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Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



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Budapest, 10 May 2010

Seminar
**Euro-Arab youth policy cooperation in the
broader Euro-Mediterranean context**

31 May – 4 June 2010, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

A contribution to the preparation of the International Year of Youth

Background Document

Background and purpose of the meeting

The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth and the Social Sector in League of Arab States have been paying particular attention to youth policy cooperation in the broader Euro-Mediterranean context since 2006.

Where it's well noted that there is a recent international attention for developing youth policies in the Arab States, the countries' motives to develop youth policies were diverse from one to another. In the Arab countries, the motive for developing youth policies is mainly justified by the need to invest in the demographic "bulge" as young people represent nearly 65% of the population. In the Council of Europe, attention to youth policy is not new, but it has re-emerged as a policy area of international cooperation since the first International Year of Youth in 1985, as a result of the understanding that national youth policy strategies can learn from each other and contribute to more cohesive and inclusive societies based on active citizenship and participation of young people and the need to respond to the challenges they meet in their path towards autonomy. The European Union has a new Youth Strategy since November 2009, which introduced the field of action "Youth in the World", which enhances young people's participation in and contribution to global policy processes on issues such as climate change, the UN Millennium Development Goals and human rights. It also supports young people's cooperation with regions outside of Europe.

Under this new field of action, the Commission seeks to enhance cooperation with third countries and international organisation in the youth field and to share the EU youth policy mode. The policy approach is complemented by financial support from the Youth in Action Programme for youth projects between young Europeans and young people from third countries under the Action "Youth in the World". In view of different realities and contexts, policy makers have used different approaches to develop national youth policies. This diversity in methods, approaches and understandings for the essentials of youth policy is seen as an opportunity to reflect on "what works" in youth policies and to stimulate a dialogue and exchange lessons learnt in this field.

Supporting the formulation of inclusive, multi-sectorial and evidence based youth policies stands as one of the main pillars in the League of Arab States regional vision for empowering Youth. Therefore, ongoing efforts are being made by the Social Sector in the League of Arab States to strengthen the capacity of the youth policy stakeholders to adopt and master participatory and multi-sectorial approaches in developing national youth policies.

Initially, the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth focused its work on training trainers and key multipliers, for its own activities and, more generally, and supported the quality and development of Euro-Med youth activities. It quickly became apparent, however, that working with trainers and multipliers, although crucial to secure quality and sustainability of youth exchange and cooperation programmes, reached only the surface (and only part of the surface) of European and Mediterranean youth matters. On the one hand, because the Euro-Med youth programme was only reaching a limited number of young people and, on the other hand, because its results and actions, although very successful, seldom permitted down to the "street level" of young people and youth workers (regardless of their formal or professional status). In some countries there was a near ignorance between the official/public level of

youth policy and the practical level of Euro-Med youth activities. The youth exchanges, seminars, training courses and volunteers' exchanges were supported but hardly acknowledged. Conversely, the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation activities could sometimes be held while ignoring the official instances of youth policy.

The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth reflects the principles of both partners in relation to youth policy definition and implementation. Both the European Commission and the Council of Europe are committed, *inter alia*, to:

- youth policies and programmes that aim to empower young people, and to support their autonomy and well-being;
- evidence and knowledge-based youth policies;
- youth participation as a pillar of youth policy definition, implementation and monitoring;
- promoting a youth policy that, consequently, takes into account and respects the specific roles and interaction between youth research, public youth policy services and youth organisations (including youth workers), coined by some as the "magical triangle" (and metaphorised by others as a "mystical triangle").

Euro-Mediterranean including Euro-Arab youth policy cooperation at the beginning of the 21st century is also more than youth exchanges and intercultural competence development. Youth policy is also an actor in intercultural dialogue. Not only because young people should learn values of peace and tolerance, but because officials and experts in youth policy ought to be part of the "dialogue".

Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Arab youth policy cooperation slowly emerged as an obvious and necessary area of cooperation for these two main factors:

- To associate youth policy to intercultural dialogue (mainstreaming intercultural dialogue in youth policy);
- Making youth policy actors aware of the benefits and needs of intercultural dialogue.

There is of course a very clear and obvious additional dimension to all of this: cooperation on youth policy itself. That is the possibility to learn from each other, develop cooperation projects and, ultimately, be able to influence each other. This is very much what is at the root of international youth policy cooperation. In this sense, youth policy experts and professionals will/would:

- mutual improvement of knowledge and update of information about youth policy developments;
- learn from and about each other and respect each other better;
- develop and implement more effectively youth policies;
- cooperate and engage in intercultural dialogue.

Sharing a common geographical and cultural space does not mean that the issues and realities affecting young people are in any ways similar. The demographical reality of youth is often totally different between European and Mediterranean countries, notwithstanding disparities among each of them, and so are the challenges that they face in their path to autonomy, self-fulfilment and citizenship. The youth policy responses have, therefore, to be different in purpose, scale and resources.

But there are also shared realities and interconnected issues, such as migration, education, citizenship and human rights, intercultural learning/dialogue and environmental cooperation. Furthermore, it is possible and necessary to share experiences in youth policy and about youth policy.

The first youth policy cooperation initiatives that involved the League of Arab States and the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth were carried out at the initiative of the Swedish Board of Youth Affairs, in cooperation with the Swedish Institute in Alexandria which hosted the first seminar on youth policy in 2005. It was further developed in Cairo in 2006, with an international round-table "Youth policy and research development in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework", organised at the invitation of the League of Arab States, the Swedish Institute in Alexandria and the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and European Commission.

Two other seminars followed the Cairo round-table: a seminar about the role of youth research (Cairo) and a seminar about the role of youth participation (Budapest) in the definition and implementation of youth policy. Both seminars played important roles in associating governmental and non-governmental partners to the cooperation and have resulted in better knowledge, exchange and, in some cases, concrete projects.

Meanwhile, other processes and actors saw the light, including the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and the Alliance of Civilizations and specific initiatives of the ILO and the World Bank. A parallel process of cooperation has progressively developed between the League of Arab States, the Council of Europe and the European Youth Forum through the European participation in the the 2nd and 3rd League of Arab States Youth Forum in Amman-Jordan and in Assilah-Morocco (including the Euro-Arab coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations).

The publication in 2008 by the Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit for the Euro-Med Youth programme, of Youth Policy Studies on Mediterranean partner countries confirmed the important of associating intercultural Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Arab youth projects to youth policy in all countries.

Acknowledging the value and considerations of the first round-table and taking into account the results of an external evaluation carried out by independent experts, the League of Arab States and the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the framework of their partnership in the field of youth have agreed to organise a second round-table on youth policy cooperation, open to international and national, governmental and non-governmental partners active in youth policy development and implementation and interested in sharing experiences and in view of mutual learning and future cooperation. This second round-table on youth policy cooperation took place on 22-23 April 2009 at the European Youth Centre in Budapest.

Besides being seen as an opportunity to share progress and projects among different stakeholders in the region since the first one was organised three years earlier, the second round-table pursued the following objectives:

- To exchange information regarding the ongoing and planned youth policy projects and programmes of the participating organisations and countries;
- To analyse commonalities, specificities and complementarities between the actions and approaches of the participants and their institutions;
- To discuss the priority youth issues in the broader Euro-Mediterranean region and the youth policy responses to them;

- To explore the possibilities of coordination between the partners and to identify the priorities for Euro-Arab and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the youth policy field.

The round-table participants agreed on the need to deepen the cooperation by addressing more concrete issues and by focussing on areas where cooperation can be most effective. One of such areas is capacity-building for youth policy cooperation - and the round-table proposed the organisation of a pilot training seminar.

Aims and objectives

Aims

This seminar aims at mutual exchange of knowledge and update of information about youth policy developments and development the competences of Arab and European youth policy experts by exploring and learning together the “essentials” of youth policy and how they are and could be practiced in European and “Mediterranean” countries¹.

The training seminar will have a clear multiplying effect by helping build a group of experts based on a shared understanding of youth policy and youth research. The participants will be civil servants, leaders in non-governmental youth organisations and also youth researchers. This builds on the needs previously identified in the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth for building up knowledge and experience in youth policy, and also on the conclusion of the Arab Human Development Report which, among others, places emphasis on the development of policies that are inclusive of young people. If successful, the activity format could be replicated in the future.

Objectives

- 1.) To exchange mutual knowledge and information about youth developments;
- 2.) To develop a better understanding of the youth policy principles and programmes of the League of Arab States, the European Union, the Council of Europe and other regional partners;
- 3.) To develop a shared understanding of the realities of young people in European and Mediterranean societies, the issues affecting them and the way youth policy provides responses to them;
- 4.) To understand different policy realities and existing models applied in formulating, implementing and evaluating the national youth policies;
- 5.) To develop participants competence about the essentials and indicators of youth policy;
- 6.) To enable participants and their sending institutions/organisations to increase the effectiveness of youth policy and work schemes;
- 7.) To support the work of the cooperating institutions in the field of intercultural dialogue through youth cooperation;

This seminar will also be a contribution to the preparation of the International Year of Youth that will start in August 2010.

Programme and methodology

¹ The “broader Mediterranean” scope of the seminar is meant to embrace also states member of the League of Arab States which are not part of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership as it has been the case with similar previous activities.

The programme of this seminar will combine contents and methods of a seminar (presentations from experts, discussions and group work) with approaches and methods from non-formal education and training (holistic approaches for skills development). Specific competence areas to be addressed are:

- Cooperation on youth policy;
- Youth participation and its role in youth policy;
- Using research for needs and evidence-based youth policy;
- - Empowerment of youth organisations;
- Monitoring and *quality assurance of the youth policy implementation*.

A draft daily programme will be sent to the participants in the seminar, together with the other practical information, in due time.

Profile of participants

The seminar is open to professionals and volunteers involved in youth policy development and implementation in their institutions/organisations in their countries, such as civil servants in charge of youth policy in national or regional institutions, leaders of youth organisations, youth researchers and youth workers.

All participants should:

- Be committed to Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Arab cooperation in the youth field
- Be ready to share their experiences with youth policy in their institutional or organisational context
- Be interested in developing their competences in youth policy
- Be supported by their sending institution or organisation, notably in view of the follow-up of the seminar
- Be able to work in English or Arabic.

Practical information

Venue

The meeting will take place in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. There are direct flights from several European capitals to Sharm El Sheikh. An alternative to direct flights is to fly via Cairo from where there are several daily flights to Sharm El Sheikh. Visa can be purchased at the airport for most European countries.

Dates:

Dates: 1 - 3 June 2010 (working days). All participants are expected to attend the full duration of the meeting.

Financial conditions:

Travel of European participants is covered by the partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth.

Board and lodging are provided and covered by the League of Arab States.

Working languages:

The seminar will be held in English and Arabic with simultaneous interpretation.