

Conference

Literary Exchange and Translation in the Euro-Mediterranean Region: Challenges of the Next Decade

The Literature Across Frontiers 10th anniversary conference was jointly organized by the General Directorate of Libraries and Publications of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Republic of Turkey and Literature Across Frontiers (LAF) Network, and was held on 26-28 May 2011 at Dedeman Hotel, Istanbul, Turkey.

REPORT

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Conference

Aims

The conference brought together invited representatives of key organizations and institutions working in the field of literary exchange and translation, European and international networks, cultural NGOs, as well as individual experts, researchers, publishers and translators with the aim to discuss the current state of policies and practice in the field of literary exchange and translation in the Euro-Mediterranean region, with a special focus on exchange between Europe and the South-East Med.

The conference discussed the environment in which literary works and books in general travel across the region, highlighted successful projects and best practices, identified key challenges and issues to be addressed in the coming decade, and formulated recommendations.

The concrete objective is to follow the conference up with a two-year project aiming to build intercultural bridges across the Mediterranean through literature within the framework of the Literature Across Frontiers programme of activities.

Participants

The conference was attended by seventy invited delegates from thirty-three countries. Several registered delegates had to cancel at the last minute but as they had contributed to the preparatory discussions and will be hopefully involved in the conference follow-up they are included in the attached list of delegates.

Format and topics

The conference functioned as a working meeting with plenary sessions and parallel workshops addressing the following topics:

- Publishing translations and challenges / opportunities of the digital age
- Translators, their training, status and working conditions
- Forums for literary exchange – book fairs, festivals, literary projects
- Literature, media and intercultural / interreligious understanding
- Best practice and policies
- Mobility of professionals and literary works in the Euro-Med region

The above topics were discussed during the workshops, and discussions were summarized in the plenary sessions that followed them. A group of moderators / rapporteurs met at the end of Day 1 to formulate key questions for workshops in Day 2, and final summaries were delivered in the concluding plenary session.

Press conference

A press conference was held at the end of Day 2 with the following speakers: **Alexandra Büchler** (Literature Across Frontiers), **James Joseph Cassidy** (European Commission), **Ümit Yaşar Gozüm** and **Onur Bilge Kula** (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey).

Organization

The conference was jointly organised by General Directorate of Libraries and Publications of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey and Literature Across Frontiers (LAF) Network, with the following **Steering Committee**:

Co-chairs: **Alexandra Büchler** (Literature Across Frontiers) and **Ümit Yaşar Gozüm** (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey)

Members: **Sònia Garcia** (Institut Ramon Llull), **Adrian Grima** (Inizjamed), **Christos Chryssopoulos** (Athens International Literature Festival), **Robyn Marsack** (Scottish Poetry Library), **Janis Oga** (Latvian Literature Centre), **Iris Schwanck** (FILI – Finnish Literature Exchange), **Zerrin Yilmaz** (Delta Publishing / Word Express Project), and, on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, **Oktay Saydam** (Head of the Publication Section), **Yakup Koç** and **Fatih Özdemir**.

Practical organization and management of the conference was undertaken by the **Conference Team**: **Mari Siôn** and **Zerrin Yilmaz** – Coordination, **Pelin Özer** and **Vildan Bizer** – Conference Assistants, **Nia Davies** and **Mehmet Altun** – Documentation

Preparation of conference contents, materials and follow-up reporting was undertaken by **Alexandra Büchler**, **Alice Guthrie** and **Mari Siôn** (LAF).

Thanks to the moderators and rapporteurs and especially to the following for their contribution to the summarizing of discussions and formulating of recommendations: **Yana Genova**, **Elizabeth Grech**, **Alice Guthrie**, **Taina Helkamo**, **Neil Hewison**, **Elin Jones**, **Robyn Marsack**, **Christoph Neumann**, **Müge Sokmen** and **Emma Turnbull**.

Background

Literature Across Frontiers has been initiating and cooperating on projects in the field of literary exchange and translation in the Euro-Mediterranean cultural space with the aim of encouraging intercultural dialogue between Europe and the South-East Mediterranean region through literature. LAF projects have included promotion of authors and literary works between the two regions, and specific projects in Turkey, Arab countries and Israel. These projects have been carried out with a range of partners such as the Anna Lindh Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures (ALF), British Council, Goethe Institut, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Helicon Society for the Advancement of Poetry in Israel, as well as many partners in Turkey.

LAF's activities in the region have concentrated on developmental work and have included:

- creation and co-organization of several new literary festivals;
- translation workshops and seminars for publishers and translators;
- the series of events *European Literature Today*, staged in Egypt in 2008-2010;
- *1001 Books for the Bibliotheca Alexandrina* - a book donation initiative;
- *Arabic Comics Project* in cooperation with Goethe Institut Cairo
- *The Cross Border Art Project* co-organised with the Anna Lindh Foundation in 2007-2009 and developed as part of the Build a Bridge Campaign launched by the ALF in the aftermath of the Israel-Lebanon war of summer 2006. The project aimed to use artistic expression to reflect the situation of a society coming out of a major conflict, and to encourage social engagement and dialogue through participation in cultural activities. The first stage of the project took five artists from the Euro-Mediterranean region on a month-long tour of Lebanon, Israel and Palestine where they worked with local artists, writers and community groups; the second stage consisted of several workshops, seminars and a publication produced by LAF.

LAF's involvement in the *Euro-Mediterranean Translation Programme* initiative (above) has consisted of the following projects:

- a study of literary translation from Arabic, Hebrew and Turkish into English in the UK and Ireland in the period 1990-2010;
- a two-day international symposium on writing, publishing and translating in minority languages of stateless nations in the Euro-Med region, held in Istanbul in January 2011;
- a project aiming to develop models for recruitment and training of literary translators from European languages into Arabic and Turkish. The implementation of the third project was disrupted by the Arab revolutions, and will be resumed in autumn 2011.

The aim of the present conference was to build on the activities of the LAF platform to date and to create a forum which would assess the current state of literary exchange in the region and discuss future cooperation within the framework of the activities of the LAF network.

Preparatory steps

Prior to the conference, the delegates were sent a brief and a questionnaire asking about their policies and activities relevant to the topic of the conference, and about examples of best practice. Delegates were also asked to list the main obstacles to literary exchange in the Euro-Med region and to suggest how they could be removed.

The questionnaire generated a range of responses which were summarized in a paper circulated in advance of the conference along with the programme, a background paper and biographies of delegates (see the attached Appendix 1, 2, 3 and 4).

In summary, the responses revealed the following:

Apart from organizations specializing in Euro-Med work, the represented organizations and institutions do not have a specific Euro-Med policy, although some are members of Euro-Med networks, such as the Anna Lindh Network, and have been involved in Euro-Med activities, particularly in cooperation with LAF.

Obstacles to Euro-Mediterranean literary exchange and translation listed by respondents can be categorized under the following headings:

- Lack of information and knowledge
- Lack of funding
- Lack of translators and translations
- Difficulties associated with publishing translations
- Mobility problems for writers and other professionals
- Problems related to multi-agency working, lack of synergies and coordination
- Media interest and the role of media, stereotyping
- Cultural challenges

Recommendations that could help overcome obstacles to Euro-Mediterranean literary exchange and translation received came under the following headings:

- Events, book fairs and festivals
- Funding and government support
- Networks and cooperation
- Translator training
- Media and promotion
- Publishers
- Improving mobility
- Improving knowledge and sharing good practice

(For further details see Appendix 1 - Summary of Responses)

Topics and areas of concern

The above topics were discussed during the workshops and discussions were summarized in the plenary sessions that followed them. A group of moderators / rapporteurs met at the end of Day 1 to formulate key questions to be presented and discussed in workshops on Day 2. The concluding plenary session of Day 2 summarized the main points and recommendations made by the conference and passed a resolution against censorship (Appendix 4).

The key issues and areas of concern emerging from the discussions on Day 1 can be listed under the following headings:

1) Policy and funding

Public funding for arts and culture in general

Why do we need public funding and what arguments can we present to policy-makers? The need to safeguard diversity, quality and independence which may be incompatible with commercial interests dictates that arts and culture cannot be left to market forces. The book market is no exception and literary works cannot be treated as a commodity and translated literature is often further disadvantaged. Questions of value and evaluation were also raised: what return are funders looking for, what is “value for money” in terms of cultural and artistic output?

With respect to EU and national funding, the principle of subsidiarity “whereby the EU does not take action (except in the areas which fall within its exclusive competence) unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level”, which affects the area of culture, was seen as not always being to the advantage of policy-making and support for culture at national and local level. The EU should be encouraged to complement support provided at national level, particularly now, at this time of severe cuts to cultural budgets across Europe.

Equally important is the need for civil society to be involved in cultural policy development, or even for cultural policy to be civil society-driven, and it is the civil society which is – or should be - the primary implementing agent. There is a real danger of cultural projects being adapted to fit policy rather than policy being informed by constant feedback from grassroots level, and this must be avoided by means of on-going consultation and dialogue between policy-makers and funding beneficiaries.

Policy relevant to literary exchange in the Euro-Med

While none of the national literature organizations from Europe have a specific Euro-Med policy, many are aware of the need to engage with the South-Med and have developed projects or participated in projects organized under the LAF umbrella in order to increase the flow of translations from their languages into Arabic. Turkey with its TEDA translation programme has achieved a considerable increase in literary translation from Turkish into a number of languages in recent years.

The only organization present with a Euro-Mediterranean policy developed as part of its overall strategy was the regional Next Page Foundation which has been supporting translation between Arabic and Eastern European languages, as well as projects in Arab countries, and was the first to conduct significant studies into translation policies and reading habits in the Arab world.

Naturally, other organizations present, such as the René Seydoux Foundation and Babelmed, and the partner organizations in the Euro-Mediterranean Translation Programme — the Anna Lindh Foundation and Transeuropéennes — focus on the region itself.

At European level, support for cultural exchange and cooperation in the region is minimal: the Culture Programme allows only limited activity in third countries, and in terms of literary exchange, LAF has been the only initiative funded by the Culture Programme which has systematically promoted and fostered Euro-Med literary exchange. There are special programmes, for example a recent call for applications for cultural cooperation with post-revolutionary Egypt, but these command very small allocations and occur on a one-off basis. Finally, under the Translation strand of the Culture Programme, only languages of countries eligible to participate in the programme are covered; this includes translation from and into Turkish but, of course not Arabic or Hebrew.

Euro-Med cultural cooperation is also encouraged and supported by the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures, but again, support for literary exchange and translation has so far been limited and ALF investment in this area has focused on fact-finding and strategy development in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Translation Programme with partners Literature Across Frontiers and Transeuropéennes.

Recommendation:

Literature and translation are integral to intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region and fostering this dialogue will require a far more generous and sustained investment at national, regional and European level into cultural cooperation in the wider region, and particularly into qualitative and quantitative research in view of evidence-based policy development, as well as into mobility, training and translation in both directions.

Public vs private sector

How can the public sector best intervene in the highly commercialized sphere of publishing, while safeguarding cultural and linguistic diversity and supporting quality? What might be the optimal model for publishing translations (commercial vs grant-dependent publishing)? Can we find new models for support for culture involving private–public partnerships? Can we learn from other sectors such as the music industry?

Official institutions vs civil society

Conference participants advocated the need for direct, unmediated contact between civil society actors, cultural NGOs and the unofficial, alternative or even underground literary scenes, as opposed to official cultural relations and cultural diplomacy, and stressed the need to assist cultural NGOs in the South-Med with capacity building. This can only be achieved by means of equitable exchanges and sharing of knowledge and experience, in which both sides of the Med learn from each other. Internships and exchanges of cultural operators should be supported in both directions in order for

equal exchange and learning to take place. In a climate of financial constraints, which direction is a priority? That with more of a deficit at the moment or that which can contribute to capacity building in the long-term? And how can we make the most of the opportunities offered by the recent changes brought about by pro-democracy movements?

Recommendation:

The role of the civil society and of the independent, unofficial cultural sector has to be acknowledged and its actors supported on both sides of the Mediterranean in order to ensure direct, unmediated contact between them with the aim of achieving equitable exchanges and sharing of knowledge and experience, in which both sides of the Med learn from each other. This will ultimately contribute to capacity building wherever it is needed and by whatever means necessary.

2) Forums for literary exchange

Several forum models were identified as being key to literary exchange: book fairs, literary festivals and projects were discussed as forums and channels for exchange and dissemination of literature in translation. The different formats serve different purposes but what they have in common in this context is that they play a role in promotion of exchange and translation and their functions overlap:

- a) trade book fairs (networking, information sharing and trading rights at book fairs)
- b) general public book fairs (bringing books and writing to the general public, promotion of reading + networking, information sharing and trading rights at book fairs)
- c) literary festivals (bringing books and writing to the general public, promotion of reading)

Book Fairs

It was suggested that combining the book fair and book festival model in having a high quality literary programme alongside publishers' stands and networking opportunities and professional programmes could be the ideal model in this context. The Prague Book Fair (attending the conference) is an example, as is the Istanbul Book Fair, and other book fairs which cater for the general public rather than being mainly trade fairs. In the Arab world, this model is still rare and should be encouraged. The financing of such cultural and professional programmes is, of course, an issue here.

Two examples were given of positive action in focusing on literary exchange between the Arab world and Eastern Europe: the Prague Book Fair which focused on Arabic literature and Slovakia which has systematically promoted its literature in Arabic-speaking countries in recent years. Both countries have a huge translation deficit in both directions, but are hoping to improve the situation with the help of qualified translators. Lack of awareness and interest on the part of readers appears to be the greatest obstacle. Recruiting, training and supporting translators, maintaining contact with publishers and literary periodicals, in addition to providing translation grants, are seen as the way forward.

Festivals

Festivals mostly straddle the public/private domain and the question is to what extent they are seen as commercial vehicles for the promotion of newly released titles (which is the case also with book fair programmes) or whether they could be more than that: networking and exchange forums. The

commercial model is widespread in the UK and some other countries, while the non-commercial model is in evidence for example in Eastern Europe where literary festivals are smaller and their role is both to cater to the general public and to create a forum where authors, translators, publishing professionals and cultural operators meet and exchange ideas and knowledge, discussion of projects, etc.

The following questions were raised in this context: how exactly do festivals encourage reading and engagement with literature at a deeper level? What mark do costly festival appearances of authors really leave on the audiences?

The South-Med Region

While there are several book fairs in Turkey (TUYAP book fairs in Istanbul, Bursa, Diyarbakir) and in the South Med (Beirut, Cairo, Casablanca, Jerusalem), they still largely lack the international trade dimension of European book fairs and function mostly as book “bazaars” for the general public, especially in the absence of effective book distribution networks in the Arab world. Each of these fairs has its own distinctive character and their international content is supplied mainly by locally based foreign cultural institutes and embassies, rather than by the trade itself.

As for festivals, Turkey has several poetry festivals, but the first literary festival based on the international model was established only a few years ago (Istanbul Tanpinar Literature Festival run by the Kalem Agency). The literary festival model has also been largely exported to the Arab world from Europe (for example the one-off Beirut39 Hay Festival, PalFest, Emirates Airlines Dubai Festival of Literature and festivals in the Maghreb). A closer survey of festivals in the region would be able to answer questions such as: what are their aims and target audiences; to what extent do they grow out of local traditions of disseminating literary works, especially poetry, or do they rather conform to the Western commercial festival model and how does this benefit local audiences? Do they serve as networking forums? What is the media response to them? In what ways do they promote reading among wider audiences and young people? In Europe, for example, the Voix de la Méditerranée poetry festival in the town of Lodève in Southern France creates a space for dialogue between poets from the wider region, audiences and French poetry publishers. In Malta, there is the Malta Festival of Mediterranean Literature organized by the cultural NGO Inizjamed, in Greece the DaseinFest – Athens International Literature Festival, which focuses on young authors and on the crossover between literature and other art forms. Both are modest but concentrate on the developmental potential of bringing writers and artists together for a period of time, and there may be a case for supporting more similar initiatives and developmental models in this context,

Projects

As for projects, the various models share the following functions which again overlap:

- a) Networking and knowledge sharing, professional exchanges
- b) Collaboration, creation and production of new work across cultures and languages (new writing or translations, presentation and dissemination of these)
- c) Dissemination of work and information (media projects, publications, websites, DVDs)

The notion of sustainability of cooperation projects and artistic collaborations was discussed from the point of view of cultural operators and artists on the one hand and from the point of view of

funding bodies on the other. It seems that funders usually equate sustainability with the ability to demonstrate future independence of funding, especially of the original funding source which supported the initial stages of the project. On the other hand, sustainability for artists and cultural operators means continuity and development of working relationships in a supportive environment which ultimately allows development and creation of new work.

How can these notions can be reconciled is a key question, and lack of financial security on the part of cultural NGOs eager to cooperate across cultures in ways different from the “cultural diplomacy model” espoused by government and semi-government bodies and institutions is a major issue to be addressed in the future.

Recommendation:

- a) Identify and analyze examples of best practice in the field of literary exchange and translation with reference to forums such as book fairs, festivals and projects to develop guidelines for future cooperation in this sphere.

3) Mobility

Mobility of literary professionals across the region is of central importance to cultural and literary exchange, and the growing visa restrictions in the Shengen zone and the British Isles are a major concern for all organizations engaged in cultural cooperation between Europe and the South Med.

Lack of mobility funds is another concern, especially at a time of cuts to cultural budgets, and organizations and individuals spend a disproportionate amount of time securing small amounts of money to fund necessary travel.

Recommendations:

- a) Collect more information about current cross-Med mobility support available at EU, regional and national level and develop more detailed recommendations in cooperation with other networks and organizations in view of increasing the capacity and resources of existing funds, and establishment of quick-response mobility funds across Europe to facilitate mobility of cultural professionals, including authors, translators, researchers, staff and independent literary organizers.
- b) Investigate the feasibility of devolvement of EU mobility funds to a consortium of European and regional organizations which could redistribute them by means of an uncomplicated, quick-response scheme based on knowledge of the field and its actors.
- c) EU governments should be lobbied following the model of the UK-based *Manifesto Club's Visiting Artists and Academics Campaign for International Collaboration and Exchange* <http://www.manifestoclub.com/visitingartists>, and that European mobility networks and campaigns against visa restrictions for artists, cultural workers and academics should join forces in order to achieve lifting of such restrictions, e.g. On The Move or Culture Action Europe. www.on-the-move.org, www.cultureactioneurope.org)

4) Publishing

The conference discussed the impact of the forces of globalization on the one hand and the fragmentation of the cultural market, especially in the field of books, on the other. A number of problems were discussed, for example the difficulty in monitoring translation quality, print runs and distribution of subsidized books, especially in the Arab world. At the same time, it was acknowledged that, despite its size as a single-language market, the Arab book market suffers from a number of problems which prevent publishers from issuing large print runs, something European agents and rights holders find it difficult to understand. As a result, the expectations of right holders are unrealistic when selling rights for Arabic translation.

The participants debated the challenges of the digital age at length and asked if e-publishing could make the dissemination of translated literature easier, and if so, under what conditions. The questions of e-rights and technical difficulties presented by e-publishing for bilingual or multilingual editions were also raised. The threat of piracy, especially in the Arab world, further complicates e-publishing which still bears little relevance to the Arab world. Kotobarabia is a rare example of a company specializing in e-publishing in the Arab world, but its main focus are original Arabic titles.¹

E-publishing in the form of e-books and on the internet was seen as a way of circumventing censorship and overcoming the notorious problems of distribution in the Arab book market. There are many popular literary websites, both in Arabic, English and other languages which serve as an example of digital publishing in the Arab world. Free access, non-profit internet publishing however has its limits in terms of available resources, and sometimes suffers from problems inherent in lack of editorial monitoring, but it is an obviously one of the ways forward in disseminating literary content. On the other hand, publishing translations on the internet and in e-book form clearly offers unprecedented dissemination possibilities: many translated print books are published in very small print runs (500-1,500) while a text published on a free-access website may be read by thousands.

It was agreed that digital publishing is an area which should be explored further in relation to translation and that translation funding organizations should take digital advances into consideration when developing their policies and guidelines.

Recommendation:

- a) Develop initiatives which would foster a better understanding about the Arab book market on the part of European publishers and literary agents.
- b) Assess the opportunities offered by e-publishing to translated literature, especially with respect to young readers who are the “digital natives” of our time. Assess how reading can be promoted through digital channels and how digital publishing can be harnessed to serve diversity.

¹ See also Digital Minds Network and the study *Digital Publishing in Developing Countries* at <http://digitalmindsnetwork.com>

5) Media and intercultural understanding

The media play an important role in shaping perceptions of other cultures, whether within the borders of a single country or internationally, and their role in guiding discourse on translated literature is equally vital. From reporting on international literary events, reviewing and allocating space to reviews of translations, to offering a more complex analysis of literature in translation and its socio-cultural context, the media both reflect and shape public opinion and our attitudes to this form of cultural mediation.

Digital technology has opened the door to a range of new forms of communication and to alternative media complementing and challenging the power of mainstream media. How can mainstream media be made more receptive to translated literature (especially in terms of reviewing) and how can the media in general become a better tool for debate on the value of a broader publishing scope? Alternative media, on the other hand often fills the gaps in mainstream media reporting and meets the needs of specialized communities (e.g. Babelmed project).

Recommendation:

Investigate the ways in which alternative media can be supported in its role of complementing and challenging mainstream media in guiding discourse on translation and translated literature, and collect examples of best practice by mainstream media in promoting translated literature to be highlighted and disseminated.

6) Translation and translators

A number of translation-related problem areas were identified as requiring urgent action targeting both literary translators and publishers, and in particular translators working in the South Med and into Arabic and Turkish. Provision of literary translation training, especially from less widely-spoken European languages, and monitoring and assessing translation quality in both directions were seen as top priority areas requiring attention. Capacity building, professionalization of the translation industry and overall improvement of working conditions for literary translators are needed not only to ensure that literary translation becomes a viable career choice for language and translation studies graduates, but also that the number of translation and translation quality increases across the board. It was however acknowledged that this is a complex problem which calls for complex, step-by-step long-term solutions.

Recommendations:

- a) Develop strategies for the recruitment and training of literary translators into Arabic and for the professionalization of literary translation and improvement of the status and working conditions of translators working into Arabic.

- b) Develop strategies for the recruitment and training of literary translators into Turkish from less widely used languages.

- c) Develop methods for quality monitoring and assessment of literary translations from and into Arabic and Turkish in cooperation with agencies supporting translation on the one hand and publishers on the other.
- d) Gather information about residencies and travel bursaries for translators working from and into Arabic and Turkish and investigate the possibility of creation of new residency opportunities for literary translators in Arab countries and Turkey.

7) Education

Broadening the scope of literary education and language learning was identified as one of the methods by which school children could be introduced to other cultures and cultures of immigrant communities in Europe could be validated. The participants asked how we could influence the education system on both sides of the Med with a view to integrating literary exchange into the curricula, and creating more contact zones, but also acknowledged that this is a vast task which falls outside the scope of possible action pursued by the present organizations.

Recommendation:

- a) Collecting, analyzing and disseminating examples of best practice introducing literary exchange into schools, and developing guidelines that would encourage schools to use EU programmes for this purpose could be a first step forward to be taken by an appropriate organization or consortium of organizations.

8) A Hub for Euro-Mediterranean Literary Translation?

The concluding session of the conference focused much of its energy on the possibility of establishing a hub for Euro-Mediterranean literary exchange and translation which could take the form of a Euro-Mediterranean Translation House or operate as a multi-partner forum with a variety of physical spaces dedicated to providing opportunities for dialogue, training and meetings.

Recommendation:

- a) Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Euro-Med Translation House or Euro-Med Literary Exchange Centre, either as a physical or virtual entity, which would organize meetings, seminars and residencies, and act as a point of information on literary exchange and translation in the region.

Key conclusions and recommendations

The conference concluded that the need for intercultural dialogue between Europe and the South Mediterranean has never been greater and that the recent pro-democracy movements in the Arab world have created a momentum which offers a unique opportunity to interconnect literary scenes on both sides of the Mediterranean, locate literary exchange in a wider social, cultural and political context, and celebrate the unprecedented potential freedom of expression the Arab Spring could make possible once the ongoing revolutionary processes are complete.

At the same time, there is a need to continue developing cooperation with organizations, institutions and individuals in Turkey so as to achieve a more substantial, multi-directional literary exchange in the East-Med region in which Turkey plays a significant political, economic and cultural role. Literary exchange with Turkey must extend beyond literature written in Turkish to that written in the Kurdish languages.

We should therefore strive to include Arab and Turkish organizations and cultural players in European platforms and networks, with the aim of learning as much as possible about each other's cultural environments. It is important however to keep exchange equal and balanced at all times, and to achieve a situation in which we can transfer knowledge, and share experiences and ideas in both directions. Freedom of expression is essential to such an exchange of ideas and the conference delegates passed the following resolution regarding freedom of speech:

The participants of this conference have noted with regret recent censorship and the prosecutions of publishers, writers and translators. We wish to state that Literature Across Frontiers and its network of partners stand for freedom of expression for writers, translators and publishers, and passionately believe in the free exchange of books and ideas within and across national borders.

Any action aiming to address the deficits in literary exchange in the region must address a host of interrelated issues and target a range of actors. A strategic approach involving a comprehensive, multifaceted initiative addressing identified problems and offering solutions is required. Such an initiative would take the form of a series of pilot projects, planned, implemented and evaluated within the next two years by a consortium of partners under the LAF umbrella. This initiative will target the following groups and cover the following areas:

Target groups

- Policy-makers and funders at national, regional and EU level
- Publishers, editors, literary organizations, cultural NGOs and forums on both sides of the Mediterranean
- Literary translators in the South-East Mediterranean (training, status and conditions of work)

Areas to be covered

- Advocacy, information and data collection processing and provision
- Sharing information on best practices, transfer of knowledge in all directions
- Training, internships, residencies
- Mobility of professionals

The initiative will create an initial hub for contacts, information flow and networking and will investigate the feasibility of establishing a centre, physical or virtual, which would organize meetings, seminars and residencies, and act as a point of information on literary exchange and translation in the region.

[END]