



YouthPartnership

**Survey on the evaluation and follow-up of
the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Policy Co-operation
activities, organised in the framework of the
Youth Partnership**

EXECUTIVE REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objectives of the Partnership on Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission are:

1. To raise the awareness of the young people including multipliers of the human rights and the common values shared by European and democratic citizens, and to provide them with the skills that enable them to become active members of their own societies.
2. To strengthen networking and solidarity between youth groups with focus on the social aspect and its values in the European societies.
3. To provide recognition and improve quality and visibility of youth contributions/role.
4. To present a better understanding and knowledge of youth issues and youth policy development.
5. To provide a framework for co-operation as concerns the better understanding and knowledge of youth issues
6. To contribute to the further development of youth work and youth policy by promoting exchanges, dialogue and networks and to strengthen youth policy development at the European level with the aim to foster evidence-based youth policies.

The survey covers four main meetings:

1. Seminar “Youth policy: here and now” (Alexandria, 11-15 September 2005)
2. Round table “Youth policy and research development in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework” (30 May 2006)
3. Seminar “The role of research in the development of youth policy and youth work in a broader Euro-Med context” (Cairo, 27-30 November 2006)
4. Seminar “The role of youth participation and civil society in youth policy and youth work in a broader Euro-Med context” (Budapest, 24-27 October 2007)

The survey makes an analysis of those four activities as educational proposals according to the following categories: background and motivation of the organizers, aims and objectives, expected outcomes, focus and content, profile of the participants, commitments of the partners, initiatives conducted by the participants, and follow-up.

The starting point of the survey is the activities presentations. Descriptive reports and outcomes of the meetings have been improved after receiving the feedback.

INTRODUCTION

This survey evaluation report has been compiled to assess the effect, to date, of the activities undertaken by the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in its efforts to initiate a process of youth policy coordination in European and neighbouring Mediterranean countries. The findings of the survey have formed the basis for a set of recommendations included in this report which the Partnership should look to incorporate into its future strategy for youth policy co-operation.

In 2005 the Youth Partnership, together with several national and regional partners, initiated a process of youth policy co-operation aimed at fostering greater cooperation between stakeholders of youth policy. Amongst its objectives, the Partnership seeks to present a better understanding and knowledge of youth issues and youth policy development and provide a framework for co-operation in doing so. In addition, it hopes to contribute to the further development of youth work and youth policy by promoting exchanges, dialogue and networks and to strengthen youth policy development at European level with the aim to foster evidence-based youth policies. Therefore to set the process in motion the Partnership has held four key events since 2005, namely:

Date	Activity type	Event Title
11-15 September 2005	Seminar	Youth policy here and now
29 May 2006	International round- table	Youth policy and research development in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework
27-30 November 2006	Seminar	The role of youth research in youth policy and youth work development in the broader Euro-Med context
24-27 October 2007	Seminar	The role of youth participation and civil society in youth policy and youth work development in the broader Euro-Med context

Objectives and scope of the survey evaluation report:

This evaluation seeks to support the development of the Partnership by:

- Assessing the benefits of the four key events in order to help shape the future strategies and priorities of the Partnership and the other stakeholders in the process of Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation;
- Determining the impact of the events on the participants, participants' organisations and partners as a measure of their effectiveness;
- Making recommendations to feed into the design of the future activities and strategies of the Partnership based on the participants' and partners' feedback and needs.

Methodology and approach:

The survey makes an analysis of the effectiveness of the four key events against the Partnership's objectives by firstly conducting a thorough review of existing relevant materials including: the Youth Partnership's website, partner websites, event objectives and post-event reports. Following this, a detailed questionnaire was designed and disseminated to the event participants, organisers and other relevant partners of the Youth Partnership, the responses to which were then analysed and utilised in compiling the recommendations at the end of this report.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

A: Participant responses

The event organisers selected participants across the region on the basis of their interest and commitment to working in the field of youth policy development. Of those who attended the different events, 100 participants were invited to complete a questionnaire for the purpose of this survey. 27 responses were received in total, the majority of which were from organisations working on the national level in their countries, with a higher response rate from the Mediterranean organisations compared to European ones.

The results show that the themes of the events touched the needs and the priorities of participants and their organisations, as 89% of the respondents agreed that the themes were directly related to their work.

Key benefits noted by participants

The benefit mentioned most frequently by the participants and their organisations was the opportunity for networking and sharing of practices with other countries. On the practical front, the participants noted how they were able to develop relationships, which opened the door to information exchange and joint activities with other participants' organisations.

A significant 85% of the respondents indicated that the meetings helped them gain knowledge and understand concepts in youth policy, role of youth research and the importance of youth participation. The participants also reported that the events held enhanced their motivation to take an active role in youth policy issues.

Other key benefits of the events held noted by the respondents included:

1. Having the opportunity to reflect on different practices and learn from the European success stories and good practices in youth policy field;
2. Learning and understanding the importance of the involvement of young people in research;
3. Learning ways and methods to connect research with practice at local level;
4. Developing new projects ideas and potential partners for the future;
5. Learning and understanding new definitions and concepts in the field of activating youth participation, and
6. Being helped to start identifying some priorities and needs in their countries that need the expansion of formal and non-formal education.

Key outcomes from the events

The survey showed that the meetings motivated participants to take active roles in youth policy issues on a number of different levels: 67% started taking an active role within their own organisations; 70% of participants started to take active role in their local community; 60% at national level; 63% within the Euro-Med context, and 48% became active on the regional level.

In addition, the events contributed to the development of the participants' organisations and enhanced the capacity of youth work and youth policy in different areas including: projects and policy implementation, the production of new manuals and publications, training and advocacy work.

More specifically, the participants reported that since the events, they have been able to:

- provide their organisations with useful information and contacts for future engagements, networking and meetings with organisations to share experiences and bringing different resources and materials, and serving as references in youth policy field in their organisations;
- support their organisations in improving their knowledge and understanding of youth policy issues;
- develop new ideas for projects and initiatives for the organisation;
- expand the organisations network and contacts, and
- update the organisation with the latest information about youth policy in the region.

16 of the participants who responded said they worked on new initiatives and programs in their organisations related to the themes of the seminars following their participation in the meetings. The activities carried out these participants include reports, research papers, surveys and training programmes.

All of these outcomes are very important indicators that the objectives of the events were achieved, especially in networking and developing initiatives in the field youth policy across the region. They also indicate that the participants demonstrably proactive following the events even without any direct follow-up from the organiser or partner. 77% of participants said that the post meetings follow-up by the organisers was only updating the participants and their organisations with information on future activities.

Challenges faced by the participants

When participants were asked to identify the challenges that they faced in their involvement with the initiative thus far, the following were some of those mentioned:

1. Lack of knowledge on how to be efficient and organised in implementing activities.
2. Language difficulties hindered the ability to learn from each other; the translation from Arabic to English or English to Arabic was confusing for many participants.
3. The logistical difficulty of conducting a survey with other European and MEDA countries.
4. Difficulty in expressing the issues related to cultural differences.
5. Broadening to new partnerships outside the Euro-Mediterranean region.
6. Challenges in obtaining visas to enter host countries, particularly those in countries where there is political hostility.

The participants indicated that whilst these were challenges, they were not necessarily obstacles for learning, exchange of experiences and building partnerships between participants in youth policy field; rather, they were considered to be “an added value” once they learnt how to deal with them.

B: Partner responses

Out of 8 partners selected by the Youth Partnership to be involved in the process, 5 responses were received.

Feedback on understanding of partner roles

Based on their self-perceptions, the partners believed themselves to either be strategic partners or implementation partners. Their differing backgrounds and experiences however, suggest a significant gap in which some partners have had a long experience in youth policy at all levels and a very good understanding of the objectives and aims of the Partnership while others have had no experience and do not necessarily understand why there is a need for partnership in youth policy. In spite of this, the majority of the partners reported that they were very interested in youth policy and in learning from others in this field.

The desire to learn more about youth policy was for some partners the main goal in the role they played whereas conducting follow-up activities after the event seemed to be a part they were less interested in. This lack of understanding regarding their roles may have led to the levels of dissatisfaction reported by some of the partners, particularly concerning the evaluation and follow-up stages. Surprisingly, only two of the partners indicated that the events held achieved their goals and objectives, noting that there were still difficulties in the process, including a change of staff working within the partnership, and the late introduction of new partners who have not been involved from the beginning, which made it all so uncertain what the next step would be.

Challenges faced by the partners

There were two kinds of challenges the partners faced in carrying out their roles:

1. *Challenges surrounding the content of the events.*

The content coordinated by the organiser was considered to be vague and therefore caused difficulties in implementation. Reasons given for this included:

- Lack of prioritisation
- Unclear goals
- Limited efforts in all processes
- Poor evaluation
- Weakness in follow-up
- Limited participation from partners in various stages of the events

2. *Challenges in practice*

These challenges included:

- No researchers during the meetings
- The absence of expert rapporteurs and editors at the events meant that weak reports were produced
- Limited time was designated to the planning and implementation periods
- Working in groups consisting of several nationalities, cultures and languages was challenging

- More time should have been given to communicate and understand each other so that a stronger common project could be developed
- No mitigation of the risk of participants having difficulty in obtaining visas to enter the host countries

CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the events held showed that they had been successful by contributing huge benefits and responding to the interests of all actors on all levels within the Euro-Mediterranean context. The meetings have created a new equal dialogue between the Arab countries and European countries through the exchange of experiences from both sides of the Mediterranean.

In general, the findings of the surveys indicated that the events achieved their goals on different levels and in different ways relating to the parties involved in the meetings. On average, a positive satisfaction level was reported by all those surveyed of 7 out of 10, with the highest levels of satisfaction noted by the organisers (8/10) and the lowest by the partners (5.7/10).

The partnership cooperation in youth policy fields has proven to be one of the priorities in the Euro-Mediterranean context and has been relatively successful to date. That said, further improvement can be made in any future planning of meetings as outlined in the recommendations; most importantly, to have a clear vision and understanding of the partnership objectives in youth policy field.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The majority of the participants believe that the Partnership is succeeding in meeting the goals defined, however, certain recommendations can be made to improve the process and overcome the challenges being faced. Most notably, more interaction between the organisers, partners and participants is highly recommended in the future to make better use of the participants as multipliers for youth policy once meetings are concluded. Also, there is a clear problem on the practical side of things; this may be because there is too much focus on detail and that can create a gap between the goals and the contents. To disseminate the partnership objectives and aims between Mediterranean countries and create a system of follow-up in each country should be partners' role to follow-up in their country as the outcomes of the events and to help in selecting new participants.

Other key recommendations include:

1. A strategy covering at least three years should be set out for the process with a well-prepared action plan.
2. There needs to be a mandate for the partner organisations to work within so that there is a clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities between the partners. There were partners with very good experience in the field of youth policies and research but they were treated equally as partners with no real and concrete experiences. Our suggestion for future seminars is to distribute responsibilities between partners based on their experiences.
3. Partners and the organisers need to strengthen their follow-up activities - e.g. by disseminating information on success stories and initiatives (the website of one of

the strategic partners does not include any data or information about the meetings and the seminars).

4. Resources should be dedicated to improving the means of communication.
5. Efforts should be made to ensure that all relevant parties are involved in all activities through every phase not just at the beginning and at the end as this will allow for more positive and effective co-operation.
6. Simple overviews/backgrounds should be provided to enhance understanding, for example "bottom-up" projects can be used as case studies to understand the basics of the different cultures.
7. The organisers should give more attention to the reports and the documentation of the seminars and meetings in the future as the previous system was not effective and lacked details. Reporting is important for any follow-up plan and for determining if the seminar achieved its goals and reflect the learning environment that was during the seminar. In addition, it is a tool for others who are interested in this field to benefit from so perhaps it would be wise to develop a quality standard template or standard reporting of such meetings.
8. There needs to be more focus on developing a supporting environment at the local level for young people to be active partners in their communities. Youth should also take a bigger role in the co-operation process as an example of youth participation.
9. Additional support should be given to those countries that have not yet developed national youth policies.
10. Improvements should be made to the application procedure for identifying and selecting participants and partners so that there is more balance between European and MEDA countries and more diversity in attendees.
11. Try to clearly connect the objectives of the seminars to each other and with the partnership in youth policy cooperation overall objectives and goals. It was not clear why the international round-table had a diversity of international organisations attend the meeting including UNDP, UNICEF, and UNESCO. There was no steering committee to follow-up the outcomes of the meeting, to make the process visible or to maximize benefit of these organisations' participation and their possible support.

