



Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures
Fondation Euro-Méditerranéenne Anna Lindh pour le Dialogue entre les Cultures
مؤسسة أناليند الأورو-متوسطية للحوار بين الثقافات

Mister President, Honourable Members of the Board of Governors,

Welcome

We, the Coordinators of the Anna Lindh Foundation National Networks **highly appreciate the opportunity** of having an exchange of views on the occasion of our parallel meetings in Berlin this week.

First of all, we would like to briefly introduce ourselves to you. Our Meeting gathers the Coordinators of ALF National Networks; we are especially proud to announce to you the presence of representatives of Romania and Bulgaria, where the effort to establish an Anna Lindh Network is successfully proceeding.

The **Meeting** of the Coordinators of Network in Berlin focuses on the **development and design of the Foundation policy** for the next two years. In this context, it is of great importance to the Networks to assure and strengthen their position within the institutional framework of the Anna Lindh Foundation as a joint institution of the Euro-Med Partnership. We trust that the opportunity to meet here today is born out of the real interest of the Board of Governors to enter into a dialogue with those involved in the implementation of the Foundation's mission, which is the role of the Networks and their Coordinators.

This is therefore a **crucial moment** in order to consolidate the Foundation as a Network of Networks. There is no other organization, which can offer such a comprehensive approach to intercultural dialogue and cover at the same time the whole of the Euro-Med area.

Context: Our uniqueness

The context we are working in is a difficult one, with several conflicts of political, socio-economic or cultural origins still affecting the region. The plurality of operators working to overcome these conflicts is another reality that the Foundation had to take into account when it was established, and which lead to the main question: What is our uniqueness?

In fact: **The uniqueness of the Foundation is the Network of Networks.**

In these first two years of existence, we have invested in making our Networks a reality, during day-by-day effort of gathering organizations together and putting them in contact among each other. This effort has produced a large **platform of more than 1000 organizations in 37 Networks** up to now.

Achievements

We would like to bring to your kind attention some of the achievements, which have contributed to involve Networks in intercultural activities:

1. At the beginning of the Foundation, in 2005, we had 600 organizations registered in the Networks, while **this number has now reached 1400**, distributed in the whole Euro-Med region. They are regularly being informed about themes and projects concerning cultural cooperation in the Euro-Med framework;
2. **63 grant contracts** have been signed so far by the ALF with partner organizations of Networks; on a different level, the Foundation herself has trained 450 teachers in methodologies of Intercultural dialogue in 2006, joined the Euro-Med network for academic cooperation, and created prizes for the Dialogue between Cultures and for Intercultural Journalism. The Foundation also reacted with customized programs to the situation created by the Israeli-Palestinian-Lebanese conflict (Build a Bridge Campaign), assisted by some Network members, who are themselves active in the region.

The interest and demand for support in project development from the Foundation is **steadily increasing** in many of the 37 National Networks, hitting a peak at this point.

A new approach: Investing in Networks

In Berlin, we have committed ourselves with the new Direction of the Foundation to focus our effort in the next two years in strengthening the Networks, consolidating their project capacity and giving them the necessary tools in order to be able to function as real social players for dialogue.

It means, we **shall invest in the infrastructure of the Foundation**, the Network of Networks, which is our uniqueness and our real strength.

Networks should become able to mobilize the best energies and expertise in their countries promoting mutual understanding, mobility of ideas and persons, and generating opportunities for partnerships and participation.

What we want is an institution which is more than just a Funding Agency, but also and especially a **Facilitator, a Clearing House and a Space**, where **ideas are generated, partnerships are developed, resources are matched, and services to the civil society are delivered**.

A Foundation as a Facilitator, a Clearing House and a Space is a concept whose ultimate aim is to prepare and encourage civil society to take an active role in dialogue initiatives. For us, dialogue is a strong means to foster mutual understanding, experience sharing, cooperation and friendship, and a common sense of belonging within the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Successful work in the field of exchanges and dialogue is not a short-term issue but can be achieved only in a mid-term, if not a **long-term perspective**. We are particularly satisfied that we were able to have an exchange of views with the new Executive Director of the Foundation as far as the need for structural reform and new perspectives for the strategic approach of the Foundation are concerned. We are confident that we will be able to work very constructively with Mr. Guerrato.

Our landmarks for the future of the Foundation

Therefore, the Foundation needs to work along the following three directions:

1. **Empowering Networks:** To make the Networks more effective by delivering services that will enable them to operate and create projects (contact making meetings, sharing project ideas, matching partnerships, support fundraising, developing capacity building, creating specific networks around joint policies such as academic cooperation or education, etc.). The Network of Networks is the **backbone** of the Foundation. If we do not create the conditions so that they can build the infrastructure to properly function, the Foundation will not survive in the long term.
2. **Simplifying procedures:** We welcome the proposal of Mr. Guerrato to further ease and smarten the procedures in the field of the Call for Project Proposals, which up to now is the most important financial instrument the Foundation disposes of. If we simplify these procedures, we will create the conditions for member organizations in the Networks to participate at a higher rate in the Call for Project Proposals.
3. **Supporting cross-network activities:** We had the impression that several co-organized activities by the Foundation up to now were lacking in coherence, capacity to reach a wider audience and duration in time. This is why the Foundation should, as for now, stimulate **joint activities involving several Networks simultaneously along common values and priorities**, which have an impact on our societies, thus contributing to increase the visibility of the Foundation by creating a **“Critical Mass”**. In this context, we should particularly rely on cooperation with

strategic partners who are themselves already well-versed in the field of cultural dialogue.

2008 – A Unique Opportunity

In this framework, the Year of Intercultural Dialogue, 2008, is a unique opportunity for the Network of Networks to raise its profile.

In 2008, we will persist in our commitment, creating projects through and for our Networks. Drawing upon our large platform of member organizations, we have a wide reach and thousands of channels to operate through. We will strive to **create simultaneous activities, reaching out to people in different Euro-Med countries** at the same time. Simultaneous actions bring people together around a common topic, allowing greater focus and ensuring greater impact.

Dialogue is a means and an open agenda whose content should be designed by the Networks.

The Foundation and the Board of Governors

Networks are the strength of the Foundation, and it is what can make a difference in the region, where already several players are developing dialogue initiatives.

This is why we invite you, members of the Board of Governors:

- 1. To endorse our common vision on strengthening the networks;**
- 2. To find appropriate resources, mainly funds and facilities, to help the Networks to consolidate and to better function.** Since the Barcelona and the Tampere Meetings of the Network Coordinators, we have stressed the **urgency** to solve this issue. Investing in the “infrastructure of the Foundation”, a functioning network of civil society players, must be a **joint commitment** of both of us, the Networks and their Coordinators, and the Government representatives. Network Coordinators, particularly in the **new EU-member countries and in the Mediterranean partner countries**, are still lacking resources in order to exercise their main mission of making their National Network grow and become more active. Supporting National Networks should become a **model**, either through fresh financial support or through contributions in facilities, human resources and services.
- 3. To ensure a regular exchange of views between us and the Board**, in order to follow closely our process of making the Foundation a Facilitator for the Euro-Mediterranean civil society, we would recommend:
 - **A revision of the Foundation’s Statutes**, ensuring that the Coordinators are involved and consulted in the decision-making process referring to ALF matters;

- **An annual meeting of the Coordinators of the ALF Networks and the BoG** in order to ameliorate communication and exchange within the institutional framework of the Foundation. In this context, it is vital for the Network Coordinators that they meet the Board of Governors in advance of scheduled timelines for decisions concerning the strategic planning of the Foundation.

Future cooperation between the Networks and the EU Presidency

Finally, we would like to make a request of cooperation. At the end of our meeting in Berlin we will attend the opening session of the Euro-Med Youth Parliament to which the Foundation has made an important contribution. The opening ceremony will take place in the presence of the German Foreign Minister and thus be given major visibility. The involvement of the Foundation in the Youth Parliament shows that we are able to stage politically important events if we work with appropriate partners. We would highly appreciate if a political event as the Euro-Med Youth Parliament could be emulated on a regular basis, thus permitting the Foundation to join ranks with political representatives. **We invite the countries assuming the Presidency of the European Union to support similar events of cooperation with the Foundation and its Networks as part of their presidential agenda.**

The Dialogue between Cultures must become a regular element also of the political agenda of the Euro-Med cooperation. We see it to be a **common challenge both for the Foundation, the ALF Networks and the Board of Governors.**

*The Coordinators of the Anna Lindh Foundation National Networks
Berlin, 30 May 2007*