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NATIONAL CENTER FOR ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

# Alternative Dispute Resolution

## Yearbook, 2017

SPECIAL EDITION

Award-Winning Articles of the National Mediation Paper Competition

*The special edition presents the award-winning articles of the National Mediation Paper Competition organized by Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University National Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution. The contest was held within the framework of Mediation Academic Enhancement Project implemented with the support of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).*

*This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Its contents are the sole responsibility of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University National Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).*

TBILISI, 2018

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## Standards of Accreditation of Mediators in Georgia

*The purpose of the paper is to emphasize the advantages of establishing standards of accreditation of mediators in the conditions, when the mediation institute in Georgia is in its initial stage of development and has low recognition and trust within the society. It is important to pay attention on those standards, which are appropriate for applying to a person willing to acquire the title of a mediator and which will be one of the most important steps towards eradication of those issues, which in the Georgian reality the mediation institute is facing now. The paper also surveys the establishment of regulatory legislative mechanisms of standards of accreditation of a mediator, which shall be developed for regulation of this issue.*

**Keywords:** *standards of accreditation of a mediator, certification, license, scheme of accreditation, continuous education, mediation trainings, regulations, mediation center.*

### 1. Introduction

Mediation, as an alternative way of dispute resolution, is gradually developing worldwide and in some countries is a strong alternative of a court. Despite this fact, in the countries where mediation institute is deeply rooted, no agreement exists on what requirements should a mediator meet to acquire this title. Until today, the “name “mediator” is not preserved in the majority of rules. Everyone is free to use it”.<sup>1</sup> Like in other countries, no way exists in Georgia which the one who desires should undergo, in order to obtain the title of a mediator, this will reflect negatively on the development of modern mediation institute, because the number of people willing to mediate is decreasing.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tsertvadze G.*, Mediation, Tbilisi, 2010, 178 (in Georgian).

For the purpose of development of modern mediation in Georgia, the first step was made in December 2011,<sup>2</sup> therefore, this is the news for the Georgian public. Skeptical attitude towards the novelty is a typical characteristic of the existence of society, especially in those conditions, where the mediation institute, compared to the other possibilities of dispute resolution stands out in the least mechanisms of protection of parties, which is expressed in the fact that the agreement reached through mediation is not subject to enforcement, “it is an ordinary agreement which the parties shall perform. In case of its non-fulfillment, the agreement reached through mediation might become subject of court or arbitral consideration.<sup>3</sup> Existence of standards of mediation institute creates even more skepticism in the society. The latter requires even more solid guarantees, in order to feel safe and in case a dispute arises, address to the mediation process.

It should also be noted that “in order for the disputing party to reach a desired outcome, a mediator’s professional skills and experience are of a great importance. This entails that a mediator cannot carry out a mediation process without the respective psychological preparation and special education.”<sup>4</sup>

The first part of the present paper answers the questions whether it is necessary to regulate a mediator’s professional activity in Georgia, in the second part will focus on the standards that one must satisfy in order to become a mediator, whereas, the third part surveys the regulatory mechanisms.

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<sup>2</sup> *Okropiridze B.*, Mediaion – News in Modern Georgian Law and Perspective of its Development Based on International Experience, Journal, “Annual 2012”, 2013, 33 (in Georgian).

<sup>3</sup> *Tsertsvadze G.*, Mediation, Tbilisi, 2010, 244 (in Georgian).

<sup>4</sup> *Okropiridze B.*, Mediaion – News in Modern Georgian Law and Perspective of its Development Based on International Experience, Journal, “Annual 2012”, 2013, 41 (in Georgian).

## **2. Inevitability of Establishment of Standards of Mediation Accreditation in Georgia**

### **2.1 Regulation as a Guarantee for Development of Mediation Institute**

“Types of Mediation shall be taken into consideration with regards to the regulation of Mediator’s professional activities – private mediation and court (compulsory) mediation.”<sup>5</sup> According to the Georgian legislation, during the court mediation in some cases the state obliges parties to try settle before examining the case at the court, in such a case, parties do not have a possibility to choose a mediator themselves, unlike private mediation, where there is the freedom of choice. In case of court mediation, the state shall offer the parties qualified mediators, for selection of which establishment of certain requirements are necessary.<sup>6</sup>

The opinion that due to the fact that in the private sector freedom of choice exists and it the market will itself regulate a “good” or a “bad” mediators, should not be taken into account, therefore, in the private mediation establishment of standards of mediation accreditation is not appropriate. The fact shall be taken into account that in the circumstances, when Georgia is on its initial stage of development of mediation institute and has low recognition throughout the society, the main issue is not choosing a mediator, but the desire to apply for a mediation.<sup>7</sup> One of the most important encouragements of origination of this desire is appropriate to regard establishment of accreditation standards for a mediator, since the regulation serves several important goals, including, growth of condidence towards the profession. By establishing regulations, a liscence issued by the state will give a sign to the society that mediation is a respectfull profession.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Authors Collective, Perspectives of Legal Regulation of Mediation in Georgia, Responsible Editor: associated professor *Tsertsvadze G.*, Tbilisi, 2013, 135 (in Georgian).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 135-136.

<sup>7</sup> Compare, *ibid*, 137.

<sup>8</sup> *Hinshaw A.*, Regulating Mediators, *Jour. Harvard Negotiation Law Review*, Spring 2016, 201.

Despite this, establishment of regulations serves the role of protection of the society from “problematic” mediators, non-competent practitioners and unprofessional providers.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas, mediation is new for the Georgian society, hence, it has low trustworthiness. Establishment of regulations ensures delivery of information to the society concerning mediators. Despite the fact that not one legal dispute is being resolved by mediation, those who is using mediation services, do not well understand its essence and even more, are not able to distinguish mediators from each other. In order to the person, rendering mediation service, to adopt a correct decision, he/she needs reliable information regarding mediators or their qualification. Nowadays, it is easy to acquire information or other’s recommendation through the internet, but it might become difficult to get exhaustive and reliable information on the concrete mediators, in some cases even impossible.<sup>10</sup> Certification or licensing indicates to the fact that mediators are competent with the basic skills.<sup>11</sup>

The main advantage of the regulation is that it is the possibility for formation of the profession. The real profession might not be established without certification or licensing.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, establishment of regulations for the “profession” of mediators is justified in terms of mediation development.

## 2.2 Regulation Form

It is an important issue with which form should a regulation be established. For the latter, it is appropriate to take into account the possibility of effective execution of the goals already above discussed regulations.

Registration, as regulation form, ensures provision of small amount of information regarding a registered person and is not establishing standards or methods for execution of control of the quality. Therefore, it shall be excluded from the discussable area.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>10</sup> *Hinshaw A.*, Regulating Mediators, *Jour. Harvard Negotiation Law Review*, Spring 2016, 199.

<sup>11</sup> See. *Kovach K. K.*, *Mediation In a Nutshell*, Thomson West, 2003, 252.

<sup>12</sup> See. *Ibid*, 261.

Certification requires from individuals to comply with the minimum standards of competence, but at the same time gives access to uncertified persons to the regulated field, therefore, it, like the registration, offers low standards of the society's protection.

As for licensing, if a person does not comply with those conditions which are necessary for acquisition of a license, one's entry into this field automatically becomes illegal. Besides, the license ensures establishment of sanction for unethical, unprofessional or illegal conduct.

By virtue of licensing, provision of information to the public with regards to which mediator might be "problematic" is possible through various sources, including, web-site of an organization. Licensing is the only form of regulations, which fully satisfies the purposes of the above-discussed regulations.<sup>13</sup> Licensing means that any organization or a state takes a responsibility for the competence of a mediator.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike other countries, where certification of mediators basically happens by mediation provider organizations and the market is automatically regulated, introduction of licensing is reasonable due to the fact that in other countries mediation institute is not as young as the Georgian modern mediation and is not facing the problem which is the lack of awareness and reliability in society. Therefore, whereas, licensing sets high standards related to achievement of goals of mediation, significant changes exactly through this form of mediation should be carried out in terms of standards of accreditation of mediators, which shall be discussed in detail in the further chapters of the present paper.

### **2.3 Body Issuing License**

In the Georgian reality, no such mediation providing organization exists which actively carries out trainings of mediators. That is the reason why by engagement of interested parties, donor organizations and representative of states the mediation center shall be created which will ensure conducting compulsory trainings for qualification of a mediator as for court mediators as well as mediators working in the private sector.

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<sup>13</sup> *Hinshaw A.*, Regulating Mediators, Jour. Harvard Negotiation Law Review, Vol. 21:163, Spring 2016, 212.

<sup>14</sup> *Kovach K.K.*, Mediation In a Nutshell, Thomson West, 2003, 261.

Exactly the mediation center shall exclusively issue mediator’s license according to the prior developed accreditation scheme. (The approximate outline of the accreditation scheme will be discussed in section 2.2 of the present paper). The mediation center shall provide availability of the detailed information concerning mediators registered at the registry of mediators.

## **2.4 Price of License**

Price of licensing is an important issue. In most cases, high price of licensing is an impediment factor during the process of mastering profession. Hence, due to the fact that number of people interested in mediation is not that high, low price of license might become a motivation for people desiring to become mediators. The price shall be determined according to the Georgian general economic condition, with the aim not to decrease but to increase the number of people willing to become mediators.

## **3. Standards of Accreditation of Mediators in Georgia – Sharing International Experience**

### **3.1 Scheme of Accreditation of Mediators**

#### **3.1.1 Scheme of Accreditation the Center of Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) for Mediators**

The Center of Effective Dispute Resolution (hereinafter – “CEDR”), which is recognized as one of the leading commercial mediation training centers, has developed a scheme of accreditation of mediators. The first part of the scheme of accreditation of mediators of CEDR indicates to passing those trainings by people willing to become mediators, which includes a five-day comprehensive study program for development and improvement of the skills necessary for mediation. During the last two days, participants are evaluated by authorized members of CEDR, which themselves are experienced mediators.<sup>15</sup> These mediators evaluate according to different components, including, whether a participant creates a supporting

<sup>15</sup> *Boulle L., Nesic M., Mediator Skills and Techniques: Trinagle of Influence, West Sussex, 2010, 646.*

environment for mediation, develops communication and interaction between each participant of the process, forms and maintains a safe and an effective working system, leads the mediation process, promotes the parties to adopt implementable decisions, has the ability to develop through analyzing his/her own weaknesses and strengths. Each of these components is divided into sub-components. The rest of the issues are evaluated in writing after completion of a five-day course.<sup>16</sup>

Accreditation scheme in detail entails exactly what will be studied during this training. Be it the management of mediation process and promotion of negotiations, improvement of communication skills, effective dispute resolution or others.

It should be noted that according to the accreditation scheme of CEDR, no prior requirement, including qualification or experience is not a pre-condition for a person to undergo this training.

CEDR was this first which developed the scheme of professional continuous education for mediators.<sup>17</sup> The aim of the program of professional continuous education of CEDR (hereinafter CPD) is to preserve these standards and renew, strengthen the education received though initial accreditation. Continuous education might entail conducting 4 mediation processes annually, out of which at least two – a short summary of the mediation process is presented in writing (of course, by protecting confidentiality), 16 hour training *etc.*<sup>18</sup>

In some cases, CEDR offers the clients the service of an assistant mediator, which is an important component of CPD. Participants of the continuous professional education might adjust the role of an assistant mediator. Both the leading mediator and his/her assistant are under strict supervision, which includes provision of a feedback.

It is important that accreditation of CEDR is widely recognized by other organizations providing mediation.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <[https://www.cedr.com/library/documents/Training\\_assessment\\_competencies.pdf](https://www.cedr.com/library/documents/Training_assessment_competencies.pdf)>, [01.07.09].

<sup>17</sup> *Boulle L., Nesic M., Mediator Skills and Techniques: Triangle of Influence*, West Sussex, 2010, 646.

<sup>18</sup> <[https://www.cedr.com/exchange/docs/CEDR\\_CPD\\_notes.pdf](https://www.cedr.com/exchange/docs/CEDR_CPD_notes.pdf)>.

<sup>19</sup> *Boulle L., Nesic M., Mediator Skills and Techniques: Triangle of Influence*, West Sussex, 2010, 647.



### 3.1.2 Scheme of Accreditation of a Mediator in the Georgian Reality

#### 3.1.2.1 Is Mediation a Skill not a Talent?!

„If humans did not know how much work I needed to master my art, it would not seem that wonderful”.  
*Michelangelo Buonarroti*<sup>20</sup>

Some people have such qualities, experience or innate talent, which help them be an effective mediator without conducting any formal training. For example, in the history of some famous people, such as: Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Benjamin Franklin, have not conducted any formal training and did not have any accreditation of a mediator. Nevertheless, this is more exception than the general rule. In all cases, even those people who have inherent talent for dispute resolution need preparation and practice (like those people, who naturally have talent to help a sick person, however, in terms of medical service, they are still conducting preparation and practice).<sup>21</sup>

Skills of a mediator may be acquired, developed and improved. This conclusion lies behind many mediation trainings and is based on courses studying mediation that are taught in the universities, schools and other educational institutions.<sup>22</sup>

#### 3.1.2.2 Mediation Training

Whereas, as it was discussed in part 2.2.1.1 of this paper, mediation is more of a skill than a talent, in order for a person to be ranked as a mediator, requirements of compulsory undergoing of trainings is appropriate.

The scheme of CEDR indicates only to a five-day training, which should not be enough for formation of those minimal standards which should determine the competence of a mediator. Almost in all professions, one

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Boulle L., Colatrella M.T., Picchioni A.P.*, Mediator Skills and Techniques, LexisNexis, 2008, 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Boulle L., Nesic M.*, Mediator Skills and Techniques: Triangle of Influence, West Sussex, 2010, 2.

year education is necessary in order for a person to become licensed or certified.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, in order for the profession to be established, the duration of training should be increased and should not be limited to only a few days of training. For instance, Bundesverband Mediation (hereinafter BM) “was established in Germany in 1992. This an interdisciplinary union, the main goal of which is spreading of alternative possibilities of dispute resolution and popularization in Germany”.<sup>24</sup> The union has developed its standards, the satisfaction of which is required for a mediator to be granted a qualification. Undergoing 200 hour study course is regarded as compulsory, out of which 120 hour shall be conceded to the review of fundamentals of mediation, a participant concedes 30 hours for execution of what one has learnt in practice, or 20 hours of working with a mediator.<sup>25</sup>

Every person learns new skills and techniques differently. Some people study the best in a cognitive way, which means the receipt of information before realizing it in a particular situation. Some through other’s observation and as a result by formation of their own behavior. Some are better studying through the process doing, which implies, for example, participation in simulations.<sup>26</sup> Modern brain science tells us that such high level practitioners, such as mediators, develop their own ability, divide their experience in components and separately work on each component. They not only divide their abilities in sub-abilities, but also identify such sub-abilities, such as: active listening, summarizing, reformulation *etc.* and those which need improvement.<sup>27</sup> Stemming from all above-mentioned and taking into consideration that it will be impossible to adjust this training to an individual, it shall be of a complex type and contain various types of activities.

It is important to pay attention to the fact that part of training should envisage possibility of mastering family, medical, notarial or other types of mediation, since each of them is distinguished by significant specificity and requires different approach from a mediator.

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<sup>23</sup> See, *Kovach K.K.*, *Mediation In a Nutshell* , Thomson West, 2003, 258.

<sup>24</sup> *Tsertsvadze G.*, *Mediation*, Tbilisi, 2010, 180.

<sup>25</sup> See, *Ibid*, 180.

<sup>26</sup> See, *Boulle L., Nesic M.*, *Mediator Skills and Techniques: Trinagle of Influence*, West Sussex, 2010, 2.

<sup>27</sup> See, *Boulle L., Colatrella M.T., Picchioni A.P.*, *Mediator Skills and Techniques*, LexisNexis, 2008, 10-11.

The assessment system proposed by the CEDR accreditation scheme should be shared during formation of the scheme of the Georgian mediation accreditation, since it gives an opportunity to assess practical skills as well as theoretical knowledge of a mediator.

### 3.1.2.3 Pre-conditions

In CEDR accreditation scheme, as it already was discussed above, no pre-conditions exists for undergoing a training for a person willing to mediate. In the Georgian reality, it will be appropriate, as a pre-condition, to establish a requirement of presentation of only a document evidencing higher education. Similar approach stems from those purposes of establishment of mediation as a worthy profession next to the other professions, most of which require minimum a bachelor diploma. Regarding pre-conditions, demand of some court mediation and association for a court license is extremely topical,<sup>28</sup> which should be disregarded during development of an accreditation scheme of the Georgian mediators, since, a mediation institute, which shall become worthy alternative of dispute resolution, shall be interpreted as “the process which pays attention to the interests and resolution of their issues, instead of reaching an agreement which shall be based on a legislation or to what rights parties have according to the law”.<sup>29</sup> Due to this reason, the lack of legal education is not an obstacle for mediation process since it is more oriented towards the interests of parties. Since no agreement exists regarding which profession should a mediator have, why should be required from a mediator to be a jurisprudent? In this case, a person, at the same time, should also know the basic features of a businessmen, a teacher, and a priest (the life of a priest is a priceless bridge towards the mediation because the priest is already a creator of peace<sup>30</sup>). Therefore, it is a responsibility of parties and

<sup>28</sup> *Mosten F.S.*, *Mediation Career Guide: a Strategic Approach to Building a Successful Practice*, San Francisco, 2001, 51.

<sup>29</sup> *Kovaki K.K.*, *New Wine Requires New Wine Jar* (wineskin – which is prepared from an animal’s leather): which is manufactured from an animal’s leather): transformation of lawyer’s ethic, in order to one to solve an issue by excluding competitiveness: mediation (mediation), journal “Annual 2012”, 2013, 141.

<sup>30</sup> *Mosten F.S.*, *Mediation Career Guide: A Strategic Approach to Building a Successful Practice*, San Francisco, 2001, 52.

their lawyers to present their positions in a way that a mediator can properly understand problematic issues. If there are legal issues in a case, which in the opinion of parties, are of a great importance, for this case, a mediator should ask both parties to explain these issues orally or in writing.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.1.2.4 Continuous Education

In order for a person to be a distinguished mediator, one should never stop studying and his/her education should never be limited only by one week or one-month study courses. Famous pianist, Busoni used to say: “how ideal the last interpretation seem to me, I will never abandon the possibility to develop. For example, often, after my concerts I go straight home and practice specific parts of my composition during hours, because during the concert new ideas occur in my mind”.<sup>32</sup>

Wrong idea exist that only accumulation of the experience is enough to became a qualified mediator. For example, most of people drive cars every day, but do they drive better only because they have more practice? It is true that experience improves skills, however, regarding the techniques of driving a car without the new knowledge or feedback, their skills stay at the same level, do not develop. The same happens in case of any other skill, it is golf, music or mediation.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, like in CEDR’s accreditation scheme, definitely continuous education should be determined in the scheme of mediator accreditation of Georgia. In case of satisfying concrete requirements annually, a person will retain a status of a mediator, otherwise the sanction of suspension of a license should be determined. Mediation Center should ensure the possibility of provision of necessary trainings or other activities for continuous education. Continuous education should also envisage alternatives which a mediator will count as fulfilment of its requirements (for example, undergoing trainings held by other mediation provider organizations).

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<sup>31</sup> *Goodman A.H.*, Basic Skills for the New Mediator, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., United States of America, 2005, 29.

<sup>32</sup> *Boulle L., Colatrella M.T., Picchioni A. P.*, Mediator Skills and Techniques, LexisNexis, 2008, 11.

<sup>33</sup> *Boulle L., Nesic M.*, Mediator Skills and Techniques: Triangle of Influence, West Sussex, 2010, 2.

#### 4. Framework of Legislative Regulation

In many countries accreditation standards of the mediator fall into an ethic regulation sphere. For example, article 1.1 of the European code of Conduct, which represents a recommendation and is not binding, determines the competences of a mediator: “mediators should be competent and aware of the mediation process. Relevant factors should encompass appropriate trainings, continuous education and practice for development of mediation skills, considering the relevant standards or accreditation schemes.”<sup>34</sup>

In the Georgian reality, considering the international experience, it would be appropriate to define an article regarding competences of the mediator according to the code of ethics. Unfortunately, code of ethics of mediators in Georgia has not yet been developed, therefore, first of all, works on this matter should be commenced. It is important to note the fact that stemming from the nature of licensing, the provisions of the code of ethics should not be of a recommendatory character but - binding. Code of ethics, being of a recommendatory character, cannot ensure execution of the purposes which were discussed in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of this paper. Otherwise, the law on mediation shall be developed, which will in detail determine an article concerning mediators. It is appropriate to form this article similar to the European Code of Conduct, by difference that it should indicate the exclusive organ issuing the license – mediation center and that appropriate scheme of the accreditation of mediators of Georgia which will be developed in future.

Besides, it is necessary for this article to indicate which certificate issued by the mediation provider organization will be equal to the license issued by the mediation center, since nowadays in Georgia, there are many mediators who were trained by the international mediation provider organizations. The obligation of licensing is justified to apply only to those people who have not participated in such certified courses, however, the obligation to satisfy the requirements of the continuous education program should apply to each mediator.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 642.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of the present paper represented to show the necessity and advantage of developing the accreditation standards for mediators, which was clearly identified by the research. The paper examined those mechanisms of regulations which are appropriate to be regarded as one of the main and necessary means for solving the problem identified in the introduction.

Establishing regulations for the profession of a mediator will bring us to the improvement of status of mediation institute, it will transform into a worthy alternative of a court, which is not an auxiliary means of a sphere subordinate to other regulation.<sup>35</sup> As a result, more trust of modern institute of mediation will be created in the society which is an encouraging precondition for mediation. Besides, number of people willing to become mediators and who the perspective of development of mediation depends on will increase. Moreover, regulation of accreditation standards of a mediator on the legislative level shall raise the standards of protection of people benefiting from the service.

Finally, development of mediation institute will help to eradicate one more problem, regarding overload of cases at court, which is important for effective execution of justice.

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<sup>35</sup> *Hinshaw A.*, Regulating Mediators, Jour. Harvard Negotiation Law Review, Vol. 21:163, Spring 2016, 201.

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