**First Intercultural Morning Coffee**

October 13, 2020 – 09:30 am to 10:05 am CET Time

**Attendees:**

Participants: Miriam Diez Bosch, Phd and professor at the Blanquerna School of Communication and International Relations, at Ramon Llull University in Barcelona (Spain); Bayan Tal, Senior Advisor at the Jordan Media Institute (Jordan), Alicia Arbid, coordinator at the Arab Women's solidarity association (Belgium)

ALF Representatives

**Chair of the meeting:** Eleonora Insalaco - Head of Operations and Intercultural Research

**Facilitator and rapporteur**: Johannes Jauhiainen – Social Media Executive

**Co-rapporteur:** Racha Omeyri - Intercultural Research Officer



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## Background of the meeting

The First Intercultural Morning Coffee brought together a group of alumni of the Intercultural Trends and Media Platforms.  The aim of the meeting was to offer professionals working with media narratives and cross-cultural interactions from different Euro-Mediterranean countries a space to discuss and reflect on how restrictions to mobility as a consequence of Covid-19 has affected intercultural relations.

## The meeting

In the plenary session participants were encouraged to reflect on the following observations and questions:

According to the Anna Lindh Intercultural Trends report, 39% of Europeans experienced cross-cultural encounters in the street and 15% via tourism while the same numbers among respondents in the Southern Mediterranean countries were 13% and 24%. Hence it is likely that restrictions to free movement have hampered cross-cultural encounters and encounters between members of the minority and the majority communities living together in multicultural cities.

Are these experiences reflected in the public debate? And if so in what way?

Guiding questions

The meeting started by encouraging the participants to share their views on how restrictions to mobility caused by the pandemic might have impacted, on the one hand, interactions between people from the Southern and Northern shore of the Mediterranean and, on the other hand, interactions between people of the minority and majority communities living together in multicultural cities.

Participants were also encouraged to reflect on how these experiences were covered by the media and public debate in their countries and/or professional contexts.

Secondly, participants were encouraged to reflect on two additional questions. Firstly, on what the Anna Lindh Foundation could do in order to support cross-cultural reporting and intercultural dialogue within the renewed regional context? And, more in particular how the media can support dialogue work and give visibility to grass-root initiatives and how civil society and the academia can contribute to media monitoring.

## Summary of the main challenges, issues and recommendations

This report summarizes the key outcomes from the exchange during the first virtual Intercultural Morning Coffee on the 13th of October 2020.

The following issues and challenges identified in the meeting are among the most noteworthy:

* Gatherings that aim to diversify cross-cultural images, advocacy promoting dialogue and intercultural relations have been hampered by restrictions to mobility. Despite these set-backs the lockdown also presented windows of opportunities to reach out to diverse communities at the local level.
* Media coverage of refugees, migrants and vulnerable groups such as women and people with disabilities decreased during the initial stages of the pandemic. Later on, the media did cover migrant communities as a crucial part of the workforce and also in relation to solidarity initiatives. In the summer period, with renewed migration waves, the media and the public discourse also portrayed migrants as potential spreaders of the virus, which resulted in growing xenophobia, discrimination and stigmatization of these communities.
* During the lockdown the media has also exposed some challenges related for example to increased domestic violence towards women. If on the one hand this can be seen as a positive factor shedding light on a negative phenomenon, this also let to stereotyping of certain communities. In Belgium these negative stereotypes were connected to domestic violence affecting women in Arab Muslim communities. This has deepened existing prejudices and further contributed to the stigmatization of the communities in question. Shedding light on these already existing phenomena became a catalyst for civil society to innovate their work and to raise awareness in the field.
* From a media perspective the lockdown also presented itself as an opportunity for showcasing positive post-lockdown stories. This was carried out by civil society through contacting the media, writing editorial articles highlighting the beneficial initiatives by local communities. For example, during the lockdown youth and civil society organizations initiated solidarity campaigns and communicated about them to the media and the public with the help of social media.
* Due to the lockdown journalists are more constrained in their work which has resulted in a narrower selection of stories being reported. As a result, there are less stories addressing life in local diverse communities because journalists are restricted to desk-work instead of going to the field.

Recommendations for civil society, media outlets and the Anna Lindh Foundation:

* Participants urged journalists to go back to the field whenever possible and encounter the different realities affecting people’s lives.
* Civil society needs to continue to develop good practices for how to minimize media narratives that embolden negative cross-cultural stereotypes
* There is a continuous need to build bridges between the Southern and Northern shore of the Mediterranean through discussions and storytelling. This can be done, among others, through long term partnerships between media outlets and civil society organizations in the region.
* There is a continuous need for accurate cross-cultural reporting on, for example, the severe economic situations that Lebanon and Jordan find themselves in. This accurate reporting could encourage even further cooperation especially among civil society organizations.
* There is a continuous need for training journalists on cross-cultural reporting in order to fight stereotypes in the region.
* There is a need to reflect on new working-methodologies for the Anna Lindh Foundation to amplify and develop intercultural initiatives in the Euro-Mediterranean that could bridge the local, regional and international levels.

## Annex I Press Release

The Anna Lindh Foundation has launched a series of Intercultural Morning Coffee's meetings.

The aim of these meetings is to encourage discussions among journalists, academics and civil society on current affairs relating to cross-cultural reporting in the Euro-Mediterranean and to sustain the EuroMed network brought together with the Intercultural Trends and Media Platform.

The first Intercultural Morning Coffee focuses on how the restrictions on mobility due to the global pandemic have affected intercultural relations in the Euro-Mediterranean region: how have these experiences been reported? Whose voices are heard?

The Intercultural Trends report reveals that 39% of Europeans experienced cross-cultural encounters in the street and 15% via tourism. While in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean 13% experienced cross-cultural encounters in the street and 24% via tourism. Hence, it is likely that restrictions to free movement have hampered cross-cultural encounters and encounters between members of the minority and the majority communities living in multicultural cities.

In addition to encouraging reflections, an aim of the Intercultural Morning Coffees is to generate recommendations and ideas for how the Anna Lindh Foundation can continue to support all actors in the Euro-Mediterranean who actively contribute to shaping cross-cultural images of one another.

**About the Anna Lindh Foundation Intercultural Trends and Media Platform**

The Intercultural Trends and Media Platform brings together media, academia and civil society to create a network and to discuss how perceptions between Europeans and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean people have evolved in recent years as a result of the growing migratory and refugee movements, the rise of populist’s discourses and phenomena of violent extremism.

 If you are a journalist, member of civil society or academic who would like to participate in a future edition of the Intercultural Trends and Media Platform, please do not hesitate to contact us (johannes.jauhiainen@annalindhfoundation.org - Intercultural Research Social Media Executive)

For more information on the Intercultural Trends and Media work at the Anna Lindh Foundation you can contact: Eleonora.Insalaco@annalindhfoundation.org - Head of Operations and Intercultural Research

## Annex II: schedule of the meeting

**October 13th, 2020 - 09:30 am to 10:05 am CET Time**

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| **Time CEST** | **Item** |
| 09:30 | Welcoming short introduction by moderator |
| 09:35 | Start of plenary |
| 10:00 | Wrap up of session with concluding remarks from the Head of Operations and Intercultural Research at the Anna Lindh Foundation. |
| 10:05 | End of session.   |