



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture MEETING

Thursday 30 September 2010

10:00 a.m. - 13:00 p.m.

15:00 p.m. - 17:00 p.m.

European Parliament
Brussels, Room – ASP 1E2

10.00 - 11.30 First Session

Opening remarks of Eduardo Cabrita, Chair of the Cultural Committee. Welcomed the participants and presented the agenda.

Mentioned four meetings of the Cultural Committee in 2010, Lisbon, Amman, Istanbul and now Brussels, very important to successful exchange between the north and the south of the Mediterranean. This year we are to discuss three themes, which were adopted in June in Palermo, under the Italian Presidency: “Immigration and integration: dialogue between the young generations to develop a culture of peace” (Theme 1); “Dialogue between cultures and religions: towards a Mediterranean charter of values” (Theme 2); “Dialogue between cultures and religions: towards a Mediterranean charter of values; The Mediterranean heritage: the preservation of archaeological sites” (Theme 3).

Adoption of draft minutes from the meeting in Istanbul.

Briefed the members of the Enlarged Bureau meeting held in Palermo in June, namely on the difficulty to agree on a declaration regarding the Turkish humanitarian freedom ship by Israeli governmental forces.

The Chair informed that the next meeting of the Enlarged Bureau of EMPA will take place in Rome, 12 November.

Exchange of views on “Immigration and integration: dialogue between the young generations to develop a culture of peace”; (Theme 1)

Catherine Teule, *Vice-chair of the European Association for Human Rights*, started by giving some figures: 3% of the world population is migrant, and in the EU the percentage is higher at 6.2%, twice the worldwide level. However this number is misleading, a large percentage is actually from members of the EU itself, so the numbers do not justify this rise in xenophobia going on today in Europe. We need people. Most migrants today have higher level of education, more women and unaccompanied minors. These are problems for the countries of origin. It poses new problems. In the EU are we really so overwhelmed by migrants to be sending them back? By locking up our borders, we are trapping people in the EU itself. The fact that people cannot get in easily it does not create an incentive for them to leave. If we look at the Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to leave their country of origin. In fact if we don't let them in, we are not allowing them to leave. The



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EU has also an asylum problem. For the EU, this is considered bothersome but tolerated. About 75% of those who apply for asylum are rejected. We are trying to set up a common asylum system so that migrants' rights would be exactly the same whatever country they arrive at, so there will be no dumping between the countries. This initiative has been worked year after year but the EU has had some problems in finding a common ground.

In Euro-med relations the EU has agreements and partnerships with its neighbour countries; this is a way to stop people from arriving to our borders. We have training and financing given to partners countries to stop migration flows. We have to make sure that these negotiations are carried out in transparent way and in absolute respect for human rights, both from the north and the south. The UN convention on migration could be a good common basis to set up future polices. All countries in the south Mediterranean, who have not, should sign the Geneva Migrant Convention and so should the EU countries to facilitate the respect of all migrant workers and improve things for the next generation.

Bernd Hemingway, *International Organization for Migrations*, it is important to refer that the Mediterranean region is considered to be the most emblematic for south-north migration in the world. In the EU we have a mixed flow of migration which is composed of economic migrants and, in recent times, more environmental migrants, asylum seekers and trafficking migration, for sex and for labour and also unaccompanied minors.

The special factor in the Mediterranean region is not just emigrants from the south of the Mediterranean but also coming from as far as Asia and the Middle East via North Africa. We have a migratory trail route that is difficult and dangerous, desert, sea and mountains plus the demographic factor. These dangers make it more visible, in terms of media, and it changes the perception that more irregular migrants are coming this way when in fact most illegal immigrants, initially come to Europe legally and then overstay their visas.

Raül Romeva I Rueda (MPE), *Civil Liberties Committee EP*, I would like to set out three questions. The most important one is regarding values; there is a crisis of values in Europe. We must be clear on what are the fundamental rights of Europeans, or how can we manage the values and rights of people who are arriving? The question I ask is, when does a person stop being an immigrant and becomes a citizen? A second important question is the possibility of allowing a person to make a living. This is important when we talk about European polices, we must focus on the starting point of people who arrive, we need to set regional and interregional cooperation in order to minimize the perceived need for people to move. We should not mix fundamental rights with the policy of the freedom of movement of people and goods. The third issue is the economic crisis. It is clear that when there are crisis, vulnerable groups are the first ones to end up in a precarious situation. There is a certain paradox, we are talking about people living in precarious situation, when regular jobs are lost, and there is an increase of labour in the black market with greater exploitation of people who will just take any work, regardless of wages and conditions.



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Questions and Answers:

Mr. Chorfi (Algeria) on migration at the very heart of political choices and decisions. Emphasis on how Algeria is a transit country for migrants.

Mr. Kasoulides (MPE) on how the longer we take to process asylum application, the more illegal immigration we have. The need for Europe to have uniformity of wages so there is no labour dumping.

Mr. Al'Yousfi (Syria) on how migration is a problem that concerns all countries in the regions. Freedom of movement is a human right that must be respected. How war and occupation forces migration (Iraq, Palestine, etc), therefore a problem not for the countries of the north but for counties like mine.

Ms. Carmen Romero Lopez (MPE) on how members of the EP have a very different view from members from national parliaments. The position of Europe is more and more closed, as we can see how the ROM community has not been recognized as citizens. Europe is in a position of closing and pushing out.

Mr. Korichi (Algeria) on how migration is an historical phenomenon and of human rights. It seems today it is treated as a European issue, when it is a universal issue.

Ms. Arib (Netherlands) on how migration is not a recent phenomenon, this issue has been debated for more than 40 years and still is a complicated and a thorny one. At the EU level we must promote further policies to protect the rights of migrants.

Appointment of rapporteurs for Theme 1:

- Mr. Korichi (Algeria)
- Mr. Patrick Le Hyaric (MPE)

10.00 - 11.30 Second Session: Exchange of views on the “Dialogue between cultures and religions: towards a Mediterranean charter of values”; (Theme 2)

Ms Katérina Stenou, Director, Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, UNESCO. Underlined that the new dilemmas and malaises of coexistence in this very region require a fresh look at relations between culture and security, between cultural diversity and political stability. For UNESCO, this means that, more than national narratives, an intercultural thinking is needed, which will highlight exchanges and mutual influences between the Arab-Muslim world and the West. In short, a general framework has to be drawn up to showcase that a constant intercultural dialogue, during times of peace or even times of crisis, has welcomed, transformed and handed down a millenary legacy, while offering new perspectives and opportunities.

At present I am responsible for a program, an audiovisual awareness-raising tool, entitled “Intercultural Vademecum”, elaborated to combat erroneous collective representations and foster better understanding between the Arab-Muslim world and the



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other regions, in response to intercultural tensions that have arisen in recent years. Particular emphasis is laid on the need to recognize the intense interaction among all peoples in the Mediterranean Basin and the ties between them and cultures further afield in India, Persia, the Arabian Peninsula and Africa.

We now come to the heart of the matter: the Mediterranean as a metaphor, as laboratory, a palimpsest, an open historical environment, welcoming and evolving, where everyone would find sources of his/her real or symbolic origins, thus claiming one or several cultural citizenships, particularly “the Mediterranean intercultural citizenship”: *the ability and capacity of people to participate actively and responsibly in the life of their own community, their country and the world at large; it is not simply equated with nationality but it is dynamic and transformative, requiring the competence to learn and re-learn, based on notions of recognition and respect of diversity.*

Mr. Andrzej Pyrka, Gallup Organisation Europe, I’ll be talking about a poll that we have done together with the Anna Lindh foundation, which we just launched. It is important to underline ahead of the conclusions that the Anna Lindh Report has constituted an exercise of intercultural participation which has effectively brought together leading experts, opinion-makers, civil society practitioners and political representatives. In addition to pioneering for the very first time an Opinion Poll with Gallup among 13,000 people of thirteen Euro-Mediterranean countries, the Report process has engaged forty renowned experts and opinion-leaders, and identified good practices from across the Anna Lindh Networks, an approach which forms a basis for the formulation of significant conclusions.

One of the major findings of the Anna Lindh Report is that the people living across the Euro-Mediterranean region share an encouraging sense of belonging. There is a shared perspective on the common images which people associate with the 'Mediterranean', such as a specific way of life, a deep sense of hospitality and a common, widespread cultural heritage, while coincidentally, there are certain values such as 'family solidarity' and 'respect for other cultures' which can be identified as 'bridging values' across the societies of the Region.

What the findings of the Report confirm, along with an awareness of the growing human and social interrelation, is the existence of a 'Mediterranean attitude', a common mind-set which could allow the people of the Euro-Mediterranean region to feel part of a shared space with specific values different than those existing in other regional groupings, a major asset for the strategy of the Anna Lindh Foundation. Indeed, the existence of a 'homely feeling', reinforced by certain common values shared by the people of the Region and in particular its youth, is a decisive factor for the purpose of bringing people together for positive interaction within different cultural contexts, and which constitutes a preliminary element to building a collective project around the Mediterranean.

Despite the continuing limitations on cross-border mobility and free movement, as well as the limitations on the circulation of ideas and information, the Anna Lindh Report



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reveals that the Euro-Mediterranean region exists as a space of social interaction. According to the Report's Survey, around one in every three persons interviewed had the opportunity within the last year to meet people from other countries of the Region, whether through tourism, business and internet technologies, and, of course, through migrant communities living in Europeans neighbourhoods, a result which reveals that the Mediterranean exists as a real space of human and virtual interaction.

The Report also confirms that encountering other people is the best source for a non-biased knowledge, despite geographical distance, and this is the reason why the Anna Lindh Foundation fervently advocates in favour of bringing people from different countries and cultural backgrounds together and supports the development of virtual communities for dialogue.

What is in evidence is that people on the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean tend to overrate the importance of individualistic values among Europeans, while the Europeans tend to underestimate the importance of 'religious beliefs' and 'curiosity' for people on the southern and eastern Mediterranean. In terms of specific social groups who may impact on value trends, women and youth merit particular attention. Women declare a strong curiosity towards the 'other' and have an important role in shaping and conveying the main social values, while the potential of young people to act as driving forces for the wider society is revealed due to the combination of their higher level of exposure to different communities in the Region and their interest to know more about them. Changing mutual perceptions and raising public awareness about the value of cultural diversity appears as a long-term process that implies a change of perspectives that have been built throughout the centuries and through a multitude of sources, and it is precisely for this reason that the full potential of the civil society and institutional action should form the basis of common action in the largest perspective. From the media, education institutions and religious leaders to decision-makers, Euro-Mediterranean institutions and civil society organizations, all these actors must be supported and encouraged for a significant role in sustainable dialogue.

In the Euro-Mediterranean region, religion is a crucial factor in the relations and perceptions between people of different countries, and one of the major challenges to deal with relates to understanding the different approaches to religious values and practices. The Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll shows the significance of religion in the scale of values of most of the southern Mediterranean countries and, at the same time, the comparatively limited appreciation and central importance religion has for the setting of values among Europeans whose societies are on the whole more secular, even if religion occupies a place in the public sphere of many European countries.

Mr. Jean Boghossian, President of the Boghossian Foundation, I must say that three generations of my life have lived all over the Mediterranean region, so we are a living example of what we have been talking about here today.

The Boghossian Foundation was constituted in 1992 by my father Robert Boghossian, my brother Albert and myself. This foundation had until now, primarily a humanitarian



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and educational vocation. Our family is originally from Armenia, a country which they fled in 1915 at the time of the genocide. My grandfather then got settled in Aleppo, Syria, where he reunited his family members. This is where we were born. Thereafter, my father settled in Lebanon, but during the war that devastated the country we pursued our activities in the jewellery from Geneva and Antwerp.

By creating this Foundation, our objective was to share our good fortune and wealth that we have realized in our business, as well as underlining our Armenian roots by creating a network of solidarity with our people throughout their journey and especially in the twentieth century during and after the genocide. We also wish to leave a heritage to the future generations and associate our name with a generous step turned toward the future. Among other humanitarian projects: the Centre of training for the orphans in Gumri. More directed toward environmental issues: the Pushkin Park, public green space. The presidential Prize of the Republic of Armenia, granted to young people who excel in different fields of art and science, financed by the Boghossian Foundation. We have extended our action to other projects in Lebanon, our host country.

In 2006 we decided to expand the vocation of the Boghossian Foundation and to turn it into a private humanitarian and cultural foundation. It is in this context that we have acquired the very beautiful Villa Empain in Brussels, intended to become an open place for the public and for the dialogue between the various cultures of the East and the West. This dialogue seems essential to us in this current context of globalization but also in the various tensions and misunderstanding that remain present between the people. If the Villa Empain becomes the centre of shared creativity, the "embassy" of oriental cultures in the capital of Europe, we will have realized our dream.

Questions and Answers:

Mr. Dekrooj (Syria) on migration identities, different religious and cultural diversity and the acceptance of the "other", thus the important appeal of UNESCO, where dialogue is considered the asset and the bet guide for peace among all peoples.

Mr. Raul I Romeva (MPE) on migration flows, specifically to what Amin Maalouf says "human being are individuals", where our identities are multiple and this makes us unique. When we talk about intercultural dialogue we must also talk about intra-dialogue, as we are trying to do in Europe. If this is difficult for us, imagine at the Mediterranean level.

Ms. Diane Hennebert, Director of Boghossian Foundation, on the how the foundation deals directly with the question of dialogue. Note that in education books for children in Europe, we keep denying the contribution of the East to what the world is today and its heritage.

Mr. Korichi (Algeria) on language, what efforts are being made by Europe on Arabic and spreading the language and the culture of the south of the Mediterranean? That is an issue that should be taken up.

Appointment of rapporteurs for Theme 2:

- Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides (MPE)

15.00 - 17.00 Third Session: Exchange of views on The Mediterranean heritage: the preservation of archaeological sites (Theme 3)

Mr. Dominique Baudis (MPE), President of the Arab World Institute. It was in the shores of the Mediterranean that the three major monotheist religions appeared and so many cultural and scientific developments. This has to do with geography, this enclosed environment, with its diversity, the only place in the world where there is a link between three continents come together. Around the Mediterranean there are 240, more than 25% of all archaeological sites classified by UNESCO, based on three continents. To protect this heritage, its value, we have developed heritage policies, to take care of and disseminate information about these sites. Sometimes politics invades the question of heritage, we have an example of this problem in Israel with sites and also with museums asking for the return of its artefacts.

There have been different attacks against our heritage, which I divide in three: (1) natural disasters, that goes back to the beginning of time, and we cannot do anything against it – Cairo, Istanbul and so many other cities have been destroyed; (2) Also an ancient one, risks linked to war, I think of the Balkans and in the Middle East, more recently, the Museum of Beirut. War has always existed, but during the XX Century the power of the level of destruction has been exponential compared to that of weapons centuries ago; (3) pressure from human beings, the spread of towns and pressure from tourism. The Mediterranean has only 1 or 2% of water from the world but it attracts 1/3 of the world tourism. For instance, so many sites in Alexandria are today buried under construction cement, as in Jerusalem and you can see the same thing in Naples, Athens, almost everywhere. On the basis of this, what kind of recommendations can we make? Town plans drawn up that take account the historical sites, the raising of public awareness, but this will always be an ongoing effort which requires political engagement, regional planners, local planners and citizens' awareness: heritage of source of wealth, growth and employment.

Ms. Rachele Furfaro - President of the Fondazione Campania dei Festival. This is a young foundation that started in 2007 in Naples to hold the first international festival of theater, which has been happening now for three years. The Foundation was originally to hold a festival and this was something very innovative, the idea was to be very creative festival with an international dimension using not only the theaters of Naples but also archeological sites to hold productions. The public response and of critics has been positive right from the start. The Foundation has now come up with a number of projects and initiatives and they latest project is the Mediterranean Cities. The Foundation works closely with other Italian cities, Sicilian for instance for contemporary art, and to



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promote the culture of the region. In 2009 we started a project called Mediterranean Cities, supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and it involves 12 cities, both from the north and the south of the Mediterranean.

Mr. Renato Quaglia, Director on the project “le città del mediterrâneo” The aim of the project is to foster dialogue, trade and collaboration between the major cities on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. The project will last two years, culminating in 2011 with two events that will be held in Naples and in Sicily. In Naples, in public areas in the historical centre, a number of “temporary districts” will be set up, animated by different activities (representing culture, artisan activities and trade) and managed directly by the Mediterranean cities involved. In Sicily, on the other hand, twenty Museums of Contemporary Art or Art Biennials from Mediterranean cities will be invited to establish sections promoted by their own cultural institutions, offering visitors a chance to journey through the contemporary art of the Mediterranean.

Ms. Chrystelle Lucas, DG EUROPAID, we organize thematic workshops with the civil society representatives who do not necessarily benefit from Euromed Heritage IV but who are interested, we also provide tools, like documents, easily accessed through our *website*, management practices, recommendations etc and there is a section of technical assistance at national and regional level all related to heritage. We are starting to work with Tunisia and Jordan and I know Algeria is also interested. We have worked with the Council of Europe to update a thesaurus on certain terminology used and we have contributed to translations to the Arabic. There is also a Euromed information centre that can be very useful in areas such as in social affairs and transports. Keeping archeological alive is very important we do that also. We work, for instance, with children so that they take interest in heritage. In the Euro Med region will must people aware of the importance of landscape, heritage as part of the environment. We can assist with technical assistance in order to help prepare legislation to prevent the destruction and of archeological artifacts.

Questions and Answers:

Mr. Burhan (Syria) on the need for laws and regulations to stop the theft of our heritage.

Mr. Arsenis (MEP) on the responsibility as legislators to ensure the protection of cultural heritage and on the need to protect natural heritage and urban landscape.

Ms. Stenou (UNESCO) on how to move forward by revisiting our past, in other words: the importance of preserving our collective memories.

Appointment of rapporteurs for Theme 3:

- Mr. Kriton Arsenis (MPE)



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- Mr. Censu Galea (Malta)

Conclusions by Mr. Cabrita

Our strategy will be to continue the discussion of these themes in Lisbon, both at the theoretical and practical level, both on projects in the North and in the South, so that we can disseminate information and we can draw proper and recommendations for the plenary session in March. It would be important to have a *rapporteur* from the south for the second theme, we will hold further contacts in the weeks to come to this effect, before the Lisbon meeting.

Any other business

None

Date and place of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on the 31st January 2011 in Lisbon, Portugal.
