

## 2.5 Preliminary Conclusions

*The following conclusions from the debate on new strategies for re-vitalizing the Dialogue between Cultures since February 2006 were presented by the author in his speech to the Barcelona VIII Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Tampere, on 28 November 2006.*

As the dialogue instrument of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the Anna Lindh Foundation has submitted in February to the EuroMed Committee a draft strategy for revitalising the Dialogue between Cultures, taking into account a climate of growing resentments between North and South of our region, as well as the fact that traditional modalities of dialogue have largely failed to cope with the so-called cartoon crisis. Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner and the Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly have invited the ALF to prepare mechanisms which would allow prevention and early intervention.

Let me share with you three core elements that have been identified after consultation of our national networks, regional partners, participants in our youth dialogue campaign, our Advisory Committee and a high level expert group convened together with the Arab League:

1. Xenophobia is fear of foreigners, motivated by lack of knowledge. If we want to promote mutual respect, we have to provide in all countries education for cultural and religious diversity, a minimum knowledge which is not provided in most of our school textbooks. Ironically, the so-called non-believers are the only group that is benefiting, in some EuroMed countries, from such education.
2. We need to transmit both, knowledge about shared universal values, but also about differences. Similarities and differences overlap. There are even cultural differences in pursuit of universal values such as between the English and the French way of legal provision of non-discrimination in society, the one focusing more on integration by “positive laws”, the other more on integration into republican identity.

3. We need to take a stand against any misuse of culture or religion for political purposes. Such misuse can be very subtle, for example in stressing the misconception of Europe versus Islam, as if Europe's identity would not also have Islamic roots and present features.

The Tampere conclusions concerning countering terrorism should not be misunderstood as if dialogue would be just a modality of the fight against terrorism: Dialogue cannot replace political action and negotiations; what it can do in this context, is de-legitimising any association of cultures and religions with terrorism.

We have established, together with the Council of Europe and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO), a EuroMed teacher training programme on cultural and religious diversity. The first 400 teachers from 35 countries have benefited from this programme providing educational resources hardly to be found in school textbooks.

Our Youth Dialogue programme involved more than 2000 young people which are normally excluded from dialogue projects. The programme stresses multiple, dynamic and overlapping cultural identities, thus putting into practice international agreements such as the UNESCO Universal Declaration and Convention on Cultural Diversity.

Learning about cultural diversity, the common denominator of the ALF programme, also takes place at music workshops and in establishing teams of young researchers from four different countries.

The Anna Lindh Foundation has departed from the tradition of dialogue events that bring together so-called representatives of cultures and religions. We focus on a human rights based understanding of culture as both: heritage and a space of freedom to make choices, which is the UNDP definition of quality of life.