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Italy's EU Presidency to re-launch cultural dialogue across the Mediterranean as Anna Lindh Foundation celebrates 10th anniversary

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"The Italian Presidency will be a unique opportunity to put cultural dialogue in the Mediterranean at the heart of the agenda of EU external relations," the Italian Under Secretary of State for Culture Francesca Barracciu has told an international conference on Mediterranean cooperation organised by the Italian news agency ANSA as part of the Universal Forum of Cultures in Naples, in view of the forthcoming Italian Presidency of the European Council. In this context, one of the key events announced for the Italian Presidency will be the 10th anniversary of the Anna Lindh Mediterranean Foundation, to be marked at an event in Naples from 27 to 30 October, with representatives from 42 countries.

The event, set to mark a decade since the Member States of the Euro-Med Partnership took the joint decision to create the Foundation, will focus on the theme of the next chapter of intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean.

Paul Walton, Head of Communications at the Anna Lindh Foundation's Headquarters in Alexandria, underlined: *"There is a growing appetite for mutual knowledge among citizens of the Mediterranean, also inspired by the dynamic social changes taking place in the region. This must be the basis for renewing the cultural dialogue agenda and supporting civil society actors in working together to face common challenges."*

The conference, organised by ANSA as part of the Universal Forum of Cultures in Naples, gathered representatives of international organisations and media bodies engaged in Euro-Mediterranean affairs in the historic town of Pompeii. It concluded with a call to leverage the forthcoming Italian Presidency of the European Council for renewing cultural dialogue across the region.

Khalid Chaouki, President of the Cultural Commission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, said: *"New and emerging youth and civic movements to the South and North of the Mediterranean represent a spirit of change in the region, based on shared values. We must not miss the opportunity to invest in these movements at the base of our societies for leveraging Mediterranean cooperation."*

The Italian Presidency of the European Council will formally begin on 1 July and run for six months until the end of December. At the beginning of January, the Foreign Ministers of Italy and of Greece – current hosts of the EU Presidency – jointly announced that 2014 would be labelled 'The Year of the Mediterranean'.

The **Anna Lindh Foundation for Inter-Cultural Dialogue** promotes knowledge, mutual respect and inter-cultural dialogue between the people of the Euro-Mediterranean region, working through a network of more than 3,000 civil society organisations in 43 countries. Its budget is co-funded by the EU (€7 million) and the EU member states (€6 million). ([EU Neighbourhood Info](#))

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