

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*

From the Barcelona Declaration to the New Agenda of the Mediterranean

June 15, 2021

DISCUSSION TOPIC

*The role of civil society, youth
empowerment, and intercultural
dialogue in finding solutions to
problems common to the region*



EIGHT HIGH-LEVEL GUESTS AND PARTICIPANTS

NAME	AFFILIATION
AISSAM BENAÏSSA	<i>Expert Moderator</i>
ELISABETH GUIGOU	<i>President of the Anna Lindh Foundation</i>
ELEONORA INSALACO	<i>Head of Operations & Intercultural Research at ALF</i>
BLANCA MORENON-DODSON	<i>Manager of the Center for Mediterranean Integration France</i>
BURAK YUSMAK	<i>Consultant for International Affairs/Young Med Voices Alumni Germany</i>
MERNA SHALASH	<i>Executive Manager of PFTf, National coordinator of Egyptian Network of ALF Egypt</i>
NADA ABDELSAMAD	<i>Journalist BBC Arabic Service Lebanon</i>
SANA AL-EMAM	<i>Arab Women Media Center, Project Manager Jordan</i>
JOSEP FERRÉ GAVARRÓ	<i>Director General of IEMed, National coordinator of Spanish Network of ALF, Spain</i>

TOPIC

The Importance of Intercultural Dialogue between Northern and Southern Mediterranean Countries

THREE PILLARS

①

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Building bridges between people and political leaders

②

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Implementing programmes that encourage the youth to lead dialogues and share solutions

③

POINTS OF CONVERGENCE FOR EUROMED COUNTRIES

Promoting stronger cooperation in the EuroMed region

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Main Recommendations emerging from the Virtual Marathon for “from the Barcelona Declaration to the New Agenda of the Mediterranean”: Empowering the youth and civil society, keeping the dialogue between the North and the South open, investing in education, promoting media literacy, promoting the development of cities, and joining forces in fighting climate change.

①

TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL POLICIES AT THE CITY LEVEL by decentralising diplomacy and funding, implementing training programmes and facilitating coordination between cities.

②

TO FOSTER A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE BETWEEN DECISION-MAKERS AND YOUNG LEADERS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION by involving the youth in political discussions, listening to their concerns and training them in proper communication techniques.

③

TO WIDEN THE SCOPE OF ALF PROGRAMMES to reach underprivileged communities in order to reduce disparities and inequality and to foster social inclusion through its civil society network.

④

TO ENCOURAGE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN PEOPLE NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST OF THE MEDITERRANEAN in order to promote inclusion and integration in the region and to fight all kinds of discrimination.

⑤

TO ENSURE THAT GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS ARE FULFILLING THEIR PLEDGES ON ENVIRONMENTAL ENGAGEMENT by sensitising public opinion to environmental and sustainability issues.

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 organised 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 organisations 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 5

Intercultural dialogue between European and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean populations is a powerful tool that promotes inclusion and integration.

Dialogue 5 focuses on the importance of integrating the youth in society, supporting the development of cities, upholding democratic values, reducing disparities, and taking strict measures regarding climate change. All this is discussed in the framework of promoting intercultural dialogue in the EuroMed region.

Intercultural dialogue has always been at the heart of the *Anna Lindh Foundation* ever since its establishment said ALF President, Ms. Elisabeth Guigou. Currently, ALF is the largest and most important Network of Euro-Mediterranean associations. It has contributed to the development of multiple programmes in domains related to culture, education, art, and media. ALF is also interested in the empowerment of the youth, gender equality, as well as questions of mobility, extremely relevant topics in the aftermath of Covid19. Also, civil society is central to ALF's goals which include improving trust and mutual respect between EuroMed countries and societies. The *Anna Lindh Foundation* will work to address some of the pressing challenges for the EuroMed region in the coming years, and this Marathon will help identify the good



*Elisabeth Guigou
President of the Anna Lindh
Foundation*

practices of intercultural dialogue, the challenges, as well as the new opportunities that are generated by the pandemic.

Ms. Eleonora Insalaco shared scientific data from the Intercultural Trends Survey directed towards the people living in the EuroMed region. This data provides insights on the main areas of the joint communication for the new agenda of the Mediterranean. For instance, over 90% of the EuroMed population believes that *cultural and religious minorities* should be given the same rights and opportunities, and over 75% see *diversity as a source of prosperity*. Moreover, *intercultural dialogue* as well as *education* and *youth programmes* are seen as important tools to prevent hate speech. As for *migration*, one of the most common features and fears of the region, data shows that only 20% of the North African and Middle Eastern population aim to migrate to Europe. Data on the environment shows that *environmental issues* constitute the main area where both Europeans as well as Southern and Eastern Mediterraneans are interested in furthering their knowledge in. More than 90% of the survey participants consider that *EuroMed cooperation can be beneficial for societies in general*, as well as for *individuals*, and that gains from such cooperation will be felt at the levels of education and training, youth employment, environmental sustainability, the promotion of law, gender empowerment, addressing the refugee crisis, and support to civil society.



Eleonora Insalaco
Head of Operations &
Intercultural Research at ALF

Pillar ①: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN PEOPLE AND POLITICAL LEADERS:

What is the role of civil society networks in building a climate of mutual trust and collaboration within the EuroMed region?

Upholding Democratic Values



Nada Abdelsamad
Journalist BBC Arabic Service
Lebanon

In some Southern countries, people's values differ from the values of the authorities, and civil society is not always independent, said panelist Nada Abdelsamad. In order to properly implement policies, therefore, attention should be paid to governmental accountability and transparency. In these countries, **dialogues for change making need to take place on a (top) governmental level and not on a (bottom) individual level.**

Helping Cities and Municipalities Struggling Because of Migration



Blanca Moreno-Dodson
Manager of the Center for
Mediterranean Integration
France

Small communities, like Lebanon and Jordan, are recipients of massive forced migration and displacement coming from areas that are still experiencing conflict. When migrants arrive in a country, they need support which includes language training, housing and a fixed income. Panelist Blanca Moreno-Dodson noted that municipalities in cities that house refugees, as well as cities that act as transit for refugees, rarely have the fiscal resources coming from

central governments, or the ability to generate their own resources or sufficient technical resources. **She suggested implementing training programmes that will equip municipalities with the latest technical elements to develop their own private sector engagement strategies.** Ms. Moreno-Dodson noted that the *Anna Lindh Foundation* recognises the importance of cities in today's world, which is why it works alongside civil societies to support the development of these cities.

Decentralised Funding and Diplomacy



Burak Yusmak
Consultant for International
Affairs/Young Med Voices
Alumni Germany

Panelist Burak Yusmak proposed **organising summits in the Euro-Mediterranean region to train mayors and allow them to gain useful skills**. Civil society, which promotes and strengthens communication between individuals, should also do the same for cities. Another important step according to Mr. Yusmak would be **to decentralise diplomacy as well as funding so that the resources go directly to the cities**. This would go hand in hand with the recommendation of applying a systemic approach and in some cases following a top-down approach and significantly reducing governmental corruption.

RECOMMENDATION 1

To support the development of intercultural policies at the city level by decentralising diplomacy and funding, implementing training programmes and promoting coordination between cities.

Pillar ②: THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPOWERING THE YOUTH TO LEAD DIALOGUES, SHARE SOLUTIONS, AND BECOME ACTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY:

What programmes should be implemented and promoted to empower young people to play an active role in the new agenda of the Mediterranean?

Involving Young People in Decision-Making



Burak Yusmak
Consultant for International
Affairs/Young Med Voices
Alumni Germany

Panelist Burak Yusmak highlighted the importance of listening to young people as a first step to involving them in the decision-making process. This is possible through creating dialogues between key decision-makers and young leaders in the Mediterranean region. An example of this was an event organised by the *Anna Lindh Foundation* at the beginning of the pandemic where young people from around the world met with ambassadors, and they were able to share their concerns and propose solutions, some of which were seriously considered by the authorities. The next

generation of young leaders will be key drivers for the future of the region and they will tackle transnational challenges, such as climate change, extremism, and social and economic development. There is also the problem of rising totalitarianism that can only be resolved by upholding democratic values. To do that, Mr Yusmak believes **it is essential to engage young people in those dialogues by inviting them to summits and live events where decision-makers can listen to their solutions and propositions**.

RECOMMENDATION 2

To foster a culture of continuous dialogue between decision-makers and young leaders in the Mediterranean region by involving the youth in political discussions, listening to their concerns, and training them in proper communication techniques.

Financial and Linguistic Obstacles



*Nada Abdelsamad
Journalist BBC Arabic
Service Lebanon*

Panelist Nada Abdelsamad remarked that a lot of young people from the EuroMed region were not benefiting from international opportunities due to financial and linguistic obstacles. This is especially relevant in some southern countries where the public education sector is weak and underfunded, and where school graduates can only speak one language (Arabic). At the same time, ALF is not benefitting from those young people's input which would put ALF in touch with the realities of such countries. For example, Ms. Abdelsamad believes that in a country such as Lebanon where people are facing an unprecedented economic crisis and have no electricity or fuel for their cars, they cannot see intercultural dialogue initiatives as a priority. She recommended that **ALF take into account the specific contexts of different countries and adapt its programmes to them.**

Reducing Financial Discrepancies



*Josep Ferré Gavarró Director
General of IEMed, National
coordinator of Spanish
Network of ALF Spain*

Panelist Josep Ferré Gavarró focused on **the need for ALF to take into consideration the need to reduce financial disparities between different countries and between individuals within the same country. It is necessary to foster social inclusion**, ensuring that everybody is fully involved and participating in society because there is no sustainable growth without equality between citizens.

RECOMMENDATION 3

To widen the scope of ALF programmes to reach underprivileged communities in order to reduce disparities and inequality and to foster social inclusion through its civil society network.

Pillar ③: THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING POINTS OF CONVERGENCE BETWEEN NW AND SE MED COUNTRIES:

How can we promote stronger cooperation in the EuroMed region?
What are the points of convergence among the EuroMed society?

Diversity at the Heart of Intercultural Dialogue

Intercultural dialogue is considered a fundamental pillar of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and it is a key element when it comes to fighting climate change, developing a digital economy and intelligent forms of mobility, and reopening/controlling borders. For centuries, this region has shared a common history as well as common values, such as peace, stability, and a wish to reduce class disparities, particularly after the pandemic, said panelist Blanca Moreno-Dodson. Common values are a strength, but at the same time, **intercultural dialogue should take into account diversity, which should be seen as an asset to move forward towards a more integrated region.** She noted that the *Anna Lindh Foundation* has been and still is playing a crucial role in promoting intercultural dialogue to move towards more inclusive and sustainable societies across the Mediterranean region.



*Blanca Moreno-Dodson
Manager of the Center for
Mediterranean
Integration France*

Panelist Merna Shalash discussed a programme which was organised by the Egyptian network in the framework of the *Anna Lindh Foundation* that addressed hate speech. This extremely successful programme was in partnership with different countries from the North, notably Spain, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Latvia. Similarly, panelist Sana Al-Emam extensively described another project called *We Hear Your Voice* tackling gender-based violence and which was a collaboration between Italy, Spain, Palestine, and Jordan. *The dialogue between these different cultures shed light on the common problems that all peoples of the EuroMed countries face, helping find solutions for them.* It was therefore suggested that **different networks from the North and the South operationalise intercultural dialogue as a powerful tool to promote inclusion and integration.**



Merna Shalash
Executive Manager of PFTf,
National coordinator of
Egyptian Network
Egypt



Sana Al-Emam
Arab Women Media
Center, Project Manager
Jordan

RECOMMENDATION 4

To encourage intercultural dialogue between people North, South, East and West of the Mediterranean in order to promote inclusion and integration in the region and to fight all kinds of discrimination.

The Problem of Climate Change



Josep Ferré Gavarró
Director General of IEMed,
National coordinator of
Spanish Network of ALF
Spain

Panelist Joseph Ferré Gavarró discussed the problem of climate change that threatens the entire region and that can only be solved through dialogue. Taking into account that the Mediterranean is the most affected region by climate change, **it is essential to focus on ensuring that different governments and administrations from both Northern and Southern countries are fulfilling their pledges for engagement when it comes to the environment.** It is also critical to **take action through sensitising public opinion to issues related to the environment and sustainability**

RECOMMENDATION 5

To ensure that governments and administrations are fulfilling their pledges for environmental engagement by sensitising public opinion to environmental and sustainability issues.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, poverty is on the rise, and this can have a disastrous impact on social cohesion and inclusion, which are key elements for intercultural dialogue. Moreover, the Mediterranean region is facing a climate-change crisis which is a top-priority issue, exasperated by the problem of migration and forced displacement. The three most relevant actors today are young people, civil societies, and local authority representatives. It is necessary to keep the dialogue between North and South open, to apply a systemic approach both bottom-up and top-down, and equally necessary is the need to invest in education, and promote media literacy concluded Ms. Eleonora Insalaco.



Eleonora Insalaco
Head of Operations &
Intercultural Research at
ALF