

The ALF Report on Intercultural Trends

A tool for knowledge and mutual comprehension

Pioneering study receives praise from leading Italian political figures for its new approach to rebuilding cross-cultural relations and focusing on shared values across the two shores of the Mediterranean

Rome, 26 November 2010

The President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Gianfranco Fini, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Franco Frattini, presented yesterday the Anna Lindh Report on Intercultural Relations at the Italian Parliament, in an institutional event which gathered leading politicians, intellectuals and media experts and was attended by the Director of the Foundation, Andreu Claret. The presentation, organised by the Forum of Foreign Relations of the Democratic Party, involved also the MP of this organisation, Piero Fassino, and the Senator and President of the Anit-mafia Commission, Pisanu.

The Anna Lindh Report, which is based on the very First Gallup Opinion Poll carried out with 13,000 people from 13 countries in Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region, has involved experts on cross-cultural affairs from Italy and over twenty other Euro-Mediterranean countries.

Praising the Anna Lindh Report, Gianfranco Fini, stressed that “in the Mediterranean it is not possible to focus only on the economic cooperation, but also on the social and cultural issues”.

“After September 11, there is a necessity to develop together soft security measures”, said Fini, which underlined the role of the Foundation for the promotion of intercultural dialogue. Considering the Report conclusions “of great interest”, Frattini stressed “the existence of a sense of belonging to the Mediterranean among the people of the Region”. Frattini recalled the pioneering role of Italy in the EuroMediterranean dialogue and the commitment of his government with the Anna Lindh Foundation.



1. From left: Andreu Claret, Piero Fassino, Gianfranco Fini, Franco Frattini, Giuseppe Pisanu, Giacomo Filibeck.
2. André Azoulay, President of the ALF.
3. Michele Capasso, President of Fondazione Mediterraneo and Andreu Claret, Executive Director of “Anna Lindh” Foundation.

The Report and its region-wide Survey was coordinated by the Anna Lindh Foundation, an institution shared by the 43 countries of the Union for the Mediterranean with a mandate to bring people together for in-

tercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Presenting the outcomes of the Report, Claret pointed out that “according the findings of the survey, we share fundamental values, such as family solidar-

ity, hospitality, curiosity towards other societies”. He stressed that those values “appear like cultural bridges within and across societies of our common Region.”

In the conclusions of the presentation, Fassino insisted on

the importance of the Union of the Mediterranean as an institution created to promote cooperation in the region, and considered the Anna Lindh Report as “an initiative able to make more focused and efficient any strategy of intercultural dialogue”.

The following debate focused on the reassessment of approaches to building intercultural relations at the national level as well as across the two shores of the Mediterranean, given in particular the important role



Italy has played historically in trans-Mediterranean cooperation. Based on the findings of the Survey and expert analysis, the Report presents proposals for action, including investment in education for intercultural learning, developing tools for an improved quality of interaction and supporting the potential of media for improving knowledge and respect.

The Rome Debate is part of a series of national debates aiming at presenting the results of the Anna Lindh Report and providing an insight into people’s perceptions about each others from both shores of the Mediterranean as well as the similarities and differences in their value systems.

Gallup Europe carries out a survey in 13 Euro Mediterranean Countries >> 2

Gallup Europe carries out a survey in 13 Euro Mediterranean Countries >> 3

Michele Capasso is among the international experts who contributed to ALF Report >> 4

For more information related to the Anna Lindh Report on Intercultural Trends 2010, you can log on to:
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GALLUP® EUROPE



Andreu Claret

Gallup Europe carries out a survey in 13 Euro Mediterranean Countries

Gallup has been commissioned by the Anna Lindh Foundation to conduct the first Euro-Mediterranean Survey on Intercultural trends. It is the first time that such a survey has been envisaged on such a scale, with the ambitious objective of assessing the convergence and differences of genuine Euro-Mediterranean public opinion and attitudes. The Euro-Mediterranean Survey will be conducted every three years using a random sample with 1,000 completed interviews per country among the general population. Countries will be covered on a rotating basis. The first Survey was conducted in August and September 2009 in several European countries and countries bordering the southern and eastern Mediterranean. In this first wave,

the European countries that were included were Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom and the countries bordering the southern and eastern Mediterranean were Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Turkey. In Turkey and the countries from the European group, interviews were conducted via Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) and in countries bordering the southern and eastern Mediterranean by face-to-face interviews. In Hungary, 700 interviews were carried out by CATI, and 300 by face-to-face, in order to increase coverage.

The development of indicators to be monitored on a regular basis and based on variables and items such as the interest in cultural diversity, knowledge of cultural differ-

ences, spaces of encounter, multiple identity belonging, religion, mutual perceptions and intercultural dialogue will help to bridge the gap in perceptions and in understanding the existing differences and divergences between people and communities across the two shores of the Mediterranean. It will also help tackle misperceptions and rebuild human and cultural bridges in the Mediterranean region and ultimately facilitate the actions of civil society, decision-makers and opinion-leaders. The result will be a dialogue with the long-term perspective of shaping the Euro-Mediterranean space as an area of cooperation, exchange, mobility and peace' as expressed in the ambitious but humanist core values and objectives of the Foundation.

The results of the Survey are analysed at an overall level for both groups of countries – the European countries, and those of the southern and eastern Mediterranean region, and at country level. For most questions, differences between responses based on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents also are analysed.

Respondents from European countries and from southern and eastern Mediterranean countries had a different perception of what the Mediterranean region is. When asked about the countries which spontaneously came to their mind when thinking about that Region, Europeans tended to think about European countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, while respondents from southern and eastern Mediterranean countries rather thought about their neighbours.

Indeed, the countries that came to mind to most Europeans when thinking about the Mediterranean region were Italy (72%), Spain (65%), Greece (54%), France (39%) and Turkey (30%). Among respondents from the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, Egypt (38%), Syria (36%), Lebanon (34%) and Morocco (28%) were most often cited. However, in both groups of countries, a fifth to a quarter of respondents gave the name of one of the countries of the other group. For example, in south-

ern and eastern Mediterranean countries, such a share named Italy (26%), Spain (24%), France (22%) and Turkey (21%) (Chart 1.1). In general, interviewees from European countries cited more country names than those from southern or eastern Mediterranean countries.

Respondents shared a good image of the Region: when presented with several associations that people may have when thinking about the Region, respondents from both groups tended to choose positive characteristics over negative ones. Over three-quarters of respondents thought that the Region was somewhat or strongly characterised by its hospitality, its lifestyle and food, a common cultural heritage and history and its creativity. Approximately seven in ten respondents had negative

associations such as the Region's resistance to change, environmental challenges in those countries and the Region as a source of conflict. Despite this commonality, respondents from the two groups differed in their answers. For instance, Europeans more often associated the Mediterranean region with a certain lifestyle and food than respondents from southern and eastern Mediterranean countries (90% vs. 75%), and more often perceived the Region as a source of conflict (73% vs. 61%) ([...] By Robert Manchin).

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VALUES CONSIDERED IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN EDUCATION BY RESPONDENTS CHART 2.5

	Value priorities of respondents in their home country			Perception about values in European countries			Perception about values in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries		
	Family solidarity	Religion	Curiosity	Family solidarity	Religion	Curiosity	Family solidarity	Religion	Curiosity
Bosnia - Herzegovina	20,3	6,9	6	17,4	9,2	6,5	18,8	16	8,1
Egypt	3,1	50,6	16,4	4,5	12,8	39,8	6,9	38	17,4
France	28	5,9	7,6	22,7	4,9	9,7	25,7	23,3	5
Germany	44,4	2,6	8,5	32,4	10	5	33,1	34,4	2,5
Greece	35,1	6,9	2,4	27,2	8	3	19,9	34,2	2
Hungary	61,8	6,9	3,5	51,2	10,2	5,2	34,6	45,7	1,5
Lebanon	21,3	39,6	11,5	4,2	4,8	24,7	15,3	45	5,4
Morocco	7,8	46,4	13,8	1,8	10,2	28	8,1	46,6	8,3
Spain	29,9	6,5	4,6	26,2	5,9	3,6	18,4	29,8	2,9
Sweden	13	1,6	26,4	28,4	12,5	9,3	30,4	33,6	5,3
Syria	9,9	23,3	16,6	10,6	14,3	24,8	8	38,2	8,5
Turkey	35	40	2,5	17,5	21,2	6,9	15,2	49,7	4,2
United Kingdom	29,9	5,9	4,6	36,5	7,6	2,7	34,7	20,1	2,2

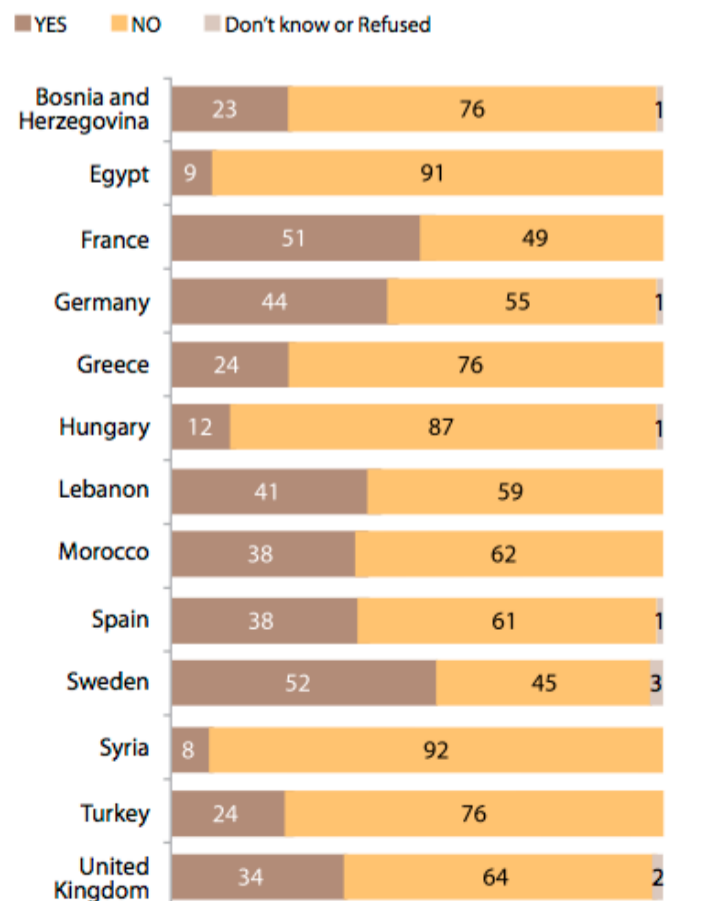
Base: All respondents, % Total. The Chart establishes a comparison among the 13 surveyed countries taking into account three values: family solidarity, curiosity and religious beliefs and presenting the perception that respondents have about people's priority values in other surveyed countries. Chart developed by M. Toczy on the basis of the Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010.

MOST IMPORTANT VALUES TO RESPONDENTS WHEN BRINGING UP THEIR CHILDREN CHART 1.13

	Most important	Second most important
Family solidarity	European: 12 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 15	European: 24 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 26
Respect for the other cultures	European: 12 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 5	European: 26 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 13
Obedience	European: 10 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 18	European: 13 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 18
Independence	European: 10 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 7	European: 14 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 11
Curiosity	European: 9 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 12	European: 9 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 7
Religious beliefs	European: 1 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 41	European: 9 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: 21

Survey Question: In bringing up their children, parents in different societies may place different emphasis on different values. Assuming that we limit ourselves to six values only – let's say: curiosity, obedience, religious beliefs, independence, respect for the other culture and family solidarity – I'd like to know which one of these six you would say are most important to you personally? And the second most important? Base: All respondents, % Total (© Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010).

INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES CHART 1.12



Survey Question: In the last 12 months have you personally met or talked with any person (or persons) from Europe / from countries bordering the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea? Base: All respondents, % by country (© Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010).

The ALF Report presented in Italy and in Euro-Mediterranean Countries

London



Malta



Rome



Bologna



Palermo



Torino





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Michele Capasso is among the international experts who contributed to ALF Report



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Islam, the West and Modernity

MICHELE CAPASSO

In the context of the dialogue between cultures, the relation between Islam and the West is fundamental. Islam is the common denominator through which the Muslim world is represented despite its diversity. This is a generic concept in which western historic imaginary makes a convergence of several unconscious allusions. This term indicates 'a society in which the State is the ruling authority and civil life is ruled by religious norms dictated by the Quran'.

Modernity is also a common denominator, pointing towards 'a society based on positive law and not just divine law, as well as on legal equality and equality of access to positions of political representation'. Much as Islam is a static representation of a wider differentiated and dynamic reality, modernity is the static abstraction of diversified changing realities. That is why modernity does not identify with the West and Europe of today. This is a project of societies developed in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment and that further developed during the period of Positivism. Its basic principles are crucial for the complexity of modern life, effecting changes in all structures that were seen as appropriate to ways of living in the past.

If on one hand the Islamic world is facing problems related to the absence of Modernity, in terms of individual rights and democracy, on the other hand the West is suffering from an excess of modernity. Rapidity, rationality, decentralisation of production, absence of solidarity, anomie of collective contexts, lack of a 'sense of life' in young people: these are the new problems of a society which defines itself as post-modern.

The problem of 'Islam and Modernity' does not lie in the opposition of two antagonists but encompasses three terms: 'Islam, the West and Modernity'. Two historical realities and a common critical area; a problematic situation where everyone sees the reflection of his own defects in the other's eye; a divided universe where the logic of the world capital makes the European West and the Mediterranean peripheral to the hubs of the government. When the issue is placed between two terms, it brings about a political opposition. When the same issue is placed between three terms, it calls for a policy of solidarity to advance together in a parallel evolution and in shared agreement towards a shared objective, even if the starting points and distances to the objective are different.

Countries of the Mediterranean, Europe and of Arab-Muslim culture have a vital interest of following a path, different from the one undertaken until now. One must not forget that the European civilization is greatly indebted to Islam. Western Europe owes much of its renaissance to Islamic civilization and time has come to pay back this debt. However, Modernity is not often offered to Islam in ways to promote its equality but rather through structures that aim at expressing its submission.

The challenge that awaits us is to build a 'coalition of shared values and interests', avoiding that modernity homologates and cancels different cultural identities: A big resource for Islam and the West alike.

MICHELE CAPASSO is President of the Fondazione Mediterraneo