# Module 3: Interaction across Cultures

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The first two units of this module contain 2 videos, 3 compulsory and 3 additional readings.

The first unit is entitled “Have you interacted with someone and how have you interacted?”

In this unit, the correlation between the place of interaction and the level of appreciation of diversity is analyzed.

The first reading is From multi-culturalism to interculturalism: data confirms the change written by Ricard ZAPATA – BARRERO.

The author explains that the multi-cultural narrative policy has been dominant in the last two decades and that it promotes the inclusion of immigrants into the majority by respecting their differences, cultural practices, religions, and languages. He then moves on to point out that this type of policy has not actually been very successful in achieving integration and socio-economic improvements of immigrants. Instead, the past two decades marks an increase in intolerance towards diversity and in the support of xenophobic and in most cases, Euro-sceptic political parties. He also highlights that along with these political developments the increase in competition for resources between host and migrant communities is reducing solidarity.

As a possible solution to this problem, the author proposes the intercultural policy paradigm, instead. According to his view, diversity should be seen as an advantage and a resource rather than a threat. Because an immigrant has additional skills and competences in terms of social and cultural capital, namely language, cultural-particular worldviews, and knowledge, etc. He states that interculturalism promotes dialogue and interactions between people from different backgrounds, the newcomers, and the hosts because it is a way to address the problem of confinement and segregation which leads to social exclusion and social inequalities.

He supports his views with some data from the Anna Lindh survey data. According to this data, there is a correlation between the level of people’s appreciation of diversity and the kind of intercultural interaction they have had. One of the main findings of the survey is that among Europeans, interactions through online chatting and within the schools are more likely to produce a positive change of view about the other (37% and 32% respectively), an inclination of people to see diversity as a resource for society (74% and 78.5% respectively) and refuse the idea of it as a potential threat (74% and 80.5% respectively). Among SEM respondents there is a similar level of positive change of view about Europeans when the interaction has taken place in the school, in the neighbourhood or in the public space (57%, 57%, and 60% respectively).

The definitions provided by the author about interculturalism and the arguments in favor of it are clear and convincing. But he also expresses criticism against the multiculturalist view and that, in my opinion, is not clearly defined and sufficiently explained in the article. For this reason, the paper gives me the impression that it addresses a field expert public who already knows core definitions and views in this domain. In addition, I find the graphics to be very difficult to understand and interpret since in some cases fundamental information such as survey questions, headlines, etc. are missing.

The second reading of this unit is Intercultural Trends and Social Changes in Poland written by Konrad PEDZIWIATR. This article explains in a very clear and concise way the social and religious dynamics in Poland. I personally enjoyed very much reading country-specific papers in the Euromed course because they provided an in-depth view of countries that I did not know much about.

The author gives demographic information about the Polish society that he then uses to explain some dynamics. In the article, we discover that:

-Almost 95% of the population are ethnic Poles and 88% are Roman Catholics.

-Almost 43% of adults regularly participate in religious services.

-Poland is still an emigration rather than immigration country.

-The most important values are family, work, and religion.

An interesting finding of the survey is that the majority of Polish interviewees claim that the media have no impact on their views about people from the SEM. In the case of those whose views changed after exposure to media information about the region, 15% said it changed in a negative way and only 7% in a positive way. A quarter of the people interviewed, have not seen, read, or heard anything in the Polish media about the SEM region. Polish people are also below the European average (53%) in terms of contact with the other shore because only 29% had any contact with SEM people over the last year.

We see from the information provided in the article that Poland has a highly homogenized society with poor welcoming attitudes towards non-Polish. Poles are also less open to people from different cultural backgrounds in their immediate circle compared to the European average as 65% of European interviewees marriage of a close relative with someone from a different cultural background would not be problematic at all, in Poland the same answer gave only 38%.

The author also argues that the Polish reluctance to engage more dynamically in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation can be partially explained by geography and geopolitical position, but some of it also stems from the nationalistic/patriotic movement taking place over the last years in the Polish society.

The second unit of this module is called “Change your view” and it contains one reading called A Vision for Social and Cultural Relations in the Euro-Med region written by Claire Spencer.

In this paper, the author elaborates on current migration dynamics such as trans-Mediterranean migration and sub-Saharan migration and the consequences these issues have on Euro-Mediterranean relations. She also demonstrates with the help of Anna Lindh survey data that there is a curiosity in each side of the Mediterranean in receiving news and information about different spheres of life (cultural life and lifestyle, economic conditions, political changes, and religious beliefs and practices), even though the percentages concerning each issue differs from public to public and are difficult to generalize.

The author also points out that the positive images of the 'other' are on the rise since 2010, in line with the expansion of information flows. The perception of the Mediterranean as a region of insecurity and turmoil is consistently lower in Europe (31%) and the southern Mediterranean (23%). Spencer also invites policymakers to end the top-down frameworks since they continue to be at a distance from the citizens whom they serve.

Even though this was not a ground-breaking article since it more or less repeated the data that was already mentioned in previous readings it was a reader-friendly one, with clearly stated arguments and easy-to-read graphics.