

LOCAL DIALOGUE PLATFORM

Concept note

Background

Human beings are the center of the concerns for inclusive and sustainable development and the Coronavirus pandemic has exposed and deepened existing social inequalities and hampered progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs). As such, the IMF estimates that by 2022, close to 90 million people will have fallen below the extreme poverty threshold since the pandemic started (World Economic Outlook, IMF, 2021).

Since the outburst of the pandemic, recent consultations regularly conducted by the ALF with its network members and stakeholders shed light on challenges and threats related to diversity and mutual perceptions through increase in discrimination, hate speech, racial profiling and negative stereotypes brought on by the pandemic making them more visible. The emerging evidence indicates the health crisis exposed disparities in vulnerable populations and disadvantaged communities who were left behind.

Moreover, consultations pointed to mobility limitations undermining fundamental freedoms due to quarantines, lockdown, travel restrictions and border closures to contain contagion that constrained the possibility for direct engagement and interaction between people increasing the risk of social exclusion. Hence, responding to these challenges requires immediate action in order to manage culturally diverse societies.

The relevance for addressing intercultural dialogue at the city level has been reiterated by the Anna Lindh Foundation's research on Intercultural Trends. Indeed, the fourth iteration of the ALF Intercultural Trends Survey conducted every three years reveals that the vast majority of respondents in European and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries agree that cultural and religious diversity is important for the prosperity of their societies (77% and 78% respectively). Cities as major partners in the implementation of the ALF activities, considering the role they play for the implementation of intercultural dialogue policies, are in the frontline in promoting diversity management, inclusiveness and social cohesion, and sustainable development

In this regard, building on its regional capacity building scheme for intercultural citizenship education, the financial support to EuroMed civil society collaborations and its research work on Intercultural Trends, the ALF is working for the establishment of local dialogue platforms to encourage a systemic approach for dialogue at the local level. Furthermore, to recognize existing good practices and give them visibility in 2021 the ALF is launching the first edition of the Euro-Mediterranean Capital for Dialogue Award.



Local Dialogue Platform

In 2021, the ALF is piloting the Local Dialogue Platforms a series of workshops and a larger regional gathering bringing together local and regional authorities and representing bodies, civil society organizations, educators and academics in a structured space for exchange

- **Exchange good practices** for cultural diversity management and dialogue promotion across the EuroMed region
- Encourage **collaborations between local authorities and civil society organizations** in the implementation and promotion of intercultural policies and practices
- Support the **involvement of young people, women, marginalized groups, migrants and refugees** in the development of initiatives, promotion of intercultural relations
- Identifying and discussing **new trends, methods and priority areas** of work for the promotion of intercultural dialogue

Why the Local Dialogue Platform workshops?

The main purpose will be to exchange practices and methodologies for a local-level Intercultural dialogue approach to collect different experiences and knowledge from actors who are active within and across cities around the Euro-Mediterranean.

Practices and methodologies can be about how to promote an active dialogue. The aim of the platform workshops is to support collaboration and facilitate cross-cultural encounters between public authorities and civil society organizations in order to combat negative stereotypes and tackle polarization. In addition, these platforms aim, to create a wider network consisting of national, regional and international actors on both shores of the Mediterranean.

This network in turn will be offered the possibility to exchange ideas and good practices on new trends, long-term strategies and methodologies for promoting an inclusive intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean.

While the ALF supports the regional exchange dimension, in the medium and long term the purpose is to establish systemic local dialogue platforms involving local and regional authorities, civil society representatives, educators, academics.

Format and Structure

- The Local Dialogue Platform Workshop and Regional Meeting will take place virtually
- 3 Local Dialogue Platforms workshops with 10 participants for each of the meetings
- 1 Regional Local Dialogue Platform with around 30 participants
- Each Workshop will be structured around plenary sessions and break-out rooms to allow for show-casing of good practices and to establish direct contacts among participants

Discussions will be stimulated around specific thematic fields but not only such as migration/mobility, gender, art, education, media and youth.

Publication on good practices

As a final outcome a digital publication of good practices shared and discussed will be produced as well as tips and lessons learnt for the promotion of intercultural dialogue and Euromed cultural and social cooperation at the city level.