



## The Anna Lindh Foundation: An actor for dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean space

As an institution shared by the forty-three countries of the Union for the Mediterranean, the Anna Lindh Foundation is in a unique position to bring people together to work for dialogue between cultures and towards a common area of co-operation and exchange.

Having established in its first phase of operation a region-wide network of over 2000 civil society organisations, the Foundation is now preparing to launch large-scale action in fields impacting on mutual perceptions, as well as assuming its advocacy role through the preparation of the first annual report on intercultural behaviours in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

### Actor for Dialogue

*'(Bringing peoples and cultures together.. ) is a historic and hence politically crucial task, and it is urgent'*

'Groupe des Sages', High-Level Advisory Group, 2003

Intercultural coexistence remains one of the major challenges at the start of the twenty-first century, a challenge which within the regional context of Mediterranean cooperation centres on bridging the gap in perceptions and understanding existing between people and communities across the two shores of the Mediterranean.

It is in this context that the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers, meeting in Naples in December 2003, decided on the setting up of a Foundation to bring people together in a 'real and effective dialogue with cooperation between equal players', a mandate and approach which built directly on the report of the High-Level Advisory Group ('Groupe de Sages') established by the President of the Commission in 2003.

In 2008, the Anna Lindh Foundation's work in the region was reinforced through its founding role in the Union for the Mediterranean, with the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean and Marseilles Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial setting out the Foundation as a central actor of Mediterranean cooperation, responsible for developing the social, human and cultural dimension of the Partnership.

### Coalition of Values

Following its inauguration in April 2005, and the establishment of its headquarters in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, the Foundation set about developing a network of civil society organisations in each one of the Euro-Mediterranean countries, and building the capacity of member organisations to develop intercultural partnerships and projects.

Within its first three years of operation, this network grew into the largest Euro-Mediterranean network, made up of hundreds of NGOs, cultural groups, universities, local authorities and public institutions, with the Foundation facilitating in this period over two hundred joint projects and dialogue actions through its call for proposals programme and co-organisation of initiatives.

In 2008, on the occasion of the Euro-Mediterranean Year of Dialogue between Cultures, the Foundation launched for the first time a collective action involving all the networks, '1001 Actions for Dialogue', which successfully mobilised in over thirty Euro-Mediterranean countries public events and dialogue initiatives held in synchronisation and communicated to thousands more through international media.

## Tackling Misperceptions

*'Our priority is to support people, on the two shores of the Mediterranean, in retaking over their common destiny'*

André Azoulay, President of the Anna Lindh Foundation

With the network now established as the backbone of the Anna Lindh Foundation's work, and the institution's central role in the Union for the Mediterranean, the Foundation set about preparing its new programme phase, 2009 to 2011, which centres on bridging the gap in misunderstanding between people and communities and rebuilding human and cultural bridges in the Mediterranean region.

Indeed, one of the paradoxes in the context of the Foundation's work is the fact that despite the investment over the years in work for Mediterranean cooperation, the gap in mutual perceptions between people across the region remains, and in some cases has significantly deteriorated, a reality which continues to be at risk of regional challenges, from conflict and war to economic crisis.

It is for this reason that the Foundation's new programme phase is centred on understanding better the cultural and political processes which are forming opinions and behaviours and developing large-scale action in those fields which are shaping the perceptions of people: *Ideas and Ideologies; Education; Cultural Production; Media; Religion, Spirituality and Values; Cities and diversity.*

## Understanding the challenge

At the same time, the Anna Lindh Foundation has recognised the need to work more on better understanding the reasons why mutual perceptions have made limited progress during the process of Mediterranean cooperation, as well as assuming its advocacy role on areas related to intercultural coexistence, as foreseen by the Groupe des Sages.

To that end, the Foundation is developing a scientific programme on intercultural trends in the Euro-Mediterranean region, an area of work which will allow the institution to better understand the challenges that the Union for the Mediterranean faces in its cultural and human dimension, and to identify more adequate answers for decision-makers and actors on the ground.

The output of the research process will be the publication of an Annual Report, which offers a comprehensive and comparative overview about the intercultural trends and their evolution in the Euro-Mediterranean region, a report which will be delivered to the principal Euro-Med institutions and will also be a tool and guideline in the hands of the Anna Lindh Foundation's National Networks for their activity in each country.

Indeed it is through this unique approach, of facilitating the action of civil society, decision-makers and opinion-leaders in favour of dialogue, that the Anna Lindh Foundation is assuming its central role in the Union for the Mediterranean, with the long-term perspective of shaping the Euro-Mediterranean space as 'an area of co-operation, exchange, mobility and peace'.

For further information on the Anna Lindh Foundation, please log on to:

[www.euromedalex.org](http://www.euromedalex.org)