

**Final Report for First Virtual Local Dialogue Platform session, July 6 2021,
11.00-12.30 (CET).**



**20 EuroMed Capital
21 for Dialogue Award**



Co-funded by
the European Union

List of participants:

Participants from civil society, academia and the press in the Euro-Mediterranean region

Gurkan Akcaer, Director for the international part of System & Generation, Turkey/Belgium; Mohammad Zawahreh, Founder of Sawa'a for Community Development, Jordan; Dr. Senada Demirovic, Senior adviser of Urban Planning department of Municipality of Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Katerina Siampou, Head officer of Strategic Planning at Municipality of Tripolis, Greece; Jacopo Cimmino Coordinator, youth and education of the NGO, System & Generation, Turkey; Aspasia Protogerou, Director of The Center for Education, Research and Action FOTOESSA, Greece.

Anna Lindh Foundation:

Eleonora Insalaco, Head of Operations and Intercultural Research; Thomas Lund; Cultural Management Expert, Haitham Samy, Logistics & Administrative Expert; Johannes Jauhiainen, Social Media Executive and rapporteur of meeting; Racha Omeyri, Intercultural Research Officer.

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Background of the meeting

Between July and September, the Anna Lindh Foundation planned to organize 3 Local Dialogue Platform meetings, and in the fall 2021 the Foundation anticipates to arrange a larger Regional Local Dialogue Platform to exchange and showcase good practices and lessons learnt as well as identify areas for further development on diversity management, promotion of intercultural relations at the city level and broad stakeholders' engagement.

The first Local Dialogue Platform was held on 6 July with the participation of a restricted number of people to allow enough space for discussion and learning about the best strategies to engage local authorities and civil society organisations in various activities planned by the ALF for the promotion of Intercultural dialogue at the city level.

The Local Dialogue Platform meetings are part of the broader Intercultural Cities and Learning Programme of the Anna Lindh Foundation which in 2021 aims to launch the first edition of the EuroMed Capital for Dialogue Award.

The main purpose for the First Virtual Local Dialogue Platform meeting was to exchange practices and methodologies for a local-level Intercultural dialogue approach and to collect different experiences and knowledge from actors operating in cities around the Euro-Mediterranean. These practices and methodologies can be a basis for the promotion of active dialogue with a broad stakeholders' engagement at the local level.

The meeting aimed also to support further collaboration and facilitate cross-cultural encounters between public authorities and civil society organizations combating negative stereotypes and tackling polarization.

Furthermore and more broadly, the Local Dialogue Platforms also aim to create a wider network consisting of national, regional and international actors on both shores of the Mediterranean. This network in turn will offer the possibility to exchange ideas and good practices on new trends, long-term strategies and methodologies for promoting an inclusive intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean.

While the ALF supports the regional exchange dimension, in the medium and long term the purpose is to establish systemic local dialogue platforms involving local and regional authorities, civil society representatives, educators, academics.

Objectives of the meeting

During the meeting the following objectives stimulated and guided the discussion:

- Exchanging good practices for cultural diversity management and dialogue promotion across the Euro Med region
- Encouraging collaborations between local authorities and civil society organizations in the implementation and promotion of intercultural policies and practices
- Supporting the involvement of young people, women, marginalized groups, migrants and refugees in the development of initiatives, promotion of intercultural relations
- Identifying and discussing new trends, methods and priority areas of work for the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

Summary of key challenges and recommendations

The meeting began with an introduction by Eleonora Insalaco, Head of Operations and Intercultural Research at the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF), who underlined the importance of creating spaces where local actors promoting dialogue and intercultural relations can meet, reflect and learn from each other. Insalaco also noted that Local Dialogue Platforms is one of the programmes organised by the Anna Lindh Foundation bringing together civil society organizations, trainers, academics, journalists and authorities to reflect together on how to promote intercultural relations and dialogue in cities.

Insalaco then opened the plenary session for an introduction of each participant, after which she presented a selection of findings from the 2020 Anna Lindh Intercultural Trends Survey. These included the notion that migration issues are considered to strongly characterise the Mediterranean region by 38% of respondents in Europe and 60% of survey respondents in countries in the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean (SEM).

Furthermore, Insalaco noted that diversity in cities is as a reality in the Euro-Mediterranean considered by a majority of people a source of prosperity and that the vast majority of respondents (89% in European countries and 90% in SEM countries) considered **local authorities and civil society initiatives** that promote intercultural dialogue to be either ‘somewhat effective’ or ‘very effective’ actions. This in turn suggests a high level of confidence in local authorities and civil society. Lastly, it was shared that respondents see the Mediterranean region above all as characterised by its **common cultural heritage and history**, with 89% of respondents in European countries and 85% in SEM countries considering it a characteristic of the region. This also gives a positive tone for all initiatives promoting cohesion in the region.

During the roundtable, participants presented and discussed good **practices promoting local dialogue across the EuroMed region and how promoting intercultural dialogue in cities had been affected by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic**.

Media narratives with regards to diversity in cities were also discussed with a special emphasis being put on social media, local television and live streaming services.

Among the good practices exchanged an example related to activities in Belgium targeting especially first and second-generation immigrants. Participants were also briefed on how culture, artistic initiatives and common cultural heritage had been successfully used as tools and platforms for reconciliation in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina after the Balkan war in the nineties. One practical example of such initiatives was the reconstruction project of a bridge with great symbolic value for each involved community. Constructing the bridge was considered as a significant step for the reconciliation of the involved communities.

Some years ago, the city of Mostar also applied for the European Capital of Culture. Through this application and the strategy put in place, the city gathered several cultural and educational institutions together, to create a common narrative. **The application process itself was considered by the concerned parties as a positive experience as it promoted collaboration and integration.**

Reflections then developed about how to bring nuance to the public narratives about immigrants and improve the mutual understanding of one another. Regarding this, good practices were shared about the effect that a theatre initiative had brought local people and people of immigrant backgrounds together to share experiences in the form of storytelling. This initiative resulted in many of the participants reflecting on what each city gains and loses when people immigrate or emigrate.

Light was also shed on two initiatives carried out in Zarka, a city located in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which hosts a significant number of Syrian refugees. One of these initiatives aimed to bring together and **build bridges between local Jordanians and more recently arrived Syrians** within the parameters of a Youth City Council initiated by the UNDP. This city council was developed as a parallel institution to the city government in order to give youth a voice regardless of whether they are locals or refugees. The second initiative discussed was an incubator helping Syrian and local women develop business ideas and to discuss social, cultural and economic issues together. Whilst personal empowerment was the primary aim of this good practice a secondary aim was also to tackle religious extremism.

The discussion then moved to focus on Tripoli, in Greece where cultural projects have successfully managed to promote intercultural dialogue by bringing local people and refugees together. This was achieved in part **thanks to a collaboration between civil society organizations and local authorities**, which arranged trainings in photography, film making and storytelling. The project then culminated in the city government's support for the celebration of 200 years of independence, which included a festival with a significant participation of refugees in the programming. This programme included workshops and discussions among youth about issues such as democracy, independence, freedom and their dreams. The Tripoli local authority representative highlighted that activities showed how local people and refugees had the same visions and dreams.

Lastly, reflections developed around experiences from the New Urban Topologies project which saw participants from different backgrounds meet to discuss common issues and promote a dialogue. The outcome of this experience was that **it is beneficial to create situations where cultural minorities who are often othered are not perceived as a threat**. The project also constituted a collaboration between officials, authorities, activists, architects, artists and researchers, who met when touring a specific city in a bus together. This concept of bringing people together and creating an informal atmosphere was considered positive for stimulating discussions.

Recommendations

- Culture and art are important and effective tools to promote dialogue, a better understanding of one another and reconciliation at the local level.
- It is advantageous to find and create neutral and encouraging public and private spaces in physical and digital format where dialogue can be promoted.
- To better promote dialogue and mutual understanding on the local level, it is beneficial to amplify voices of the public in general but especially of minorities, youth and refugees.

- Initiatives tend to have a good chance to succeed if they are carried out through a bottom-up principle.
- Partnerships between Local Authorities and Civil Society Organization are to be encouraged especially since direct and regular contacts can be ensured at the local level.
- History and cultural heritage may be used to reconcile and promote mutual understanding of different cultural, ethnic and religious groups.
- Creating alternative narratives may be beneficial to promote dialogue and mutual understanding and offer stories countering those often circulating in the media.
- In some situations, it was also deemed beneficial to let actors promoting diversity in cities meet anonymously for open and honest discussions.

Annex II: Post-event Press Release

The main purpose for the First Virtual Local Dialogue Platform meeting was to exchange practices and methodologies for a local-level Intercultural dialogue approach and to collect different experiences and knowledge from actors operating in cities around the Euro-Mediterranean. These practices and methodologies can be about how to promote an active dialogue.

Furthermore, the Local Dialogue Platforms also aim to create a wider network consisting of national, regional and international actors on both shores of the Mediterranean. This network in turn will offer the possibility to exchange ideas and good practices on new trends, long-term strategies and methodologies for promoting an inclusive intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean.

Some of the recommendations that surfaced during the meeting include:

- Culture and art are important and effective tools to promote dialogue, a better understanding of one another and reconciliation at the local level.
- It is advantageous to find and create neutral and encouraging public and private spaces in physical and digital format where dialogue can be promoted.
- To better promote dialogue and mutual understanding on the local level, it is beneficial to amplify voices of the public in general but especially of minorities, youth and refugees.
- Initiatives tend to have a good chance to succeed if they are carried out through a bottom-up principle.
- Partnerships between Local Authorities and Civil Society Organization are to be encouraged especially since direct and regular contacts can be ensured at the local level.
- History and cultural heritage may be used to reconcile and promote mutual understanding of different cultural, ethnic and religious groups.
- Creating alternative narratives may be beneficial to promote dialogue and mutual understanding and offer stories countering those often circulating in the media.
- In some situations, it was also deemed beneficial to let actors promoting diversity in cities meet anonymously for open and honest discussions.

About the EuroMed Capital for Dialogue Award

The EuroMed Capital for Dialogue Award is an initiative of the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) as the first institution created for the promotion of intercultural dialogue, in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The EuroMed Capital for Dialogue Award is conceived as an international recognition for cities that have implemented or initiated intercultural policies and actions and have a vision to enhance cultural diversity, intercultural relations and EuroMed collaborations with the collaboration of different stakeholders. The awarded Capital would also be a reference to inspire dialogue work at the local and regional level in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The conceptualization of the EuroMed Capital for Dialogue Award benefited from the contribution of a series of organisations, including UNESCO, Council of Europe, UCGL, Eurocities, MedCities, UN-Habitat, OECD, the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), working for the enhancement of city-to-city collaboration, promotion of dialogue at the local and regional level, as well as benefited from the expertise of the ALF Advisory Council and the one of experts associated to the ALF research work on Intercultural Trends and analysis of the civil society good practices implemented by the ALF civil society Network.

The EuroMed Capital for Dialogue Award aims to shed light on innovative and interdisciplinary practices that involve different actors ranging from local authorities to civil society to educators, journalists, academics, civil society, and private bodies for the promotion of cross-cultural education and artistic production, social cohesion and intercultural interaction, combating stereotyping and intolerance.

The Award aims to acknowledge multicultural cities and cities which have a vision, which implement intercultural policies and support intercultural initiatives and EuroMed social and cultural collaborations.

For more information and for media inquiries contact: Thomas Lund, Cultural Management Expert (Thomas.Lund@Bibalex.org), Eleonora Insalaco, Head of Operations and Intercultural Research (Eleonora.Insalaco@annalindhfoundation.org), Johannes Jauhiainen, Social Media Executive (Johannes.Jauhiainen@annalindhfoundation.org).

Annex IV Post-Exchange Questionnaire

Post-evaluation questionnaire for the first Local Dialogue Platform on 6 July 2021

In the framework of the EuroMed Capital for Dialogue Award and to encourage a systemic approach for dialogue at the local level, to give visibility to good practices and exchange knowledge across the EuroMed region, between July and October, the ALF organizes a series of Local Dialogue Platforms bringing together local authority representatives, civil society, educators and academics. Please find the concept note for the Local Dialogue Platform-meetings here: <https://www.annalindhfoundation.org/sites/default/files/documents/page/Concept%20note%20-%20Local%20Dialogue%20Platform.pdf>

Your name

Short answer text

What best describes you? *

- Representant for a local authority
- Academic (e.g. university professor, researcher ...)
- Civil society activist (e.g. youth worker, educated trainer, social activist ...)

How would you rate your satisfaction with the First Local Dialogue Platform on 6 July 2021? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very low	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very high



Do you consider the Local Dialogue Platform can encourage collaborations between local authorities and civil society organizations in the implementation and promotion of intercultural policies and practices across the region.

Long answer text

In which way collaboration between local authorities and civil society can be improved?

Long answer text

The findings of the ALF Intercultural Trends Survey 2020 reveal a good level of openness to cultural diversity and rights of minority within society by people in the EuroMed region. Is this a result reflecting the reality in your society?

Long answer text

What aspects did you appreciate about this Virtual Exchange?

Long answer text

Are you interested in having further Virtual Exchange sessions?

Short answer text

Did the online event met your expectations? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not so much.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very much so.

Was the addressed topic relevant your work /professional life? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not so much.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very much so.

Did this virtual exchange encouraged meaningful discussion amongst the participants *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not so much.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very much so.

⋮

Did this virtual exchange facilitates building positive relationships with participants from different sectors *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not so much.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very much so.

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