

Intercultural Dialogue as a core component of a renewed EU Southern Neighbourhood Policy: Inputs of the Anna Lindh Foundation for the ENP Review.

The political, security and social landscapes in the EU, and its Southern Neighbourhood, have experienced seismic changes over the past ten years. Old certainties have been eroded, new challenges have appeared, and the cultural roadmap represents today the only viable long-term approach for creating “a common space of peace, stability and economic prosperity”. As the EU and its partners to the South and East embark on recalibrating relations in the framework of the ENP review, the Anna Lindh Foundation proposes the following “culture-centric” rethink of relations.

Intercultural dialogue and cultural diplomacy form an essential approach and instrument to deal with the emerging common challenges faced by societies to the north and south of the Mediterranean. The “clash of ignorance”, and distorted vision of our shared values and interests, is fueling rising xenophobia, extremism and radicalisation (Anna Lindh Report on Intercultural Trends and Social Change 2014). Intercultural dialogue can no longer be considered as offering only a “passive and peripheral role” in the EU Neighbourhood Policy for the Southern Mediterranean. Rather, it should be used as central, proactive component to reinforce a cultural platform for the citizens of the region and to significantly scale-up people-to-people cooperation in the face of negative trends. During the last years, the lack of consultation of civil societies in the Mediterranean has blinded the EU leadership on their ability to induce profound changes in the region.

It is for this reason that we recommend that the EU institutional leadership work with the Anna Lindh Foundation, and similar minded institutions and existing networks, to develop “**a comprehensive intercultural dialogue strategy for the entire Mediterranean region**”. One of the fundamental shifts in approach being advocated is to transform the current 2/3 year programming cycle into a long-term programme/policy to be built over the next ten years. In this way the current limitations and compromises of the short-term approach on the prospective EU partnership for cultural dialogue can be averted. This will be the basis for working with civil society on a bottom-up support to regional cooperation and addressing those deep social and cultural issues at the heart of relations between the EU and its neighbours, before they become critical political and security problems.

Redefining the Intercultural Dialogue policy agenda

A first step, in the framework of a renewed ENP, will be to redefine the intercultural dialogue strategy and agenda. Here we can draw on the research and analysis work of the Anna Lindh Foundation, its wide spectrum of networks and partners, and its direct experience working with civil society in the field during the last ten years. Specific areas of action:

- (1) Establishing a “Groupe des Sages” – involving high-profile cultural personalities from the Mediterranean, high-level media executives and leading youth ambassadors for dialogue. The mandate of the Group will be to focus on establishing the strategic guidelines for a long-term policy approach to intercultural dialogue, and a renewed definition of its meaning in the context of Mediterranean cooperation. This definition could form the basis of a first Euro-Med Charter on Intercultural Dialogue, to be adopted by the European Council and UfM Member States.

- (2) Promoting research and analysis on social trends and values in the Mediterranean, in order to better understand what citizens in the South and North desire from an ongoing ENP partnership. This includes building on the analysis work and polling data of the first editions of the Anna Lindh Report on Intercultural Trends (2010, 2014), and providing policy dialogue platforms for sharing related survey analysis with leading academic and media representatives.
- (3) Benefiting from the build-up and process towards the Maltese Presidency of the European Council in 2017 which represents the only “Mediterranean” Presidency within the current mandate of the Commission. The Maltese Presidency oversees the ENP Mid-Term Review, and Malta is the proposed venue for the 3rd edition of the Anna Lindh Mediterranean Forum. It could, therefore, provide the process for embedding the long-term intercultural strategy via the European Council and a potential first UfM Ministerial Meeting on Intercultural Dialogue.
- (4) Launching policy initiatives across the European Union Delegations in third countries and Representations in the EU whereby intercultural dialogue and cultural diplomacy are recognised as central pillars of cooperation with the partner country. This would also ensure there was a natural counterpart within the relevant Delegations/Representations to support inter-agency coordination on the intercultural dialogue agenda.
- (5) Promoting an inclusive approach to the intercultural dialogue strategy, whereby there are mechanisms and platforms to engage civil society, institutions and governments in a shared agenda. A renewed ENP represents an opportunity for a leadership role for the EU in putting in place formal dialogue structures involving the principal actors.

Scaling-up debate and exchange opportunities for youth and women

Young men and women, to the north and south of the Mediterranean, are the first victims of unemployment and social instability, but are equally untapped assets in the face of rising radicalization and xenophobia. Across the Mediterranean, women are still suffering from cultural prejudices which prevent them to fully participate to society. Areas of action recommended which can focus on providing youth with the dialogue skills and spaces to build their own narrative in the face of negative trends:

- (6) Facilitating the preparation of a multifaceted and coherent policy for youth, centred on sustainable opportunities for dialogue, debate, exchange, networking and mutual learning. This also implies the creation of mechanisms for the leading regional actors working on youth to coordinate efforts and join-up programming approaches.
- (7) Promoting the role of women as primary actors for intercultural dialogue, as recommended in the Anna Lindh Intercultural Trends Report and reflected across the youth and media programmes of the Foundation. The scope of work to include advocacy for positive national practices among the UfM Member States focused on empowering women in leadership roles in the domain of cultural enterprise and regional cooperation.
- (8) Investing in transforming the flag-ship debate programme “Young Arab Voices” into a multi-country, Euro-Med programme and instrument. Having embedded itself within diverse youth communities across the region (I-Scale Evaluation), “YAV” is in a unique position to bring learning experiences from the Arab region to the EU and to act as a bridge between grass-root social development programmes and other ENP and EU instruments such as Erasmus Plus.
- (9) Establishing a large-scale “Euro-Mediterranean Erasmus” programme targeting students on the two shores of the Mediterranean. The EU should also leverage and promote existing social

development programmes in the EU and MENA region which can represent pathways to wider EU education and youth employability instruments.

- (10) Putting the cultural dimension at the forefront of EU-financed mobility schemes, and advocating through EU Member States (MSs) for the simplification of visa procedures for cultural and youth leaders. This includes initiating an assessment with MSs the creation of a “Euro-Med Cultural Passport” and a mechanism to positively engage cultural institutions in visa processes.
- (11) Maximising the positive influence of the EU with national Ministries and agencies to promote and embed intercultural citizenship learning in formal and informal education centres. This includes supporting the adoption and dissemination of education resources related to learning about cultural diversity and intercultural affairs, and skills for debate and critical thinking.

Investing in media dialogue, communication and translation

The potential of media in bridging the gap in perceptions and addressing a “clash of ignorance” was underlined in the findings of the first Anna Lindh Report on Intercultural Trends. While there is already substantial investment in technical training and tools for journalists, there is significantly less support for promoting dialogue within the media sector. Areas of action include:

- (12) Creating an observatory mechanism, in partnership with leading media institutions, to monitor more effectively the role of media when it comes to cross-cultural reporting and reporting on issues of cultural diversity. The engagement of senior media executives and schools of journalism will be essential for the multiplier effect of this initiative, as well as links to academic institutions and think-tanks working on media affairs.
- (13) Placing an increased value on the communication dimension of programmes for intercultural dialogue and cultural diplomacy. This includes promoting policies whereby communication is part of the programming from the start of the process, resourcing media and advocacy training programmes with civil society and cultural leaders, and facilitating support for large-scale communication and visibility campaigns.
- (14) Promoting and channeling the learning experience from previous initiatives on cross-cultural reporting (Mediterranean Journalist Award on Cultural Diversity, Dawrak Journalist Exchange) into large-scale training and capacity-building programmes for journalists supported by the EU. Involving networks of young reporters in participating in mainstream media fora and peer-to-peer initiatives with senior media practitioners.
- (15) Promoting with the EU High-Representative for Foreign Affairs a programme of high-profile public and broadcast debates on issues related to the intercultural dialogue agenda. Investing in support for large-scale communication campaigns and media capacity-building exercises which aim to give visibility to the voices of the region’s youth leaders in building their own narrative in the face of extremism.
- (16) Advocating for investment in programmes and mechanisms for improving translation across Arabic and European languages. Building on the recommendations of the report entitled “A Mapping of Translation in the Euro-Med region, the EU and the institutions of the Union for the Mediterranean to launch a long-term and sustainable programme on translation.

In looking to put intercultural dialogue and cultural diplomacy at the core of a renewed EU Southern Neighbourhood Policy, the EU is in a position to build on existing tools and to invest in building the capacity of existing institutions to face the common challenges impacting on societies across the region.

For the Anna Lindh Foundation, ten years on from its creation by the Member States of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), it now approaches the defining phase of its institutional development. It needs, through the new strategic approach adopted by the 42 governments of the UfM (“Working Together Towards 2025” – 11th June 2015), to assume the role envisaged by its forefathers as the region’s “central institution and reference point for intercultural dialogue” in its diverse dimensions. In this way, the Foundation will be in a position to play a central role in a renewed ENP policy as the instrument of the EU for intercultural dialogue across the Mediterranean as well as for a better understanding of civil societies’ aspirations.