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Youth policy and research development in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework

International Round-table

Cairo, Hyatt hotel, 30 May 2006

REPORT

1. Background, aims and objectives of the meeting

In September 2005, the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, the Swedish Institute in Alexandria and the Egyptian Ministry of Youth organised a seminar "Youth policy here and now". The seminar was a first step for young people, governmental officers, researchers and NGO representatives from European and Arab countries to meet and learn from each other, exchange experiences and identify challenges on youth policies, from design to implementation and monitoring.

Representatives from seven countries participated in the seminar: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Slovakia, Sweden and "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". Each country had a delegation with three participants who also represented different actors in youth policy development: officials of governmental institutions involved in the definition and implementation of youth policy, representatives of national youth organisations and researchers actively involved in youth policy definition.

Despite their different demographic structures and approaches to youth policy, the participants developed a shared understanding of the importance of the role of youth policy and came up with ideas how to cooperate in the future and how to improve the implementation of youth policies, both in Europe and the Arab world. They also underlined the value of such seminar in fostering intercultural cooperation and dialogue among professionals of youth policy and they stressed the need to strengthen cooperation between the youth policy and the youth research fields.

One of the outcomes and follow-up of the seminar was the realisation that it constituted the starting point for a process of youth policy cooperation in the broader Euro-Med context. Two additional seminars were thus envisaged: one about the role of youth research in youth policy and youth work development in the Euro-Med context (to be held in November 2006) and another on

youth participation planned for 2007 (hence covering the three dimensions of the triangle of good governance in youth policy). These three seminars should lead to the organisation of a high level Euro-Mediterranean conference of Ministers dealing with youth policies in 2008.

Within this context, the organisers invited for an international round table on “Youth policy and research development in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework”, as an attempt to extend cooperation to all relevant partners in the region. The round table served as a forum to exchange experiences and information with key stakeholders in the Euro-Mediterranean region and to further explore the interest and feasibility in a high level conference.

The background document “Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of youth – towards a knowledge based approach on youth policy development” served as the starting point to engage a debate on the youth reality in the Euro-Med region.

Several questions were put on the table as core dimensions of change for young people within the European research discourse:

- the end of normative transitions to adulthood
- neither education nor the labour market seem to correspond to young people’s needs and aspirations
- identities and lifestyles are increasingly plural, contingent and individualised
- a chasm has opened up between young peoples perspectives and practices of participation and the participation options they actually have
- intergenerational relations face major restructuring for both demographic and economic reasons
- the transition to knowledge societies mediated by information and communication technologies creates open, mobile economic and cultural environments that are re-shaping young people’s life chances and risks as well as their social and learning environments.¹

The debate contributed to share different experiences and to verify whether the realities described above reflect the realities of the of ‘societal youth conditions’ in the broader Euro-Med context.

The exchange also aimed at verifying the applicability of the so-called triangle of good governance between public authorities, civil society and the research community to the Euro-Med reality.

Participants exchanged views and experiences to identify common strands of interest, major challenges and actions to be taken, in view of developing a more structured dialogue and regular cooperation between Europe and the Arab region.

2. Exchange of views on existing projects and programmes relating to youth research and youth policy development in the Euro-Med framework

Anna Lindh Foundation

The main target group of the Anna Lindh Foundation’s activities is Youth. In the field of youth activities, the foundation aims to promote Cultural Diversity, Human Rights, and Gender Equity and women’s role in societies.

¹ cp. Bendit, Chisholm, Laetheenmaa, Lauritzen, Walther, Zentner in: “A knowledge based youth pact”; working paper submitted to the Informal Meeting of Youth Ministers of the European Union and Austria Youth Event 2006, p 1,ii. The full document is provided in Appendix 1 to the present report.

ALF is working tirelessly via all its programmes to bring young people together and engage them in public policy dialogue with each other, civil society organisations and government leaders and other key stakeholders in the field of youth participation in regional and national youth policies. The aim is to increase and strengthen youth participation under the Cultural pillar of the Barcelona Process incorporating youth in the 35 Euro-Mediterranean countries, as well as to strengthen youth participation in advocating for, implementing and monitoring youth policies.

The foundation is also working in presenting all the ideas and drafted resolutions coming out from young people participating in the foundation's youth activities. The priorities of ALF in the field of youth activities are focused on outreach and engagement, knowledge and capacity building.

The League of Arab States

Various studies and activities are being implemented in the field of Arab youth empowerment with a special focus on the important role of youth in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to reproductive health and reproductive rights of youth.

The Arab League's Report on the state of the art of Literature on Arab Youth points out the lack of data on youth in the region, the low profile of the available studies in terms of the absence of comprehensive conceptual frameworks, adopting a social problem approach when dealing with youth. Therefore, there is a need to support youth studies and research in the region in order to bridge the gap in data and provide reliable information on a regular basis.

- Arab Youth advisory committee to the Youth empowerment project

Established one and a half years ago, the Youth advisory committee's mandate is to provide support, advice and research in the youth field within the framework of the League's Youth empowerment project. Based on a participatory approach, the committee reunites 15 active young members from the region.

Bibliotheca Alexandrina

The Bibliotheca develops activities around 4 main themes: political participation, unemployment, leadership training and future perspectives for young people.

An observatory of youth empowerment is also being established to bridge the numerous gaps in the knowledge about youth and respond to the lack of coordination and cooperation between Governmental policies and NGOs developing youth programs. The two main purposes of this project are the development of an info mall, i.e. a website collecting and posting information about NGOs (www.infomall.org); and the development of indicators to measure the initiatives developed in the youth field.

Council of Europe

Established in 1949 the Council of Europe is the continent's oldest political organisation. It groups together 46 countries. The Council of Europe is committed to the development of parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, the safeguard of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the promotion of Europe's cultural diversity.

- The North-South Centre

Based in Lisbon, the North-South Centre promotes dialogue between Europe and other regions of the world, namely Africa (including the Euro-Med area) and to a lesser extent Latin America and

Asia. The main purpose is to build bridges at global level on issues like democracy, Human Rights, education and citizenship, in line with the main priorities of the Council of Europe.

Young people play an important role in the work programme of the North-South Centre and their involvement is sought at every level.

The Centre also plays an active role within the framework of the Euro-Med Partnership agreement: trying to ensure a Euro-Med presence in its global activities, it aims at integrating the Euro-Med reality into a more global dimension.

- Directorate of Youth and Sport

The Council of Europe has always paid particular attention to matters affecting young people, with a double perspective: to associate young people to the building of a European space of democratic participation and cooperation and to promote cooperation among member states with the view to address issues that affect young people. The European Youth Centres, in Strasbourg and Budapest, and the European Youth Foundation are among the Council's main tools for youth policy and youth work development in Europe.

In addition to youth policy development, the Council of Europe's youth sector has three other work priorities: human rights education and intercultural dialogue; youth participation and democratic citizenship; social inclusion.

The Directorate of Youth and Sport has had a pioneering role in developing youth policy standards and cooperation in Europe, including a system of national youth policy reviews. A Ministers conference is organised every three years.

The Directorate is also developing a campaign on diversity, human rights and participation, which will be launched at the end of June 2006.

Economic Research forum

The Economic Research Forum is an independent NGO that funds research activities on relevant issues for the Arab region, mainly carried out by young researchers from the region. Youth and gender issues always receive special attention in these research projects.

The Forum welcomes initiatives aimed at exchanging experiences and practices to overcome specific problems in the region, such as the lack of reliable, comprehensive data about the Arab youth world.

Egyptian Federation of Youth NGOs

Established in April 2005, the Egyptian Federation of Youth NGOs reunites 8 youth-led Egyptian NGOs with the aim to promote dialogue among civil society entities.

The Federation focuses on 3 main priorities:

- 1) building the capacities of member NGOs
- 2) promoting dialogue with other sectors of the society (government, private sector, etc.)
- 3) creating a network of Arab Youth NGOs

Euro-Med Youth Platform

The main activity of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform is facilitating networking between all those interested in the youth sector in the region. It reunites youth NGOs, local authorities that are

developing youth initiatives and a growing number of academic institutions dealing with youth studies.

Being aware of the lack of research on the youth sector in the Mediterranean, the Platform started compiling an archive on the situation of young people in each country of Europe and the Mediterranean.

The Platform monitors the participation in Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation and targets the less represented countries. It facilitates the creation of Euro-Mediterranean networks of youth organisations that share similar objectives.

European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum's activities are mainly devoted to:

- explore youth policies and strategies in the region in terms of definition development and implementation of youth policies and participation;
- focus on the role of youth policies and youth participation in shaping democratic societies;
- assess the reality of young people in both regions;
- develop recommendations in relation to a better involvement of youth in policy development;
- develop a mapping of independent and autonomous youth-led organisations in order to identify and develop cooperation with a youth counterpart in the region.

ALECSO

Alecso was represented by Prof. Tharwat Ishak, professor of Sociology at Ain Shams University in Cairo. The professor stated the interest of ALECSO in future cooperation leading to research development in various fields, such as education, policy, sociology, youth values and attitudes, conflicts between generations, intercultural dialogue.

European Network of Youth Researchers

Within the Partnership Agreement between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, the Research Network has been carrying out youth policy reviews and involved in the production of an Indicators Report on youth policy development and implementation. A European Knowledge Centre for youth policy was also established and thematic seminars were organised on issues such as resituating culture, young people's political participation, non-formal learning and voluntary activities.

The underlying principles of the Network's activities are a better understanding of youth and the open method of coordination, principles that were put forward in the European Commission's White Paper on Youth published in 2002.

Egyptian National Youth Council

The National Youth Council is the main governmental institution responsible for youth policy in Egypt. Building on the principle that young people should be the starting point to develop an understanding of different cultures, the National Youth Council aims at empowering young people through skills and knowledge in order to strengthen democratic participation and build peace and intercultural dialogue.

The Council does so through a wide range of programs aimed at promoting talent and skills development in different fields.

Partnership on Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission

The Council of Europe and the European Commission have developed a close cooperation in the youth field. The current Partnership on Youth is a single framework agreement that covers 3 main areas of cooperation: youth research and policy; European citizenship and quality development; Euro-Med, Human Rights Education and intercultural dialogue.

Activities developed under the Euro-Med strand include training courses in Human Rights Education based on the Arabic version of Compass, the manual on Human Rights Education with young people. The purpose of these courses is to establish a network of trainers and multipliers in the Arab region and to develop the capacity of youth organisations to introduce Human Rights Education in their work. Two regional training courses for the Arab region took place in Jordan and Egypt in 2006 and a third similar course will be organised in the Maghreb region in 2007. These courses will be followed by an evaluation later next year.

The Euro-Med Partnership on Youth also initiated some work in youth policy cooperation. Last year's seminar on youth policy development was the first step towards an exchange on how youth policies are being developed in Europe and the Meda countries. A second seminar on the role of youth research will take place this year in November and a third seminar on the role of youth participation is planned for next year. The role of the Partnership is to explore new areas of cooperation beyond those provided by the Euro-Med Youth programme; youth policy is one of such areas.

Most of the activities organised within this Partnership agreement are implemented in cooperation with local partners.

Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs

Sweden has over 30 years experience of youth policy development. Central to the Swedish youth policy is the idea that young people are a resource for society. During the 1990s a system for implementation and monitoring was created, which also included regular evaluations of objectives and content. The National Board for Youth Affairs is the coordinating body for this process. It is a governmental authority working within the areas of young people's leisure and associative activities and international youth programmes. In addition to this, the Board stimulates the development of municipal youth policy and coordinates and follows up the objectives of the national youth policy. The National Board for Youth Affairs is also the national agency for the Youth programme in Sweden.

Policy and suggestions of improvement should be built on knowledge of young people's living conditions and launched through joint actions. Young people should be consulted and their knowledge utilized as a resource. The purpose is to make them involved and also to have real influence in the making of youth policy. The Board promotes method development, capacity building, dialogue and exchange of experiences through various projects, including study visits.

Swedish Institute in Alexandria

The Swedish Institute in Alexandria is dedicated to the dialogue of civilizations. Its main task is to promote broad contacts between Europe and the MENA region. The Institute places strong emphasis on developing cooperation and networking in the areas of Youth, Media and Education/Research. It also follows closely the themes highlighted in the Barcelona process, giving

priority to multilateral projects, involving groups of countries on both sides of the Mediterranean. The institute aims to facilitate dialogue on issues of common concern and to contribute to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

UNICEF

UNICEF is working with other partners to support the development of rights based youth policies with the full participation of young people. The approach focuses on young people's positive assets moving away from a problem solving approach and involving young people as equal partners in the process. Empowerment of young people, and building the capacity of both adults and young people in promoting participation of all stakeholders, especially adolescents and youth, are key elements in UNICEF support.

The principles at the basis of every policy is to be developed within a rights' approach (building on international conventions and commitments, especially the Convention on the Rights on the Child), that starts with adolescents as early as possible (10 years old onwards) to ensure a continuum of positive investments in assets and skills, that covers the most vulnerable young people especially young women, as well as the most excluded and marginalised. Involvement of young people is supported throughout the process, from the design stage of the policy up to the monitoring and evaluation stage.

There are a number of experiences in MENA where young people were involved in the process of policy development, and the challenge now is to ensure that the momentum is maintained in the implementation phase. Other challenges to overcome include the scarcity of data on young people, on their needs, wants and rights. Employment and the quality and relevance of education are major concerns for young people in the region, in addition to opportunities to express their views, and their participation in the political process. This is translated in a trend to migrate and seek employment abroad.

UNESCO

Unesco's experience in the region confirms the lack of research in the youth field and the need to develop evidence-based policies and a participatory approach for youth NGOs.

Research should definitely contribute to this by focusing on key issues for the region, such as unemployment, the need to promote innovation and youth entrepreneurship, the quality of education and the transition to the labour market, participation in social and political processes. Cooperation with European countries should also be strengthened in order to consolidate knowledge and experiences about youth in the region.

UNDP

The main objective promoted by the UNDP is the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Youth-related activities are therefore considered as a means to promote youth contribution to achieve this key objective.

The UNDP provides support to the development of national youth strategies and to the work of observatory networks in different countries with indicators related to youth and women. Investing in youth is also seen as a means to promote sustainable human development.

Lebanese Centre for policy studies

The main task of the centre is to analyse and improve public policies. Several projects are underway in the field of electoral reform, governance, youth issues in both research and policy. Other major activities include: a seminar on political engagement in crisis and transformation; building a youth coalition for advocacy and reform; a summer school on conflict prevention and transformation in cooperation with UNDP (open to young people aged 18-24). The main objective is to help young people elaborate new alternatives.

Goethe Institute

As a cultural institute, the Goethe Institute started developing activities in the field of intercultural dialogue and then expanded the scope of its initiatives with the aim to build bridges between the field of intercultural dialogue and youth policies. Examples of such activities are the European Youth Parliament in Berlin in cooperation with various NGOs, a seminar on youth values and an intercultural seminar.

3. Common strands and interests in youth policy cooperation

There is a shared agreement to understand 'youth' also as a code for the future of societies. Consequently, absence of youth policy relates to the absence of a vision for the future of a society. This is, everywhere, the hidden agenda of youth policy.

Contributions of stakeholders around the table, mainly from the region, could be centred around the following items:

- (1) Transition from school to work, including access to vocational training, employment and the question of the quality of education.
- (2) Globalisation and social change, including the item of knowledge based economies, life long learning and mobility
- (3) Lack of relevant youth data, a critique to statistical data collections only and the absence of relevant, youth focussed interpretations of these
- (4) Empowerment of children and young people, promotion of youth advocacy
- (5) Children and Youth as a factor of development, the socio-economic scope of youth work, its impact on human capital development and its economic impact
- (6) Youth representation as in democratic youth representation, the distinction to youth services and networks
- (7) Migration and brain drain, the political, cultural and economic impact of 'diasporas', the intercultural relations aspect, the transfer effect and the model character as opposed to rejection of 'home comers' and modernity
- (8) Youth policy as good governance and the domains: health, employment, criminal justice, leisure, housing, risk behaviour, security, gender, family and religion
- (9) Intercultural Learning, the concept of 'tolerance of ambiguity', the refusal of one truth, the challenge of the countryside and the villages, the spreading of ICL
- (10) The eight millennium development goals and – in short – the UN agenda
- (11) Vulnerability, the process of marginalisation, the despise of the 'weak', work with gender items, minorities, handicapped, drop-outs
- (12) Country processes and national action plans and how to develop a 'management by objectives' approach in youth policy development

Cross-cutting youth policy agendas were also identified, namely:

- (1) identity formation and political socialisation
- (2) nation building, Europe building, regional belonging and the problem of identification
- (3) modernity and modernisation
- (4) social change and young people as actors of social change
- (5) participation
- (6) power (analyse it, work in it and with it, develop it)
- (7) information, specifically youth information

While acknowledging the equal importance of the above-mentioned items, participants also agreed on the need to establish priorities and to focus on a limited number of relevant issues, especially in relation with the preparation of a high level conference on youth policy development.

4. Towards a high level conference on youth policy development in 2008? – Challenges, purpose, format and steps in the preparation

Participants welcomed the idea of convening a high level Euro-Mediterranean conference on youth policy development to put youth policy prominently on the agenda and address key issues of common interest for co-operation between European and Arab countries. Involving ministers and senior civil servants, researchers, European and international organisations, NGOs and the media, such a conference would be an opportunity to highlight the key role of young people in Euro-Med societies, the challenges they meet and the policies to overcome them.

This conference should be seen as a mutual learning situation leading to a sharing of experiences. However, in order to mark a difference, this conference should not be limited to discussion, but also aim to encourage joint action on specific youth-related issues. There is a need to improve policy implementation, to translate theory into practice. To this end, it is important to seek the active involvement of all stakeholders – young people, policy-makers, researchers, NGOs, international and regional organisations – through the strong commitment of key partners both from Europe and the Arab world.

Youth policy implementation should also be accompanied by a systematic evaluation approach, which is still lacking in many countries, especially in the Arab region. Developing and introducing a new policy is not sufficient. An evaluation of its impact is also needed to assess its effectiveness and introduce the necessary changes. This is the only way a society can learn from its past experiences and progress.

The expected output of such an event would be the production of a youth policy civil society agenda at high level and of a set of concrete recommendations as well as the promotion of networking at different levels.

Such an initiative should also aim at involving a large number of actors, including those groups who are currently not targeted or reached. This would entail meeting the challenge of identifying reliable youth organisations, especially in the Arab region, who will be able to act as multipliers and spread the information and outcomes after the conference.

A successful conference should also be based on a comprehensive analysis of the youth situation in the Euro-Med region. This would entail a large effort aimed at collecting updated information prior to the event. The difficulty of collecting credible, updated data to develop a comprehensive and realistic picture of the youth situation in the Euro-Med region is one of the main obstacles to overcome. This is particularly true when it comes to collecting sensitive information, for instance in

relation to the issue of reproductive health and HIV infection. Reproductive and sexual rights in the region constitute a sensitive cultural, political and religious issue that is often kept silent. Thus little or no information at all is available concerning the evolution of sexual habits or HIV infection rates. Reversing this attitude represents a major challenge that requires a joint cooperation effort towards capacity-building and empowerment of youth.

The suggestion to organise a national survey on youth was put forward. This could be a useful tool to promote a larger involvement of researchers, youth organisations and other stakeholders and to provide policy-makers with updated, reliable information.

However, collecting data and working with mere indicators is not sufficient. In order to be credible and useful, data has to be processed, interpreted and connected to the reality underlying it. Research on youth cannot be dissociated from the living reality of young people. Another factor that needs to be taken into account is the influence of the power system when it comes to data release and availability.

The link between researchers and civil society, especially youth organisations, should be strengthened in order to improve the knowledge of the research world and increase trust in its players and activities. A better involvement of youth in research could be achieved, for instance, by building capacity in the academic environment.

The issue of youth involvement in policy-making represents a challenge in itself. On the one hand, youth mistrust of the institutions is a widespread reality in the region. On the other hand, the lack of young people's involvement is also due to their fear that nobody will pay attention to what they have to say.

Youth policy ownership by young people should be encouraged since an early age by involving all major players who can affect youth participation, such as families, the education system, institutions. On the other hand, efforts should be devoted to mobilise and build the capacity of youth-led NGOs in order to help young people have their say in the process and be accepted as an item of governance.

While acknowledging that a lot still needs to be done in the fields of youth research and youth policy development and implementation, participants also identified the need to take stock of previous successful experiences and promote the use of the tools that are already available in this field. For instance, the Pan-Arab Family Health Survey could serve as a guidance and inspiration tool for future action, in particular in the preparation of the seminar on the role of youth research foreseen in November.

The possible format of the high level conference was also discussed. It was suggested that this conference consists of three major phases, namely:

- an initial consultation phase involving civil society;
- the high level conference, bringing together government representatives, researchers, NGOs and other major stakeholders to work on previously identified key items;
- a final phase for the elaboration of the conference conclusions and recommendations, which could be carried out in working groups.

Each partner has an important role to play in this process according to their own specific field of competences. Preparations for the high level conference could therefore be carried out in separate fora with clear agendas and mandates, which would culminate into the high-level conference in 2008. This conference, in turn, should not be seen as an isolated ambitious aim, but rather as the launching pad for a more dynamic, articulate process that could also lead to other similar conferences in the future.

5. Function of the seminar on the role of youth research

Within this process, the November seminar on the role of youth research will be an opportunity to focus on the research dimension, promote dialogue and the exchange of knowledge among researchers, NGOs and governments in order to further develop research cooperation.

This could lead to the development of a series of pilot projects to be run between the end of the seminar and the high level conference, which could serve as a learning experience during the preparation of the conference.

The seminar could also be an important step to involve a larger number of research centres and statistical institutions from the Euro-Med region in this process and to mainstream youth in research and statistics.

The seminar will be followed by a seminar on youth participation and the role of NGOs in 2007.

6. Conclusions and ideas for follow-up

Participants acknowledged the value of the round table and expressed their satisfaction for a fruitful and useful exchange of experiences, from which a series of positive signals emerged, namely:

- a shared interest in developing and implementing efficient and effective youth policies for young people and with young people;
- the willingness and openness to cooperate and promote youth involvement and participation;
- the need to associate researchers in the policy-making process and to promote their role to gather reliable information about the youth world;
- the need to develop a structured, intercultural dialogue between both sides of the Mediterranean to overcome differences in cultural backgrounds, traditions and perceptions and to promote mutual understanding and cooperation on an equal footing;
- the need to take stock of previous successful experiences to overcome old resistances and develop innovative approaches.

On the basis of the above-mentioned considerations, it was suggested to turn the exchange initiated with this round table into a regular, possibly annual, process that will bring all partners together to share information and progress. In 2007, the round-table should be organised around the preparations for the seminar on youth participation. It was suggested that it could last 1½ days.

In addition to this, participants welcomed the idea of promoting pilot projects, study visits and expert exchanges as additional effective tools to ensure follow-up.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Background document

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH – TOWARDS A KNOWLEDGE BASED APPROACH ON YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT

By Peter Lauritzen, Head of Youth Department, Council of Europe, Directorate of Youth and Sport

(1) Introduction

Comparative youth research and gathering information and knowledge about young people in Europe is not a novel activity. Within the European Union this began seriously some 15 years ago, within the Council of Europe there is a tradition of youth research co-operation with a view to contribute to youth policy development of more than 25 years. The need to know better about young people grew dramatically with the end of the Cold War; this generated the need to reformulate societal policy with regard to young people and to look out for evidence for what was suggested. Since that time European institutions demand transversal and coordinated youth policies and corresponding action.

Over the years, the following items have been identified as core dimensions of change for young people within the European research discourse:

- end of normative transitions to adulthood
- neither education nor the labour market correspond to young people's needs and aspirations
- identities and lifestyles are increasingly plural, contingent and individualised
- a chasm has opened up between young peoples perspectives and practices of participation and the participation options they actually have
- intergenerational relations face major restructuring for both demographic and economic reasons
- the transition to knowledge societies mediated by information and communication technologies creates open, mobile economic and cultural environments that are re-shaping young people's life chances and risks as well as their social and learning environments.

(cp. Bendit, Chisholm, Laethenmaa, Lauritzen, Walther, Zentner in: "A knowledge based youth pact"; working paper submitted to the Informal Meeting of Youth Ministers of the European Union and Austria Youth Event 2006, p 1,ii) .

This is a researchers' position. Is this a strictly European position? Or does it also describe global conditions of change to cope with for young people and does it, consequently, also represent a catalogue of 'societal youth conditions' which is valid for Euro-Med co-operation?

(2) Youth policy co-operation in the framework of Euro-Med co-operation and the intercultural dimension

There are many reasons why youth policy and youth research in European and in the Euro-Med region should speak to each other and enter into a more structured and regular co-operation:

- Within the European institutions political actors have agreed on a structured ‘trialogue’ between public authority, civil society and the research community. This is called, ironically, ‘the magic triangle’ and its aim is more transparency and better governance in the youth field. If this form of social co-production of knowledge on youth and on action to take remains restricted to the Council of Europe and the European Union, it will – after some time – lose its capacity to communicate competently with other areas in the world, simply because it follows very specific, participative and transversal rules. Therefore, it is very important for the European area to remain globally connected and to involve neighbouring regions into developments.
- Many factors show, that it is very difficult to arrive at a strict distinction between a kind of ‘mainstream Europe’ and the Euro-Med region. Europe has not defined its borders forever; they always exist and they always change. Who knows the shape of Europe in 15 years? Further, long years of migration, the recent, contemporary history, the one before World War II and then the preceding history of migrations from and to the Mediterranean area during centuries make this history an inseparable part of any complex, factual and ambitious understanding of Europe; an understanding that respects diversity, as it has always been and as it has become, an understanding which pays tribute to multifaceted reading of history through all political actors, victims and perpetrators, all religious actors, nations and ethnic entities and an understanding which is more interested in Europe’s potential to solve conflicts and produce solutions that in its borders and ways to preserve its wealth for itself.
- Concretely: reading through the catalogue of ‘youth transition conditions’ in the introduction, what would a corresponding list produced by “Meda” countries look like? A recent publication (“683 Opinions – The Situation of Young People in the Euro-Mediterranean Area”, Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform, Kalkara, Malta 2005) provides, indeed, a multitude of individual opinions and solid country statistics, but there is little to go by in terms of generalising youth trends and establishing evidence. This was not even the purpose of the publication; the introduction points clearly to the lack of youth research in the area. What can be done about this and is there a societal and political way that would lead to a youth research and youth policy avenue in the area?
- Often the difference of culture is used to point out limits to connecting a mainstream European discussion with discussions as they are needed in the Euro-Med area. As a result we can observe two mutual processes of adaptation: one of ‘mainstream Europeans’ to the Euro-Med community, which is all understanding and going for harmony and conflict neutralisation and then we can witness the reverse process in the area of taking Europe, particularly the European Union, as a model which has not only to be understood, but almost to be obeyed to. Both approaches do not lead far. Co-operation as strived for within the Euro-Med co-operation of the partnership agreement between the Council of Europe and the European Union respects difference, but needs agreement on a common framework of societal references. In the youth field these are human rights, also understood as core values for youth and community work; participation and citizenship; access and inclusion (with regard to education, work, decent living conditions and leisure). Differences of cultural perception need to be outspoken; be they economic, religious, social or, indeed, cultural. To respect the rules of cultural dialogue and to inspire intercultural learning participants in the co-operation process should be able to agree on a culture of discourse which provides by its nature an equal position of all partners in the communication process and does not refrain from critique, as this is – or at

least should be – a world wide academic tradition, also largely shared by civil society and the NGO community.

(3) Towards a high level conference of youth policy actors in the Euro-Med area in 2008

This is a medium-term vision: a Euro-Mediterranean conference, involving ministers and senior civil servants, researchers, European and international organisations, competent human capital agencies, NGOs and the media highlighting the key role of young people in Euro-Med societies, challenges they meet, policies to overcome these and large European co-operation formats of knowledge sharing and policy development concerning young people. The items of such a conference could be employment, education and participation and the all-embracing dimension should be the intercultural dialogue.

Such a conference would have as its main task to put ‘youth’ prominently on the agenda. Not only are young people identical with the future (even if it is said everywhere and one cannot hear it anymore, but they actually ARE), they also represent often a part of the population superior to 50% in the Northern African countries of the Euro-Med process. This act of awareness raising should go together with strategies to build capacities and to enforce youth policies, both in state and society. European countries have gone through this process; they have come up with many different ways of dealing with young people and there is not one single model of how to do it right; but there is a richness of experience and reflection which should be shared.

To get there, some work has to be done on concrete projects of co-operation of the kind as they are making up the programme of Euro-Med co-operation within the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

A particularly prominent event within this partnership is the seminar on “youth research and youth policy development” to be held from 20 – 24 November 2006 in Alexandria in co-operation with the Swedish Institute. This seminar should be a first occasion to

- establish an inventory of common items of research into young people
- look into the particular relation of research to the development of youth policy
- promote civil society in the youth field
- look into the practical, physical conditions for knowledge production on youth: what exists in terms of youth studies, European studies, social statistics and analysis, gender studies, non-formal education etc.
- learn about secondary and higher education and the place of youth therein
- learn about the role of religion, political philosophy, culture and social stratification in the Euro-Med region
- develop a ‘down to earth’ approach to research: the role of action research, field studies, participative research, research as a learning process between young people subject to research and researchers
- look into the objectives, remit and organisation of youth policy and establish the ‘triangle’ of good governance in the youth field.

In order to prepare this seminar well, the preparation meeting planned for 30 May to 1 June in Cairo will be accompanied by a round-table discussion on the process outlined here. This should be a discussion between ALECSO, UNICEF, OHDIR, EU, Council of Europe, Anna Lindh Foundation, the Swedish Institute, the Swedish public youth authority, the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform and some of the regular partners in the co-operation, particularly NGOs.

The round-table would be an excellent opportunity to test the validity of the research and youth policy development process and it could also give important signals on (1) whether the proposed 2008 high level conference does hit a nerve and is welcomed and (2) what the agenda of such a conference should look like.

This is the proposed time table:

- Round-table on youth research and youth policy development; Cairo, 30 May
- Preparatory meeting for the November seminar, Cairo 31 May/1 June
- 20 – 24 November 2006 , Alexandria, Swedish Institute, seminar on “Youth research and youth policy development”
- 2007; in the region, ongoing project work, trainings and field work within the Euro-Med co-operation programme; follow-up to the seminar recommendations
- 2008 ; no location yet; high level conference on ‘Young people in the Euro-Med region – employment, education and participation’

Conclusion

A lot of good work is going on in the Euro-Med region. However, it seems to be difficult to reach aims such as sustainability and reliability, transparency and access to knowledge on youth. This is why the partnership suggests to work within a medium-term regional process, which is inevitably linked to the overarching aims to bring lasting peace and prosperity to the region and understand the Mediterranean region as a genuine part of Europe.

Strasbourg, 25/04/06

Appendix 3

Participants' contributions to the round table

THE ANNA LINDH FOUNDATION AND YOUTH POLICY INITIATIVES WITHIN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

Ms Eman Qaraeen, Head of Education, Heritage and Human Rights

The main target group of ALF is Youth.

In the field of youth activities, ALF aims to promote the importance of “***Cultural Diversity ” as a right of Human Rights*** and ***Gender Equity and women’s role in societies***.

ALF is working tirelessly via all its programmes to bring young people together and engage young people in public policy dialogue with each other, civil society organisations and government leaders and other key stakeholders regarding youth participation in a regional and national youth policies.


The aim is to increase and strengthen youth participation under the Cultural pillar of the Barcelona Process incorporating youth in the 35 Euro-Mediterranean countries region as well as to strengthen youth participation in advocating for, implementing and monitoring youth policies encouraging the inclusion of “***Cultural Diversity ” as a right of Human Rights*** and ***Gender Equity and women’s role in societies*** within the Youth National Policies in their respective countries.

The foundation is working as well in presenting all the ideas and drafted resolutions coming out from young people participating in the foundation’s youth activities to the Euro-Mediterranean Board of Governors, Head of ALF National Networks, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional Networks, Civil Society Organisations members in the ALF national Networks, media, intellectuals, academia and decision makers.

The priorities of ALF in the field of youth activities are focused on outreach and engagement, knowledge and capacity building. More information about the youth initiatives are available on the Foundation’s web-site: www.euromedalex.org.

THE ARAB LEAGUE, POPULATION POLICY DEPARTMENT

Mr Khaled Louhichi, Director




Round Table on Research and Youth Policy Development
in the Euro Med Cooperation Framework

30/ May/ 2006


" Arab Youth Observatory "

Population Policy and
Migration Department




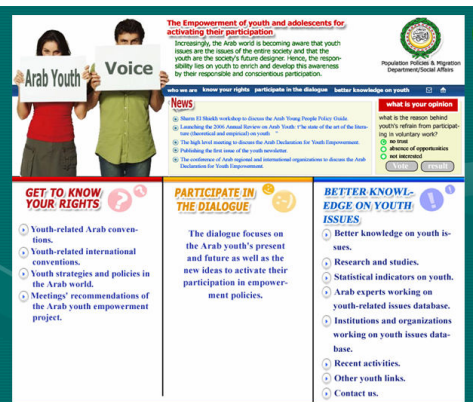

Objectives

- Provide reliable, up-to-date, and significant data concerning Arab youth.
- Contribute in crystallizing the knowledge about Arab youths' status and needs.
- Activate the dialogue and gain the support of decision makers, governmental institutions and NGOs concerned in Youth, as well as Youth organisations.
- Building the capacity of governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations targeting Youth empowerment.



major mechanisms and activities


- ♦ Regional databases:
 - ♦ The regional statistical database on youth.
 - ♦ The regional database on Arab youth experts.
 - ♦ Database on Arab and international organisations concerned in youth.
 - ♦ The Youth bibliographical database.
- ♦ The Arab regional network for youth national networks.
- ♦ The Arab youth advisory committee.
- ♦ The Youth periodical newsletter "Idafat Sukanya"
- ♦ An Arab strategic document: The Arab Declaration for Youth Empowerment.
- ♦ The Arab Young People Policy Guide.
- ♦ The Arab Youth Voice website.

The Annual Review of Arab Youth "the state of the art of the literature (theoretical and empirical) on youth"

The review dealt with the following major issues:

- Youth issues that have been dealt with in the research.
- The approaches and theoretical frameworks that have lead youth's research and surveys.
- Methodologies used in youth's research and surveys.
- Characteristics and status of Arab youth.
- An agenda for regional research regional priorities on youth for the decade.



Recent publications: Strategic studies

- "Developing the Arab Education System towards Youth Empowerment" by Kamal Naguib.
- "Reproductive rights and reproductive health of the Arab youth" by Laila Nawar.
- "Arab Youth and Family Communication: from evaluating to activating" by Zohair El Hattab.
- "Arab Youth between work and unemployment: reality and future horizons" by Samir Radwan.
- "Youth participation and empowerment: concepts and implications" by Abd El Baset Abd El Moti.
- "Arab youth & International Migration: Lost opportunities or contribution to the continuity of Arab development" by Mohamed Khachani.



Strategic activity 2006

- The Arab Parliamentarian Conference on Youth Issues, November 2006.

Other priority projects in the Project

- National statistical surveys.
- Qualitative studies.
- A bi-annual regional comprehensive and policy oriented report on Arab youth with a focus on a specific pertinent challenge in each issue and highlighting pioneer experiences.

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN YOUTH PLATFORM

Mr Giovanni Buttigieg, Director

The main activity of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform is facilitating networking between all those interested in the youth sector in the region. The great majority of the c. 4500 organisations that have joined the Platform to date are youth NGOs, but this database includes also a number of local authorities that are developing youth initiatives and a growing number of academic institutions dealing with youth studies.

From the beginning we were aware of the lack of research on the youth sector in the Mediterranean, and so started compiling an archive on the situation of young people in each country of Europe and the Mediterranean. This study reflects the situation of young people as seen by young people. It is available on-line and in print.

The Platform monitors the participation in Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation, and targets those countries least present.

It facilitates the creation of Euro-Mediterranean networks of youth organisations that have similar objectives. Some of these also conduct research. This includes a study on youth unemployment by the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Trade Union Network, and one on the illegal displacement of young people by the Euro-Med Network on Youth Trafficking.

Platform resources are used by various researchers in conducting their studies, such as consultations, distribution of questionnaires, and expert opinions.

Building national capabilities in the youth sector in the Mediterranean is the Platform's priority for 2006. This is being done through the assistance in the establishment of national federations of youth organisations that can eventually push for the implementation of national youth policies.

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF YOUTH RESEARCHERS

Mr Anthony Azzopardi, Senior expert

The Council of Europe's long history of working with researchers led to the formation of the Research Network. The network was involved in facilitating evidence-based themes concerning the condition, status and trends of young people's lives. As time passed, these activities dwindled to a minimum.

However, thanks to the Partnership Agreement between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in April 2003, the Network regained its status. Its contribution to youth policy reviews since 1997 was intensified. Thirteen such reviews have taken place and two more are currently in progress. A Synthesis Report of the first seven reviews was produced and a second such report for the following reviews is being prepared. Through its members, the Network was also involved in the production of an Indicators Report on youth policy development and implementation. Advisory missions to a number of countries also include members of the network as expert advisors. The Partnership agreement created the opportunity to establish the European Knowledge Centre for youth policy and to organise thematic seminars on issues such as resituating culture, young people's political participation, non-formal learning and voluntary activities. Each one of the seminars was followed by a publication of a selected number of research papers submitted for the occasion.

The underlying principles of the Network's activities are:

- a) a better understanding of youth and
- b) the open method of coordination

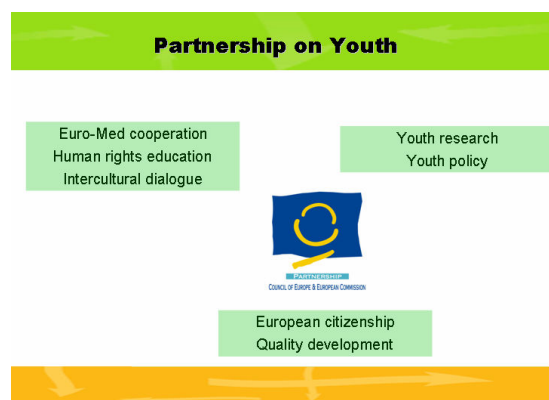
These principles were put forward in the European Commission's White Paper on Youth published in 2002.

The future challenges and ambitions of the European Network of Youth researchers include:

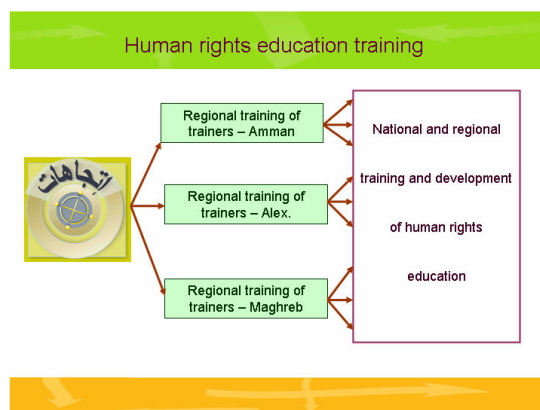
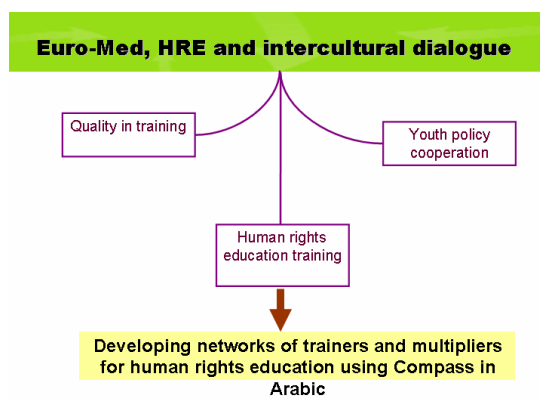
- i) a further expansion of its activities towards the East (eg. former Soviet Union countries, Russia and Japan)
- ii) a more solid and effective co-operation in the Euro-Med region.

PARTNERSHIP ON YOUTH BETWEEN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Mr Rui Gomes, Head of Unit Education and Training, Council of Europe, Directorate of Youth and Sport



Manual for human rights education with young people



Development of Rights Based Youth Policies

For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY



A paradigm shift

Focus on positive assets of young people

The cost of not investing in young people: addressing problems (security, poverty/exclusion/unemployment, protection, etc.)

Move away from service provision: young people have a role to play

Contribution of young people to achieving the MDGs; not only the benefits of MDGs to them

UNICEF

COE Cairo May06

A rights approach

Support development or review of national youth policies to be consistent with a holistic approach to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, CEDAW, A World Fit for Children and other international instruments and commitments

UNICEF

COE Cairo May06

Contribute to the MDGs

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

UNICEF

COE Cairo May06

Principles

Start as early as possible, a continuum of investment

Ensure that the policy covers the most vulnerable adolescents and young people (with focus on girls and young women)

Ensure that the policy covers the excluded and marginalised

UNICEF

COE Cairo May06

Strategies ...

Review all existing policies affecting adolescents

Build a data base on young people for evidence based policies

Ensure that the policy is developed with a multi-sectoral approach involving all relevant ministries: there is no need for a separate budget for youth!

Build a large partnership of governments, youth representatives, NGOs, professional associations, media private sector and regional/international agencies

UNICEF

COE Cairo May06

Strategies

Ensure the participation of young people (from all backgrounds) throughout the process of developing a youth policy

Build the capacity of all stakeholders in this area, especially young people

UNICEF

COE Cairo May06

Support to country processes

Yemen: development of children and youth policy/with World Bank

Djibouti: support activation of youth policy (challenges of capacity)

Lebanon: support development of youth policy/with UNESCO

oPt & Syria: support development of youth policy/with UNFPA

Morocco: support development of national vision/with UNFPA – joint programme

Jordan: supported development of youth policy/with UNDP

Iraq: plans for support to youth policy development

Plans to document MENA experiences, identifying good practices: pending availability of funds

UNICEF

COE Cairo May06

Initiatives

Regional workshop in December 2004, with UNESCO, Save the Children Sweden & ICNYP: follow up actions developed

Regional workshop in July 2005 to build capacity in child & youth participation, with Save the Children Sweden: follow up on country level

Handbook on development of youth policies with full participation of young people (draft for review), building on review of MENA experiences

Support from Sida Sweden for 7 countries in the region, includes work on youth policy

UNICEF

COE Cairo May 06

E- spaces & partnerships

MENA Child & Youth Participation e-group:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MENACHild_YouthParticipation/

Contact Administrator to join the group on:
MENACHild_Youthparticipation@yahoogroups.com

www.unicef.org/voyn

VOY Arabic to be launched in June/July 06

For partnerships, contact: Helen Alayan/Consultant

E-mail: helenalayan@gmail.com

UNICEF

COE Cairo May 06