



**IEMed.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING OF WRITERS AND INTELLECTUALS REGARDING MEDITERRANEAN EUROPE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE, ENCOURAGED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN (IEMED), HELD ON 23 MAY 2008 IN BARCELONA.**

- Gathered together with the objective of drawing up instrumental recommendations, we consider it necessary to strengthen the Barcelona Process, and in particular its third pillar related to society and cultural exchange – as that could encourage European institutions to re-assess their policies toward Mediterranean societies.

- They believe that dialogue, proximity between peoples and justice are the best means in order to bring violence to an end and promote peace.

**RESHAPING CULTURE INTO A INSTRUMENT FOR PROGRESS**

Culture needs to recover its function as a symbolic and ethical engine for human progress, and intercultural relations need to help to address common social, political and economic questions, transcending the frontiers of identities. Culture has to offer the possibility of creating common working platforms addressing concerns that are widely shared by public opinion in the Euro-Mediterranean region, concerns that do not divide, but bring people together, since they transcend national frontiers, such as social cohesion, sustainable development, climate change, gender equality, or the right to access to artistic and cultural development.

**CREATING CONDITIONS FOR ESTABLISHING DIALOGUE**

We believe that the following conditions are required in order to establish dialogue:

- Willingness in both its dimensions: a humanist, altruist willingness and a strategic willingness, according to which dialogue is entered into for the pragmatism of a better world, to contribute towards a better coexistence.

- **Receptivity:** Dialogue assumes a discussion between people or groups of people who could have divergent points of view for reaching a commitment, an agreement or a compromise. Similarly, knowledge and the recognition of a common cultural heritage (both historic as well as geographical and philosophical) are key elements for mutual understanding.

- **Materialisation:** Abstract dialogue is not as important as dialogue for resolving something specific or for responding to a specific question – instrumental or constructive dialogue. Conversing to find out the ideas of another person is necessary, but not sufficient.

- **Elimination of misunderstandings:** This is a question of trying to minimise the risks of conflict and finding the best possible way of crossing the frontiers between the speaker and the listener. In order for the dialogue to be efficient it should deal with a common ground, a selective agreement and a temporary understanding.

- **Pluralism and recognition of differences:** Entering into a dialogue does not mean resigning oneself to oblige the other person, in which case it would no longer be a dialogue but a type of submission. We must not think that differences in points of view are only found in large communities. We must also take into account the internal differences.

- **Courage and ethics:** In a context where rooms of expression and citizens initiatives are frequently restricted, “political courage” is needed in order to give a shape to dialogue actions according to a shared ethical frame. “Courage” means addressing conflicts instead of ignoring them, recognizing the asymmetries between the aspirations of civil societies and the structures of power.

## **GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF DIALOGUE**

- **Intercultural dialogue cannot be reduced to focusing between the North and the South. It should also strike up between South-South, East-East and even West-West.**

- **Appreciating the Mediterranean concept of identity, a result of cosmopolitan interpenetrations, is also a way of preventing the drift of identitarian fragmentation of our societies. We must remember that the new cosmopolitanism implies commitment and is also lead by transnational agents, such as professional elites and emigrants.**

- Various languages can be found in European and Mediterranean dialogue which reproduce their vision of the world. **The respect and knowledge of the linguistic diversity are instruments that could improve dialogue.**

## **ACTORS AND FREEDOM TO ACT**

**Social groups or organised structures that could represent privileged partners for a new cultural policy in favour of dialogue include:**

- **Young people:** Continuous research on young people, that involves educators who work in this field and who could transmit and multiply the content of our projects in day to day practise, is essential.
- **Women:** Women today occupy a privileged position in educational institutions as teachers, and in the society as mothers, which predisposes them to becoming the transmitters of intercultural messages.
- **Immigrant communities in the region:** Their experience and condition of "cultural bridge" between the two Mediterranean shores are advantages for intercultural dialogue.
- **Local and regional authorities:** Cities, towns and regions are important allies for dialogue, due to their proximity to citizens and their exposure to intercultural conflicts.
- **Cultural operators and industries:** Their programmes reach the general public and can influence cultural public policies. Small and medium-sized cultural enterprises can amplify the effects of cultural actions.
- **The media:** Media companies exercise a fundamental influence on people. If those receiving this information are aware of the cultural diversity of the region, and of the intercultural challenges, the use of news and images will be less distorted.

## **SPECIFIC AREAS OF ACTION**

### **a) Education**

- **Review history textbooks:** The ethnocentric view of primary and secondary education can awaken sentiments of hatred and enmity in younger generations, as they create stereotypes. To this end, the teaching of history must underline the cultural contributions that Mediterranean societies transmit one to the other.
- **Promote the mobility and free circulation of people and ideas, facilitating visa procedures of people implicated in the cooperation: professors, students, researchers, intellectuals, and artists.**
- **Strengthen inter-university cooperation.**
- **Value the classics of the diverse cultures,** as well as the comparative mythologies, but not only in Europe. Arabic-Moslem countries should promote the study of their great classics.
- **Set up databases** of topics regarding the Mediterranean on music, art, literature, to be presented to pupils, and interconnect the main libraries of the region.
- **Educating for coexistence:** Ensuring that the education of young citizens is not just a schooling issue, but also a family, enterprise and media

one. Society as a whole should take responsibility for the education of young people, to instil useful values in them.

- **Favouring everything that is “intercultural learning”** i.e., that promotes diversity and plurality, including the study of the Mediterranean languages.

## **b) Communication and audio-visual media**

- **Mobilise the media** so that they carry out a role as broadcasters of Mediterranean cultures.

- **Create a Mediterranean observatory of the media, and establishing an ethical code regarding audio-visual productions.** Communication media should have as their ethical norm not to spread cultural stereotypes, and in any event to avoid them (or to analyse their use in an objective manner).

- **Promoting training and exchanges of journalists:** Organising seminars for journalists and contact among newspapers, and training programmes for young journalists, getting an understanding of the plurality of the cultures involved and shunning chauvinistic views.

- **Promoting multilingualism:** Some communication media could adopt multilingualism to connect across a diversity of audiences. Creation of low-cost small local radio stations, which are often highly effective in isolated, frequently illiterate, local populations.

- **Supporting independent media,** which allow for more freedom of expression and debate, and a more diversified information.

## **c) Literary and artistic creativity**

- **Promoting artistic creativity:** In the light of current difficulties in uncoupling artistic and literary creativity –and thought– from market mechanisms, a need exists to put in place broad channels for patronage that are robust and subscribed to by the various public and private sectors, but with excellence at the forefront. **Contribute to the foundation of cultural industries in the southern Mediterranean region. Promoting international artistic competitions where talent-spotters can discover new artists.**

- **Facilitating artists’ mobility and creativity:** Promoting exchanges and cultural tools among artists that will allow them to know each other better, understand and appreciate each other and thus establish durable relationships between diverse and plural peoples.

Artistic creativity in general –painting, sculpture, architecture, music, cinema, drama, etc.- needs to move away from the dichotomy of popular banality and intellectual elitism that is simultaneously linked to the laws of the market and speculation. Promote co-productions of different countries.

- **Disseminating Mediterranean and universal culture:** Reciprocal translations of literature from neighbouring countries within the framework

of certain European programmes, particularly into Arabic, that take in scientific, literary or artistic works, bearing in mind Euro-Mediterranean linguistic diversity.

**- Ensuring a more visible profile for women's cultural and literary output.**

Barcelona, May 23, 2008