



Semana temática: Agua y Sociedad

Eje temático. Comunicación

Título de la ponencia: *Commitments of the Anna Lindh Foundation for Intercultural Dialogue in favour of water: Reflections on the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum on Water and Intercultural Dialogue*

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Resumen:

This paper is a contribution to the International Expo Zaragoza 2008 to the Thematic Week entitled "Water and Society" Communication, Culture and Education".

The Anna Lindh Foundation's activities have been designed in the framework of a Campaign called "Water Our Common Future", which has been originally developed by the Foundation for the 2008 Year of Inter-Cultural Dialogue, in cooperation with The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMED) and European Rivers Network. This Campaign has clear links with dialogue issues, and strong networking potential. Therefore, the need to reach out to and involve civil society is important. The Campaign was the result of an assessment and conception process which started with the organization of an expert meeting with qualified persons working in the field of developing a new culture of water between society, environment, and arts.

The expert meeting, which took place from 30 November to 1 December 2006, gathered 15 experts among social activists, environmental scientists and researchers, artists and architects, and public officials, who were indicated or recommended by ALF national networks. The objective of the meeting aimed at identifying the aspects of the work on water the Anna Lindh Foundation wants to develop in future. A model of a multiple campaign was designed, focusing on three dimensions:

- The social mobilization;
- The research and networking for youth;
- The artistic creation.

The experts proposed three components:

- The Euro-Mediterranean Big Jump (social mobilization);
- The Water and Cultures in Dialogue Youth Forum (research and networking);
- The Aqua Treasury Artistic Competition (artistic creation).



1. The Euro-Mediterranean Big Jump Day, 17th July 2005

The first component was realized as a first experimental project in July 2007. Encouraged by the first European Big Jump Day, held on July 17, 2005, the Anna Lindh Foundation developed the idea of organizing a Euro-Mediterranean Big Jump Day on July 15, 2007, where thousands of people from 7 Euro-Mediterranean countries/regions were invited to take part in a simultaneous "bathing act" at selected points into rivers, lakes and the sea, to claim the right of all Euro-Mediterranean citizens to have access to clean waters, to develop a common feeling of belonging, and to tackle fundamental challenges such as building mutual respect, sharing resources peacefully or fighting climate change as a common responsibility.

The simultaneous jumps symbolized the role water plays in uniting people. The Euro-Med Big Jump Day 2007 being a pilot scheme, its aim was to develop a model for 2008, the Year of Intercultural Dialogue, involving all 37 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in this opportunity for simultaneous dialogue and mobilization events around common concerns from both Mediterranean shores, inspired by the symbolic of water. The implementation of the 2008 edition has been postponed.

Partners of the 2007 first pilot Euro-Med Big Jump were: Sustainable Development Association (Egypt), Friends of the Earth Middle East (Jordan, Israel and Palestine), Regione Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Forum de l'Allier sauvage - Vichy (France), Xarxa Nova Cultura de l'Aigua (Spain), Centre d'Education à l'Environnement (Morocco), Hellenic Society for the Protection of the Environment and the Cultural Heritage (Greece).

2. Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum "Water and Cultures in Dialogue", Turin, Italy, 20th – 25th May 2008



The second component, the Youth Forum "Water and Cultures in Dialogue", organized by the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures (ALF) in collaboration with Paralleli Euro-Mediterranean Institute, gathered 72 young people from across the Euro-Mediterranean region, all active in the field of water. The aims and objectives of the Forum were to raise awareness among youth on the role and importance of water in the cultural heritage of the Euro-Med region in order to support its preservation; to encourage exchanges, mutual understanding and knowledge; and to create an on-line forum and a user-friendly resource website on water, focusing on water as a common good, a limited resource and a central element in the cultural heritage of the Euro-Mediterranean Region.



The participants of the forum took part in three different working groups, led by a team of international experts and local trainers. Each working group had its own workshops and activities and created its own specific output, which was presented to the plenary and the public on the last day of the Forum. As a preparation to the Forum, all participants had conducted a research on a topic related to the theme of their respective working group. All research papers were presented at the meeting and have been uploaded on the Forum's website



(www.torinoyouthforum.org), which is considered as an important part of the project, as it enables the exchange of ideas, experience and best practices between the participants.

The first working group, led by Mr. Ameur Jeridi (Tunisia) and Ms. Laura Valieri (Italy), focused on the theme **"Water, Heritage and Intergenerational Dialogue"**. The specific objective of this group was to explore the water heritage of the city of Turin and on this basis to develop a "Creative Water Map" of the city, indicating the important role that water has played for Turin throughout history.



Accordingly, the group's activities included visits to cultural heritage places in Turin, presentations by experts, conferences, discussions and various inputs from participants. The Creative Map was presented to all participants and representatives of the Torino City Council on the last day of the forum. It shows an itinerary throughout the city connecting all relevant water sites of Turin and giving explanations about the water heritage, including interactive devices to facilitate different perceptions of water. The Map also includes concrete, site-related proposals formulated by the group to raise the visibility of water and draw attention to its importance for

Turin. For example, it is suggested to renovate certain buildings and sites in Turin which in the past have been connected with water, but today are used differently and are in a state of neglect. Furthermore, the map suggests that a museum on water is created and a light system and information signs are installed to draw attention to the hidden water channels of Turin which have played a major role in the development of Turin throughout history.

The second working group, led by Ms. Åsa Maria Bengtsson, visual artist (Malmö, Sweden) and Mr. Marco Pejrolo, actor and director (Torino, Italy), focused on **"Water, Spirituality and Emotions"**. The idea of this group was to go beyond lectures and ordinary exhibitions, to cross borders and create links between different cultures through collective activities, as well as to draw attention to the importance of water through artistic expression. All of arts main disciplines were used in the workshop: movement, dance, song, music, sound, words, still- and moving images, sculpture and actions. In order to prepare the main output of the workshop – a collective performance and exhibition -, the participants were divided into five smaller artistic groups, each focusing on a specific form of artistic expression. Furthermore, participants engaged in discussions, presentations and other activities. The performance was presented to the public on the last day of the Forum at the ATC theatre in Turin and was a huge success. Carrying the title





"Water as a mirror", it mixed the experiences and creations of the participants and contained many different kinds of artistic expressions, all describing water in different dimensions and expressing feelings and traditions of the different cultures of the Euro-Med region. As a follow-up, the participants of the forum exchanged ideas on other projects and activities which may lead to future cooperation.



The third group, led by Mr. Michal Kravcik (Kosice, Slovakia) and Mr. Renato Mojetta (Torino, Italy), worked on the subject **"Water, Sustainable Development and Civil Society"**. This group focused on the relation of water and global warming/climate change and on how to develop sustainable solutions for this problem. The specific task of the group was to formulate three concrete proposals on rainwater management and climate protection to the City of Turin for public debate. Accordingly, during the forum the group met a number of NGO's and experts in the field,

conducted extensive research and engaged in thematic discussions. The participants got acquainted with the "New Water Paradigm", a new innovative approach of rainwater management and its cooling function for the climate and learned how to apply it in their respective cities. Their proposals for Turin were presented to the Forum and the representatives of the City Council on the last day of the meeting. They included an elaborated proposal for the application of non-conventional stormwater management techniques in Turin, which can serve both as instruments for the recovery of the climate and for soil permeability in urban areas. Furthermore, a great number of suggestions for utilising rainwater sources in schools and for the reduction of tap water consumption were presented. Another major proposal was presented under the title "A Euromed Roadmap of Water"; it included various suggested actions for the economical, environmental, social and cultural sectors.

In addition to the specific outputs of each group, all three groups together presented a common Declaration at the end of the forum, in which they, among other things, commit themselves to act as 'Blue Ambassadors' for responsible water management, sustainable development and cultural dialogue, to network between themselves and use all existing communication channels, including visual and other arts, for education and awareness-raising on the water issue. The website of the forum will help the participants to coordinate future activities, exchange ideas and best practices and develop new ideas for projects on water and intercultural dialogue.



3. The Aqua Treasury Artistic Competition

The third component was taken on board by IEMed and the Spanish Network of the Anna Lindh Foundation. After an unsuccessful application to the Saragossa Expo Management for a joint initiative on visual art and water, IEMed and ALF decided to modify the initiative, which eventually became the *Sea of Words International Short Stories Competition*, focusing on young writers and addressing common problems of the euro-Mediterranean Region. The contest is aimed at the



production of short stories whose content is related to intercultural dialogue as an instrument for the resolution of contemporary crises, especially of a political, socio-cultural, economic and environmental nature, related as well with water. Thirty winners have been selected, and will join cultural events in Spain (Summer 2008) and literary workshops in other ALF national networks (Autumn/Winter 2008).

4. Conclusion

The Anna Lindh Foundation will continue to contribute addressing the water issues in the Euro-Med region among the civil society platform. This component needs to be developed further, as a value that plans an essential role in raising awareness of and respect for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.