



# TIME TO ACT TOGETHER

**The MEDITERRANEAN FORUM of the Anna Lindh Foundation in Valletta, Malta, is a landmark movement for intercultural action in the face of unprecedented regional challenges.**

Since the launch of the “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership” in 1995, it is the first time such a coalition of diverse regional actors has come together at this scale - young leaders, national civil society coordinators, international donors, policy-makers, city and local authority networks. A grand coalition of values from the north and the south of the Mediterranean.

This is recognition that now, in the face of grave regional and global problems, and understanding that these common challenges are larger than the individual organisations facing them, that IT IS TIME TO ACT TOGETHER.

We believe that all of these challenges - conflict, extremism, the social impact of a refugee crisis, climate change and youth unemployment - have the combined potential to generate to a more potent, long-lasting threat: a cultural divide.

We equally believe that INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE, reaffirmed as a long-term sustainable solution to improve the quality of life and livelihoods in the region, is the viable solution to addressing the underlying causes fuelling forces of polarisation within and across our shared societies.

CLOSURE IS NOT THE ANSWER to the deep and complex issues facing societies to the north and south of Mare Nostrum. We believe that we must open up inclusive dialogue and call on political leadership to increase efforts to restore trust between the region’s citizens. Intercultural action is a complement to political action, not a substitute. We further recognise the need to match the renewed policy impetus for dialogue with the required resourcing for long-term, sustainable impact on the ground.

The ANNA LINDH FOUNDATION stands today as the reference point for intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean. After a decade of investment in people-to-people cooperation, the Foundation is primed to assume its central role for collective action, working through partnership with a far-reaching coalition of regional institutions and global civil society networks.

This role reaffirms the principles of the Anna Lindh Foundation constitution (2003 Prodi “Groupe des Sages”) which stated “Intercultural dialogue must be cemented by mutual awareness and understanding, not only among states and institutions but also, and most importantly, among the societies and people living in this common area”.

Investment in youth remains the right approach for the Foundation, and we say that the Euro-Mediterranean region has a historic opportunity to activate connections among the next generation of leaders. We collectively celebrate the launch of YOUNG MEDITERRANEAN VOICES as a platform to transform debate to action while creating the basis for reinforcing a new era of enhanced Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation.

It is time to move beyond the extremist narrative and challenge widely held assumptions about radicalisation. We welcome the new cooperation between the Foundation and the United Nations to operationalise the first UN Security Resolution on YOUTH, PEACE and SECURITY (UNSCR 2250), in alignment with the new international cultural relations strategy of the EU.

At the same time, we commit to reinforce the policy impetus for intercultural dialogue through supporting the organisation of a Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Culture, the first in close to a decade, and to initiate preparations during the forthcoming Maltese EU Presidency on those priority domains identified through the MED FORUM process:



**SHIFTING FOCUS TO INTERCULTURAL CITIES.** The city of the future will be intercultural. In an increasingly urbanised Euro-Mediterranean zone, cities offer special challenges but also opportunities for positive intercultural encounters and new realities of cultural diversity. We call for new measures to recognise and award intercultural cities, as well as spread and embed pioneering practices through existing city-to-city networks.



**RETHINKING LEARNING.** Shifting the focus to embedding a shared values-based approach to formal and non-formal education. We call on education institutions and ministries to embed intercultural citizenship curricula and multiply resource networks of educators accredited in intercultural learning. Transferable skills of intercultural communication are essential to nurture shared values and prevent the growing phenomenon of intolerance.



**TOWARDS EXCHANGE 3.0.** Mobility is the first right of the Mediterranean and its peoples. We recognise the importance to significantly increase people-to-people exchange across regions. Virtual education exchange will have an increasing role in widening access and sustaining the impact of face-to-face exchange. We need to reach out to new groups, to promote an “Erasmus of Associations”, and implement policy proposals such as a “Cultural Passport”.



**REINFORCING MEDIA DIALOGUE.** Recognising the potential of media to address a growing gap in perceptions, we need to support a new generation of journalists who require enhanced assistance to report on our region’s complex social and cultural realities. We equally call on the engagement of media owners in this endeavour to report beyond the extremist narrative, and create an observatory instrument to monitor more effectively cross-cultural reporting.



**UNLOCKING CREATIVE ENTERPRISE.** As a channel of economic, social and personal development of young women and men, social enterprise also has the potential to open up new spaces of civic participation and offer innovative models of organisation. Sustainability remains a central issue for pioneers of intercultural action, and the promotion of enabling environments and resource networks can offer new pathways for CSO development.

PROFILING WOMEN AS CENTRAL AGENTS FOR DIALOGUE is key to these strategic domains, in a context where women on both shores of the Mediterranean still suffer from a lack of recognition and socio-cultural biases.

Dialogue agents also include: TRANSLATORS as the irreplaceable conveyors of cultural works and knowledge, the messengers vital to our cultures and the basis for dialogue;

MIGRANTS as cultural bridges across the north and south of the Mediterranean, with migration as an opportunity for the societies of tomorrow.

MED FORUM 2016 is a unique catalyst for collaboration, aligning actors, programming and policy-making around the long-term strategic pillars, and introducing a new evidence-based approach through the launch and roll-out of the INTERCULTURAL TRENDS REPORT.

The Forum, through its legacy policy, is also leveraging the role of Malta as a strategic connection point to reinforce relations between Europe and the southern Mediterranean, as well as the promotion of the Mediterranean capitals of cultural dialogue and Valletta’s role as European cultural capital.

We commit to place intercultural dialogue as the unique connection point in transforming the renewed policy impetus into action, among them the cooperation frameworks of the EU, League of Arab States, and Union for the Mediterranean, and to launch together a new era of partnership among citizens for the Mediterranean.

