

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



The Anna Lindh Foundation
VIRTUAL MARATHON
FOR DIALOGUE IN THE EUROMED

VIRTUAL MARATHON FOR DIALOGUE

*Promoting Cultural and Social Cooperation in the EuroMed Region
May-June 2021*

Intercultural Dialogue and Climate Change

JUNE 2ND, 2021

DISCUSSION TOPIC

*The Impact of Intercultural Dialogue for
EuroMed Collaboration in the
Battle against the Climate Emergency*



EIGHT HIGH-LEVEL GUESTS AND PARTICIPANTS

NAME	AFFILIATION
AISSAM BENAÏSSA	<i>Intercultural Debates Expert</i>
ELEONORA INSALACO	<i>Head of Operations & Intercultural Research at ALF</i>
AHMED YASSIN	<i>Cofounder of Banlastic and Environmental Activist Egypt</i>
GILDA CATALANO	<i>Professor of sociology of the Environment and Territory & Professor of Urban Sociology, University of Calabria, Rende Italy</i>
SERGI NUSS	<i>Researcher & Lecturer – MEHMED Project Geography Department– University of Girona Catalunya</i>
RANIAH ALSAYED	<i>Youth Hub Manager, Alwan wa Awtar Egypt</i>
MARCO MUSSO	<i>Account Social Media Manager of Dressyoucan and Professor at UET, Vice President of ComeUnaMares Onlus Italy</i>
SAHAR MAHFOUZ	<i>Principal of a primary school Beirut, Lebanon</i>

Intercultural Dialogue and Climate Change

THREE PILLARS

①

EDUCATION FOR AN ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY

Innovative
approaches to
teaching younger
generations about
environmental issues

②

THE ROLE OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Inspiring action
towards
sustainability by
creating a common
understanding

③

COOPERATION AMONGST POLICY MAKERS, CIVIL SOCIETY MEMBERS, AND THE COMMUNITY

Working towards
implementing
effective initiatives
and policy changes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Main Recommendations Emerging from the Virtual Marathon for Dialogue on Intercultural Dialogue and Climate Change, tackling the importance of education, intercultural dialogue, and collaboration in evading further environmental crises and complications.

①

TO ADOPT A NEW LANGUAGE THAT ELIMINATES THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT so people would realise the direct impact of their societal actions on the environment.

②

TO REVISE EDUCATIONAL CURRICULA in order to ensure the engagement of the coming generations in environmental matters and to guide them towards specialising in related fields.

③

TO USE INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS LIKE THEATRICAL ARTS in order to teach individuals about the 'climate emergency' and help them internalise those lessons for long-term impact.

④

TO PROMOTE CROSS CULTURAL DIALOGUE as an effective means of exchanging ideas as well as to ensure comprehensive engagement in the conversation about the environmental crisis.

⑤

TO RAISE THE AWARENESS OF CONSUMERS TOWARDS ECO-FRIENDLY FORMS OF CONSUMPTION in order to create a community of conscious buyers who could transform the market by supporting green and renewable production.

⑥

TO DRAFT LAWS THAT COULD PROMOTE ACTIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPECT AND CREATE A MEDITERRANEAN GREEN DEAL in order to promote intercultural action, collaboration amongst different nations, and integration of migrants.

CONTEXT

In the framework of the Celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process and the “Renewed Partnerships with the Southern Neighbourhood: a new agenda for the Mediterranean”, the Anna Lindh Foundation and its EuroMed civil society Network organized the Anna Lindh Foundation Virtual Marathon for Dialogue in the EuroMed region (VM).

The Virtual Marathon gathered activities of ALF civil society Network and partner organizations were set to take place during 42 days from the 19th of May to the 29th of June.

MAIN AIMS OF THE VIRTUAL MARATHON FOR DIALOGUE

The first aim of the Virtual Marathon for Dialogue is to **highlight the importance of the Intercultural Dialogue to build sustainable societies in the EuroMed Region**, taking into consideration the challenges and opportunities brought about by the Covid19 pandemic.

The second aim of the Virtual Marathon for Dialogue is to **develop and promote new ideas and policies towards better social and cultural cooperation in the EuroMed region**.

The Public Virtual Dialogues will involve participants and panelists who play a major role in the economic, ecological, social, and cultural development of the region. Those include high-level policymakers, journalists, decision makers, young people, business & private sector, gender pioneers, academics, CSO representatives. The challenge is to create synergies with the civil society, especially the Youth and the Women, to create the conditions for positive social change.

ABOUT DIALOGUE 3

The Mediterranean is one of the regions most impacted by the climate change and environmental degradation. Factors such as population and economic growth, urbanization, migration and poverty call for urgent action in light of the 2030 SDGs.

The Anna Lindh Foundation's recent research shows that the natural environment and climate change are areas of greatest interest to people from both shores of the Mediterranean. Over 80% of people from North and South of the Mediterranean also consider that greater cooperation around the Med region can contribute to the environmental sustainability of societies and countries. This shows awareness of environmental issues, and that these issues cannot be dealt with at the national level, but require an integrated approach. Ms. Eleonora Insalaco advocated for a Mediterranean Green Deal that goes beyond the EU's Green Deal, because the two coastlines of the Mediterranean are connected, and only cooperation from both sides can lead to a solution. She brought to the audience's attention the subject of environmental migration and its current absence from the media, reflecting upon the question of whether adequate reporting on the matter could address some of the prevalent stereotypes on migrants.



*Eleonora Insalaco
Head of Operations &
Intercultural Research at ALF*

Pillar ①: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN CREATING AN ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY

How can we shape environmentally responsible citizens? Which mediums are more effective in teaching younger generations about environmental issues?

A Language-Related Dichotomy



Gilda Catalano
University of Calabria
Italy

There exists a false, language-related dichotomy between 'society' and 'environment' as two separate entities. Society and the environment are not separate, but are rather quite interdependent. Once humanity accepts this reality, individuals will realise that their societal actions are effectively environmental actions. Based on this reasoning, Ms. Gilda Catalano highlighted **the need to embed society in the wider circle of its ecosystem.**

RECOMMENDATION 1

To adopt a new language that eliminates the dichotomy between society and the environment so people would realise the direct impact of their societal actions on the environment.

Serving Mother Nature in a Lebanese Primary School



Sahar Mahfouz
Principal of a primary school
Lebanon

Education raises awareness and builds capacities. **Educators are responsible for revising curricula and implementing professional development programmes to empower other educators on the effective use of intercultural dialogue.** They should be encouraged to use *unconventional learning techniques in order to develop the learners' sense of creativity and innovation* in coming up with solutions. Panelist Sahar Mahfouz shared the example of a competition in Lebanon where schools competed for certification as 'green schools', implementing green actions. Students were encouraged to develop practices that could decrease environmental damage. The students studied the school's climate and identified

those actions that were harming nature. Then they toured the school raising awareness and urging peers to take practical, eco-friendly steps like using water wisely and turning off the lights. It is 'baby steps' such as these that create responsible citizens. Ultimately, the students managed to transfer this knowledge to their home context and at a later stage internationally through collaborating with other schools abroad. A cycle of assessment is to follow whereby the school would monitor its graduates, identify the number of those who pursue further education related to environmental issues, and accordingly, decide how to improve school programmes to further encourage students to select such fields.

Graduating Active Professionals from the University of Girona in Catalunya



Sergi Nuss
University of Girona
Catalunya

The MEHMED project at the geography department at the University of Girona, allows exchange programmes between different universities across the shores of the Mediterranean, providing common master's degrees on Environmental change in the Med region. Panelist Sergi Nuss explained that **the programme allows the formation of a more consistent understanding of what the environmental issues are, ultimately creating more sensitive and active professionals.**

RECOMMENDATION 2

To revise educational curricula in order to ensure the engagement of the coming generation in environmental matters and to guide them towards specialising in related fields.

Education Through Emotional and Creative Means



*Raniah Alsayed
Alwan Wa Awtar
Egypt*

Organisations working on the issue of climate change have been using theatre and plays to raise awareness on the precarious circumstances of the 'climate emergency'. Themed theatre performances through which the youth can become emotionally-engaged participants are being funded and created. These plays provide participants with a deep understanding of environmental issues, showing how informal pedagogies can be quite effective. **Ms. Raniah Alsayed suggested targeting young people and their parents using nontraditional, playful and creative means to deliver significant lessons.**

Taking action and the concept of sustainability must not be advocated aggressively, but rather awareness must be raised in an emotionally intelligent manner using the correct language.



*Ahmed Yassin
Banlastic
Egypt*

RECOMMENDATION 3

To use innovative pedagogical tools like theatrical arts in order to teach individuals about the 'climate emergency' and help them internalise those lessons for long-term impact.

Pillar ②: THE ROLE OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN CREATING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND INSPIRING ACTION

How can intercultural dialogue raise awareness and promote action towards sustainability? How important is collaboration between countries in solving the environmental crisis?

Intercultural Dialogue Leading to Concrete Change



Ahmed Yassin
Banlastic
Egypt

The Banlastic initiative was designed to raise awareness while also providing remedies for the 'climate emergency'. Answering the question of 'what is wrong with single-use plastic' invites the sharing of information and initiates a much-needed dialogue among people who are unaware of the negative repercussions of single-use plastic. **Intercultural dialogue creates a community whose concerns could later be taken up the ladder to policy makers, ultimately leading to concrete change.** Panelist Ahmed Yassin explained that the battle would be lost in the absence of intercultural dialogue, therefore everyone must be included in order to maintain the diversity of ideas that could be combined to address the climate problem.

Intercultural dialogue allows people to engage deeply with questions on climate change, leading them to envision what the future might look like, and ultimately inspire action.



Raniah Alsayed
Alwan wa Awtar
Egypt

Climate Change Revealing Geographical Inequalities



Gilda Catalano
University of Calabria
Italy

Climate change is a spatial-historical synthetic indicator that tells the tale of what we have achieved throughout history both economically and culturally, as it reveals the geographical inequalities of where we live. Panelist Gilda Catalano explained that if we wish to improve dialogue across countries, *it is necessary to be honest regarding the fact that emigrating populations have benefitted less from humanity's economic growth.* **The privileged parties must be honest in admitting that they were wrong, while being ready to repair the damage.** She indicated the need to think of innovative ways to cooperate as we draw closer and closer to a world with an unstable and vulnerable environment.

Intercultural Dialogue as a Tool that Cultivates Empathy



Sergi Nuss
University of Girona
Catalunya

Empathy and values of diversity are both strengthened through intercultural dialogue. There are people in other places of the world suffering from a plethora of problems including climate change, and they are often forced to migrate for survival. Mr. Sergi Nuss expressed his hope in **intercultural dialogue can serve as a tool for people to learn about unknown realities and unfelt situations, making society more empathetic and hospitable** towards those who are forced to leave their homes and find refuge elsewhere.

RECOMMENDATION 4

To **promote cross cultural dialogue** as an effective means of exchanging ideas as well as to ensure comprehensive engagement in the conversation about the environmental crisis.

Pillar ③: THE ROLE OF POLICY MAKERS, CIVIL SOCIETY MEMBERS, AND THE COMMUNITY IN CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE.

How can policy makers help civil society members in implementing effective initiatives? How can the community guide policy makers onto the right path?

The Duty of the Consumer to Shop Green



According to UN national report, the fashion industry is highly responsible for the 'climate emergency'. Through project Dressyoucan, Panelist Marco Musso has worked with Egypt and Slovenia, hoping to sensibilise the nations towards environmental issues. This project involved designers from both countries, encouraging new forms of consumption like renting, or the use of natural fibers in production. At the end of the project, a fashion show was organized, displaying the products that were created.

While many famous brands are becoming more sensitive towards the green approach, one should pay attention to greenwashing. Therefore, **the better approach in dampening the environmental footprint of the fashion industry would be to sensibilise the consumers because when consumer demands are redirected in the interest green products, big companies and industries will follow suit.**

RECOMMENDATION 5

To **raise the awareness of consumers towards eco-friendly forms of consumption** in order to create a community of conscious buyers who could transform the market by supporting green and renewable production.

Collaboration between Authorities and Citizens to Create Positive Change towards Sustainability



Citizens cannot be expected to change traditional behaviours without having alternatives. If such behaviours are harmful to the environment, economically feasible substitutions must be made available in order to encourage replacing these behaviours. Panelist Ahmed Yassin stressed the need to provide professional work opportunities for people to promote the green economy, as well as encourage the Egyptian government to fight for legislation that would

promote micro-financed green startups. Yassin had engaged with shop owners on Fouad Street in Egypt, informing them that if they use certain sustainable alternatives, they could get certification from the Ministry of Environment that would make them eligible for tax deductions or financial support. These benefits, he explained, could act as incentives for shop owners to go green. **All the sides of the triangle must collaborate**

to initiate action: the government, civil society, and the community.

An initiative specific to the Med region is relevant as a proposal, since a Mediterranean Green deal could allow migrants to be part of the solution. *Migrants need to find a sense of purpose within their new environment in order to feel more integrated within host communities*, yet unfortunately, programmes that provide activities for migrants are scarce. Panelist Sergi Nuss suggested that **migrants could find purpose by working on projects that could help European countries adapt their areas to climate change and make them more heat resistant.**



Sergi Nuss
University of Girona
Catalunya

Often, it is the people who must push the government to do what is right, and dialogue empowers them to do so, helping them feel heard, respected, and capable of triggering change. Dialogue also provides a much-needed sense of urgency, while circling information regarding different cultural practices and whether these are beneficial or damaging to the environment.



Raniah Alsayed
Alwan wa Awtar
Egypt

RECOMMENDATION 6

To draft laws that could promote actions for environmental respect and create a Mediterranean Green Deal, in order to promote intercultural action, collaboration amongst different nations, and integration of migrants.

Head of Operations at the *Anna Lindh Foundation* Ms. Eleonora Insalaco drew a comprehensive picture of what the panelists had covered. She emphasized the need for a terminology shift from “climate change” to “climate emergency” in order to convey the sense of danger and urgency. We must have empathy regarding how our actions affect our neighbors, and we need to learn from each other through intercultural dialogue and the sharing of innovative practices. Ms. Insalaco restated the importance of collaboration amongst the three different parties the government, civil society, and the community, as there is no ideal solution characterised solely by either a top-down or bottom-up approach. All members must pour in their own efforts.



Eleonora Insalaco
Head of Operations &
Intercultural Research at
ALF