



Good morning,

Your Excellence Minister for Justice, President of GEMME HELLAS, authorities, my dear GEMME colleagues, and all the ladies and gentlemen gathered here.

Thank you for joining us today.

We are very grateful to the Ministry of Justice for welcoming us here, and to GEMME HELLAS for co-organizing this event and our meetings in Athens.

Congratulations to our Greek colleagues for constituting their section. We are very proud of you.

It is an honour for me to chair GEMME EUROPE today. This magnificent association was created by brave, pioneering people twenty years ago. From that moment on, many judges who had embraced the cause of mediation were no longer alone. Moreover, it was possible to create, together with those judges, a network of people from other professional backgrounds, all united by the common goal of promoting the amicable resolution of disputes. The exchange of knowledge and experiences with mediation professionals is always very enriching and motivating, and all efforts are essential to advance our common mission.

Since its creation, the European Judges Group for Mediation has played a fundamental role in the promotion of this method of conflict resolution and has tried to progress towards the humanization of justice, in order to improve the quality of judicial systems and provide a direct answer to the changing necessities of a heavily stressed society, in a global context of multiple crises and interpersonal relationships more and more complex.

During all this time, we have been able to confirm the positive impact of this method over people's lives.



Mediation is not simply an alternative to the judicial process, but a real paradigm shift. It is directly linked to the culture of peace, the promotion of human rights and the building of a society for everyone. It is a powerful instrument of social cohesion. And on this matter, we judges have a lot to say and even more to do.

It is our duty, of course, to resolve conflicts in accordance with the law, and in order to do that we need to have a solid legal background. But the role of judges today cannot be limited to saying only the words of the law. First and foremost, judicial systems must focus on people and solutions. And judges must be peacemakers, seeking to enable people to resolve their disputes themselves wherever possible. Dialogue should be a priority. This is something really necessary to find the cause of the conflict, which often goes beyond what is stated in the legal arguments before the court.

If people get used to solve their conflicts this way, society will be more peaceful. Peaceful coexistence is a necessity, and a right.

From this perspective, our twenty years of existence invite us to reflect. It is a time for celebration, but also a time to face new challenges, taking into account how our decisions and behavior affect the people who come to court.

If we talk about the advantages of mediation or conciliation and want citizens to use these tools, it is obvious that judges must know about them. If we want to build trust in the law and in the judicial system, we must know how to develop conflict management methods and apply them in our daily work. We must make justice more accessible and closer to the people. Efficient and sustainable, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16. And we must be able to take care of ourselves in order to better serve people, to live up to the responsibility and trust that has been placed in us.



Are European judges trained for this? Yes, they are. But, perhaps, the acquisition of soft skills and in-depth knowledge of conflict management is still an unresolved issue in many judicial schools.

That is why GEMME works closely with the European Institutions, the Councils of the Judiciary, and the Ministries of Justice of several countries, as well as with public and private institutions to promote the use of mediation and ADR in all areas where this is possible, the necessary legislative changes and an adequate training of judges.

In this context, our association is pleased to share with you today the preview of its publication ‘GEMME: Twenty Years Promoting Mediation in Europe’.

And, also, we are very happy to announce that an important partnership agreement will be signed this morning.

As an African proverb says, if you want to go far, go together.

We are sure there will be a before and an after Athens. Thank you all for allowing GEMME to evolve and continue to build peace and coexistence.

Rosalía Fernández Alaya  
Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023