

*Citizenship matters: the
participation of young women and
minorities in Euro-Med youth
projects*

.....

*A training course for youth workers and youth leaders
active within Euro-Med youth projects*

Swedish Institute in Alexandria
Alexandria, Egypt, 19–29 April 2004

Seminar report
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Council of Europe Publishing

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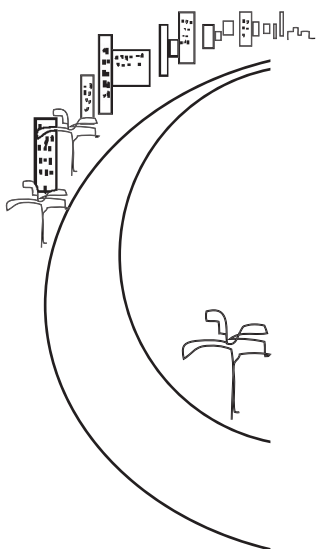
The seminar that this report documents would have never been the memorable experience it became without the dedicated and generous commitment of:

- ♦ The anonymous people of Alexandria who made us realise that any encounter between civilisations and cultures is always first and foremost an encounter between people, fellow human beings, men and women, children and adults, young and old
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Rui Gomes

Directorate of Youth and Sport of the
Council of Europe, European Youth Centre Budapest



Foreword

A seminar born out of a firm belief in concrete meetings and interaction between individuals ... How can you possibly reflect such an event in writing without ridding it of all the smells, laughs, cries and contradictions that belong to life?

It is my hope that this report, with all its limitations, shall serve the purpose of forwarding reflection, of slowly but steadily adding pieces to the understanding of oneself, others, and the world we live in. I also hope that it will make meaningful reading for participants and others alike.

I would like to express my admiration for all who took part in the seminar, irrespective of their role, for their commitment during the days in Alexandria and, not least, for the work that they are engaged in on a daily basis back where they live. Thanks to all who contributed to the report by way of taking notes and/or writing down personal reflections. For the help and support with the final editing, thanks are due to Rui Gomes at the European Youth Centre Budapest.

Stockholm Spring 2005

Ingrid Ramberg



Conclusion

To live like a tree, unique and free
Like a forest in harmony

Nazim Hikmet

Two fundamental dimensions of human life

This report deals with two fundamental dimensions of human life: the individual's unconditioned right to recognition, security and protection – necessary prerequisites in order for each and everyone of us to be able to live 'unique and free': and the right for collectives of various kinds – ethnic or religious groups, nations and minority groups alike – to be heard and listened to in an unbiased and harmonious dialogue. The tree and the forest.¹

More specifically, this report aims to capture the essence of a training course for youth workers and youth leaders active within Euro-Med youth projects. The theme of the training course was 'citizenship matters and the participation of young women and minorities in Euro-Med projects'.

The course took place within a framework of the partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of Euro-Med youth training. Participating countries in this joint undertaking include all of the EU members, plus the other ten signatories, along the southern and eastern sides of the Mediterranean Sea, of the 1995 Barcelona Declaration.

Algeria
Egypt
Israel
Jordan
Lebanon
Morocco
Palestinian
Authority
Syria
Tunisia
Turkey

1. *Thanks to team member Mr Alper Akyüz for reminding me of the relevance and beauty of these lines from Nazim Hikmet's poetry.*

In his opening speech, MR DIETRICH ROMETSCH, on behalf of the European Commission, described the Euro-Med Youth Programme as one of the corner stones of the European Commissions's activities in the youth field. The three overarching aims of the programme as he introduced them were centred around

- 1) the improvement of mutual understanding among young people across the Euro-Mediterranean region;
- 2) the integration of young people into social and professional life; and
- 3) the increasing importance of youth organisations and the development of young people's active citizenship.

"The programme", said Mr Rometsch, "constitutes a concrete framework that enables and facilitates interaction through three types of activities: youth exchanges, voluntary service and support measures."

In his opening speech, MR RUI GOMES, from the Council of Europe, placed the Euro-Med cooperation within the framework of the Human Rights Education Youth Programme, launched in 2000 by the Council of Europe, and the commitment of this programme to support young people in promoting and defending universal

*human rights
are a far too
important a
matter ...*

human rights, their rights as the rights of others. "Human rights", Mr Gomes stated, "are a far too important a matter to be left to lawyers and politicians only." He described the role of young people in the process as very valuable: "not because they need to learn about human rights more than other people, but because their thirst for justice and fairness, their generosity and feeling of solidarity gives them a special role in seeing that a violation of human rights anywhere is a violation of human rights everywhere."

In his words of welcome, MR JAN HENNINGSSON, director of the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, described the institute as a place where people can speak freely and frankly. "We have seen it happen many times", he told the group, "that people arrive with certain expectations, only

to go home saying ‘I would never have dreamed ...’. In short, they leave having received more than they expected. I hope that this experience of ours, from earlier meetings, that issues and problems are being mentioned by name, will also be your experience. This was also the vision of Anna Lindh, Sweden’s late Foreign Minister: ‘Let people meet people, meet physically, and feel at ease.’ And in an atmosphere characterised by openness, I believe these meetings can prepare the way for progress.”

*I would never
have dreamed ...*

Mr Henningsson also quoted Rigoberta Menchú Tum, the Nobel Peace prize winner of 1992, who organised women, making their voices heard: “‘If you let me speak ...’ It makes all the difference if people are allowed to put their experience into words, and express their views on things. I think the framework of this seminar can be described as a way of insuring that those who have no easy access to decision making processes be heard.”

.....

At the opening of the Swedish Institute in Alexandria in October 2000 the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Sweden expressed their visions. Mr Amr Moussa called the institute a contribution to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. “It is commonly accepted today that no country, whatever its location, can afford to be isolated from the global economy or go alone on the path of international politics.” Late Foreign Minister Anna Lindh said that “(w)e must prevent suspicions from gaining ground and try to identify and overcome obstacles to mutual respect. Prejudice can only be met by enlightenment, personal experience and confidence-building dialogue. /.../ The aim of our dialogue should be to strengthen universal values such as tolerance and understanding, democracy and human rights.”

In May 2004 there was a decision taken by the European union to create an “Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the dialogue of cultures” with the aim of developing dialogue for an increased understanding between European, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. The foundation is hosted together by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Swedish Institute.

In the invitation for the training course in Alexandria, the aims of the course were presented as follows: “The training course aims to develop a common understanding about the challenges to the participation of women and minorities in youth projects and to identify educational principles to promote global citizenship of young people in Euro-Med projects. Specific objectives were:

- ♦ To develop participants’ knowledge and understanding of women’s and minorities’ rights as universal human rights and their reality within the societies concerned with the Euro-Med Youth programme;
- ♦ To explore existing challenges and obstacles relating to the participation of young women and minority young people in European and Mediterranean countries;
- ♦ To provide participants with methodological insights and approaches in using human rights education and intercultural learning in youth programmes and projects for social cohesion and citizenship;
- ♦ To discuss and identify common educational principles and criteria for the promotion of the participation of women and minorities in Euro-Med youth projects;
- ♦ To share experiences and projects of best practice in citizenship promotion through intercultural youth exchanges;
- ♦ To extend participants’ knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural realities of young people across the Mediterranean area in general, and of Egypt in particular;
- ♦ To provide participants with useful information and contacts for future Euro-Med youth projects.

Expectations and outcomes

The participants on the training course travelled from twenty different countries. They had different backgrounds and different needs, but they shared the will to expand their capacity and perspectives through a learning

process that involved theory and practice on both personal and professional levels. This is what one of them, Ms RUT ERDELYIOVA from Slovakia, formulated about her expectations in her application form.

As the programme director of a Youth Foundation, I carry the responsibility of creating programmes which create opportunities to young people of all backgrounds, including young women and minority youth. Given the fact that my country is in the process of complicated and difficult changes which very much affect the lives of all young people, I am eager to learn anything that helps me create opportunities for their participation in decision-making processes, improves their status in society and contributes to the protection of their rights, regardless of their status and origin.

Having returned home after the course, she comments in a mail on what the course had given her:

I have just come back from Alexandria, an event that was not a seminar. It was a LIFE CHANGING experience in many aspects.

From a professional point of view it helped me to understand the philosophy and operational structure of the Euro-Med programme, but it also helped me to become sensitive to a whole range of issues, which I would not have thought of on my own, related to youth programmes. As a result, I will put emphasis on the active promotion of gender equality in all our programmes and will try to create space for minority-sensitive projects and human rights education. The necessary know-how was a by-product of the seminar.

On a personal level, I arrived in Egypt as an ignorant and islamophobic Central-European, and I left as a Jewish person fascinated by Arab cultures and in love with the Arab people. I will not be able to stop talking about my experiences with the Arab world for a long time now. The challenge to my own prejudices and lack of knowledge has been painful at certain

a life-changing experience!

moments, but it has changed the way I'll see the world, politics and Arab cultures for the rest of my life.

I wish I could convey the atmosphere when Palestinians and other Arabic people sat together with the rest of us, discussing hot issues that we, as Europeans, only have the chance to know about from news broadcasts: the intensity of sharing and multicultural exchange taking place is beyond measure.

I just wish many more people could be lucky enough to get the chance to be challenged like this. The world would become a different place.

• • • • •

Participants came from:	<i>As a human rights activist I want to advance the protection of minorities and vulnerable groups, and to enlarge the mission of youth minority and women's participation in the process of building a tolerant and multicultural society.</i>	SUZANA RICEA
Austria		
Belgium		
Bulgaria	<i>As a student in Arabic studies, I touched such themes. But I would like to build up my know-how beginning at my young age (I am 21 in April), to contribute to all these rights, and to convince others of the value of them. Meeting other people from other countries with a different political and cultural heritage is the basis of a more tolerant world-society ... Participation is the beginning of the realisation of a common dream: changing the world, beginning with yourself.</i>	YOUNES OUCHAN
Denmark		
Egypt		
Finland		
Hungary		
Israel		
Italy		
Latvia		
Morocco		
Palestinian Authority	<i>To be a Palestinian woman is enough reason to participate in any activity or course that might improve the rights of women in my society, because the challenges are big and difficult and we should exploit any opportunity we can for improvement.</i>	
Poland		
Russian Federation		
Slovakia		
Spain	<i>Anyone who watches the news should understand how much the whole world needs to accept others. I would say that most of the wars in the world happen because of the ignorance of minorities. Therefore it is also very important to concentrate on young people, because they have open minds.</i>	RADWA ABDEL FATTAH AHMAD MUSA
Sweden		
Tunisia		
Turkey		
United Kingdom		

Citizenship matters

The headline of the training course invites different interpretations, depending on how the words are stressed. One possible reading, a highly relevant one, exposes the crude fact that it does make a big difference what passport you carry. The nationality of a passport decides where its bearer can travel, and on what conditions. In relation to the training course this mattered very specifically, in that some invited participants were not able to attend – because of visa problems. Others talked about waiting nervously at the airport during passport control.

Unequal treatment, however, does not limit itself to the passport as a physical object. In day-to-day interaction, citizenship is defined not only by papers, but also by such things as the colour of your skin and the quality of your hair. A person who does not look ‘right’ is likely to be brought to question, to be defined as a ‘non-belonger’ over and over again, whatever the papers may say.



*defined not only
by papers*

I stopped travelling across borders by train because I felt so uneasy always to be the one picked out. Border controls at airports did not differentiate in that way. I say did not, because now that, too, has changed. To be accepted in the line for EU member countries you cannot have a nose or a moustache like mine. I have learned that through sad experience ...

Kurdish refugee carrying a Swedish passport

Citizenship for whom?

Many school books in many countries probably use headlines like the one I remember from the book that introduced me to the political system of ancient Greece. “The first democracy” it read, although the system referred to was in fact a fellowship for men only, free men even. Slaves

and women did not count. Still today, institutionalised inequalities that systematically and deliberately discriminate against women exist in many countries. Women's testimonies may be worth less in court than men's, or women may inherit less than do men. In some countries a woman's citizenship follows that of her husband when she marries. Conditions like these form part of reality in many parts of the world, and examples are many.

Restrictions relating to citizenship can also be studied by means of looking at how existing laws are implemented, that is, who is allowed to acquire a certain citizenship and on what conditions. In many European countries hundreds of thousands of people live year after year without papers. They may be integrated economically, in the sense that they have become indispensable to the market system, but without accumulating any personal benefits such as insurance or pension. A euphemism such as 'guest worker' illustrates clearly the lack of balance to the system. Equally problematic is the labelling of people as being 'illegal'. Motives or needs may be insufficient, or even falsified, but no individual is ever illegal, and nobody deserves having his or her story dismissed or lost, just because there are so many others.

Citizenship is furthermore a matter of institutionalised day-to-day practice. For instance, are all children registered immediately after birth? Are both boys and girls registered with the same accuracy? In most countries, access to education, to health care or to any dimension of society, demands that you are registered. If a girl with no ID becomes a mother, then the same problems are inherited by her children, who do not exist in the eyes of society. In this sense, too, the question of citizenship remains linked to economic status: poor people run a higher risk of not having their rights as citizens safeguarded. The Egyptian participants on the course verified the existence of these problems, but also talked of an ongoing campaign in their country to provide unregistered women with official ID-documents.

Every society has its blind spots, deriving from our context-bound understanding of normality. Maybe the inhabitants of ancient Greece did not question the fact that the right to speak and vote was reserved for free men only. Today we do not know if maybe tomorrow we will regard it as strange that children do not have the right to vote in elections. However, an ever-growing exchange of information and ideas, resulting from globalisation and raising levels of education and awareness, paves the way for comparison and change in both legal systems and daily practices. Countries in which women and men are not described and treated as equals before the law can no longer escape opposition, neither from the outside nor from within.

The different value of different citizenships

Within the context of any one country, citizenship is an indispensable prerequisite for living on an equal basis with others. But what about when we start comparing citizenships across national borders? Or lives with different citizenships within one and the same country?

It is unavoidable that, whereas we may think of cultures as different and equal at one and the same time – something anthropologists would call ‘cultural relativism’ – the same attitude is less visible when it comes to citizenship. There is a clear ranking – clear not in its details maybe, but in the way the system works. While some passports are door-openers, associated with wealth, tourism and an aura of internationalism, other passports give rise to suspicion: isn’t this a potential asylum seeker who should not be allowed in?

Sociologist Hassan Hosseini-Kaladjahi has elaborated on this theme in relation to immigrants and discrimination. He formulates a word of warning against devoting too much energy to defining cultures and cultural minorities. Instead, we ought to see and deal with the consequences

of the ranking between countries in terms of economy and level of industrialisation. Integration, he argues, is much more a matter of class differences than of differences in ethnicity. (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2002:121–132)

For a refugee-to-be, citizenship can be a hindrance; this we know from the fact that some people actually throw away their documents, hoping that this will facilitate a new start in a new country. For others, although they live in their countries of birth, citizenship can become a serious obstacle in life. In present-day Europe, with many countries undergoing rapid change, with or without physical violence, many people are suddenly told that they carry the wrong passport, speak the wrong language, or are wrong and unwanted in other ways. This is what one participant formulated on this matter:

What does it mean to be a member of a minority community? Well, it took me quite some time to think it over and to collect my thoughts. Of course I can speak only for myself, reflecting the reality I face in everyday life.

I am quite an optimistic person and wouldn't like to write only about bad things. (My short composition would look like a complaint if I did this. I will try to mention both the good and bad sides of life in my country.

I am probably a lucky person: in spite of being a minority member I have managed to get a job. But my work includes a constant struggle for survival. People are very unfriendly and cold. There isn't a sense of unity in our society, only traces of separation. You know, I almost never experience a cultural shock when I go abroad to visit unknown countries (Egypt was a rare exception), but I always experience it when I return home. I know that this does not sound patriotic, but that is the way it feels.

It will probably sound strange having said this, but I love my country. It is my motherland; I like everything...except the people. There is constant combat between different groups. Why does it have to feel like a misfortune to belong to a minority group? We are all humans, so why this strict division? The

main issue to me is that we remain tolerant human beings ...

I want to hope that I will be able to survive (in the direct and the figurative sense). If we join the EU it will create new opportunities, but prices are already rising and no one knows when salaries will join this process - something that worries everybody in my country.

I was very lucky to be accepted to participate on this course in Egypt, gaining new knowledge, new friends, and new opportunities. For me it was like a breath of fresh air, a small amount of oxygen that will last me a very long time.

I think of when we were asked to draw a tree illustrating our identity. In my case, my personality was all hidden under the leaves. I want to hope that some day in the future I will be able to unveil it and to speak freely about who I am. Come that day, I hope it will sound meaningful even in my country ...

A PARTICIPANT

What you see depends on where you look

In a folder introducing 'The partnership on Euro-Mediterranean Youth Co-operation in the field of Training' (Spring 2003), the general situation which motivates special efforts is described in the following words:

"It is often stated that the history of Europe has been shaped by exchanges and interaction between peoples and cultures across the Mediterranean Sea. What is less obvious at present is to what extent and in which ways and in which spirit such exchanges will happen in the future. Young people are often confronted with obstacles to mobility and youth exchanges that are the result of typical forms of xenophobia, prejudice and ignorance about one another. Yet, young people are crucial for the future of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation."

It is not difficult to find facts that feed images of a binary opposition between the north and south shores of the

Mediterranean. Such interpretations are reinforced by news about refugees landing their boats on the Spanish coast or at the Italian island of Lampedusa, not to mention those who drown before reaching any shore. Different living conditions, as well as strict immigration laws, constitute substantial hindrances to communication and interaction.

The economic and political framework is there and must be acknowledged. There is an indisputable imbalance of power between the north and the south, between the first and second half of the hyphenated concept of Euro-Med. Nevertheless, the agenda for a course that aims at promoting exchange and interaction on a local and individual level among young people has to address things differently. If one were to compare the approach of the course to the old serenity prayer – the one that asks for peace of mind to accept what you cannot change, for courage to change what can be changed, and for enough wisdom to tell the difference between the two – one could say that emphasis was put on the feasible, on the achievable. The whole get-together was very practical in its search for dialogue, for the positive broadening of the range of things open to possible change, actions and ways of thinking alike. Far from taking a confrontational stand, the course strove to equip its participants with competence, self-confidence, network building and good working methods. Considerable effort was put into listening capacity, empathy and the willingness to try to understand the standpoint of the other before making judgements.

The rule and the exception

In 2002 the Euro-Med Partnership was presented in a brochure called 'Dialogue between cultures and civilisations in the Barcelona process'. In 24 pages, the general idea of the partnership is introduced, together with concrete information on the youth programme, and on

contacts in different countries. What has made this publication stay in my mind is not so much its written content as its photographs. The presentation of this 'framework for dialogue', as it is called, 'not only between countries, but also between societies, cultures and civilisations' does not in itself give testimony to a dialogue on equal terms. In the photographs, 'culture' and 'cultural heritage' are placed very distinctly on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The buildings, the people, the activities, the outfits – everything breathes tradition. In contrast to this, Europeans – still through my interpretation of primarily the photographs – appear as the carriers of modernity, preparing young high-flyers for the future.²

Of course there is nothing wrong with exporting or sharing technology, and partnerships can be very fruitful for all involved. But what I want to highlight is something quite different. It concerns the division of roles and identities that occurs, and the unintended perceptions of oneself and others that may come out of processes aiming at quite different goals. The problem I notice in the photographs in the brochure is that they link the South to history and tradition only, and the North to modernity and technology only. This division of labour resembles very much a world order in which the richer parts of the world consume the 'sun, sea and sites' of the poorer parts of the world, without acknowledging the lack of balance it creates and reinforces, and without reflecting on the parallel existence of sameness and difference.

Culture is something we all live with varieties of. It is not something that 'the others' have – while 'we' are only 'normal'. The truth is that my normality is normal only to me. However difficult it is to embrace in practice and not only in theory, I think the course in Alexandria really

2. *Approached from a different angle, the division in characterisation between the north and the south of the Mediterranean can instead be 'culture versus nature'. The UN list of World Heritages includes numerous cultural sites in the north, whereas sites in Africa are for the most part natural wonders.*

took the issues of reflection and self-consciousness very seriously.

How bilingual is your own street?

One day of the course was devoted to the participants' exploration of multicultural realities in Alexandria. The aim was to create situations in which the individual participants could see 'places and people in reality, and in every-day living conditions'. Trying to step into the shoes and the lives of other people is not an easy task. Knowing this, the team had planned the day in stages, with a series of questions – not to determine the focus of interest beforehand, but to help in the reflection process.

The many strong reactions to the day out in Alexandria clearly showed how difficult it is to go against preconceived expectations. Many, of course, came back overwhelmed with positive impressions. What I want to comment on however, are some interesting negative reactions.

Many Egyptians expressed their regrets that the day had not been spent in nicer places – why were these visiting friends not taken to some of the many historic sites of Alexandria? A number of the European participants shared this view: 'The fish-market was smelly and not very nice ...' 'The streets of Alexandria were easy to get lost in ...' 'Why were there no signs in English?'

In my interpretation, reactions like these illustrate the problems that arise from the binary opposition in the understanding of oneself and others. Thinking back to the brochure mentioned above, if Egypt is not allowed to show its cultural heritage, then what do its people have to offer? There was a clear worry about having the less 'advanced,' less 'presentable' sides to the city exposed to the foreign visitors. Likewise, many of the Europeans shared the same expectations. Europeans too, are trained, consciously and unconsciously, to appreciate the south as a holiday resort, more than as a space for mutual encounters.

One interesting comment came from someone in the group sent out to the Carrefour shopping centre. “This was the first time since we arrived that I felt at home,” he said, gratefully. But what does this embracing of such a presumably well-known outpost represent? It seem that brands, trademarks and patterns of consumption associated with the West are able to generate a homelike feeling beyond geography. Whether or not there is specifically a Carrefour in my own town or not, it feels more accessible, makes one feel more at home, than the rest of Alexandria.

*a space for
mutual
encounters?*

Feelings of helplessness can blur the memories of what home is really like in other ways too. From one group there were complaints of the lack of signs in English. But, as probably more people noticed after this exchange of views, all street names in Alexandria are, in fact, given in both Arabic and English, as is much other writing, such as advertising. “Check once back home – how bilingual is your own street?” Rui Gomes asked, a Portuguese who lives in Budapest, but doesn’t speak Hungarian.

Who does the real work?

Our perceptions of oneself and others are problematic in that they stop us from seeing the processes we are involved in clearly. An example of this is the tendency to ‘know’ beforehand who the giver and receiver of help is

.....

In the afternoon of the day of the exploration the group was introduced to DR FAROUK O. ABAZA from the Faculty of Arts, History Department in University of Alexandria. He gave a lecture on the history of Alexandria accompanied by a slide show. The lecture had a lot for those that had lacked traces of ancient history during the morning session. His lecture was an interesting introduction to the excursions later during the course, first the one to Giza and the pyramides, second the one to Biblioteca Alexandrina.

in a particular situation. DR AZZA KARAM, from the World Conference of Religions for Peace, mentioned this problem as she asked, rhetorically, “Who does what in the welfare sector of the world? Who is it that provides health care and schooling for poor people around the world?”. In most countries, she went on to explain, it is not the state that provides a basic infrastructure. It is the religious communities that cater for the well-being of ordinary people. She underlined the importance of recognising this contribution, and the importance of establishing a working dialogue between all institutions that can, and actually do, make peoples’ lives better.

Dr Karam was quite critical of the commonly held view that civil society should take care of welfare programmes, and that religious institutions ought to stay away from this field. People who maintain this opinion very often have no idea who currently undertakes this task. Religious institutions carry a much bigger responsibility than the critics are aware of.

The discussion brought up by Professor Karam is interesting in national as well as international contexts. The self-perception of the West of being the ‘giving party’ of, for instance, technology, could benefit from this kind of open reflection. ‘Giving’ means entering into delicate infrastructures. And the acts of both giving and receiving contribute to the fixation of roles. Open analysis on who actually does what, and on who could add what, contributes to the quality of all dialogues.

*the self-perception
of the West of being
the ‘giving party’*

What is a minority?

The training course centred around the participation of young women and minorities in Euro-Med youth projects. In her introductory words, Dr Azza Karam issued a warning: “Beware of how you use your words!” Minorities and women, she reminded us, are different concepts.

Minorities may include women, but they are not restricted to women. Minorities are not a matter of numbers only. Minorities are not something that you can define or make a list of once and for all. Why? Because we are all multiple identities: religious, national, ethnic, sexual ...

When Mr Jan Henningsson talked about minorities, he called it a mental concept (in opposition to a statistical one, that is, one you can define, count, or put in boxes). This underlines the importance of the right to self-definition. It makes a difference if your identity as a minority is given to you by others, or if it is your understanding of yourself that is being recognised by others. Ascribed identities may not only not help the people concerned, but they may actually cause harm, in that they build an assumption that in itself serves to marginalize, as Dr Karam said.

Attributing minority status to a group may be done with good intentions, with the aim of empowering the group in question. Still, these attempts may be refuted. Mr Henningsson gave us an example from Egypt, when high representatives of the Coptic Orthodox church refused to be ascribed a minority status: "We Copts are not a minority. We have been in this country for ages; we feel at home."

The relation between minority status and lack of power or of self-esteem, which Jan Henningsson called 'minority mentality', is an understandable reason for wanting to avoid this labelling. In some instances, however, it may be the accurate term to describe a feeling or a situation that might otherwise remain unseen. As Ms AGNIEZSKA TATERA, a participant from Poland, wrote in her application:

I think that I am part of specific minority group – that of the socially and economically disadvantaged youth. I live in very specific region – people don't have a higher education, unemployment figures are huge (over 34%), and people don't want to participate in social and political life. I have a good education but I am nevertheless economically disadvantaged. I'm unemployed. My brother, too, is unemployed. My mother is on a pen-

sion and my father has a special allowance prior to his pension. So, many of my social, professional and personal plans and intentions have failed because of economic barriers. Many of my friends are in the same situation. We lose our power in order to realize new ideas, and mostly they don't work because we can't get money. And we must still fight with unfriendly office workers etc. This whole situation is very tiresome for our souls.

A presentation of oneself like the one above can be a powerful instrument in the hands of a person who uses it to say "this is me; these are my living conditions; this is my struggle in life." But many definitions and descriptions work the other way around, pinpointing who 'the other' is. There is a current ideological tendency in the West to divide people into 'cultures', distinct entities, each of which has its own identity. If this opens up for more self-chosen diversity, then it is positive. But if it leaves every group to cater for itself in a more fragmented society, then it is less positive.

Multiple identities

Bringing in the concept of multiple identities, Mr Jan Henningsson underlined that for a non-discriminatory society to function it is important that we define people not

only with one label. People fill many roles at one and the same time, and may interact as professionals, parents, friends, and political activists simultaneously. Not only are individuals different, but the settings, too, are different, and they change over time. An example would

be someone who came from Yugoslavia to Sweden as an immigrant in the 1960s. Without moving one inch, the same person today maybe defines him- or herself as a refugee from a number of different countries. But in order to know the individual identification of somebody, an openness towards reflection and dialogue is required.

*Without moving
one inch ...*

The course dealt with issues relating to identity in a number of different ways. On the one hand the entire course was devoted to resisting simple labellings of 'the Other'. The whole programme was set up like one big encouraging invitation: come and investigate and explore – yourself and the so-called other likewise – in an atmosphere characterised by reciprocity at all levels.

On the other hand, one key outcome that was aimed for was the establishing of collaboration in the form of projects. And in this context a certain form of labelling is a prerequisite. There are given entities for example in the way that proposals and applications have to be written. Which countries can apply, and in which combinations? Answers to these kinds of questions demand labelling.

I have the impression that many substantial ideas for future exchange were born during those days in Alexandria. I have no doubt that quite a few people will write good applications and put successful projects into practice. But in doing so, I also hope that those involved will be able to resist every form of pre-categorisation when it comes to establishing friendship, and when it comes to recognising oneself in the other. Many, many important belongings that each of us has and feels, or could have and feel, are totally independent of national borders, and also cut across ethnic, religious and other affiliations.

This was illustrated very beautifully in an exercise where the participants all came out to the floor, and chose sides depending on whether or not they were afraid of dogs, had children, spoke Russian, and so on. Some of these similarities obviously carried more weight than others. But the message was clear: there is no single person with whom you share everything. And with every person you share at least something that can be explored and developed. One of the participants summarized the following reflection:

Sitting in front of my computer, I try to reconstruct the course in Alexandria, my stay in Egypt and my journey back to

*there is no single
person ...*

Austria, in order to recall the impressions and ideas I got.

I first see myself in Cairo, sitting with my Egyptian friend in her mother's house. They are talking in Arabic, which I don't understand, but the whole situation feels very familiar, as if it was my mother sitting in front of me.

The next scene is in the aeroplane. A young African man is sitting beside me, and we are chatting. He is Somali, but has lived in London since he was twelve because of the war in Somalia. He describes his experience in London and the problems he faces there. Then he asks me to say something about myself, and it strikes me that, actually, we just need to change the names, countries of origin and domicile – and our stories would be almost the same.

The aeroplane approaches Paris and we have a very nice view of French landscape. I am excited and feel like I am coming back home.

Back where I live, I put on my favourite music CD, German alternative rock, prepare a cup of Chinese green tea, and relax.

Then I call my mother in Belgrade to tell her that I am back and that everything is fine. After more than two weeks I am speaking Serbian again and I feel happy about this.

The next day I take a look at the cinema programme, and see that they are showing a film by an Argentinean director whom I like very much. I go with an Austrian friend to see this film and afterwards we visit a typical Austrian café in Salzburg to have an English brunch, something I very often do at weekends.

During the brunch my friend asks me for some legal advice that she needs urgently. I find myself changing my pose, becoming serious and answering her questions professionally. At that moment I was a lawyer.

On the way back home I pass a photo exhibition at a gallery and decide to go inside to take a look. The photographer is an old man in his eighties who happens to be in the gallery. We start up a conversation and he talks about his passion for photography and what it means to him. I am very touched by this, because he expresses exactly my feelings regarding photography.

Coming back out of this session of recalling, I find myself very confused, not knowing what I should write about 'my identity'.

How is it that I was able to identify with an Egyptian daughter, a Somali immigrant, a group of German musicians, an Argentinean filmmaker, an 80 year old Austrian photographer ...? To elaborate on this seriously would take very long time, so I give up and go to bed. During the night I dream of being myself, whatever that is ...

LJILJANA ZLATOJEVIC

A Human Rights issue

“Women’s rights are human rights. We are all responsible.” This was the title of DR GOLDA EL-KHOURI’s presentation and it states very clearly that women’s rights are an issue at the heart of human development. Dr El-Khouri, Unicef Regional Advisor on Youth, Middle East and North Africa Region, also illustrated the importance of participation when stating that “We cannot hold young people responsible if they have no information.”

... *if they have
no information*

In her presentation, she drew up a picture of how things stand with respect to the situation of girls and women; how many times they lack the means to be active in shaping their own future. She quoted from the Arab Human Development Report 2002 that identifies 1) a freedom deficit, 2) a women’s empowerment deficit, and 3) a human capabilities/knowledge deficit relative to income.

Dr El-Khouri described the state of the situation on the southern side of the Mediterranean. Without having the same kind of figures for Europe we can still be sure of one thing, that the higher degree of wealth in Europe is not evenly distributed, neither within or between countries.

It needs hope for the future in order to dare to be involved: you cannot seriously engage in discussions about the future if you dare not count on having any future for yourself.

Dr El-Khouri gave an overview of the many international documents that have been created for the improve-

ment of the situation, and for the securing of human rights for all. Still, the improvement of the situation for women and children cannot be safeguarded through conventions alone. It takes more active involvement for this, an engagement that at the grassroots level is best promoted through education.

Education is an act of calling

*t*he primacy of
being human

Professor MOHAMED EL-SAYED SAID, from the Al Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, described education as an act of calling. He pointed to the fact that calling people in the name of ethnicity, nationality, kin-group etc, is in fact something that can lead to war, and civil war. What he advocated instead was for people to look at the primacy of being human. Human rights education is all about calling upon the internal humanity within, to let the sense of humanity come forward. He also said that in doing so we cannot separate the content of human rights education from ourselves, and the means we have when we try to promote the awareness, in ourselves and in others.


The course gave participants many different kinds of input, as well as the possibility to reflect upon oneself as a learner: what do we learn, how do we learn, and when is it that we learn?

Being professional in the field of youth work implies being also very personal: as individuals, you are your own most important tool. During a session on attitudes and skills, three factors were underlined as particularly important: tolerance of ambiguity (to accept that things can have many different meanings and to be able to deal with a question without yet knowing the answer); empathy (openness towards how s/he might see things); and distance to social roles (what makes me say/do a certain

thing, or makes me able to say/do it, i.e. the willingness to try and look at yourself from the outside).

I think it is fair to say that the course in Alexandria succeeded in bringing about exchange that in turn paved the way for change and also growth.

One person talked about a process of growth in relation to expectations and appreciation of oneself: to speak in front of a group, express thoughts and opinions freely, dare to voice an opinion – all of these were new experiences to this person, who also said, “I will never give up on them!” Another person said that the very framework of the course had opened the way for new experiences: “If it had not been here, I would not have dared to go to a workshop on homophobia.” There were also many, many others who engaged themselves in processes of great courage, quite simply by admitting what they did not know, or did not achieve. It takes courage to say, “I am still new to this; I know nothing; I need input.” Many people have to grow very old before they are able to admit and express their own limitations. Many never arrive at that point.



*M*any never
arrive at
that point

How do we learn? For better or for worse, unless we make an effort, we tend to make use of both good and bad practices in our learning. In bringing up children, for instance, it is quite difficult not to repeat the upbringing you received from your parents, with its good and bad sides. If learning involves change, which it is likely to do since it brings us new perspectives, then it is also likely to be slow. Reactions relating to change are more likely to be characterised by wait-and-see policies, than by an enthusiastic “let’s go!” People generally tend to be more concerned by what they may lose than by what they may gain or benefit. In addition, if there is too much, then we will rebel, but if there’s too little pressure, then we will go back to old habits. In conclusion, for change to be something more than the tide coming in and going out, we should not put speed too high on the agenda.

When do we learn? A training course is not a class, and it is not formal education. Still, even out of that context, we are all more used to taking in and learning, in some situations than in others. One common prerequisite of these situations is that we deliberately put ourselves on the track, saying, “Now I’m learning!” Consequently, when we step out of ‘the learning’ – we tend to act and react differently.

One example of how difficult it can be to practise your principles was illustrated in relation to interpretation in informal settings. I think it should be regarded as a loss, to everybody, every time someone is reduced to – speaking in grammatical terms – the third person through interpretation. For this, the interpreters’ booth might serve as a learning example (beyond being a medium for the transmission of a message): professional interpreters never take over when someone speaks in the first person ‘I’. Among participants, however, it was quite common that input was reduced to a “s/he thinks that ...”.

Throughout the course, I think there was a great readiness among everyone to be learners. By now, long since back home or elsewhere, I hope we can all hold on to the idea of being constantly involved in potential learning processes. If we look at it from this angle, then walking the streets of an unknown town, or even a well-known town, streets where people spend their days or even their lives, cannot possibly be an uninteresting experience.

The art of coupling theory and practice

As Professor Said underlined, human rights can never be taken for granted; they must be promoted all the time. The big challenge for a training course is not related, I believe, to the general theory of human rights; instead, it is to do with coupling the well-known theory to the practice of everyday life, whether in the role of learner, leader or multiplier.

Let me finish with some words from Edward Said, words which capture very well the atmosphere the training managed to create around issues which are as complicated as they are and, and which will remain important.

“There is a line that haunted me for many years in an essay on Leonardo da Vinci by the great early twentieth century French poet Paul Valery. Describing Leonardo’s mind in its power and elegance, Valery says that the Italian artist could not but think of a bridge whenever he thought of an abyss. Metaphorically speaking, an abyss is the equivalent of what is presented to us as immutable, definitive, impossible to go beyond. No matter how deep and problematic was the scene that presented itself to him, Leonardo always had the capacity for thinking of some alternative to it, some way of solving the problem, some gift for not passively accepting what was given to him as if the scene that Leonardo imagined could always be envisioned in a different, and perhaps more hopeful way.”

(Said, quoted in Sjögren 2003)

The purpose of the seminar in Alexandria was not to investigate the immutable, the definitive, or to go beyond the impossible. Rather, its mission was to build bridges, in the full awareness of hindrances, obstacles and historical shortcomings, and to be guided by the overarching belief that diversity is not a threat to cohesion but rather a prerequisite.

*Attending this course
is a statement of optimism*

RUI GOMES

The Council of Europe has been particularly busy in the past decade with pursuing and monitoring standards of democracy, human rights and the rule of law among its member states. The fact that the Council of Europe is a pan-European organisation does not mean that it is blind to the rest of the world.

In 1988, the European campaign for global solidarity and interdependence – also known as the North-South campaign – rallied NGOs and governments in the North and in the South in claiming more solidarity and exchange between people from the North and the South of the world, recognising that interdependence is not only economic, but that it also has very important, social, cultural and environmental dimensions. One of the outcomes of that campaign was the creation of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, based in Lisbon, which carries, together with the Directorate of Youth and Sport, this Partnership on Euro-Med Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The North-South Centre has become the main body of the Council of Europe in the field in inter-regional cooperation at world level, and in promoting cooperation between the Council of Europe and other regions, particularly in the fields of global education and Human Rights.

The youth sector of the Council of Europe – the Directorate of Youth and Sport – has also traditionally

had a very important global dimension, not least because many of its non-governmental partners – youth organisations – have truly international and global dimensions, such as the scouts, the young socialists or youth exchange organisations. Both the European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation have a record of supporting the participation of young people from Africa, Asia and the Americas in their activities.

The direct involvement of the Council of Europe in Euro-Med issues dates back more than seven years when a series of activities on Euro-Arab cooperation were initiated in order to foster political cooperation between youth organisations and youth leaders in Europe and in Arab countries. These activities have later evolved to Euro-Med cooperation – not only Euro-Arab – and they have sought to embrace other realities of youth work and youth cooperation beyond the political youth cooperation.

When, in the year 2000, we launched the Human Rights Education Youth Programme, we made a commitment to support young people in promoting and defending universal human rights, their rights and the rights of others. By their universality, human rights should know no borders, even if their application is very different from one country to the next. This is notably the case today within Europe as within the Mediterranean countries involved in Euro-Med cooperation. One of the things we have learned through our work with human rights education is that human rights are far too a important matter to be left to lawyers and politicians only. The role of young people in this process is very valuable, not because they need to learn about human rights more than other people, but because their thirst for justice and fairness, their generosity and feeling of solidarity gives them a special role in seeing that a violation of human rights anywhere is a violation of human rights everywhere.

The Euro-Med programme aims at promoting the ideals of a democratic and global citizenship based on human rights and intercultural exchange. This entails address-

ing two human rights domains that are often indicators of challenges and needs for change: women's rights and minorities' rights. These are the themes of our training course.

If, as Mahatma Gandhi put it, a "civilisation should be judged by its treatment of minorities", then we have to admit that there is room for a lot of progress

*there is room for
a lot of progress ...*

when it comes to respecting minorities' rights, equality of opportunities and, more generally, respect for cultural diversity as a key element for equality-driven and cohesive societies. The access of young people from minority backgrounds (religious, ethnic, social and national minorities) to the Youth Programme is one of its priorities, together with addressing racism, discrimination and xenophobia. This is so because minority young people often have less access to the programmes.

Intercultural learning, the key educational approach and objective of youth exchanges, is meaningless if it is not also applied to the way we deal with difference and diversity in our daily environment. This means the use of inclusive approaches to minority groups and communities and the recognition of diversity as the very basis for social cohesion itself.

We must also admit that these themes often lend themselves to the creation of stereotypical and ethnocentric views among those involved in European and Mediterranean countries. Consider the emotions raised by the new laws regarding the display of religious symbols in French public schools, about Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe, or about the rights of social and religious minorities in Arab countries. We live in times where it seems easier to see conflict as an inevitable fatality, and violence as the way to solve conflicts. We should not underestimate the role of ignorance and prejudice; together these make it difficult for these issues to be addressed in educational projects in a non-confrontational way.

The Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport, partner in the Euro-Med Youth Covenant with the European Commission, has intercultural learning, democratic citizenship and human rights education with young people at the core of its programme. The experiences accumulated all indicate that youth workers can be effective multipliers and agents of change in these matters, in the same way that all youth projects should be 'little schools' of citizenship and participation.

In this framework, we are set to explore the issues related to minorities' rights and women's rights in European and Mediterranean societies in a manner that should itself serve as an example and set guidelines for future activities on these issues. This implies that we are able to speak openly and constructively, to engage in a frank exchange process and to admit that we can only learn together, learn from and with each other. It might not always be an easy process, but it is the best we know. Tolerance, after all, is meaningless if it does not imply any effort or sacrifice.

Attending this course is a statement of optimism. It is easy to be pessimist if we look at Euro-Mediterranean area today. Violence seems to prevail over efforts for peace, and the clash of civilisations seems to be approaching a self-fulfilling prophecy. As we hold this seminar, women are marching for peace in the Middle East and women – too – are holding a hunger strike in Lille, claiming their right to a shelter. These news items don't always make the headlines, but these are the voices of resistance, of human dignity and justice.

Young people are also part of this movement, young people and all people who suffer from what Mahmoud Darwish calls – referring to the Palestinian people – the 'incurable disease' called hope. I hope that these days of working together will contaminate us all with hope, with visions and also with specific projects to give hope to others, here, there and everywhere.

*the 'incurable disease'
called hope*

We live in a time when it is easy to see conflicts and violence as inevitable. But I think we may be able to see things differently. Young people can make a change. The means to do this is through an education, not provided by schools, etc., one which explores challenges to women's rights, minority rights, human rights. We need to speak frankly, openly and with mutual respect, not shying away from saying openly what we think, and asking about what we don't know.

We had 250 applicants for this seminar. The good thing about this is that they were all good; the bad thing was that we had to make a selection. The reason why this needs saying is that all participants need to regard themselves as multipliers, as representatives of those who could not be here. We are just a handful, but the topics we are treating are important and I believe that there is really something to be learned.

It is easy to be pessimistic and to be carried away by all that is negative: racial exclusion, violence, hatred, discrimination. Is the clash of civilisations inevitable? Or can we believe and show that it is not?

A tool to prepare future generations for a closer cooperation

DIETRICH ROMETSCH

The Commission considers the topic of the course 'The participation of young women and minorities in Euro-Med projects' as a very important one. In fact, participation of young people, and especially women, in society, and of those who suffer from disadvantages, is one of the priorities of the Youth Programme. The participation of young people in society, especially of young women and of disadvantaged young people, also constitutes one of the priority themes of the political cooperation in the youth field at European level, and which started in 2001 with the publication of the White Paper on Youth. Since then the political cooperation in the field of youth, the so-called 'White Paper process', has gained in momentum and constitutes a framework for cooperation on youth affairs. In May the Commission will submit new proposals concerning the future cooperation at a European level, in the area of voluntary activities and greater understanding and knowledge of youth.

Another equally important development constitutes the Commission's communications on 'the new generation of education and training programmes' and 'Citizenship in action', which were published in March this year. The two communications set out the guidelines for future programmes intended to replace the current Community programmes Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Tempus, Youth, Culture 2000 and Media Plus, from 2007

to 2013. The documents underline the need to establish reinforced and restructured programmes which are clearer to the citizens of an enlarged European Union, enabling them in particular to benefit from a true common area in terms of mobility.

It is interesting to notice that the new youth programme is mentioned in the paper 'Citizenship in action'. According to this document the definition of young people will be extended from 15–25 to 13–30 years of age. In addition, the document suggests a new action called 'Youth for the world' which will increase the programme's geographical scope and will enhance the development of mutual understanding through an open-minded approach to the world. Or as Mrs. Reding put it in her press declaration, "Questions linked to education and citizenship will be among the major challenges of the next decade ... The [new] programmes ... form part of a new overall approach, building bridges between cultures and individuals".

Before going further into the future perspectives, let me briefly recall the present programme, i.e. the main objectives of the current Euro-Med Youth Programme, and give some figures on its development.

Euro-Med Youth Programme

The Euro-Med Youth Programme is one of the corner stones of the Commission's activities in the youth field in cooperation with third countries. It will continue to play an important role for us. It is one of the regional programmes set up within the third chapter of the Barcelona Process on 'partnership in social, cultural and human affairs'.

Euro-Med Youth enables intercultural dialogue and non-formal learning activities for young people from 27 Euro-Mediterranean partners. It is a tool to prepare future generations for a closer cooperation between Euro-

Mediterranean partners, based on mutual respect and tolerance. With enlargement, the number of participating countries will grow to 37. Euro-Med Youth is a concrete initiative in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Its aims are the following:

- ♦ to improve mutual understanding among young people across the Euro-Mediterranean region based on and committed to mutual respect, tolerance and dialogue between the various cultures
- ♦ to integrate young people into social and professional life and to stimulate the democratisation of civil society
- ♦ to increase the importance of youth organisations and to develop young people's active citizenship, especially that of young women, and to promote the exchange of information and experience between youth organisations.

The Programme started in 1999 and can be considered as a prolongation of the European Commission's Youth Programme in a particular region. It involves three actions of the Youth Programme: youth exchanges, voluntary service and support measures. The Commission's budget for the period 2002–2004 is about €14M. To this must be added the co-financing from the organisers of projects. The Commission hopes that this level of funding can be maintained for the period 2005–2006.

In terms of the number of projects, Euro-Med Youth has made a positive development. In fact the number of projects which have been submitted and accepted during the last 5 years has continually grown:

1999: 26 projects accepted
2000: 77 projects accepted
2001: 108 projects accepted
2002: 158 projects accepted
2003: 185 projects accepted

This constitutes a total of 554 projects which received funding between 1999 and 2003. If we add to this

the projects which were accepted in March 2004, we reach more than 600 projects. This has enabled around 14,000 young people and youth leaders to participate in international youth activities. The Euro-Med Youth Programme reached a good overall gender balance, since 51% of those participants were women. 52% of the participants came from EU member states and 48% came from Mediterranean countries, which is also a good result in terms of geographical balance.

This development shows that the programme is making good progress. However we do not want to stop

*progress, not only
in quantitative
terms*

here, especially since statistics show only part of the reality. Our ambition is to make progress, not only in quantitative terms but also in qualitative terms. We would like to attract the best projects for contributing to meeting the aims of the Programme, and those which

have an impact on the two strategic priorities of the Programme. These are, firstly, on capacity building in the area of youth and youth organisations through partner finding measures, information and training; these actions are very important for the development of human resources, and will allow the development of high quality projects; today's training course in Alexandria is a concrete contribution to this priority; and secondly on the consolidation of the structures of the Programme, i.e. the network of National Coordinators / National Agencies / Salto Euromed, the recently created Euro-Med Platform and the partnership between Council of Europe and Commission.

The National Coordinators play an important role in this respect. Their role is sometimes difficult, especially with regard to the geographical particularities and the political contexts. The Commission's priority is to further consolidate the role of the coordinators and to nominate a National Coordinator for Syria, which does not have one so far. The Commission would like to enhance support and training actions of coordinators, particularly through the National Agencies network. The twinning / tutor sys-

tem with the NA in EU Member States and the National Coordinators should be strengthened in order to allow the coordinators to receive orientation and advice.

We are convinced that striving towards these two strategic priorities will help to further increase the number of activities, to improve the quality of projects, to enhance the partnerships between youth organisations across the Euro-Med region, to strengthen the profile of the Euro-Med Programme and to have an impact on young people's role in society, the democratisation of civil society and the dialogue between our civilisations.

Gender and minority issues in EU policy-making

Gender equality and minority issues play an important role in the EU's policy-making and policy implementation. The EU has a long-standing commitment in this area. The promotion of gender equality is an important element of the European Union's external relations and of its development cooperation policies. The promotion and protection of women's rights is an integral part of the EU's human rights policies in third countries.

The best known tool for preserving fundamental rights in the EU and creating a European area of freedom, security and justice is the 'Charter of Fundamental Rights', announced by EU leaders in December 2000. It brings together into a single, simple text all the personal, civic, political, economic and social rights enjoyed by the citizens and residents of the European Union. It states in Article 21, "Any discrimination based on any grounds such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited".

According to the EU-Treaties (Nice Treaty), the following articles relate to the preservation of the rights of women and minorities:

- ♦ Art. 6 TEU: “The Union shall respect the fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome on 4 November 1950 and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, as general principles of Community law.”
- ♦ Art. 3, § 2 TEC: Concerning all activities of the EU “... the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women.”
- ♦ Art. 13 TEC: “... the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission ..., may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.”
- ♦ Art. 137 TEC: The Community supports “equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work.”
- ♦ Art. 141 TEC: “Each Member State shall ensure that the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied.”

The current Commission has taken a number of actions to realise these provisions. The following non-exhaustive major steps can be mentioned:

- ♦ In 1996 the Commission introduced the gender mainstreaming approach, integrating the gender equality objective into all policies that have a direct or indirect impact on the lives of women and men.
- ♦ In 1996 the STOP programme was set up to reinforce cooperation against trafficking in women and children. This was followed by the DAPHNE initiative and the new DAPHNE programme (2000–2003) to combat violence against children, young people and women. The successor programme DAPHNE II (2004–2008) will most probably be adopted this year and will dispose of an increased budget.

- ♦ In 2000 the Commission adopted a 'Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality 2001-2005' which was followed in 2001 by a 'Community Programme on gender equality 2001-2005'.
- ♦ In 2001 a decision was taken on a directive providing for equal treatment for men and women with regard to access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions.
- ♦ In 2002 Anna Diamantopoulou, the European Commissioner responsible for employment and social affairs, said, "violence against women is not just a moral crime, it is a legal crime."
- ♦ 2003 was 'The European Year of People with Disabilities (EYPD)'.
- ♦ In the follow-up of the White Paper on youth, the Council of Youth Ministers adopted in November 2003 so-called 'common objectives for participation by and information for young people'; in this context the Ministers asked "to identify more clearly the obstacles in the way of participation by specific groups and by disadvantaged young people and encourage measures and mechanisms capable of overcoming those obstacles, in particular by making allowance for their diversities and priorities (cultural and ethnic background, disabilities, socio-economic factors, gender etc.)."
- ♦ The Commission's DG EMPL supports transnational exchanges to promote gender equality. The 2004 priority theme is 'promoting change in gender roles and overcoming gender stereotypes' in economic life, equal participation, the representation of social rights and civil life.

The list of measures could be extended. They certainly constitute a positive development and will help to improve the situation for women and minorities in the EU. However, the situation is still far from satisfactory. Concerning, for example, the situation of women in the EU, the following deficiencies can still be observed:

- ♦ The level of employment of women is around 55 %, which is clearly below the 60 % aim the EU has fixed within the framework of the Lisbon process.
- ♦ There is still a gap in terms of salaries: men earn 16 % more than women for the same work, especially in the private sector.
- ♦ Women are less represented at senior management level in companies and administration, including the Commission (exception: DG EAC which has now 2 female Commissioners!).
- ♦ More women than men have a university degree but women are still under-represented in science.
- ♦ Women are more vulnerable with regard to unemployment and poverty.
- ♦ Women in the EU are still frequent victims of violence, very often by their partners.

Conclusion

A considerable amount still remains to be done. I am convinced that this training course will make a valuable contribution to these issues. It is clear that not all problems can be solved through one seminar. But it can at least raise awareness of problems, contribute to the reflection on possible solutions and the development of new ideas, and thus help to change consciousness with regard to the role of women and minorities suffering from disadvantages. The overall objective should be to improve the quality of projects in the Euro-Med Youth Programme and to increase the number of projects relating to the 'place of women in society', which continues to be one of the thematic priorities of our programme.

*Everybody should have
the right to display and to act out
multiple identities*

JAN HENNINGSSON

I lived in south India for some years, working as a teacher. Let me share with you first of all some reflections on my experience and observations in India. And immediately, those of you who have experience of this region, the middle East and North Africa, will see the parallels and the bearings of these observations on our situation here. I am sure that our European colleagues will also feel it at certain points in their hearts. India is, after all, not as different as you may imagine.

In India in the 1920-1930s there was a budding, rather strong women's movement, a movement for women's rights. It existed at a local and a state level. As you know, India, with its population of one billion, is divided into states. And the women's movement reached the level of the states; it was quite advanced and well organised. However, these women, of various cast and ethnic backgrounds, took a strategic decision to withdraw a little bit from the barricades, and to devote their energy and their loyalty to the anti-colonial movement, that is to say, to Mahatma Gandhi and those people who were trying to liberate India from British colonialism.

The women involved in this gender equality movement in India have written about this, and some of them have expressed regret because they say we retreated from the barricades in order to join forces with the national front, hoping and anticipating that our rights would automati-

cally come through national sovereignty. That did not happen. Why?

First of all, most of the people involved in the anti-colonial movement in India were men, and men who had a male chauvinist attitude. They would not show any interest in gender issues. When the time came to write the constitution for this new large nation, also after the partition with Pakistan, the men who drafted the constitution based citizenship and civil rights, not on individuals, but on confessional and cultural and ethnic affiliation. That is to say, the people of India were defined according to which religious group they belonged to. The result was that Christians and Muslims and Sikhs and the very few Buddhists and the Jainists, who had co-existed in India with the Hindus, were all given a cultural minority status. They were given group rights according to the constitution. Among 70–75% of the population were left undefined, or rather collectively defined as Hindus.

The legal system in India as it developed was to give civil codes, special civil codes for Christians, for Muslims, for Sikhs and so on. And these codes encompassed, for instance, a marital code, an inheritance code, codes under what conditions a woman can ask for divorce, and so on. And there were very conservative lawyers for the Christian code, and there was a very conservative interpretation of the Sharia for the Muslim code. And for the Hindus, for the majority, there was just the regular civil code.

Now, some 15 years ago, a Hindu nationalist movement began to take power and to formulate a programme according to which India should be a Hindu nation, not only culturally, but also religiously. And one item of this nationalist programme is what is called the unified civil code. The leaders, the spokesmen for the communities, the Christians, the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Jainists, are opposed to this because they see it as intruding on the community rights of these groups.

But the interesting thing is that in these minorities, among, for instance, the Indian Christians, women speak

up and they say, “yes, let’s go for a unified civil code!” As a Christian woman or as a Muslim woman, I have fewer rights; I have more limited rights under the community laws that regulate my rights than I would have if we were all under one civil code, all having the same rights and restrictions, on marriage, divorce, inheritance ... So suddenly there was this inner division within these communities, between the male elite, let’s call them the ‘patriarchy’, and an increasing number of educated and articulate women in these groups who no longer wanted to sit back, retreat from the barricades, and hold back their standard of rights because of some group loyalty.

*if we were all under
one civil code ...*

I point to this because in modern studies of the conflict between the individual and community (undertaken by researchers such as Kymlicka) the perspective is usually quite different. We have for example Nathan Glazer who has written about individual rights against group rights, an analysis that builds on the opposite: that an individual may be discriminated against because of this group belonging, and that one way of asserting this individuals’ rights would be to grant community rights. This, incidentally, is one argument frequently put forward, for instance, in Sweden by Muslim organisations and communities who would like to have community rights and who are not so interested in looking at individual rights. Much of the same analysis is done in the United States as a way of avoiding discrimination, and to diminish people’s feeling of rootlessness and alienation

But history, for example the history of India, has shown that this is not always the outcome. And that women, not surprisingly, are the ones who are the victims of the discrimination that follows from a non-transparent system.

One discussion that emerged in India because of this, and one that I have also seen in other conflicts, including in the Middle East, is described by an expression that I think Professor Kymlicka has coined, and that is ‘multiple identities’. For a non-discriminatory society to function

it is important that we define people not only with one label. And, again, women here are usually the losers. If you say about a person “she is a Muslim woman” – full stop, or about a male “he is a Buddhist” – full stop, then you may have defined that person legally according to the institutions, but there are also many things you have not said. Is not everybody a professional, maybe a member of a political party or some non-governmental organisation? Does not each and everyone of us have many labels that we could put on? All of us have the right to multiple identities. And that goes not only for, shall we say, democratic societies.

In the case of India, if you begin to define people across many dimensions, the stereotypes become less easy to apply to one another. You begin to see people as complex as they really are. This is one of the important discussions in relation to women and minorities. We should allow each and every person to display and to act out multiple identities in society.

What is a minority mentality?

The third observation has a lot to do with colonial legacy, the negative side of the colonial legacy, because there are not only negatives. That has to do with the mentalities. If we simplify things we can say that there is a majority mentality and a minority mentality. The minority would be, in my thinking, characterised by a paralysing sense of powerlessness. Those are the people who have no access to the tables where decisions are taken. The minority mentality of a group of people would be that they really have no say in society, or only under a very restricted jurisdiction, and that they are ‘wrong’ in some sense, maybe even persecuted. While we have said, this it is important to say that minority and majority are not, to my mind, numeric concepts. They are not statistic but much more concepts of mentality.

I will give you one example: there was a well-meaning academic here in Egypt who once wanted to arrange a conference on what he called 'religious minorities' in the Middle East. He invited a number of church leaders and other leaders to have a meeting, discussing for instance the situation of Christians living in countries dominated by Muslims. But the leader of the Coptic orthodox church here in Egypt refused to accept the invitation. Why? After all he is the leader of the single largest Christian minority in the Arab world, six or eight million Copts living in Egypt and one million abroad. Is that not a very visible and important minority that should speak of its experience, and that could maybe speak on behalf of other churches? "No," he said, "we Copts are not a minority. We have been in this country for ages; we feel at home. We may be numerically fewer than our Muslim brothers and sisters, but we definitely do not regard ourselves a minority." He spoke for his own life, and I think he spoke for many Copts in Egypt who do not necessarily see themselves as powerless, or marginalized or oppressed or anything like that. Since they feel at home – why should they talk as a minority?

*We may be
numerically
fewer, but ...*

I think this is important because it ties in with how we use these concepts and what we understand by 'a minority'. In social psychology you talk about 'alter casting' when you ascribe an identity or a social role to somebody, which that group or that person himself or herself would not accept as a good description. This is where the Coptic reaction to the academic institution comes in: don't talk about us as a minority. Talk about us as Christians, as a church, as Arabs, but don't come with this game.

In India I would have seen exactly the same thing among the Hindus as if they were a persecuted minority on their own soil, claiming for example that the Muslims in India enjoy better rights than the Hindus. And that the Christians are better off because of their links with the West, whereas the Hindus, who are by far the majority of

the population in the country, do not have rights, or the same say, or the same input as these cultural minorities, numeric minorities. Therefore, in the present political discourse, this kind of talk from the oppressed, a minister in the government in New Dehli, talks as if he – it is usually a he – represented a small group that was really suffering from all kinds of discrimination. Whereas this same person would belong to a community that numerically embraces 750 million. This sounds paradoxical but you can see it clearly happening.

About unity and consensus

Finally, a few words about a problem, or maybe two problems, relating to the Islamic civilisation as I have come to know it. And these are the two concepts of unification/unity (tahid) and consensus/agreement. The first concept can be a very good thing – and a very oppressive thing. When Ayatollah Khomeini seized power in Iran on 1 February 1979, he had been preparing for this moment during his 40 years in exile. The society he wanted to create on the basis of his interpretation of Islam was a society characterised by unity, a kind of cohesion that has no cracks. The persecution that had existed under the Shah against the Muslim leaders was now transformed into the persecution of those who would not buy this concept of unity. This concept often comes up in discussion about human rights, for example, concerning women's rights. The argument goes like this: Our society is fragile; it is made up of a social fabric that must not be disrupted. If we allow too many variations or too many conflicting views, we will destroy this fine fabric of Tahid that we have in our country, and therefore we will not ratify this convention ... As an outsider I will not go into how this concept can be interpreted. I just point to the risk of using the argument of social cohesion as an argument not to allow the right to be different.

Slightly less controversial is the concept of consensus. Islam is old in Tanzania, formerly Tanganyika. They have an African forum, where all the men in the village congregate; they sit in a circle, led by the elder. Each and every one must then give his opinion before they reach a decision about something in the village, such as for instance digging a well. That is called consensus, but it builds on hearing everyone first (with the limitation I mentioned, that it is a male thing). But the idea is to hear everyone before taking a decision. This can seem to be a desirable thing, and it probably is in many senses. But in the end it can be used as an oppressive means, to keep uncomfortable opinions out. Actually there is a very telling story in the Jewish Talmud about the rabbis who were sitting discussing something from the scriptures. And they reached a conclusion that one of them felt was wrong. That person, according to the story, was in direct contact with God, our creator. So he went to God and said, "My fellows have reached a very strange conclusion – what shall I do?" "Well. Show them who is in charge" God says, and he begins to give signs: one tree jumps across the river; but the men won't change their minds. Then the walls of the houses around where they are sitting come tumbling down, and then finally God himself speaks like a thunderstorm and he says to them, "you should listen to this Rabbi, he knows how to interpret this verse." And then these other Rabbis look up to the sky and they say, "please be quiet; you yourself have told us to use our intellect and our minds to work out as good an opinion as possible; we won't be disturbed by strange voices from the sky. Please leave us alone." The Rabbi was very sad and went to God again, complaining. But, the story doesn't end here. They asked him afterwards: when you went back, defeated, to God, what did he say? God laughed and he said: "My children, I was defeated."

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We were asked to draw a tree ...

We were asked to draw a tree as a symbol of our identity. A simple, straightforward exercise – yet I hesitated for a while not knowing how to express who I am with a symbolic tree. I drew a tree with very strong lines. I did it unconsciously but I realized later on that this is exactly how I feel: settled, strong in what I believe and visibly healthy and strict-looking. I know people perceive me as a strict, bossy character, even though I know I am a big softy. But my headscarf gives the impression of someone who “cannot talk about anything else except religion”.

Then we were asked to label the tree with what we think is our branch or trunk. First I was a bit hesitant; I was mixing terms and ideas, and did not know what was really important to put on the tree. I started with the roots: faith and good morals. That moment I felt so grateful to have a mum like the one I have. She has really given me a strong grounding, and taught me a lot about how to be good and respectful towards others. This comes with me without a shadow of doubt.

Then I realized that my trunk is my faith and my belief in Islam. It gives me a framework; it makes me stand for what I am and what I believe in, and without it I would be a faceless nobody in the street. The trunk of the tree is a visibly strong part. By drawing it and talking about it I knew I would look like an even stricter Muslim. But I also wanted people to understand that there is nothing wrong with believing in something beautiful, and that Islam is an essential part of every Muslim – be they practising or non-practising. Two other group members mentioned Islam as key element in their life, and I was glad to see young people being able to identify what is important to them. Next to my trunk I drew some small branches as a symbol of the children that I am hoping to bring up.

The branches of the tree were not really important to me for some odd reason. I felt that what was visible was not really essential, but then I wrote Education, Behaviour...etc. I also put a few birds around my tree as symbols of people who can rely on me and find a nest whenever they need to. I have realized how important

it is to me to be a help for others. This thought gave me strength and stability.

The tree exercise was an interesting approach to try to explain identity and culture. It was an easy exercise yet required deep self-analysis and, at times, courage to say things I would normally not say. It was also great in a sense that it helped us to connect with one another within the group. Thirdly, it was a real 'speak out and listen' exercise rather than an intellectual debate, so many of us, I believe, had the chance to shed some misconceptions about ourselves from the very beginning. I am certain that I found out things about many people that helped me to connect with them more easily later on during the course. I am hoping that other people felt the same about me.

From the daily journal of HENRIETTA SZOVATI

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Break away the dominant stereotypes

As a social movements activist, I would like to introduce some critical points of view about the Euro-med framework and European policies that are strongly felt by social movements in Spain and which can greatly help to implement programmes better, where these are not working properly.

The experience in Alexandria is an important resource to implement to myself the values that concern us. Recent terrorist attacks in Spain have developed quite a strong social paranoia of fear and security. Fear is the first step towards totalitarian and racist policies, so my visit to Alexandria will help to break away the dominant stereotypes reinforced by TV and mass media.

From the diary of ABEL AL JENDE

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Contrasting feelings

My feelings throughout the course were always contrasting: some lectures and working groups made me feel excited and positive;

others, unfortunately, made me feel surrounded by prejudice and ignorance on burning subjects such as homosexuality or HIV/AIDS ...

I realized with great surprise how some people working with minorities – or being themselves part of a minority – don't just have strong prejudices, but even obstinate resistance to the idea of equal rights for every human being. Without giving any sort of judgment and criticism, I understood how easy it is to claim our own rights, and at the same time how difficult it is to accept the rights of others. Also, my initial feeling of anger and shock slowly transformed in my mind and turned into an awareness of the real difficulties that human rights education encounters in its path to fulfilment and practical success.

At the same time I was positively surprised by the changes of minds and attitudes of some others, who even refused to discuss certain subjects, and who then turned in an instance to doubting the integrity of their harsh opinion: this is surely the beginning for a constructive opening of the mind, and made me feel positive and hopeful about society education.

Fortunately my mood and feelings were following the line of an electrocardiogram, and for very negative impressions, positive and fruitful ones had to follow: I had the opportunity to get to know people (both among the trainers and the participants) of remarkable professionalism and experience and, last but not least, of interesting personality. (Ten days of working side by side can give something deeper than a superficial impression.)

With some of them, practical project drafts have been taken into consideration and I really hope they will turn into real successful seminars and youth exchanges.

Personal considerations by LUCIA BARBIERI

Women's rights are human rights: We are all responsible

DR GOLDA EL-KHOURY

Women's rights, status, role and well-being are central to human development and to the realization of the human rights of children, women and men. Unequal gender relations and wide gender gaps in the social, economic, political and civic spheres not only constitute a denial of the individual human rights of girls and women, but also reduce human capabilities, threaten social cohesion and distort social values and relations. Discrimination against women, denying or limiting as it does their equality of rights with men, is fundamentally unjust and constitutes an offence against human dignity (CEDAW).

The facts speak for themselves

The Arab Human Development Report 2002 identifies three different kinds of deficits

- ♦ The freedom deficit
- ♦ The women's empowerment deficit
- ♦ The human capabilities/knowledge deficit relative to income

Illiteracy in the Arab region

- ♦ 53% of women are estimated to be illiterate in 2000, expected 37% in 2015.

- ♦ 44 million illiterate women aged 15 and above (2003)
- ♦ Youth (15–24) literacy rate 76% in 2000, expected 85% in 2015
- ♦ There are 8 literate girls for every 10 literate boys aged 15–24 in 2000

Girls in primary education

- ♦ The Arab Region is on track to achieve the universal primary education goal (but national figures hide inequality)
- ♦ 81 % of children at primary school age were in school in 2000
- ♦ 7.5 million children were out of school in 2000, 4–5 million were girls (60%)
- ♦ 9 girls for every 10 boys were enrolled in primary schools

Girls in secondary education

- ♦ Enrolment ratio: 57% for boys, 52% for girls
- ♦ At the secondary level 9 girls for every 10 boys were enrolled in schools in 2000

Girls in tertiary education

- ♦ Enrolment ratio: 17% for both sexes in 2000; 16% are women and 19% are men

Education and labour market

Women are found in the fields of education, arts and humanities, while men dominate the field of engineering. This difference also has implications for the labour market. Women should be supported to join professional and technical categories.

Women and economic activity

Women constitute 29% of the region's labour force. In Gulf Cooperation Council countries, however, women have a lower participation rate in the labour force. A majority of women work in the service sector and in the

public field. Women constitute the largest proportion of agricultural workers compared to men.

Women and unemployment

- ♦ 17.1% women unemployed compared to 10.6% men in 2001.
- ♦ Youth unemployment is 35.3% in 2001.
- ♦ Low participation in labour market and high unemployment increase women's dependency.

Women and political participation

- ♦ 5% of parliamentary seats were occupied by women in 2003. Right to vote and stand for elections is still denied in a number of countries
- ♦ Women occupy less than 3% of all ministerial posts. The majority of women occupy posts of low to medium level management

Source: ESCWA, 2003

Statistics on violence against women

- ♦ At least one out of every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime.
- ♦ Domestic violence is the major cause of death and disability for women aged 16 to 44 (the Council of Europe)
- ♦ In the USA, women accounted for 85% of the victims of domestic violence.
- ♦ WHO estimates that up to 70% of female murder victims are killed by their male partners

Source: AI, Stop Violence Against Women

Causes of violence against girls and women

- ♦ Historically unequal power relations
- ♦ Historical development of institutions which reflect, support and perpetuate unequal power relations
- ♦ Economic and social conditions that exploit female labour and the female body

- ♦ The primacy of men's control and authority
- ♦ Men's control of women's sexuality
- ♦ Criminal activity that profits from the abuse of women and girls

The rights framework

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW) (1979)

- ♦ Highlights the inequality and discrimination against girls
- ♦ Advocates for a legal enabling environment
- ♦ Promotes the right to education and information
- ♦ Encourages girls' and women's participation



CEDAW points out that discrimination continues to be an obstacle to the realization of women's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Its scope extends beyond public life to include discrimination that occurs in private life and in the family, and its stipulations apply to girls and women of all ages.

State Parties shall take all appropriate measure to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure women are on equal terms with men, have the right to vote in all elections ... to participate in the formulation of government policy ... to participate in non governmental organizations... (art. 7)

State parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children (art. 9.2)

The Elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education ... (art. 10,c)

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure ...the same rights ... to the same

employment opportunities, ... to free choice of profession and employment, ... to equal remuneration including benefits, to social security ... (art. 11)

State Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law (art. 15)

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and shall ensure ... the same right to enter into marriage, ... to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent, ... the same rights to decide freely and responsibility on the number and spacing of their children ... (art. 16)

State Parties commit to

- ♦ incorporating the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- ♦ establishing tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- ♦ ensuring elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

Reservations on CEDAW

- ♦ Equal rights in national constitutions and legislations
- ♦ Elimination of discrimination against women in the political and public life
- ♦ Equal rights to acquire, change or retain nationality
- ♦ Equality before the law
- ♦ Eliminate discrimination against women in relation to marriage and family relations

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

Why is the convention on the rights of the child relevant to advancing women's rights?

- ♦ The stipulations of CRC and CEDAW are mutually reinforcing
- ♦ The life cycle approach: best possible start in life
- ♦ Gender based discrimination begins in childhood
- ♦ Women are agents of change of attitudes towards girls

The CRC is guided by four foundation principles that underpin all of its other articles, i.e.:

- ♦ non-discrimination (Article 2)
- ♦ the best interests of the child (Article 3)
- ♦ the right to life, survival and development (Article 6)
- ♦ respect for the views of the child (Article 12)

State Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (art. 2)

The Child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality... (art. 7)

State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (art. 12)

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds (art. 13)

... the education of the child shall be directed to ... the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding of peace, tolerance, equality of sexes ... (art. 29)

... a child belonging to a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her groups, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language (art. 30)

... to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 34)

The Millennium Development Goals (2000)

- ♦ Adopted by 189 nations in the Millennium Declaration in 2000
- ♦ Shared responsibilities and objectives of all development parties
- ♦ Global targets to guide national strategies
- ♦ Measurable time bound indicators by 2015

The Millennium Development Goals

- ♦ Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women (# 3)
- ♦ Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015 (target 4)
- ♦ Achieve Universal Primary Education (# 2)
- ♦ Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (target 3)

A World Fit For Children (2002)

The outcome document of the United Nations Special Session on Children 2002, with goals and targets
– National Plan of Action

- ♦ Put Children First: the best interests of the child
- ♦ Leave no Child Behind: Each girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights
- ♦ Care for Every Child: Children must get the best possible start in life
- ♦ Educate Every Child: All girls and boys must have access to free good-quality primary education

- ♦ Listen to Children & Ensure their Participation: the right to express themselves & to participate in all matters that concern them

A WFFC is one in which all children get the best possible start in life and have access to a quality basic education, including primary education that is compulsory and available free to all, and in which all children, including adolescents, have ample opportunity to develop their individual capacities in a safe and supportive environment.

WFFC plan of action: The achievement of goals for children, particularly for girls, will be advanced if women fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, are empowered to participate fully and equally in all spheres of society and are protected and free from all forms of violence, abuse and discrimination. We are determined to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child throughout her life cycle ...

It is vital that national goals for children include targets for reducing disparities, in particular those which arise from discrimination on the basis of race, between girls and boys ...

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995)

It aims at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.

It reaffirms that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an integral and indivisible part of universal human rights.

It emphasizes that women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of equality.

12 critical areas of concern: poverty, access to education and health services, violence against women, impact of armed conflict, economic inequalities, access to decision

making, stereotyping, the rights of the girl child, etc
2005: a milestone year: Review of implementation

The International Conference on Population & Development (1994)

- ♦ The right of young people to take part in decisions that affect their life
- ♦ The right of young people to protect their sexual and reproductive health

Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, and the elimination of all kinds of violence against women, and ensuring women's ability to control their own fertility, are cornerstones of population and development-related programmes ... (principle 4)

All countries should strive to make accessible through the primary health-care system, reproductive health to all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015. (para 7.6)

*Men and boys have a role
in achieving gender equality*

The Beijing Platform of Action encouraged men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality. The negative impacts of gender inequality are borne by society as a whole.

Men and boys have the capacity to bring about change in attitudes, relationships and access to resources and decision-making.

Contribute to eliminate gender stereotypes and combat violence against women.

Men and women have a shared role in adopting safe and responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour.

A Human Rights based approach

The guiding principles of human rights treaties are:

- ♦ *Universality*: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- ♦ *Non-discrimination*: on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, opinion, origin, disability, birth or any other characteristic
- ♦ *Indivisibility and interdependence of rights*: The fulfilment of one right cannot be achieved by compromising or violating another right. All rights have equal status, and there are no rights that are more important than others’.
- ♦ *Accountability*: States acknowledge and accept obligations when they ratify human rights treaties. They agree to implement these treaties and to be accountable for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the people within their jurisdiction. Participation of individuals in decisions related to all matters that concern them.

UNICEF Commitment to Gender Equality

- ♦ Supports the equal rights of women and girls, viewing CEDAW as complementary to CRC. The right of women to participate in decisions that affect them is central to the realization of the rights of children. The rights, equality and empowerment of women are especially important to healthy child development and to building healthy families communities and nations.
- ♦ Supports women’s full participation and empowerment in the community and within their families.
- ♦ Works to end violence against women, particularly violence within their families.
- ♦ Ensures that data are disaggregated by sex, geographic origin, age and ethnicity in order to expose disparities which are all too often concealed by averages.

Resources

It's in our hands: Stop violence against women (Amnesty International/
En, Fr, Ar) www.amnesty.org

CEDAW country reports: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/ Gender
link: www.macmag-glip.org

UNICEF Innocenti Research Center www.unicef-icdc.org

Interagency Network for Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE):
www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/

Commission on the Status of Women: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/

Monitoring the situation of Children & Women: www.childinfo.org

Committee on the Rights of the Child (General comments)
www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc/

The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies
www.medinstgenderstudies.org/world

The Mediterranean Women's Studies Centre www.kegme.org.gr

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Even if culture, religion or level of economic development are factors of importance, sexual discrimination and gender-based violence are common to young women in Europe and in Mediterranean societies. That is why I think that youth projects can promote a greater understanding, based on mutual respect, human rights, intercultural exchange and democracy.

MAYSOON SHAABAN, participant

Youth organisations can play a very important role in the inclusion of women from Mediterranean countries in their activities and their structures. Women/young women should be seen as partners not as an object in youth policy. The strategies/programs must be done for them, with them. But sometimes the ethnocentrism and racism of women's movements themselves make minority women and their concerns invisible.

SUZANA RICEA, participant

*Women and minority rights:
securing equality and diversity
within a universal framework of
human rights*

DR AZZA KARAM

I realise from some of the conversations that there are different understandings of what the term ‘minority’ means or refers to, or is understood among you. I would therefore like to start by looking at the terminology that we are using. After that I would like to share with you a little bit about my work, that the organisation Religions for Peace, or the World Conference of Religions for Peace does, and how it is relevant to some of the issues that you will be raising during the next few days. I will conclude with a few questions for further reflection.

Terminology

I noticed that it says in the programme: ‘Women and minorities’, as though they were two similar concepts. I think you will have realised by now that women are not a minority, numerically, anywhere in the world. In fact, if there is a problem, one of the major challenges is that there are more females than males around the world, which is causing serious social issues in some parts of the world. So it does an injustice to lump women and minorities together, saying women and children as if those were the marginalized sectors of society.

The problem with those kinds of definitions is that it builds on the assumption that ‘if you are a woman, you

are marginalized.’ ‘If you are a woman you are a separate category like other categories; minorities, children ...’ ‘Women and minorities, women and children ...’ That reference in and by itself immediately serves to marginalize, to disassociate. I think it is important to be alerted to the danger of making that kind of association. Minorities include women, but they are not restricted to women.

There are also different kinds of minorities. It is important to keep in mind that a minority is not necessarily a disadvantaged or oppressed group. The majority can be disadvantaged and oppressed. I am thinking of the example that we have all been hearing about, which is Iraq. There is no way that anybody could possibly argue that the Shi’a in Iraq are a minority. They are not; they are the majority. And yet, for years and years and years, they were oppressed, marginalized, subordinated, and treated with an incredible amount of injustice. These were not a minority, and yet they were very unjustly treated, in their own country and by their own institutions. So the tendency that we have to immediately equate minority with subordination and injustice is problematic in itself. So I will urge us not to equalise these things.

At the same time, when we think of minorities, say a numeric minority, a group that is numerically less, we have to acknowledge that it can be a majority at the same time. Meaning what? If you think in terms of, to use the example of Turkey, the majority are Muslims, the majority population is Muslim. And yet, there are minorities within that group, for example those who wish to be more religious, more conservative. These are Muslims, and at the same time they may be considered a minority, within their own country. We have a similar situation here in Egypt, where those who are more conservative can be considered a minority within their own religious and national community.

Let’s look at the situation in this region. Christian communities tend to be a minority vis-à-vis other re-

Minorities include women, but they are not restricted to women

religious groups, particularly Muslims in the Arab world - numerical minorities. But at the same time, you have a number of Arabs who are now living in European countries. The Christian Arabs in European countries are not a minority if you look at them from a religious point of view. Actually, they are part of the majority in a European context. So it is important that we realise all these nuances. It is too simple to say that Arabs are a minority in Europe. We need to look at what constitutes their identity. Is an Arab only identifying as an Arab? No; each one of us has so many different facets to our identity. In each particular context we only identify as A or as B. We cannot put people into categories simply by virtue of their national identity.

So, the point I am trying to make here is that we are not all one identity; we are multiple. Therefore it becomes highly problematic to categorise us as only a minority, or a majority at any point of time. We can actually occupy the two sides of this discussion at different times.

Speaking of minorities, one of the things that I want to mention is that you have religious minorities, ethnic minorities, national minorities – there are different kinds of minorities. If you think of the Kurds for example, in Turkey, in Syria, in Iran, in Iraq, they are numerically an ethnic minority, in these different countries. And yet, there are significant segments of these countries where they are not a minority, but they are the majority. And this is part of the reason behind their wish to eventually, at the very least, have their own federal arrangements, and, at the very most, their independent countries.

The democratic deficit

Not giving women their rights in the Arab context, with their very low social position and their low political participation, constitutes one of the major challenges to development in the Arab world. A recent report on

women in the Arab world has identified what they called a democratic deficit that the Arab world seems to be suffering from.

Frankly, if we look at women's participation as one of the key ingredients or factors that would define a democracy, then, whether in Europe, or in the Arab world – we have a democratic deficit. Why? Because neither in any of the European countries, nor in the Arab world do you have equal representation, and representation of women at all levels in society. Neither in Europe nor in the Arab world do you have a social acceptance that women are indeed equal partners to men. Even in the Scandinavian countries, which we all use as our role models, and rightly so, for women's political participation in particular, we are still looking at contexts where, socially, it is still problematic, and legally it is still not the case that women can occupy exactly the same positions as men. Were that to be the case anywhere in the world we would not be needing women's movements, women's rights groups, or anything. Because we would have that equality anyway. So what would we be fighting for?

The fact of the matter is, women's rights struggle, as part of the human rights struggle, is still ongoing, everywhere in the world. As such, none of the democracies that we have are actually complete, efficient democracies. There is a deficiency.

The Carnaby foundation in the United States, one of the very well known think tanks, very recently issued a paper looking at women's rights. I was completely shocked to realise that the argument that was given by that think tank was: we don't need women to have a democracy. You can have a democracy without women's equal participation; you just don't need them. Actually, reviewing the history of how democracy has emerged in the Western world, women very rarely played a prominent role. And the conclusion that they come up with therefore is: no, we don't need women in a democracy. And the subsequent argument that they come up with, even though I don't

agree with this research but I do agree with the argument that they come up with, is that the United States does not need to promote women's participation in the Arab world. It is not necessary. They can promote democracy, but they do not need to promote women's participation.

Imagine that reference in relation to any European country: we don't need women to have a democracy. Would that argument be an acceptable argument? We can have unequal rights; we can be discriminating against women, in the workplace, in society, in the domain of politics, whatever. That's not relevant to our concept of democracy. Imagine that argument!

The role of religion

Second suggestion/question. Whether we appreciate it or not, in Europe, religion has played not a prominent role, so to say. You may be familiar with the situation in some Western European countries where churches were converted into buildings for other uses because lack of attendance, converted into, for example, shopping centres or music halls. So we do have the situation where so-called 'secularism', which by the way is a huge terminology issue in and by itself, is seen as playing a much more prominent role in the European context. Religion therefore takes a back seat, at best. Now, after the events of 11 September in the United States, it is clear that it is not so easy to wish religion away, particularly in the Western world. It is not so easy to categorise religion conveniently as a private matter that has nothing to do with issues of citizenship, issues of democracy ... We all began to question a little bit whether it be that marginalization of religion, that secular societies and secular governments in particular have practiced for the last 20 to 25 years in Europe and whether that process of marginalization is justified.

We need to look at what the role of religion is, exactly, in our societies. My thinking here, is that in both

European, and Arab societies, which are supposed to be much more religious, religion plays a much more prominent role, culturally, politically, socially etcetera. And I also wonder whether in European so-called secular societies, or in Arab so-called religious societies, that particular relationship with religion doesn't have a great deal to do with where we are in our perception about the role of women. In secular societies it is not unusual to hear that "because religion does not play a prominent role in our society, women have a much more important role to play. We don't subordinate women with religion." Therefore women have much more freedom in their respective countries; at least religion is not used to oppress or subordinate women . . . You hear the reverse argument about the Arab world, sometimes in the Arab world, which is, "because of religion, women are subordinated and oppressed, and therefore ultimately we have a deficit democracy." Religion somehow is seen as the root of all evil. And its absence would therefore logically be seen as the way forward.

Whether it is a denial of religion, or an excuse, there is a strong connection between the role religion takes, the perception of that role, and women's rights.

The World Conference on Religion and Peace

Now let me share with you a little bit about the work that I do. In my organisation, which is called the World Conference on Religion and Peace and which has existed for 25 years, the main principle of that organisation is that we can compel religions to work together, to address a common challenge.

I think that you can get anybody to confront; it does not matter whether you are a Christian, a Shi'a, a Baha'i . . . we all have common social challenges. So the idea is that you try and bring together all the religious leaders to address these common issues, these common social challenges.

Another underlying principle is the realisation that anywhere in the world, religious communities are not only the oldest social service institutions, but actually the largest and best organised social services. Think of clinics, hospitals, schools – these were traditionally provided by churches, mosques. One figure that could illustrate this is that in Latin America for example, 70 % of hospitals in the entire continent of Latin America are run by the Catholic church. Similar research in the Arab world indicates that at least 50 % of all social services today are provided by religious institutions. After governments have established their own alternative social institutions, this is still the case today. In the United States we have an average figure of something like 55 %, particularly in the health and education sector, provided through religious institutions. It is an amazing figure, if you think about it. The figure is much less for Europe. But in general, a good chunk of every population actually receives its basic needs through religious institutions somehow. So the argument “Wait a minute, secularism should become more dominant!” has to be seen and compared against this reality, of how these societies actually survive. Who in society actually provides these services? We are not talking about churches for example providing higher education for a select group of people; we are talking about basic schooling, basic health care. And the question I would like to put to you is: Is it viable to talk about a secular society when the very basic needs are provided by religious institutions?

In Africa alone, there are 15 million orphans as a result of HIV/aids. The issue of these children cannot be addressed through either governments or international organisations alone. We need to work in partnership, beginning by asking ourselves: Who did this until now? And the answer is: The church did. The mosque did.

So what we do, on a very practical level, is to bring together and organise this kind of work through inter-religious councils. To date we have 51 centres, national and regional.

Out of those that provide the actual services, 90 % are women. It is the women that do the work, who run the social services. We tried to create a body to assist and to strengthen the role of women. What we found was that African women spoke out, whereas European women remained quiet. So we should take great care before we respond too quickly to questions such as in what regions or religions women are oppressed the most.

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'Different faiths, common action'

Dr. Karam joined Religions for Peace as Director of the Women's Program in 2000. Her responsibilities include mainstreaming gender issues in Religions for Peace's work, as well as developing and disseminating lessons learned and best practices relevant to the roles, contributions and capacities of religious women in peacemaking and peace-building.

Her publications include *Women, Islamisms and the State* (1998); *Islam in a non-Pillarised Society* (co-author, 1996); *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers* (Edited, 1998), and *Transnational Political Islam* (Edited, 2004).

"Politics is often understood as a male sphere. This means that women are viewed as a minority to be protected, rather than the under-represented half of human society that they in fact are."

DR AZZA KARAM

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At one occasion during the training course everybody was invited to make their own lists of minorities in their respective countries. When shared aloud, the following came up:

- Women in parliament
- Immigrants
- Christians among Palestinians
- Russians in Latvia
- Immigrants in Bulgaria
- Hungarians
- Veiled women in Europe
- Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians in Great Britain
- Sami in Finland
- Greeks in Egypt
- Jehovah's witnesses
- Roma in Slovakia
- Gypsies in Spain
- Jews (West Bank)
- Outcasts in India
- Germans in Poland
- Kurds in Turkey
- Disabled
- Homosexual people
- Berbers in Morocco
- Amazigh in Morocco
- Armenians
- Immigrants from former Soviet republics in Russia
- People lacking equal opportunities

As the list illustrates, the concept of minority is relative – it can only be defined in relation to something else. A couple of answers which did not add to the list of categories are worth mentioning simply because they invite us both to rethink the definition of 'a minority' and to acknowledge the importance of the point of departure for what we are able to see.

- ♦ There are no minorities! Is that possible?
- ♦ There is this group x, but they are not a minority ...
What would a member of the group say?
- ♦ Social, sexual, ethnic, national, religious minorities.
Can we manage to live with a door open to the possibility that there might be minorities that we do not even know exist?

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The primacy of being human

PROFESSOR MOHAMED EL-SAYED SAID

Human rights can never be taken for granted. They have to be promoted all the time. The main mission of Human Rights Education is to call upon people to act as people in their best. Education in this respect is an act of calling – to let the sense of humanity come forward, and to help the internal humanity emerge. Human Rights Education is also an act of struggling, for the principles of Human Rights to triumph. We have so many examples of cases where people are called in the name of ethnicity, of nationality, of kin group, of other forms of belonging. All these different ways of calling illustrate the difficulties that Human Rights Education has to overcome. People are subjected to so much propaganda.

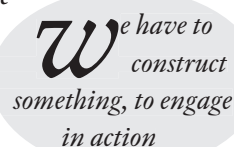
Humanity, the fact that we are all humans, is something that has to be constantly reasserted. When we part from a meeting like this and go back to our respective countries, we must all remain humans: humans as opposed to being parts on one side of a conflict; humans instead of being primarily Egyptians, or any other nationality. The primacy of being human is something very different from being called to fight my neighbour for not belonging to the same religion, the same denomination, the same ethnic group ... Human Rights Education is liberating, in that it liberates oneself from prejudices, biases. It is an education that does not have to be deserved in any way. You should be

educated not because you are an Egyptian, or because you belong to whatever other group, but simply because you are human, because of your humanity. In any given social moment, Human Rights Education should bring my humanity to the very centre of my being. No matter whether I am part of a minority angry about discrimination, or a majority thinking of itself as supreme.

Human Rights Education, furthermore, has to couple and establish connections between talking and acting.

Now, to get Human Rights Education on the agenda, would it be a good idea to teach it in primary school, alongside chemistry for instance? My answer to this question would be no, simply because the basic structure of school is too authoritarian. If Human Rights Education were to be imposed on the pupils it would probably become a new dogma. And as a result it would breed sarcasm. As teachers we have to think about, and check constantly, how people actually receive Human Rights Education, because as a topic it is so much more than just facts and figures. There is also the dialectical relation between thought and practice.

Human Rights Education should be taught not simply for the joy of it. It should be taught and learned because people can use it to defend themselves and others. But using it means that we have to construct something, to engage in action.



*We have to
construct
something, to engage
in action*

In order, for example, for students to be able to voice their concerns, there has to be a balance of power between the students and the professors. Without such a balance professors can abuse the rights of the students. Absolute power breeds absolute corruption. Therefore there must be a right for students to rate professors, to voice their opinions without fear.

When it comes to modern institutions, it is very important to couple ideas with practice. It is always a joy to think, to read, to listen to music – all these are very enjoyable things. And likewise with Human Rights Education, which means teaching people great knowledge and wis-

dom. This wisdom, however, will vanish from their heads unless practised. And this is why Human Rights Education is about supplying people with courage to use international Human Rights law, in defence of their own rights and in defence of the rights of others, groups or individuals. Defending the rights of others should not be interpreted as a threat to my own identity, my own culture or my own language. When the Human Rights of somebody, or of some group is being respected, it enriches the lives of all. The right of self-determination for every people is a right that has primacy over all others. There are many examples that you could bring up: the Amazis in Morocco and Algeria, the Kurds in Irak. As an Arab, I do, personally, support the rights of Kurds.

Coupling thought and practice is one basic principle to Human Rights. That brings us back to the topic of how to teach Human Rights. Human Rights have to be rooted in any given culture. Doing so provides us with the answer to the very crucial question of how we can put Human Rights ideas into forms that can actually be communicated and understood. And here we have to look at the specific situation of each country. In every culture there are to be found themes which are very hostile towards, for instance, women's rights.

Human rights are not there just to be taken; they have to be fought for. There are conflicts, and conflicting interests. Relations have to be safeguarded so as to work against the fair treatment of each individual. If physicians, for instance, have absolute rights, they can treat their patients as things, as objects. That is just not acceptable; we need to make physicians act towards patients as friends, as colleagues, and with respect. Departing from this example, it is obvious that we have to rewrite much of our own general expectations in relation to everyday life. It is important for patients to be able to protest, to judge, and to rate. They have to be able to somehow defend themselves against negligence, or even damage. When a person goes to a hospital he should not have to

stand at the gate to buy insurance before being allowed in. Everybody must have the right to treatment, before any talk of money comes up.

We have to take into account the different situation of different groups that we want to reach with Human Rights Education. It is not the same thing to address students, or workers, or peasants. Each and every group should have Human Rights introduced in a way that is sensitive to the concerns of the group. It is very important to introduce Human Rights Education as closely to people as possible. That is also why Human Rights education is also, necessarily, about bringing power to people, to the powerless.

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A youth worker serves as a bridge between young people, giving them a deep understanding of all life spheres, including human rights education. He or she is a permanent example for them.

DIANA SIMKOVICH, participant

In trying to establish a global culture where human rights are understood, defended and respected, you have to motivate young people to get engaged. No one has identical requirements, which is why human rights education should always be learner-centred. This means that it is essential that the educator is able to understand the people he or she works with in order to communicate knowledge about human rights in the most optimal way.

Also, since young people are best understood by other young people, human rights education should be built on straightforward dialogue through peer education.

ADWAN MOHAMAD, participant

Workshop on Antisemitism

One afternoon during the training course was devoted to parallel workshops on awareness-raising and prevention of discrimination in relation to Antisemitism, Homophobia, Islamophobia and Genderbased violence. As a reflection, parts of what was discussed in the group that dealt with Antisemitism follows below.

Antisemitism was introduced to the group as a specific form of racism, discrimination against Jewish people. Group leader RUI GOMES started by asking about the reasons why the participants chose this particular workshop. Among the answers were:

The situation of the Palestinians provokes fear and hatred. In Spain people do not distinguish between Jews and the state of Israel.

ABEL AL JENDE

In Denmark concepts are confused and abused. It is difficult to criticize governmental Israeli acts without being accused for being antisemitic. I think this is wrong because there is a distinction.

ADWAN MOHAMAD

I participate out of interest; I have worked together with Jews in religious cooperation, so I am interested in learning more.

HENRIETTA SZOVATI

I am from a mixed family, half Jewish. I did not dare to speak about this when I first came to Egypt. I am a Central European Jew, I have never lived in Israel and I did not want to be associated with Israel. I have experienced Anti-semitism on my own skin and I am very sensitive to the topic.

RUT ERDELYIOVA

The participants were invited to think about a concrete instance when they themselves had felt discriminated against or when they had been victims of prejudice. One of the stories that came up is the following, told by Rut Erdelyiova, from Slovakia.

I travelled to Warsaw, and as I got of the train the first thing I saw was an inscription on a wall saying: 'Gas the Jews'. Well, I have no cousins because somebody decided to gas all the sisters and brothers of my grandmother, just because they were Jewish. I stood there crying for twenty minutes and I felt so incredibly sad. Just that someone thinks of that event, where so many innocent people died, as something good that should be repeated. That was my experience.

My grandmother was the only one to survive from her family. They were peaceful people who lived normal lives, until somebody came and put them on a train and decided to gas them. My grandfather survived by chance; he was protected by Christian people who kept him where you keep potatoes. He had to hide like that for one year. It was extremely painful to experience that somebody thought it was a good idea! To erase innocent people from the map of the world – for nothing.

About my transgression in this respect: I came to Egypt as a totally ignorant and unknowing Central European with respect to Arab cultures. I would describe myself now as Islamophobic, because I knew nothing about the Arab world. In Slovakia the news is extreme: you have the Talibans who oppress human rights, who forbid women to go to school and who took away all their human rights. You only hear things like this, and then they start telling us ... about two days before I came here there was a clip on the main TV news in the

evening: Oh watch out because extremists are active in our country, you may fall victim to terrorist attacks, watch out for your children ... This evokes fear for something which they know nothing about, and anger. Because you feel: how come somebody comes to my country and is willing to destroy my life for an ideology that has nothing to do with me. That is why I came to Egypt not knowing anything about Arab countries, about Islam, about peoples.

I must say it is a life-changing experience to be here. To form friendships with people from here, from Palestine ... I think I will spend a lot of energy studying the Arab culture, talking to people in my country about the monsters that the politicians are creating with the hate campaigns on both sides. I have spent so much time thinking about the Arab world in very negative terms. I could not imagine how Arab families were because I thought the women must all be really unhappy, leading bad lives ... And now I feel really stupid, when I have seen how much they care for each other and how pure, in one sense, this world is.

In my world religion ... the churches, the synagogues, the places of worship are empty; people go to shopping malls instead. And in the evenings there are discos where people do

*I wish I could
convey this to
my people*

not even have a chance to talk because the music is so loud. And I come to a place where people value spiritual life, spiritual growth, where people go and worship, where they care for each other and have a completely different attitude to life. In my country when you go to hospital, the longest queues are for the psychiatric clinics because people are depressed and lonely and really unhappy. They are doing much better financially than people here. But here you see extremely poor people leading simple lives, but they have a very different attitude. I learned to gain a very deep respect for the Arab people. I wish I could convey this to my people. /.../

The way I think most people in my country understand Islamophobia is with reference to their own lives. They do not know anything about Islam or the Arab world, they are just afraid that one day somebody will turn up with a belt of

bombs around their waist and destroy their lives. But Anti-semitism is something very deeply rooted in Europe. How can you kill six million people without a majority of the people just silently watching? Or saying "yes" to what they did, although I understand that many people felt they could not raise their voice to say something. Antisemitism goes very deep; I think the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is used as an excuse today. Before the war there was a long campaign, by the politicians and in the media, in which Jews were described as greedy, etc.

I think it is the same thing with Islamophobia – they deliberately tell you only bad things about Islam to turn you in a certain direction. I do not believe the millions of Europeans that watched the Holocaust would have done it themselves, had they not been fed all these things that numbed them towards the Jewish people. I think when somebody has a political or economic interest and in order to achieve it they decide to activate the potential of hatred and fear towards other human beings just because ...

I think we all tend to fear what is different and what is unknown. I felt afraid of going to the Pyramids because, what if they collapse just today? I did not know how they were built, the structure; it is the same thing: I was afraid for Arab people because all I heard was "oh, they are terrorists", "they abuse their women" ... Once I have learned about the culture, the heritage, the way they care about each other, this will help me change my opinion. Unless you are exposed to positive information, you are robbed of the right to choose your own opinion. I really believe that it is very much about the information that you get.

I wrote my will before coming here. If I did not come back, what would happen to my son? As I look back now I feel like an idiot. The plane could have dropped, that is true. Things like that can happen, but it was my fear of going to an Arab country for the first time in my life. I spoke to people who had travelled before me, but they had only gone to the tourist places and they said, "yes, we went to Hurghada, but we were accompanied by military." So you have to be afraid in Egypt.

I still don't know; it was like I had to come here for some reason. I had to leave my little son alone, for the first time this long, and it was extremely difficult for me, but I felt I had to. Something inside was telling me, "you have to go". I followed the situation in Palestine very diligently. I follow the BBC over my computer and very honestly I must say that I cry as much when they say a Palestinian child was killed, as when a bomb in Israel killed a child. For me it is the same. But I must say, I knew a lot about the Israeli life and intentions but nothing about the Arab. They fight for something but use means that are not acceptable to me. I do not understand why they must attack innocent people; why don't they attack the army or something? The innocent people in the street

Something inside was telling me, "you have to go"

are such an easy target. Now I have talked a lot to the Palestinians here, about what it is like to be a Palestinian. Now I understand the anger and the hatred and the pain and the frustration of not being able to do things to improve the situation. I think I had come to a point in my life where I had to find the answers to the questions I had within. So I came. I did get some answers and I feel very humble.

One more example of inputs is the following, told by Adwan Mohamad:

Both sides kill innocent people. But generally, what Rut says resembles very much what happens in Denmark with Islamophobia, which is provoked in much the same way in Denmark as in Slovakia. Arabs are represented only with Kalashnikovs in their hands. People get the picture of Arabs as savages. It makes me think of how the Jews were compared to rats in the 1930s. Usually I think of myself not being exposed to racism or Islamophobia. There is a lot of prejudice in society but I don't feel it in my own life.

I used to do telephone interviews for a market analysis company, picking names at random. Every time there was a foreign name I had to fight the idea of wondering what that call would be like, whether they would speak sufficient Danish

to complete the interview, etcetera. I try to resist this immediate reaction, because I also realise that the same attitude could be directed against myself, having a foreign name. It once happened to my sister when she applied for a job and put our mother's Danish family name on the application. She was interviewed, she got the job and when she said afterwards, 'There is one thing, my real name is not Pedersen: it is Mohamed', they agreed that she had done the right thing: 'Had you put your real name, we would not have invited you for an interview.'

Group facilitator Rui Gomes went on to ask the group what their feelings were. How did you feel when you yourself discriminated? Among the testimonies and general suggestions the following key words came up:

- ♦ You give back?
- ♦ You do things just because you are used to them
- ♦ Fear of the unknown
- ♦ Fear and shame
- ♦ You are surrounded with wrong perceptions

A discussion on this followed, concerning the consequences that easily occur, and in particular the lowering of self-esteem. The victim's feeling of shame is a feeling that works on the inside of the person. It is a very common phenomenon that victims of racism end up exposing others to the same. The fact that you are Arab, Swedish, Egyptian, anything, does not make you immune to racism. Racism is a pattern of thinking which you can find anywhere. But the fact that racism exists everywhere does not mean that everybody is racist.

The group was invited to take little pieces of paper, giving them a topic for a one-minute speech. One example from this part of the workshop is the topic that Abel Al Jende got, 'We must not allow jokes about Jews.'

I think everything can be joked about. There is nothing that cannot be the object of jokes. Jokes are a way of putting things

in perspective. Jokes and fun are cultural treasures. They allow you relief from pain and fear. It is important to be able to laugh about oneself. Twin Tower jokes do not kill people. If you have to take too many precautions, you remain without a subject for your jokes. I think of Carnival time, when everything is allowed, really everything. I believe that we need space and time for jokes.

Questions raised in relation to this presentation included:

- ♦ But don't the same jokes make everybody laugh?
- ♦ Jokes may perpetuate prejudice.
- ♦ Jokes about the Holocaust – I do not find that ok.
- ♦ You often tell jokes about people that you don't know anything about.
- ♦ But who can joke about what?

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What do you think?

- ♦ “Men are stronger than women.”
- ♦ “Women can better take care of children.”
- ♦ “Religion is a major impediment to gender equality.”
- ♦ “Feminism is a Western concept.”

Participants were introduced to the above statements, one at a time, and they were invited to go to opposite ends of the room: the YES / I AGREE corner, or the NO / I DON'T AGREE corner.

Where would you go, and based on what arguments?

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Conclusions by the participants

The training seminar ‘Citizenship matters’ was organised from the 19th to 29th April by the Council of Europe and the European Commission in co-operation with the Swedish Institute of Alexandria. It brought together 40 participants, trainers and resource people from 20 European countries.

The training seminar addressed the situation and levels of participation of, and discrimination against, young women and minority youth in youth projects, as common challenges for all countries and societies in Europe and the Mediterranean area. These are also themes that often lend themselves to the creation of stereotypical and ethnocentric views among those involved in European and Mediterranean countries. One of the basic competencies of youth workers active in Euro-Med youth projects should be the ability to address these issues with young people and with others involved in youth projects. In this way, the youth workers can be multipliers and support young people in their own learning processes on these matters.

In this framework, the seminar aimed at developing a common understanding about the challenges to the participation of women and minorities in youth projects and to identify educational principles to promote global citizenship of young people in Euro-Med projects.

Through an intensive programme of workshops and with the support of resource people, the participants

debated the issues in a Euro-Mediterranean perspective, developing ideas for further action and cooperation. They also have needs for inclusive policies and approaches in Euro- Med youth projects that take into account the specific needs of young women and minority groups within a common framework of human rights, human rights education and intercultural learning.

Some of the common challenges

- ♦ Some youth and minority groups have difficulties in cooperating with the state institutions because of the lack of a legal status.
- ♦ The voice of the minorities is not heard by the institutions; they are often the subject of direct and indirect discrimination. Young people from a minority background suffer in their self-esteem, their sense of belonging and in their self-confidence, often resulting in a feeling of alienation and assimilation.
- ♦ Minority young people, including young women, are vulnerable to widespread forms of prejudice, racism and discrimination, including Antisemitism and Islamophobia.
- ♦ There is a general deficit in the representation of women and minorities at local, national and international level, as well as in decision-making processes.
- ♦ Human rights and human rights education are insufficiently present in education and in youth work. Young people need to learn about human rights as a basis for more just and humane societies.
- ♦ Religious minorities and other social minorities are, unfortunately, still taboo in many societies.

Most of these challenges are common to European and Mediterranean countries alike, although they may assume different dimensions and levels from one country to another. Generally, their perception is also influenced

by prevailing forms of ethnocentrism and prejudice, making intercultural dialogue and cooperation difficult, albeit fundamental. We have considered three target groups for our recommendations: young people and youth work, youth organisations, and youth policy institutions.

The role of youth work and young people

The duty of every person in society is to participate in an active and responsible role, exercising their citizenship. This is also the case for young people, who are the present and the future of our societies. Voluntary youth work has a major role to play in promoting democratic values based on human rights and access for all. The governmental policies also have a major role to play, notably in providing financial support and encouraging the development of educational and social programmes for and with young people, such as courses, conferences, leisure time activities and activities in favour of the community.

The development of youth in proper concept is the base of the society and nation success. All young people should be able to benefit from all the available support measures and policies in order to pursue their development and their future. Young people should also be supported in their aspirations and projects for human rights education and intercultural learning, such as:

- ♦ Organizing non formal activities such as workshops, role play and open discussions
- ♦ Supporting the concept of voluntary work with young people through coordinating with youth organizations to host them after graduation.
- ♦ Organizing intercultural activities such as seminars, study visits and job shadowing within the Euro-Med Youth Programmer
- ♦ Having open meetings that aim to raise parents' awareness for their children's problems and how to deal properly with these problems

- ♦ Promoting the concept of decision making by young people through:
 - ♦ Students councils in schools
 - ♦ Youth organisations
 - ♦ Youth councils for those aged between 15–25
- ♦ Giving young people space to see their needs and concerns reflected in and through the media
- ♦ Using different artistic and creative mechanisms with which to raise awareness and to help solve youth problems through theatre, music, and television and radio programmes
- ♦ Encouraging the participation of youth with special needs in youth work
- ♦ Raising awareness about the inclusion of young people with special needs, young women and young people from minorities.
- ♦ Supporting youth workers and youth leaders, including volunteers - who are all essential multipliers - in their social and professional role, through training opportunities and improvements in their social, legal and economic status.

The role of youth organisations

Youth organisations must be encouraged to take on board seriously the matters of gender equality, women rights and minority rights as a matter of fundamental relevance for the well-being of *all* young people in society. They should also:

- ♦ train young people in order for them to develop a new understanding of minorities and the skills to deal with them
- ♦ integrate minority youth in their work and emphasise human rights, including co- operation with different minorities
- ♦ overcome the separation between activities just for minorities and those for the majority, and design pro-

- grammes to be accessible for everyone
- ♦ develop strategies on project management, funding, and realistic planning aimed at young women and other under-represented groups
 - ♦ always consider the gender balance in their programmes and attitudes
 - ♦ foster cooperation with other youth organizations and institutional partners
 - ♦ encourage participation within their organisation and not just through the programmes
 - ♦ promote direct exchanges to overcome distance to avoid misunderstandings and stereotypes in Euro-Mediterranean area
 - ♦ lobby to the extent it is possible to public attitudes through the media and through education, especially formal education at early stages
 - ♦ seek to involve the parents of the young people
 - ♦ be in ongoing contact with the youth of society and adapt their methods and structures to the young people's lifestyles.

The role of local, national and European institutions

All the social and political institutions have an essential role to play in improving matters related to young women and young people from a minority background:

- ♦ Support the establishment and development of non-governmental organisations and civil society initiatives from *all* minorities and young people.
- ♦ Recognise the existence and role of different minorities in their territory (ethnic, national, religious, linguistic, social, etc.) and commit to equality in human dignity of all;
- ♦ Take seriously on board specific needs of minority groups, including those related to freedom of conscience and religion and to specific social needs (e.g.

translation and interpretation needs);

- ♦ Condemn without reservation all forms of racism and racial discrimination, including Antisemitism, Islamophobia and religious discrimination.
- ♦ Adopt and implement policies for equality of opportunities in their institutions.
- ♦ Train their staff and officers on anti-discrimination matters.
- ♦ Work towards the abolition of the immigration restriction laws in order to overcome the contradiction of implementing participation in a context of criminalisation of immigration.
- ♦ Encourage and support communication with minorities and from minorities (e.g. opening the media to minority languages and concerns).
- ♦ Ensure local authorities actively involve minority groups in their consultations and decision-making processes.
- ♦ Foresee budgets for human rights education in school and out of school education.
- ♦ Organise events and Open Discussion Forums to share experiences and promote cooperation among different organizations and minorities.
- ♦ Run projects.
- ♦ Train all staff on diversity\religious\minority and women's issues and against Racism.
- ♦ Organise campaigns, and support youth organizations in raising awareness for diversity and human rights.
- ♦ Have a database of translators and interpreters in all institutions within easy reach.
- ♦ Revise job application forms so as to avoid discrimination on the basis of gender or ethnicity (e.g. leaving out gender\name).
- ♦ Create an active body or council where illegalised immigrants can address\express\articulate their views and concerns.
- ♦ Implement the right of immigrants to political participation.

- ♦ Demand the reflection of minorities in institutions within society (percentage of minorities should be reflected in the organization).
- ♦ Stop public and private institutions from asking women questions about their family planning.
- ♦ Set up funds to support companies to help parents wishing to stay at home with their children.

Participants

AUSTRIA

Rafif Flür ♦ *Youth Centre FaF*
Ljiljana Zlatojevic ♦ *Helping hands Salzburg and
Frauentreffpunkt – Frauenberatungsstelle*

BELGIUM

Younes Ouchan ♦ *Hidaya, Independent Youth Socio-
Cultural Organisation*
Iris De Boeck ♦ *Red Cross Youth Belgium – Flanders*

BULGARIA

Maysoun Shaaban ♦ *Bulgarian Helsinki Committee*

DENMARK

Adwan Mohamad, *PRESS – Save the Children Youth*

EGYPT

Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim Ahmed ♦ *The Office of the
Euro-Med National Co-ordinator*
Sondos Mahmoud ♦ *The Office of the Euro-Med National
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Ghada Mohammad Gamell ♦ *Ishrakah Association*
Riham M. Nabil Hifnawy ♦ *Development and training
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Ahmed Mahrous ♦ *Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal
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FINLAND

Ariston Hulkko ♦ *Sillalla Ry*

Borhan Hamdon ♦ *Hakunilan International Association*

HUNGARY

Suzana Ricea ♦ *Inter-ethnic Association of Disadvantaged Persons from Romania*

ISRAEL

Osama Daoud Alasmar ♦ *Old City Youth Association – Jerusalem*

ITALY

Lucia Barbieri ♦ *Comune di Prato – Servizi Sociale e Sanità*

LATVIA

Irina Vasiljeva ♦ *Youth National Minority Programme ‘Zelta Kamolins’ (Golden Bell)*

MOROCCO

Yassine Isbouia ♦ *Youth Centre in Asila*

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Samah H. A. Fiala ♦ *Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation-PYALARA*

Radwa Abdel Fattah Ahmad Musa ♦ *The Palestinian Youth Centre*

POLAND

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Abel Al Jende ♦ *Youth Asociacion Voluntariado*
Internacional y Local

SWEDEN

Liina Veerme ♦ *Mälardalens Kvinnolobby/Tjejlobbyn*

TUNISIA

Darine Mesbah ♦ *Club Unesco Ezzouhour de Tunis*

TURKEY

Aysegül Dörttepe ♦ *Bosporus Youth Association*

UNITED KINGDOM

Henrietta Szovati ♦ FEMYSO
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Team

Dia Salah Abou Mousleh ♦ consultant
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Alper Akyuz ♦ consultant
Miguel Angel Garcia Lopez ♦ consultant
Rui Gomes ♦ *Council of Europe, European Youth Centre*
Budapest
Ingrid Sandström ♦ *The Swedish Institute in Alexandria*
Gehad Galal ♦ *National Co-ordinator of the Euro-Med*
Programme, Egypt

Lecturers

Dr. Azza Karam ♦ *Special Advisor, Arab and Islamic*
Affairs. Director, Women's Program Religions for Peace

Golda El-Khoury ♦ *Regional Advisor on Youth*
UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Region
Dr Farouk O. Abaza ♦ *The Faculty of Arts*
History Department in University of Alexandria

Prof Mohamed El-Sayed Said ♦ *Centre for Political and*
Strategic Studies. Al Ahram Newspaper

Dietrich Rometsch ♦ *European Commission – Directorate*
General for Education and Culture Directorate D – Youth,
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Jan Henningsson ♦ *Director, The Swedish Institute in*
Alexandria

Secretariat

Mariuca Matanie ♦ *Council of Europe, European Youth*
Centre Budapest

Randa Hafez ♦ *The Swedish Institute in Alexandria*

Programme

MONDAY 19 APRIL

- Arrival of participants
- 20:00 Dinner
- 21:00 Welcome and group-building activities

TUESDAY 20 APRIL

- 08:30 Departure from Kaoud Hotel to the Swedish Institute
- 09:00 Official opening of the course, with:
 - Jan Henningsson, Director of the Swedish Institute*
 - Mr Dietrich Rometsch, European Commission*
 - Mr Rui Gomes, Council of Europe*
- Presentation of the participants and aims of the course
- 10:15 Break
- 10:45 Getting to know each other,
and expectations of participants towards the course
- 12:30 Plenary – report on the expectations of participants
Information about the course and the Swedish Institute in
Alexandria
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Presentation of the programme and methodology of the course
- 15:00 Individual and group work on identity and culture
- 17:15 Break
- 17:30 Preparation of the exhibition about the organisations' activities
- 19:00 Opening of the exhibition
- 20:15 Closing
- 21:00 Dinner

WEDNESDAY 21 APRIL

- 08:30 Departure from Kaoud Hotel to the Swedish Institute
- 09:00 Introduction to the programme of the day

- 09:10 Exploration of the multicultural reality of Alexandria (in groups)
- 13:00 Lunch
- 15:00 Reports of the groups
- 16:30 Break
- 17:00 *'Myths and realities about multicultural Alexandria', presentation by Dr Farouk Abaza, The Faculty of Art, History Department of Alexandria University*
- 18:00 Reflection groups
- 21:00 Dinner and intercultural evening at Kaoud Hotel

THURSDAY 22 APRIL

- 08:30 Departure from Kaoud Hotel to the Swedish Institute
- 09:00 Introduction to the programme of the day
Introductory activities to women's rights and participation
- 09:45 *'Young Women's rights and their violation within the European and Mediterranean area', Dr Golda El-Khoury, UNICEF Regional Advisor on Youth for the Middle East and North Africa Region*
- 10:45 Break
- 11:15 Questions and discussions
- 12:15 Group work on the relevance of the issues raised by the speaker in participants' countries
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Continuation of the working groups
- 15:30 Feedback and reports of the groups
- 16:00 Break
- 16:15 Mini-workshops on Women's rights and Human Rights Education
- 20:30 Dinner

FRIDAY 23 APRIL

- 08:30 Departure from Kaoud Hotel to the Swedish Institute
- 09:00 Introduction to the programme of the day
- 09:10 Introduction to minorities' rights in Euro-Med youth work
- 09:45 *'Women and minority rights: securing equality and diversity within an universal framework of human rights', lecture by Dr Azza Karam, World Conference of Religions for Peace*
- 10:45 Break
- 11:15 Questions and discussions with the speaker
- 12:15 Individual and work group on challenges to minority rights within participants' realities
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Working groups continue
- 16:15 Break
- 16:30 Feedback and reports of groups discussions

- 17:15 Practical information about the excursion to Cairo
- 17:45 Reflection groups
- 20:00 Dinner by the Mediterranean

SATURDAY 24 APRIL

- Free day
- Visit to Giza and Cairo

SUNDAY 25 APRIL

- 08:30 Departure from Kaoud Hotel to the Swedish Institute
- 09:00 Introduction to the programme of the day
- 09:15 *'Human rights education as a tool for the promotion of minorities and women's rights', with Prof Mohamed Saeed, al Ahram Center for Strategic and Political Studies*
- 10:30 Break
- 11:00 Introduction to Compass, the manual on human rights education, and the educational approaches in it
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Introduction to the Euro-Med Youth Programme and the possibilities it offers for co-operation projects, by a representative of the European Commission. Introduction to the Council of Europe and its work in the field of youth and human rights
- 15:30 Workshops
 - ♦ preparing an Euro-Med project
 - ♦ developing a project with young people
- 17:30 Visit to the Biblioteca Alexandrina
- Cultural programme in the city
- 20:30 Dinner

MONDAY 26 APRIL

- 08:30 Departure from Kaoud Hotel to the Swedish Institute
- 09:00 Introduction to the programme of the day
- 09:15 Workshops on educational approaches for the participation of women and minorities:
 - ♦ intercultural learning in youth work
 - ♦ youth participation
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Workshops on awareness-raising and prevention of discrimination, such as:
 - ♦ Antisemitism
 - ♦ Homophobia
 - ♦ Islamophobia
 - ♦ Gender-based violence
- 18:00 Reflection groups
- 20:30 Dinner

TUESDAY 27 APRIL

- 08:30 Departure from Kaoud Hotel to the Swedish Institute
- 09:00 Introduction to the programme of the day
- 09:15 Guidelines for the promotion of the rights and the inclusion of women and minorities in/through future Euro-Med projects
- 09:30 Working groups drafting guidelines proposals
- 13:00 Lunch
- 15:00 Presentation of the guidelines and conclusions. Round-table with local youth women and minorities organisations' representatives
- 16:30 Café – Reception
- 17:30 Closing of the day's programme

WEDNESDAY 28 APRIL

- 08:30 Departure from Kaoud Hotel to the Swedish Institute
- 09:00 Introduction to the programme of the day
- 09:15 Guidelines for follow-up projects
- 09:45 Work on the follow-up of the course, individual and group work, consultations with the trainers
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Presentation of follow-up ideas and projects
- 15:30 Conclusions by the General Rapporteur
- 16:00 Break
- 16:30 Evaluation of the seminar
- 17:45 Closing of seminar
- 21:00 Dinner and farewell party

THURSDAY 29 APRIL

- Departure of participants

