

Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference: Establishment of Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures

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*Eric Idema
Institute for Information Law (IViR), University of Amsterdam*

At the sixth Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, held in Naples on 2 and 3 December 2003, Foreign Affairs Ministers decided, on the basis of a proposal by the European Commission, to set up a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for cultural dialogue. The Conference was held within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which was set up in Barcelona in 1995. The Partnership, which includes the EU, its Member States and twelve Mediterranean countries, aims to establish a common Euro-Mediterranean area of peace and stability, create a free-trade area and promote understanding between cultures.

The objective of the Foundation is to promote dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures and civilisations in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The Foundation will be organised in such a way that it can function as a catalyst for initiatives. A special High-Level Advisory Group, established at the initiative of the president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, has prepared a report in which it identifies a number of guiding principles and proposals for action, which should form the basis of the intercultural dialogue and direct the action of the Foundation. Among other things, the report stresses the role of the media in establishing this dialogue. It suggests, inter alia, developing courses on cultural diversity in journalism schools and film academies. It advocates educating the general viewing public by creating tele-clubs and involving young people in programme design. Also, the report wants to encourage the production and distribution of films from and about the Mediterranean. With support from the already existing Euromed Audiovisual Programme, "neighbourhood channels" should be created to link immigrant populations with their countries of origin. Also with EU co-funding, the installation of one or more multilingual unencrypted television channels on existing satellites should be supported. Lastly, the report calls for the creation of an independent media observatory, attached to the Euromed Foundation.

The Foreign Affairs Ministers at the Naples Conference have taken note of the report and expressed their support for launching the Euromed Foundation as soon as possible, thereby ensuring the necessary financial resources.

