place in the social activity are determined by society, have a purpose in human social function, which is achieved through communication. Culture, through its communicational aspect is a social phenomenon. It is impossible in all its dynamics outside society. Culture, through its genesis and purpose, is a social phenomenon, being inherited through social mechanisms, exercised and learned that leads the individual to humanity, to its supreme values. The communication factor is not external to culture; it is linked to its meaning and purpose. Culture is acquired, in particular, through the fundamental human act, namely through communication. „The language is by excellence a cultural fact," says Claude Levi-Strauss, French anthropologist, theoretician of ethnological structuralism.

Although being distinct entities, Ioan Oprea affirms, language and culture cannot develop independently; both are products of the spirit and cooperate in building the spirituality of each community. In general lines, culture represents an ensemble of intellectual aspects of a civilization and is materialized in the amount of knowledge acquired in a cumulative system of knowledge products that enable the development of critical spirit, taste, judgment, etc.

C. Stroe's statement follows the same line of ideas according to which an indication that communication is one of the characteristic feature of culture resides in the that history knows no of cloistered cultures even in apparently geographically isolated communities or nations. Communication is an organic need of the person, springing from his nature, who cannot neither from the ontic nor axiological points of view exist alone. This need, on the same basis, refers to the cultural creations. For, ultima-

tely, the goal of the creators is communication; their cultural values are created in order to be shared with others. The creator always addresses his peers, closer or more distant, to contemporary and posterior times. Consequently, cultural values are performed, extend and enrich their content, are amplified and completed through communication.

The profound connection between culture and communication can be considered one of the ontological nature for man, as G. Gheorghiu believes, since from the beginning of humanity until today it is singularized in the known universe through its ability to use more complex symbolic languages to be related to reality and to communicate and exchange messages with peers. This feature explains, ultimately, the co-living of men, their social and rational beings. Communication is the factor founds and maintains society as specific environment for human existence.

Therefore, culture cannot exist outside communication. Promotion of culture can be performed only through communication, through intercultural dialogue. Human communication processes underlain humanization, the constitution of psychological, cultural and spiritual humanity. Culture fulfills its purpose through communication which has a double function: informative and formative, the latter being crucial as it involves indispensable information storage and processing of the formation of each individual in part, and of the community as a whole.

2. Promoting cultural diversity through communication

Cultural diversity has always existed, exists and will exist regardless of the will of individuals or groups. It would be impossible to live in a world of uniformity and monotony of identical forms, repeated obsessively. Such a „mono" world of nation-states, inhabited by a single culture, whi-

ch owns a single language or possesses a control structure, is practically impossible. Pure culture spaces, unmixed, hyper-protected and self-sufficient exist just artificially, in a large laboratory of useless experiments. The real world is definitely intended to open contexts and cultures with a variable geometry [Nedelcu, A., 2008, p. 9].

Referring to the cultural diversity that characterizes the contemporary period, the political analyst Bhikhu Parekh distinguishes three forms:

- Subcultural diversity, which considers that members of society participate in a common culture, but also share a number of private beliefs and practices. In this case, cultural identities are not in conflict with the dominant culture. Tolerance game, guaranteed by the law, is one that ensures sufficient freedom to subcultural groups in preserving their own identity as a secondary consciousness complementary to the dominant identity.

- Community diversity implies the existence of relatively organized and self-aware communities, which promote a different set of beliefs and practices. Differences mark rather an affiliation than a claim for participation in power sharing.

- Perspective diversity presupposes that a part of the members of the society criticize the values and principles of the dominant culture and try to rebuild it according to other values. They must take into account the presence of minorities in public life and their need to assert themselves as separate entities in the sphere of political power. At the same time, it aims to create a framework in which minority cultures participate in shaping the principles of continuous reconstruction of the sphere of values [Bhikhu Parekh, p.14].

On the same line of ideas, philosopher Will Kymlicka, in the study „Liberal multiculturalism and nationalism", distinguishes two basic patterns of cultural diversity:

- A source of diversity is that which ari-

ses from incorporating a previously self-determined state of cultures related to a particular territory. These embedded cultures called ethnic minorities and their defining characteristic is that they can still claim various forms of self-government.

- The second pattern of diversity is given by individual and family immigration - they form groups and ethnic minorities, which are usually integrated into the society in which they settle. If diversity is created through immigration, then the insurance of linguistic and cultural rights of the individual is not absolutely necessary, because it is assumed that the individual made a free-will choice when he decided to leave, and his cultural rights are provided elsewhere, unlike the ethnic minorities, which do not have in another country, another state, a „parent nation" that would ensure the survival of their culture.

In the context of diversity, intercultural communication plays a central role in the cultural integration of individuals, communities and groups belonging to different cultural backgrounds, facilitating cultural cooperation. Intercultural communication is a direct interaction between people of different cultures, which involves much more than understanding the rules of the group, it assumes acceptance and tolerance of differences. A comprehensive definition of interculturality is given by Micheline Ray: „Who says intercultural says, starting with the meaning of the prefix inter-., interaction, sharing, openness, reciprocity, solidarity objective."

From the start we point out the differentiations that exist between the terms *intercultural communication, communication between cultures* or *transcultural* and *international communication*:

- Intercultural communication designates the complex and dynamic interaction of the actors belonging to different cultures or subcultures;

- Communication between the cul-

tures or transcultural (Cross-cultural communication) involves benchmarking (cross) of the ways in which certain themes and ideas are discussed and interpreted in different cultures, seen as different symbolic entities;

- International communication is carried out at the macro level: communication between public institutions, political structures, countries, governments, international organizations). [Gheorghiu, II, 185]

Our object of discussion will be the intercultural communication, a phrase introduced in the academic circuit in 1959 by the American ethnologist and semiotician T. H. Hall in the work *The Silent Language*. Analyzing the concept of culture in relation with the intercultural communication, Edward T. Hall distinguishes three levels of a culture:

- The First level, which he calls „conscious and technic", is the one in which verbal language and symbols, with a specific meaning, have an important role in communication;

- The second level is a „hidden" one, reserved to a limited number of individuals, excluding the ones foreign to that culture;

- The third level, unconscious and implicit, is the primary culture, which is composed of basic data, which structure our thinking.

The last two levels constitute „a set of rules on the behavior and nonverbal implicit thinking, which controls everything we do. This hidden cultural grammar determines the manner in which individuals perceive their environment, define their values, establish their cadence and fundamental rhythms of life". Using terms from computer science, Richard Hall compares the first level of culture to a computer hardware. The failure or the difficulty in the interactions of individuals from different cultures are largely determined according to the researcher by the fact that „most of intercultural relations are lived as if there were only

small differences in the software and none at the hardware level". The author concludes: „there is no aspect of human life that is not touched and influenced by culture."

A part of **intercultural communication** is the intercultural dialogue, a product of globalization, which can be promoted through cultural values and settled ethno-cultural conflict situations. The word dialogue derives from the Greek roots „dia" – with, and „logos" – word. The very concept of dialogue has been the subject of research of scientists of all the times. Even in ancient Greek, philosopher Socrates argued that it is crucial for humans to be ability to get into a dialogue relationship. While Plato, through the Socratic dialogues, managed to make a truthful presentation of the life and work of his distinguished teacher Socrates. It is obvious that the great Greek philosophers, promoted philosophical ideas and concepts through dialogue trying to reorganize the spiritual life of his contemporaries. Currently, the growing interest for intercultural dialogue is dictated by its undeniable value of solving pressing problems of the society.

The literature records multiple views on the concept of intercultural dialogue. The international Association of Universities (AIU), founded in 1950, which includes higher educational institutions from 150 countries, being a UNESCO partner, believes that the concept of intercultural dialogue is based on the „premise of recognition of differences and multiplicity of the world in which we live". These differences exist not only within each culture, but also in relations between the cultures. Intercultural dialogue is „a process that encourages the identification of the boundaries that define individuals and make them interact by overcoming these limits and even put them into question."

We find an opinion on the essence of intercultural dialogue in the „Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe",

a network for exchanging information on measures and instruments of cultural policies and trends in culture. In the authors' vision, intercultural dialogue is „a process that involves an exchange of views openly and in the spirit of mutual respect between individuals and groups with different cultural backgrounds." Measures that can be taken to achieve this vision are „the strategic tools that promote cultural diversity resulting from social interaction" and „intercultural dialogue at national level must involve cultural, public and private initiatives, to gather individuals and groups that belong to immigrant and majority population communities in order that they become part of a multidirectional communication process".

A definition of intercultural dialogue is also found in a document, proposed by the Commission „Church and Society" of KEK and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), drawn up in response to the proposals of the Council of Europe, which organized in 2007 a series of public consultations to adopt a „White Paper" on intercultural dialogue. According to them, intercultural dialogue is „a form of dialogue, whose stake and subject is the own culture and the culture of others". Factors that make possible this form of dialogue is „openness to others and the desire to listen and share ideas". A successful intercultural dialogue is characterized by respect, trust, equality, cultural curiosity and ability to change. The degree of success of an intercultural dialogue depends on the relationship between the participants and the atmosphere of intercultural dialogue, which must be one of mutual trust. Intercultural dialogue is important for those who share the same spiritual and material values, but also for those who have different views on cultural values, this last form of dialogue is essential in conflict resolution.

In order to be productive, it is necessary for the dialogue to meet a num-

ber of requirements, such as understanding the essence of the problem by both interlocutors, tolerance, forbearance, patience, power to persuade, conclusiveness, eloquence, ability to cede in the case when judgments are wrong.

In order to promote cultural values and intercultural dialogue in the European Community area several cultural programs were developed, among the first on the list being the *Kaleidoscope, Ariane* and *Raphael*. The objectives of *Kaleidoscope Program* (1996-1999) were focused on fostering artistic creation, promoting awareness and dissemination of the culture of European people, cultural exchange and cooperation. *Ariane Program* (1997-1999) aims to improve cooperation between the Member States related to books and reading, promotion of literary works and the history of European people by means of translation, performance improvement of professionals in the field of culture. *Raphael Programme* (1997-2000) aimed at encouraging cooperation between the Member States in the field of cultural heritage with European dimension. Subsequently, the programs *Kaleidoscope, Ariane* and *Raphael* were reorganized into a single framework program Culture 2000, for a term of four years, and then extended until the end of 2006. The authors of the programs have proposed to simplify community action by using a single instrument for financing and programming cultural cooperation. The main objective of the program is to promote intercultural dialogue and mutual knowledge of European culture. Because much success was registered, in 2007 the Culture program was continued for a period of 6 years (2007-2013), focusing on financing cultural projects, on supporting European cultural bodies and promotional and information activities.

We also note that the purpose of promoting intercultural dialogue at the initiative of the European Parliament and the

European Council, the joint decision adopted on 18 December 2006, the year 2008 was designated as the **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue**. This has contributed to the spread of various languages in the European culture. Over 780 events were planned and conducted. A budget of 10 million euros was allocated for this purpose. The closing gala was held in Paris this year. Also, the Council of Europe launched the **White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue** to determine an increase in intercultural dialogue as a tool for promoting understanding, reconciliation and tolerance, conflict prevention and to ensure integration and cohesion in society.

Creative Europe is a new EU funding program that will continue, for the next seven years, programs devoted to culture, intercultural dialogue and broadcasting: *Culture* (2007-2013), *Media* (2007-2013) and *Media Mundus*. Creative Europe Program has three sub-programs: media, culture and a transverse component devoted to guarantee bank loans to cultural and creative sectors and cooperation in cultural policies (available since 2016). The subprogram Culture of Creative Europe program has a total budget of 454.8 million EUR for the period 2014-2020 and will encourage professional capacity building, especially for those working in the field of culture, will strengthen the operational capacity of organizations offering professional development opportunities at international level, transnational circulation of cultural creations and long-term development of European cultural audiences for these creations.

Legal entities established in EU countries, in candidate countries and potentially candidate countries (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) are eligible for the project on condition they participate in Community programs; Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein,

Switzerland and the countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy on condition of signing the Memorandum of Understanding (Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine).

3. Methods of increasing the effectiveness of intercultural communication at the current stage

The promotion of intercultural communication, namely intercultural dialogue, has contributed to the fact that intercultural meetings become a fact of everyday life. In this context, Claude Lévi-Strauss argued: „discovering others means discovering relations, but not barriers". According to theoreticians, in order to increase the effectiveness of intercultural communication, those who interact must have *intercultural conscience, intercultural behavior* and *intercultural sensitivity*.

- *The individual intercultural conscience* involves the ability to communicate in an intercultural environment, having knowledge about the individuals whom they come into contact with and possessing the ability to build effective intercultural dialogue. The intercultural communication competence is achieved through a long series of difficult experiences. Occasional or longer contacts with those from another culture generate an initial culture shock, uncertainty and anxiety, which Gudykunst analyzes in detail, starting from immigrants' initial psychological reactions when communication barriers (language and other kind) are felt intensely and provoke contradictory emotional reactions (stress and dramatic interrogations on their cultural identity), followed by a gradual process of adjustment to the rules and regulations of the new cultural environment, and finally, this process can lead to their adjustment and integration into the new social space. If there are similarities betwe-

en the home and the adopted culture (of religious, or spiritual value), uncertainty and anxiety decrease in intensity and the individuals can more easily accommodate to the new environment. [Giorgiu, p. 126] Other barriers driven by a lack of intercultural conscience are the misrecognition of the importance of communication in different cultures, like color meaning, geopolitical, religious meanings, not knowing the language, lack of ability to listen.

- *Intercultural behavior* assumes social competence, language skills, strategies to avoid misunderstandings and to explain them, metacommunication, the methods to approach prejudices, stereotypes and clichés. [Florentina Alexander, p.23] The intercultural behavior is often determined by *cultural stereotypes* and *prejudices*. *Stereotypes* are formed subconsciously and affect those over which we apply the stereotype, as well as us, because it restricts our thinking and hinders us to explore some potentials of the people we dialogue with. In relation with the others, the stereotype may attract negative and derogatory context. In social science, the concept was introduced by Walter Lippmann, which proposes several definitions, the most circulated is the „clichés of our minds." Stereotypes can be divided into two categories: cultural stereotypes (formed as a result of education, cultural influence) and personal stereotypes (based on our own beliefs, which depend on the amount and quality of information that we have about one or another person, and the status of the person in a group). Having become part of the culture, stereotypes are maintained through three processes: selective perception – the observer retains from real environment only stereotypical aspects and ignores the other: selective interpretation of data elements consistent with the stereotype, confirmation of rule through exceptions. [Highlights of intercultural education, p. 29] *Stereotyping* is an action that

generalizes stereotypes that have a broad understanding. In the case when generalizations are applied on a personal level, *stereotypes turn into prejudices*. *Prejudices* are defined by scholars as predisposition to discriminate against a rival group, usually minority, they induce certain attitudes that affect communication with others, being generalizations based on incomplete information about an individual or group that is associated with the absence of critical thinking. According to Voltaire, prejudice is an opinion without judgment. Thomas A.D. Weston argues that prejudice is just another word for ignorance. Andre Suares notes that prejudice is a worn-out truth. The prejudice often leads to discrimination, which are the main forms of avoidance (tendency to distance themselves from representatives of a cultural group), segregation (banning contacts between groups through respecting certain habits rooted in some societies or by imposing laws, regulations) and mass violence (physical aggression). [Highlights of intercultural education, p. 35] The prejudice can lead to oppression, the power being involved. So, prejudices and stereotypes shall be removed by building an intercultural sustainable dialogue.

- *The intercultural sensitivity* assumes motivation and interest in other cultures, accepting diversity and cultural differences, empathy, resilience, respect for the traditions and customs of other cultures, tolerance, patience, objectivity. [Florentina Alexander, p.23] According to Bennett, in order to develop intercultural sensitivity, *it is necessary to move from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism*, containing a number of substeps. The *ethnocentrism*, a term initially used in 1907 by W.G. Summer, covers both tendency to overestimate own values, material and spiritual models related to values of foreign cultures, without neglecting other cultural patterns as well as the tendency to underestimate and reject

foreign cultural values, its attributes becoming national egocentrism, disregard for other peoples, apology of own culture, intolerance, xenophobia, chauvinism and tendency of domination. [Gregory Georgiu, Intercultural Communication, p. 142]. According to M. Bennett, ethnocentrism knows more phases: denial (due to lack of intercultural dialogue as a result of natural or cultural isolation), resistance (caused by differences that are acknowledged and appreciated as being dangerous) and minimizing (an attempt to preserve the uniqueness of own cultural environment by highlighting the similarities and concealing the differences). The individual accepts cultural differences, while being convinced of the superiority of own culture, and ignores the others only because they belong to other cultures. Accordingly, an ethnocentric person will rather generate hostile feelings than build effective intercultural dialogue. Analyzing the existing political realities, it is important to note that most of intercultural conflicts are caused by ethnocentric tendencies, which dominate in society. The *ethnorelativism* stage is about awareness interpenetration and networking of cultures beyond the visible differences and similarities and implicitly presupposes world perception as a relative cultural construct. The ethno-relativistic attitude could be benefic for the realization of an effective intercultural dialogue, because differences will not be perceived as a threat but as a challenge. There is no unique compulsory cultural model. Each culture creates its own cultural heritage as a result of developments in a specific historical, social and economic context, incomparable with other cultures. According to M. Bennett, in order to develop the cultural sensitivity it is necessary to undertake the following steps: *the acceptance* (recognition and exploration of differences), *the adaptation* (ability to empathize with the culture), *integration* (redefining own

identity by integrating behavioral or value aspects from other cultures and rejection of identity circumscription in a given cultural paradigm). The final step in acquiring intercultural sensitivity is the assumption of marginalization („constructive marginality"), the refusal of assimilation identity by the center respectively [Codreanu, p. 29]. The opposite of ethnocentrism is *xenoentrism*, the tendency to overestimate what is foreign to the detriment of own cultural patterns. It is manifested in all modern societies, only with different magnitudes. Usually, xenocentrist people can be easily assimilated by other cultural groups.

Referring to communication techniques typology from intercultural perspective, we distinguish **ethnocentric communication, intercultural controlled communication, dialectical communication** and **dialogical communication**.

- In **ethnocentric communication** between two cultures, A and B, culture B will always be a shadow of culture A. Culture B does not have a unicity and differentiation is ignored. Communication is oriented in one direction and there is no feedback.

- In **intercultural controlled communication**, unique cultural elements of culture B are recognized but they are manipulated to achieve the goals and objectives of culture A.

- In **dialectical communication**, there are three potential finalities:

- Theses of culture A meet opposing theses in culture B and transcend into a new culture C;

- dissolution of culture A in culture B, becoming a part of culture B;

- culture B becomes part of culture A. All those finalities are based on fusion-based communication.

- In **dialogical communication**, cultures A and B are distinct, independent, they communicate and interrelate, but each culture retains integrity. Scholars distinguish seven stages of profound dialogue,

which must be acknowledged:

- Radical encounter with what is different: „the self" colliding with „the other". On this first stage, the shock of awareness of the Other, of otherness, a different way to see / imagine the world occurs.

- Moving beyond the 'self', overcoming the self and entering into the other's world. This is the process of „tacking into brackets" the individual prejudices.

- Housing and living the experience of the other's world („the self" transferred into the „other"). The world of the other is a reality for the self, which also alternates an alternative lifestyle.

- Broadening the vision: the „self" returns with new knowledge. The great benefit of meeting the „self" with „Other's" world consists in the realization that there are other ways of understanding reality and starting the "request" to rethink, reconsider their conception. Everything is now perceived by the Self (identity, ethnicity, religion, culture, ideology, the world) in a new perspective, a new light. There is no way back to the old system of unilateral conception.

- The dialogical awakening: a radical paradigm shift, the internal transformation of the „self", which opens to the plurality of worlds and perspectives, and this irrevocable opening changes for ever their world.

- The *global awakening*: the paradigm shift transforms the relationship between self and self, between self and others, between self and the world, leading the identity to a mature one. The global awakening means raising the level of consciousness, from which we can see that cultures, religions, ideologies are located on a common ground of reality and that radical differences are also located in the Unity field.

This global awakening itself takes place on three different levels:

- A more profound discovery of „self";

- Opening of a dynamic dialogue with

those who share the same values or similar values, this new type of meeting is appointing a new challenging and „dramatic" dialogue;

- Achieving new understandings, globalized upon reality;

- Personal and global transformation of life and behavior: the self lives in a new global consciousness, a dialogical one. [Institute for Global Dialogue]

Therefore, the most appropriate way to create an effective intercultural dialogue would be dialogical communication.

When the intercultural dialogue fails, there is a disagreement, verbalized or not; it is the first form of conflict, an easy and incipient one. Not all the conflicts involve a conflict of purposes: they can arise between parties pursuing the same objectives, but deny, eventually, the ways, principles for achieving them. Therefore, the knowledge and training of skills in conflict management is a current topic and concerns different social levels, all those who by virtue of their position, profession, and relationships need to prevent or solve them efficiently. Conflicts must be accepted as absolutely normal and their resolution should be a group process, since any human group members meet different personalities, with different motivations and a work and creativity potential which varies widely. Conflict situations can be overcome through positive attitudes, communication and mutual understanding. Usually several dimensions form the basis of intercultural conflicts:

- Different norms and values;
- Communication problems and misunderstandings;
- Ethnocentrism;
- Prejudices and stereotypes.

The dynamics of conflict modifies, as a rule, the behavior of the parties involved. If the communication is limited, there are doubts and frustrations; it creates a breeding ground for conflict development. An

ineffective communication with dozed information feels more like a barrier than a bridge. The distrust increases and settlement of contradictions is never seen as a common task. The method of conflict resolution differs from one culture to another, therefore, to provide appropriate solutions, we must take into account the causes that can provoke the conflict, as well as its intercultural aspects. The conflict involves a renegotiation, a release of tension, a prioritization, a renewal of relationships, openness to others and a reassessment of attitudes, in order for the dialogue and communication to fulfill their roles. [Highlights of intercultural education, p. 48]

Accordingly, a well organized and coordinated intercultural constructive dialogue might serve as solution for conflict resolution.

4. Promoting intercultural dialogue in the Black Sea Basin

Over the centuries, from a geopolitical, geo-economical and geo-strategic points of view, the importance of the Black Sea Basin was based mainly on the role it played at the intersection region of the former powers and empires (Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Russian). In historical terms, the Black Sea has always been at the confluence of Russian, the Ottoman and Persian empires and was the center stage of the „Great game" held around it during the nineteenth century. The Black Sea region borders, established in the dispute between the great European powers, in the time of the Crimean War, and during World War I, are visible up to now. [http://www.euronaval.ro]

The notion itself: „the Great Black Sea Basin" appeared relatively recently, for naming the European region that unites the states interested in developing the cooperation in the sphere of economy and security, related to the common historical and cultural traditions. In the midst of the 90's, Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote in his work: The great chess table, named this region as

the Eurasian Balkans, besides the Caucasus and the Balkans it included in itself a part of South Asia, the Gulf region and the Middle East, because all of these regions share the same characteristic: a power vacuum.

The Persian Gulf and Middle East are today at the epicenter of armed conflicts – some in full progress and some – potential ones. Unlike them, the Black Sea, located between the Greater Middle East and Greater Europe is relatively stable, even when faced with the pressure of many internal and external threats. Being inside the triangle between the Islamic world, Russia and Europe, most countries of the Black Sea Basin choose the European vector of foreign policy, helping to promote intercultural dialogue. [http://www.9am.ro/stiri-revista-presei]

Nowadays the countries in the Black Sea Basin are characterized by a great diversity of ethnicities, cultures and religions. Although it is not simple to establish collaboration between the representatives of these states, this step will be made in order to ensure the peaceful future of this region. New strategies and policies must be developed in order to support regional integration processes and European culture, art, education, sports and ecology; to facilitate cultural collaboration of these states through the prism of intercultural dialogue, which would alleviate the main problems of the region, providing authorities with the possibility to establish peace and prosperity in the region. Respectively – the intercultural dialogue will have an important role in the regional cooperation, offering solutions to the existing problems. This follows to be established between religious leaders, political and cultural personalities, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations.

EU pays special attention to this area because EU member countries belong to it : Bulgaria, Romania, Greece. The European Union cooperates with other states in the region, holding an important political power in the region. Establishing an intercultural dialogue in the region is also a priority for the Council of Europe and all states promoting freedom, justice and equality under the law, transparency and tolerance.

Promoting a long-term exchange of scientific and cultural values in the Black Sea Basin, supporting cultural and educational initiatives, establishing and maintaining intercultural dialogue, achieving a degree of cultural proximity, creating a common cultural environment in the Basin are to become political priorities of the countries in the region, possessing a stable and sustainable base. To this end, a network of scientific, cultural and administrative institutions will be established which would promote long-term exchange of scientific and cultural values in the Black Sea region.

In this context, BSEC (Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation), founded on June 25, 1992 aims to stimulate the interaction and harmony between the member states, as well as to ensure peace, stability and prosperity and to establish good neighborly relations in the Black Sea region. The founding members of BSEC are Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and the three Caucasus countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). Referring to the importance of this institution, the head of Russian diplomacy, Serghei Lavrov declared: „Despite the existing difficulties, BSEC becomes a structured and efficient regional institution capable of ensuring multilateral collaboration on a governmental level". Another nongovernmental institution representing the political interests of this area is the International Black Sea Club, bringing together several cities on the Black Sea shore and its vicinity. It has the status of observer in the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and was created in 1992 in Odessa, Ukraine.

In this context, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank founded by the 11 member states of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, supports development projects of the Black Sea and its transformation into an area of security, stability and prosperity.

The Black Sea University Foundation is a non-governmental and non-profit regional organization, whose main concerns are to promote a better understanding and research of economy, society, education and governance of the Black Sea region, positioning it to the rest of the world, and developing ways to promote the region's interests internationally. The aim of the Black Sea University Foundation is to establish some form of effective collaboration, strengthening cooperation between educational scientific and economic environments of the countries bordering the Black Sea and adjacent regions, with broad participation of international institutions and bodies and the interested institutions from other countries in the fields of research, training and continuous education, developing activities in the fields of research, training and continuous education, including the form of partnership with the sectors of research, teaching and training. [http://fumn.eu/en/]

Therefore, cultural pluralism that characterizes the modern societies, including the Black Sea states, requires the harmonious coexistence of many cultures that tolerate each other by helping to promote new values using diversity as a value that enriches society and causes mutual respect. In the context of cultural pluralism, intercultural dialogue plays a central role in the cultural integration and mutual exchanges between communities in the Basin. In this context it is evident the need to know the history of the Black Sea countries and promote their cultural heritage in order to establish good neighborly relations in the region.

I would like to conclude this lecture with the statement of the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant: „a people without culture is a people easy to handle." We should therefore keep the cultural values that represent us, our national character and promote intercultural dialogue - the only able to propagate spiritual unity through cultural diversity.

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