**Euro-Mediterranean Intercultural Trends**

**Report on Module 1: Representation of the Mediterranean and Mutual Interest**

**Introduction:** Yasmin Kremer and Ivana Maffeo

**Unit 1.1 & 1.2:** Yasmin Kremer

**Unit 1.3 & 1.4:** Ivana Maffeo

**Introduction**

In this report we will summarize what was presented in module n.1 in the learning journey through the Anna Lindh Report “Intercultural Trends and Social Change in the Euro-Mediterranean region”. First, we will review the first unit, where the discussion focuses on the common and different views regarding the characteristics of the Euro-Med region. Then we will cover the second unit, which deals with the question of where people would like to start a new life. After these two, we will present the criticism we have on the exhibit. We will then continue to review the third unit that examines the level of interest of people from both regions regarding the other region, and how both regions derive the information that interests them from the different media channels. We will cover the fourth unit that deals with how collaboration between the two regions can deliver positive social benefits. After that we will write our criticism of these units. And finally, we will summarize what is written.

**Unit 1.1 & Unit 1.2**

**Unit 1.1**

In the first unit the module focuses on what people on the two shores of the Mediterranean associate with the region. In this unit there is a survey that shows what Europeans and people from the area of south and east Mediterranean associate with the Mediterranean region. The results of the survey show that most of the Europeans think that the Mediterranean associates with Mediterranean way of life, food and hospitality. Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries are more likely to associate the region with hospitality, followed by a common cultural heritage and history. Most of the of Europeans and Mediterranean’s, still see the region as a source of conflict. But since 2010, there is a decline in this point of view. Although there are some negative associations to the Mediterranean region in relation to instability and insecurity or in the resistance to change, far more associate the Mediterranean with positive ideas and views. In addition, most of the Europeans and southern and eastern Mediterranean’s associate migration issues with the region.

**Mediterranean, between the achievable and the desired /Mohamad Tozy**

In this article, the author refers to three survey waves that Anna Lind has conducted since 2010. According to him, the results of the surveys raise more questions than answers, and the answers must be analyzed in many dimensions such as politics, economics and psychology. The results of the 2018 surveys surprised the writer when the Mediterranean region is linked to positive values ​​like hospitality (56% vs 50.5% in 2013), food, lifestyle (56.5% vs 56.4% in 2013) and shared history (52% vs 49.5% in 2013). However, the Mediterranean area still seems to be a place of insecurity and restlessness.

Another survey that the author refers to is a survey that examines what values ​​are important for each region/country. The survey editors viewed religious values, obedience and family solidarity as conservative values. While independence, curiosity and respect for other cultures are considered advanced values. Although it is widely believed that religious states will be characterized by conservative values, the survey results have shown other results. For example, Portugal is considered a religious state, but the results of the survey showed that the most important value for the Portuguese is the respect for other cultures and only then family solidarity. Also, the survey results of Algeria, an ex-colonial state that in recent years reinvented itself as an Arab Islamic state, showed that the value of religion was the most important value, but immediately followed the value of independence. This result may be explained by the country's colonial past.

The last survey the author refers to in the article is the role of women in society in the various countries. The results of the survey show that in the Mediterranean countries only in the field of politics is there a reluctance to integrate women. But in areas like economics and society there is a willingness to integrate them. In addition, we can see that in Tunisia the role of women in economics was highest among all countries.

**Unit 1.2**

In the second unit of this module the purpose is to understand where people would like to start a new life or simply live, because sometimes perceptions or ideas are different from the evidence. In order to find out about the attractiveness of European and Mediterranean countries as places people want to live, the respondents were asked: "If you could start a new life, in which country in the world would you start them?" The respondents in the Mediterranean were more likely to want to start a new life in their country (60%) and in comparison, to European respondents, less than half responded that they wanted to start a new life in their countries (36%). It can be concluded from this that the data helped to address some of the ongoing misconceptions that a large proportion of Mediterranean citizens would be willing to relocate to other countries. One of the results of the survey seem particularly surprising when only 12% of Dutch citizens want to live their lives in their country.

**The social dimension of migration in Euro-Mediterranean countries / Ayman Zohry**

Immigration issues have become central to public discourse on countries from the South and East Mediterranean. The author of the article argues that there is a misconception that many citizens of the Mediterranean want to leave their country to live elsewhere. It can also be seen from the survey results in Mediterranean countries that said their country of residence would be their preferred place to start a new life; Compared to less than half of the European surveyed who responded that they wanted to start a new life in their country. Among respondents from the East and South Mediterranean who want to start a new life in another country, Europe's popularity as a place to start a new life is highest among young people, while older respondents will often prefer to start a new life in another Mediterranean (or Gulf) state.

Another survey the author of the article examines, relates to the openness of different countries towards people from different cultural backgrounds. The results of the survey showed that in countries such as Portugal and France the level of tolerance for people from different cultural backgrounds was highest. While in countries like Poland, Jordan, Israel and Palestine the level of tolerance was the lowest. The author believes that the openness of European citizens towards others stems from the reason that citizens in European countries met more people from the Mediterranean countries than people from the East and South Mediterranean who met Europeans. However, the results of the surveys show that cross-cultural encounters are less likely to not affect European respondents' attitudes, whereas such meetings in Mediterranean countries are more likely to have a better impact on respondents' attitudes. Only in Palestine, Jordan, Israel, Poland and Portugal are more reports that their encounter with people from the other region has changed their views negatively.

**Are Travel Shaping Young? Bernard Abergani**

In this article, the researcher reviews the findings of the Anna Lind trend survey to support his claim that Exchange programs are needed. While the questions in the surveys are not specifically related to the EU exchange programs in the narrower sense, the findings are relevant to the question of whether the exchange programs are effective. The results of the surveys show that encounters of the third type, that is, direct contact between people, are the best ways of creating solidarity and genuine mutual understanding between the two regions.

The author of the article argues that the exchange programs have proven to be an important cultural tool and mechanism. The positive effects of these programs are evident; along with mutual understanding and cultural acceptance, participants not only learned new languages, but also developed ongoing and deep relationships with people from the countries they visited. In a survey that sought to evaluate the effectiveness of various prevention and conflict mitigation mechanisms in the Mediterranean region, about 80% of respondents in both state groups thought that education exchange and youth exchange programs that promote youth-led dialogue are effective means of coping with conflict and radicalization.

**Criticism of Units 1 and 2**

The main argument that comes to me from these study units is related to one of the surveys that examines these important values ​​for each country / region. When the survey authors classified the values: religion, obedience and family solidarity as conservative values. While respecting other cultures, independence and surveys are linked to advanced values. It is difficult for me to understand why the survey editors decided to classify such values ​​as conservative versus advanced. I believe that values ​​vary according to geographical / cultural relevance and therefore the survey editors have categorized these values ​​into their personal views of what is considered conservative and what is considered advanced. For example, why is family solidarity considered a conservative value, can't non-conservative people connect to that value?

I think the survey that looked at whether people from different countries would like to start living in other countries is an important survey. Thus, the mistaken hypothesis that people from the East and South Mediterranean want to start living in other countries has dissipated and because of this they are immigrants. And so, the conclusion is that people from the are immigrants because of situations of choice and not their will. Then, the author of the article referred to a survey examining those who would like to emigrate from southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, as to where they would like to go. But he did not address the question of where Europeans who want to immigrate want to move, even though they want a much larger percentage to start their lives in new countries. And I couldn't figure out why this data was being ignored.

**Unit 1.3 & Unit 1.4**

**Brief overview**

As already mentioned before, the online course “Euro-Mediterranean Intercultural Trends” is based on the Anna Lindh Report on Intercultural Trends and Social Change in the Euro-Mediterranean region, including a unique public opinion survey among a representative sample of the Euro-Mediterranean population about mutual perceptions, values and openness to diversity.

The main objective of the Anna Lindh Foundation is to create a more inclusive, empathetic and resilient societies, to fight growing mistrust and polarisation. The first module of this journey clearly states this purpose as the module is dedicated to the perceptions about common values, attitudes, interests and expectations of people on both shores of the Mediterranean. In this section we will see more in detail what it has been learnt in unit three and unit four of this module.

**Unit 1.3 Interest in people from the other shore of the Mediterranean**

This unit is devolved to the explanation of the level of interest people have to know more about life on the other shore of the Mediterranean and how people from both shores inform themselves through different media channels. The study is supported with an explanatory video, a main supporting reading and other additional readings.

The main research question concerns the level of interest in news and information from other regions. To this purpose are taken into consideration five areas: cultural life and lifestyle, political situation, economic conditions, religious beliefs and practices and sports activities, showing a higher level of interests for each category from Europeans compared to southern and eastern Mediterranean respondents.

Interesting to note in this research is the fact that some of the highest levels of interest in news and information about people in other countries were observed among European respondents who have friends or relatives in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries.

Another relevant contribution to the study has been done by Rina Marrouch who studies the ratio of human curiosity about people’s lives on the other shores of the Mediterranean through the use of videos on social media. Social media has revealed to be an important backbone to engage more interest from both shores of the Mediterranean.

As a support of the video, the article of Alexandra Buchler provides some important hints for the developing of the argument. In fact, this article is regarding the role of translation in intercultural dialogue today. One of the most significant findings is that the media are contributing to a negative, rather than positive image of the Mediterranean, especially for immigration, and that their impact on changing views and perceptions is at best limited. As a matter of the fact many Southern and Eastern Mediterranean respondents reporting not having ‘seen, read or heard anything in the media’ about Europe. This aspect, of course led to think about the reliability of mainstream media. For this reason, the Anna Lindh Foundation identifies translation as being central to intercultural dialogue, because without the translation of some important internet sources, the younger generation remains “blindfolded”.

These new media tell stories of immediate importance, thus if we want to involve a broader engagement, it is necessary a shift in translation, from the focus of books and printed texts to a broader engagement encompassing a wide use of digital and audio-visual media and interaction with communities and audiences.

**Limitations and strengths**

This unit provides a rich explanation about mutual interest of people from both shores of the Mediterranean. The support of the social media nowadays is an important source, a source that can be sometimes negative and sometimes positive. It is really appreciated the study about the translation, especially useful for social media that can contributes to engage more young people from all over the world.

However, despite to focus the attention on the translation, it could have been useful also to discover where these social media tools were absent at all. This lack affects both shores of the Mediterranean and maybe an analysis of this aspect could have demonstrated more important hints for future developments.

**Unit 1.4 Mediterranean cooperation**

This unit explores how cooperation between shores can enable positive societal gains. Like the previous units there is always a main video showing some results, then a supporting reading of the research question and other additional readings.

Here the research question is about the effectiveness of mutual cooperation, and the main findings is that from both shores of the Mediterranean, respondents consider that cooperation can create new opportunities for education and training, for entrepreneurship, innovation and youth employment.

The main support for this research came from Abdelrahman Aldaqqah who advocates investing in youth and dialogue as a long-term solution in challenging radicalisation. The author proposes youth empowerment, education, debate initiatives, youth exchanges, and intercultural activities as effective instruments in overcoming the misunderstandings and stereotypes, and hence, prevention of radicalisation at its root level.

Youth represent a major constituent in the Mediterranean region. In this context youth are classified as “the future guardians of peace”. Although there could be some discrepancies, youth on both sides consider cultural and religious diversity an asset for their societies. the majority from both sides of the Mediterranean also think that education, youth programmes, youth participation in public life, inter-religious dialogue, exchange programmes and cultural/artistic initiatives are efficient measures in tackling radicalisation. For European youth, school is the main area of intercultural interactions, while southern and eastern Mediterranean youth use the internet and social media to get in contact with people.

The major focus of this unit is also the fact that governments, youth organizations and civil society in the Middle East should be an integrated part of a comprehensive policy that targets the international, regional and local levels to promote regional dialogue and cultural understanding.

**Limitations and strengths**

One noticeable feature of this unit is the illustration of some youth-led initiatives, for example the ‘Young Arab Voices’ a successful regional programme jointly launched in 2011 by the Anna Lindh Foundation and the British Council aiming at developing skills and opportunities for youth-led debate across the Arab region. This kind of project is a support for all the analysis of this unit.

However, before to go ahead it should be useful to understand the roots of some problems and in this case understand the roots of radicalisation. An analysis of this aspect lacks in a wide research such that of the fourth unit.