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Observatoire National de la Jeunesse

Workshop on Youth participation and social media

Report

[2- 4 July 2013, Hammamet, Tunisia]

General rapporteurs:
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Contents

A— Background and context

The South-Mediterranean youth policy co-operation of the partnership between the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe in the field of youth with various actors in the region started in 2003. The activities carried out brought together young people, youth workers, trainers, human rights educators and activists, youth researchers, governmental institutions responsible for youth policy and non-governmental youth organisations in European and South Mediterranean countries.

The process of changes brought about by the "Arab Spring" in various countries provides the context and drives the need for continuing and even intensifying this co-operation and for responding to the expectations of the stakeholders, particularly young people. In 2012 two events, in Malta[1] and Tunisia[2], were organised by the EU and the Council of Europe in the framework of their partnership in the youth field, in co-operation with other actors and partners working in and with the region.

Particularly the Malta seminar, which meant to provide an occasion for reflection and needs assessment related to Arab Spring for Arab and European youth leaders, provided fresh and critical inputs from youth activists regarding the state of youth NGOs and civil society organisations and their needs across the Arab world and in the Euro-Mediterranean region. It also provided insights on the development and consolidation of inclusive, participatory and pluralistic democracies. The Tunis symposium discussed

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[1]	Seminar "Empowerment of youth organisations and youth-led civil society initiatives in the South-Mediterranean framework" Malta, 22-24 March 2012

[2]	Symposium "Arab spring: Youth participation for the promotion of peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms" Tunisia, 27-29 August 2012

the unique political and social situation across the Arab world, in which political realignments have been a result of youth activism.

Both events, in Malta and Tunisia, led to concrete project proposals to foster co-operation, to empower youth NGO's and to promote the development of knowledge-based youth work and youth policy. Consequently, the follow-up activities are aiming at supporting these results by placing specific emphasis on the development of civil society through strengthening the capabilities and potential of youth NGOs and youth activists and hereby contributing to the promotion of democracy, participation, citizenship, freedom of expression and access to human rights.

One of the key outcomes of the earlier seminars in Malta and Tunisia that will be debated further in the follow-up activities, including the present workshop, is the identification of ways to increase youth democratic participation through the use of social media. With the massive spread of global communication, and particularly social media, youth organisations and youth movements in both Euro and Arab regions are harnessing this new and powerful vehicle to get organised and participate, to be informed and to spread information.

B– About the Seminar

Within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship, the Social media and youth participation Seminar was organised early July in Hammamet, Tunisia by the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the framework of the EU-CoE youth partnership in collaboration, with the European Youth Forum, the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe and the Tunisian Youth Observatory.

The seminar aimed at providing youth activists and experts with a space for sharing reflections and experiences, focusing on the potential of social media in contributing to democratic and inclusive societies in general and in sustaining youth NGOs, youth movements and youth-led civil society organisations in particular.

C- Summary of the Seminar discussions

Social media has changed the paradigm of communication in the 21st century. With the uprising in the Arab world and the series of protests in Europe following the harsh economic and financial crisis, social media platforms played a key role in mobilizing young people around different issues and causes related to democracy and human rights. Many countries, whether in Europe or the Arab world, are witnessing a

transitional period. Youth have played a key role in this transition and mobilized millions of individuals and groups via social networking to freely express their views on their countries regimes and politics.

Governments on their parts have become more present in social media to communicate with a new socially engaged audience online. With Human Rights activists' pressure, some governments are trying to examine how they can control social media without over censuring online content. All these factors have contributed to the necessity of adopting very clear social media strategies for both young activists and non-profit organizations in order to effectively influence decision making processes.

Social media for youth participation

Young people use social media in different ways. Using it for youth engagement can help organizations reach young people where they are; be found online through search engines; communicate with young people in familiar settings and make ideas and opportunities accessible to other youth. Social media also help create content and opportunities young people can easily share with their friends through the different social networking tools.

Social networking helps young people reach a greater number of people; by increasing the flow of information between their organization and other youth, they can target their work more effectively and efficiently. This would save them lot of additional costs; provide them with better opportunities to network with their partners; freely use creative common resources online; listen to their audience expectations and respond to their questions.

Yet, these organisations need to develop an effective social media strategy. To do that, they need to clearly identify their objectives, do market research on their audiences, and develop key messages and relevant content (text, video, and photo) that would resonate with the audience. They also need to choose the most important/popular social networking sites to engage with their audience.

Skillset and ethical challenges

There is no doubt that social media allowed citizens engage more in journalism and publication of many kinds. Yet, with the emergence of what we call "citizen journalists", the identity of professional journalists and the idea of what constitutes journalism is put into question. Today a number of citizens (mainly young people) without journalistic skills and who do not work for mainstream media call themselves journalists and write on public issues for mass audiences. This has created both skills and ethical norms

issues. While it is good that media help increase youth participation, users should be aware of the ethical responsibility in providing accurate, more objective and reliable information without attacking others in their personal liberties and privacies.

Doubts about authenticity of images

There are ethical issues raised by the rise of new image technology. These images include both photographs and video. Citizens and professional journalists connected to smart phones have new technologies for altering and manipulating these images. This has created a huge trust problem regarding whether obtained images of citizens and citizen journalists are true or fake.

Privacy issues

Issues of privacy and social media were also discussed. Due to the high volume of personal information often displayed on social networking sites, it is possible to make further estimations about a user, such as the person's social security number and other information; which can be misused more specifically for identity theft for different purposes most commonly scamming others. The problem of social media is not the data users enter by choice; rather it's everything others collect about them secretly.

Media diversity

Media often depicts people of color mostly via negative images of black men in handcuffs or Sub-Saharan or North Africans smuggling in and invading borders. Women are vastly underrepresented and lots of sexist stereotypes, humiliating photographs of women and male bylines dominate the media. Reporting on LGBT, migration or religion often contribute to a number of issues such as the rise of Islamophobia; anti-Semitism, homophobia; racism and hate speech. Users have double responsibility. The first is to make sure they verify their information and their sources before publishing content that might harm others. The second is to be vigilant about displaying too much personal information on social networking for fear of being misused by others for cybercrime purposes.

Rui Gomes, head of the Education and Training Division of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe (COE) made a presentation toward the end of the seminar on the Council's No Hate Speech initiative. **Young People Combating Hate Speech Online** is a project being run by the Council of Europe's youth sector between 2012 and 2014. It aims to combat racism and discrimination, as expressed online as hate speech, by

mobilizing young people and youth organizations to recognize and act against such human rights violations.

Youth participation and social media from a research perspective

One of the aims of the seminar was to highlight links between the "magic triangle" (meaning the interaction between research, policy and practice) of youth affairs and social media. Three researchers presented the results of their research that involved social media components. More precisely, Robert Thomson from the Pool of European Youth Researchers made a presentation about the state of play concerning the status of youth research in the European and Arab regions. At the beginning he made reference to the interregional seminar of youth research experts that took place in Rabat (1-10 April 2013). He stressed that democratic youth participation concepts, status, realities and challenges are different in the two regions while providing examples of specific topics that highlight these differences. Sofia Laine from the Finnish Youth Research Network presented the work of the Institute in this field and made some recommendations concerning the use of social media in youth participation. Badi Melki from the Institute of Applied Science in Humanities of Tunis University presented his research results of a project on young Tunisians and the Internet – a partnership that made history. A space for dialogue was provided where participants had the opportunity to address questions to the researchers. Main questions raised were how these research results can be visible and available to youth workers and how could those engaged in working with young people use available data for improving their work.

Effective e-youth participation

Effective youth participation session aimed to wrap up the issues that were addressed during the seminar in order to allow participants reflect on what they consider important elements for effective youth e-participation. Here are the major conclusions of the group final discussions:

- Effective youth participation through social media could be a subject matter in formal educational settings;
- Effective youth participation should be based on ethics code;
- Effective youth participation requires the use of the advantages of the tools provided through Internet;
- The possibility to participate in an anonymous way on-line should be further explored;
- The use and inclusion of feedback is important for effective e-youth participation;

- Institutions should support further the civic engagement of young people through online platforms;
- Youth organisations and especially grassroots movements can function as vehicles that offer platforms for expression of young people online;
- The digital divide should be taken into consideration, referring to the divide that exists between generations but also access to Internet in different areas and countries;
- There is a need for sharing success stories of effective youth e-participation to allow reflection and inspiration for other young people;
- There was a proposal to designate a Day for the celebration of Youth participation and social media.

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Workshop on youth participation and social media

Full Report

[2- 4 July 2013, Hammamet, Tunisia]

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A- Background and context

1- About the South Mediterranean – European youth policy co-operation

The South Mediterranean youth policy co-operation of the partnership between the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe in the field of youth with various actors in the region started in 2003. The activities carried out brought together young people, youth workers, trainers, human rights educators and activists, youth researchers, governmental institutions responsible for youth policy and non-governmental youth organisations in European and South Mediterranean countries.

Among other results, the cooperation created possibilities for direct exchanges between South Mediterranean and European actors in the youth field and provided opportunities for youth policy development and capacity-building of youth-led organisations through training courses and policy dialogue on human rights and democracy, intercultural dialogue, youth participation. The co-operation aims at developing a common understanding and exchange of issues of specific concern for youth policy and youth work in Europe and the South Mediterranean region.

The process of changes brought about by the "Arab Spring" in various countries provides the context and drives the need for continuing and even intensifying this co-operation and for responding to the expectations of the stakeholders, particularly young people. In 2012 two events, in Malta[3] and Tunisia[4], were organised by the EU and the

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Council of Europe in the framework of their partnership in the youth field, in co-operation with other actors and partners working in and with the region.

Particularly the Malta seminar, which meant to provide an occasion for reflection and needs assessment related to Arab Spring for Arab and European youth leaders, provided fresh and critical inputs from youth activists regarding the state of youth NGOs and civil society organisations and their needs across the Arab world and in the Euro-Mediterranean region. It also provided insights on the development and consolidation of inclusive, participatory and pluralistic democracies. The Tunis symposium discussed the unique political and social situation across the Arab world, in which political realignments have been a result of youth activism.

Both events, in Malta and Tunisia, led to concrete project proposals to foster co-operation, to empower youth NGO's and to promote the development of knowledge-based youth work and youth policy. Consequently, the follow-up activities are aiming at supporting these results by placing specific emphasis on the development of civil society through strengthening the capabilities and potential of youth NGOs and youth activists and hereby contributing to the promotion of democracy, participation, citizenship, freedom of expression and access to human rights. The planned activities take into account the needs of youth actors and will contribute to enhance youth co-operation between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean.

One of the key outcomes of the earlier seminars in Malta and Tunisia that will be debated further in the follow-up activities, including the present workshop, is the identification of ways to increase youth democratic participation through the use of social media. With the massive spread of global communication, and particularly social media, youth organisations and youth movements in both Euro and Arab regions are harnessing this new and powerful vehicle to get organised and participate, to be informed and to spread information.

2- About social media and youth participation

The Arab youth movements for freedom and democracy and youth movements in Europe (e.g. Indignados) and worldwide (such as Occupy and student/youth protests in Chile and Israel) were widely communicated through and reflected in social media. However, the debate between cyber enthusiasts and cyber sceptics on the potential links between social media and contentious politics in general and their specific impact on the developments of democratic processes is on-going.

Undoubtedly, social media have played some role in several aspects concerning recent youth-led protests in the Arab world and beyond as:
• A channel for information of youth involved in contentious politics, in particular where mass media are streamlined by authoritarian regimes;
• A forum for exchange, spreading ideas and opinion building and thus contributing to the rise of an "activist identity";
• A tool for organising and sustaining protests;
• A tool for gaining and influencing international attention, very often by nurturing old media with information (e.g. through films uploaded on YouTube).

Nonetheless, the potential of social media also bears risks and challenges among which is:
• The social media rapid reach of mass audiences at the global level implies the danger of being used to pursue and promote sectarianism, racism, sexism and discrimination through the proliferation of extremist or exclusionary content;
• Increased Internet surveillance by (authoritarian) governments all around the globe can leads to a vulnerability and danger for activists such as well-known bloggers or owners of critical Facebook pages;
• The existence of a virtual, transnational ecology of civil society activists bears the danger of overestimating the forces of a rather elitist group of online activists and losing sight of the existing gap between activists and mainstream society, especially in countries with strong rural – urban disparities which often imply unequal access to Internet and unequal levels of media literacy.

The usage of social media and the Internet raises also the question of governance of the Internet and citizenship. The governance of medium cannot be dissociated from the message and from the medium itself. Youth participation, and democratic youth participation in particular, nowadays ought to include also skills to understand and critically address the governance of the Internet and of the social media tools used for youth participation. The Council of Europe's youth campaign No Hate Speech Movement is currently being developed in order to make cyberspace a space for human rights and participation. The realities directly addressed by the campaign provide plenty

of evidence that social media can be used for worse as much as for the best and that the borderline between traditional and new media doesn't really make much sense.

Rather than pretending to give a final answer to the question of the degree of the impact of social media on recent youth movements, this workshop examined effective ways of using the potential of social media for youth participation in society.

The workshop also aimed at building links to the quadrilogue organized by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, an exchange between civil society, national authorities, local and regional authorities and parliamentarians on youth and media.

The workshop did not only discuss the issue in a theoretical manner but also encouraged the use of social media and the implementation of practical interactive working approaches: social media will be used to include a larger number of participants in the debates than only those physically present. An interactive Twitter account and Facebook page and group were created to update live about the reflections of workshop sessions and invite to further feedbacks and contributions.

The results of the workshop were documented to enable a better understanding of the potential of social media for youth participation and civil society actors. This will also contribute to the preparation of the forthcoming policy seminar in the South Mediterranean framework "Youth and Citizenship on the local and regional level".

B- About the Seminar

Within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship, the Social media and youth participation Seminar was organised early July in Hammamet, Tunisia by the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the framework of the EU-CoE youth partnership in collaboration, with the European Youth Forum the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe and the Tunisian Youth Observatory.

It built on the results of the earlier activities carried out by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership. The seminar aimed at providing youth activists and experts with a space for sharing reflections and experiences, focusing on the potential of social media in contributing to democratic and inclusive societies in general and in sustaining youth NGOs, youth movements and youth led civil society organisations in particular.

Objectives

- Exchange on how social media can promote and support democratic structures and youth participation;
- Understand the cross-media interaction between conventional media and social media;
- Exchange about and learn from existing innovative tools for e-participation;
- Discuss ways of tackling hate speech and discrimination and establishing links to the Council of Europe youth campaign No Hate Speech Movement (www.nohatespeechmovement.org).

Seminar Methodology:

The seminar used non-formal learning methods to approach the different topics tackled in order to ensure active participation and enable the sharing of experiences. All sessions were structured upon a central theme.

Karima Rhanem and Matina Magkou facilitated the sessions with the support of experts that gave special input to the topics discussed while using different techniques to facilitate the learning process. A search for a balance between individual and collective understanding was sought.

C- Participants profile and expectations:

The workshop brought together twenty two participants from Southern Mediterranean and European youth organisations/movements with a strong experience related to (e-) participation, blogging and social networking. Participants were selected through a targeted call for participation and nominated by the organisers and partners.

Participants expectations could be summed as follows, following a survey sent to them prior to the workshop.

Expectations at the level of learning

- Updates on latest developments regarding social media strategies;
- Meeting experts and potential affiliates;
- Exchanging and acquiring new skills and knowledge;
- Learning about how to target the right audience;
- Learning how to increase fans' numbers and engagement;
- Learning how to establish a good social media strategy;
- Learning and interacting through peer education;

- Promoting real exchange with less presentations and more working groups;
- Learning real cases of social media use during the Arab Spring;
- Getting more familiar with social media tools and different ways that can be used to increase youth participation;
- Exchanging views on different levels of social media usage;
- Interacting closely with other participants to exchange views on social media in different parts of the world and its influence on youth participation concretely;
- Learning from young social media activists, especially from those coming from North African countries;
- Learning more about the new Mediterranean University of Youth and Global Citizenship.

D- Content

1- Reflections on social media and youth participation

The aim of the first session was to introduce participants to concepts related to social media and youth participation and to provide space for debate on different realities and understandings in order to establish a framework for the further discussions.

The method used to encourage participants to express themselves on topics that were to be treated throughout the seminar was the statements exercise. Participants were asked to position themselves in the space provided in the room according to how much they agree or disagree with the statements proposed and were given time to express their opinion. Different views were expressed revealing the fact that concepts can be interpreted differently if filtered through different realities and stand points. Participants had the possibility to change their position when and if the arguments expressed by the other participants were allowing them to change their opinions.

The proposed statements were the following:

- Online activism has an on/off button.
- Young people should be more encouraged to participate in social media.
- I am online, I am an activist, and therefore I exist.
- Twitter is dangerous for democracy.
- There should be no limits in the use of social media.
- A campaign without social media is deemed to fail.
- There is no revolution without social media.
- The more followers I have, the more influential I am.

Participants were actively engaged in the activity raising lots of questions. They also shared examples from their own experiences and made reference to different social contexts. This session revealed the variety of opinions and understandings of the subject matter and prepared the ground for the rest of the seminar.

2- Social media tools and strategies for non-profit and youth-led organisations

Social media has changed the paradigm of communication in the 21st century. With the uprising in the Arab world and the series of protests in Europe following the harsh economic and financial crisis, social media platforms played a key role in mobilizing young people around different issues and causes related to democracy and human rights. Many countries, whether in Europe or the Arab world, are witnessing a transitional period. Youth have played a key role in this transition and mobilized millions of individuals and groups via social networking to freely express their views on their countries regimes and politics.

They took to the street demanding more freedom, social justice and democracy. They used petitions and online audiovisual campaigns to impact their policies. Social media has certainly increased the level of youth participation in social and political life. New players have emerged. Millions of citizen journalists are voicing their opinion about the democratization of their countries and are shaping new relations with their respective governments.

Governments on their parts have become more present in social media to communicate with a new socially engaged audience online. With Human Rights activists' pressure, some governments are trying to examine how they can control social media without over censuring online content.

All these factors have contributed to the necessity of adopting very clear social media strategies for both young activists and non-profit organisations in order to effectively influence decision making processes.

This session was divided into two parts. The first part included four working groups discussing key questions related to social media strategies and best practices of social media participation. The second part included an expert input about the do's and don'ts in social media.

The four groups worked on several key questions: what's being socially devoted; what are ways to engage audiences; how media will help youth achieve their objectives and increase participation; what are key steps in developing a social media strategy; how to

be influential in social media; how to expand reach and engagement; and how to monitor social media platforms...

In order to ensure a fair presence on social media, youth and non-profit organisations need to be more socially devoted online. They need to devote a specific amount of time a day to engage with their audiences and respond to their inquiries in a timely manner, creating by that more interaction in their social media platforms.

Socially devoted also means producing relevant content to your different audiences (text, photo, and video) and be ready to devote time to exchange and answer users' questions. Participants also reflected on best ways to engage an audience. The first rule is to be creative and innovative in using FB and Twitter applications to interact with the audience. Second, it is highly important to create social channels that reflect where your core demographic hangs out online. Examples of some platforms to engage audiences are **Twitter and Google +.**

They are considered an opportunity to keep conversation going on about your causes or organisations mission. Non-profits and young activists can use a specific topic with a **hashtag** to talk about key issues. **Google + Hangout** is also a good opportunity for non-profit to use their organisation experts to further spread their messages and advance their agendas.

Young people use social media in different ways whether to keep in touch with friends and acquaintances; develop new contacts; consume or share content; engage in self-expression; access information and informal learning platforms; and eventually participate in informal groups and formal youth engagements opportunities.

Using social media for youth engagement can help organisations reach young people where they are; be found online through search engines; communicate with young people in familiar settings and make ideas and opportunities accessible to other youth. Social media also help create content and opportunities, young people can easily share with their friends through the different social networking tools.

Social networking helps young people reach a greater number of people; by increasing the flow of information between their organisation and other youth, they can target their work more effectively and efficiently. This would save them lot of additional costs; provide them with better opportunities to network with their partners; freely use creative common resources online; listen to their audience expectations and respond to their questions.

Yet, these organisations need to develop an effective social media strategy. To do that, they need to clearly identify their objectives, do market research on their audiences,

and develop key messages and relevant content (text, video, and photo) that would resonate with the audience. They also need to choose the most important/popular social networking sites to engage with their audience. Participants also discussed the do's and don'ts on social media platforms and shared best practices of experiences that helped increase youth participation.

3- Social media, ethics and privacy

The Internet and the social media communities it encompasses can be powerful resources. They offer both a remarkably robust amount of historical material and an incredible amount of "real-time" reporting from people at the scenes of breaking news events. But they also present new and unfamiliar challenges, and they tend to amplify the effects of any ethical misjudgments you might make. While it is a good media to increase youth participation, users should be aware of the ethical responsibility in providing accurate, more objective and reliable information without attacking others in their personal liberties and privacies.

Professional journalists today share the journalistic sphere with tweeters, bloggers, citizen journalists, and social media users. The economics of professional journalism struggles as audiences migrate online. This new mixed news media requires a new mixed media ethics – guidelines that apply to amateurs and professionals alike whether they blog, Tweet, broadcast or write for newspapers.

The session moderators through practical exercises highlighted examples of recently documented ethical problems; issues related to sources and verification of information before publication.

Skillset and ethical challenges

There is no doubt that social media allowed citizens engage more in journalism and publication of many kinds. Yet, with the emergence of what we call "citizen journalists", the identity of professional journalists and the idea of what constitutes journalism are put into question. Today a number of citizens (mainly young people) without journalistic skills and who do not work for mainstream media call themselves journalists and write on public issues for mass audiences. This has created both skills and ethical norms issues.

The skills that many of citizens' journalists do not necessarily have include investigative capabilities, research skills, facility with media technology, knowledge of how institutions work, and highly developed communication skills. The ethical norms include a commitment to accuracy, verification, truth, and so on. One of the biggest issues

discussed during this session is the absence of the verification of sources of information as it had contributed in several occasions to harming both individuals and organizations' reputation.

Several reports and images circulate the globe with high speed via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and smart phones. Even traditional media started today receiving massive information from social networking. Their competition for scoops[5] makes them rush for instant publication before they are adequately checked and verified as to the source of the story and the reliability of the alleged facts. This has contributed to the spread of many rumors online that went viral, and in most cases believed by millions not only in the country of origin of the information but across borders.

Also citizen journalists are often not balanced or impartial in their reporting compared to professional journalists, though the latter is also debatable. Many of them see themselves as partisans or activists for causes or political movements, and reject the idea of objective or neutral analysis.

Doubts about authenticity of images

Finally, there are the new ethical issues raised by the rise of new image technology. These images include both photographs and video. Citizens and professional journalists connected to smart phones have new technologies for altering and manipulating these images. This has created a huge trust problem regarding whether obtained images of citizens and citizen journalists are true or fake.

Privacy issues

Issues of privacy and social media were also discussed. Due to the high volume of personal information often displayed on social networking sites, it is possible to make further estimations about a user, such as the person's social security number and other information; which can be misused more specifically for identity theft for different purposes most commonly scamming others. The problem of Social Media is not the data users enter by choice; rather it's everything others collect about them secretly.

To sum up, users have double responsibility. The first is to make sure they verify their information and their sources before publishing content that might harm others. The second is to be vigilant about displaying too much personal information on social networking for fear of being misused by others for cybercrime purposes.

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[5]   ***Scoop*** is an informal term used in journalism. The word connotes originality, importance, surprise or excitement, secrecy, and exclusivity. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scoop_(term)

4- Media diversity

The objective of this session was to provide social media participants with an overview of what media diversity is while offering them with a concrete example of the Council of Europe No Hate Speech Campaign.

Seminar participants were coming from multicultural and diverse European and Arab societies. Yet, diversity in those given societies is not always considered as an asset but a threat to their democracies. The depiction of minorities and the most vulnerable groups in the media often include biased information.

Media often depicts people of color mostly via negative images of black men in handcuffs or Sub-Saharan or North Africans smuggling in and invading borders. Women are vastly underrepresented and lots of sexist stereotypes, humiliating photographs of women and male bylines dominate the media. Reporting on LGBT, migration or religion often contribute to a number of issues such as the rise of Islamophobia; anti-Semitism, homophobia; racism and hate speech.

The rapid increase of the use of social media makes it more complicated as several people, especially youth, are getting their information online. With all the issues of ethics and verification of sources and information online, this makes the spread of hate speech viral on the Internet.

Rui Gomes, head of the Education and Training Division of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe (COE) made a presentation toward the end of the seminar on the Council's No Hate Speech initiative. **Young People Combating Hate Speech Online** is a project being run by the Council of Europe's youth sector between 2012 and 2014. It aims to combat racism and discrimination, as expressed online as hate speech, by mobilizing young people and youth organisations to recognize and act against such human rights violations.

The project is a tribute to youth participation and co-management. It was initiated by the youth representatives in the Joint Council on Youth, the committee which brings together youth leaders belonging of the Advisory Council on Youth and the governmental youth representatives of the European Steering Committee on Youth.

The project is therefore being carried out by young people with the support of governmental youth institutions.[6]

The representation of diversity concerns everyone! Every person is likely to become vulnerable to hate speech due to his/her gender, sexual orientation, ethnic or national

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[6] More information about the campaign can be found in this link:
http://act4hre.coe.int/no_hate/No-hate-speech-movement/Videos/Campaign-Video-2013

origin, religion or ideological convictions, and intellectual or physical disability. Therefore, media and social media users should take their share of responsibility in supporting social cohesion.

5- Social media and youth research

One of the aims of the seminar was to highlight links between the "magic triangle" (meaning the interaction between research, policy and practice) of youth affairs and social media. Three researchers presented the results of their research that involved social media components. More precisely, the following presentations were made:

Robert Thomson - from the Pool of European Youth Researchers - made a presentation on the state of play concerning the status of youth research in the European and Arab regions. At the beginning he made reference to the interregional seminar of youth research experts that took place in Rabat (1-10 April 2013). He stressed that democratic youth participation concepts, status, realities and challenges are different in the two regions while providing examples of specific topics that highlight these differences.

These included research on Young People and Sexuality by Prof. Abdessamad Dilamy (Université Mohamed V, Morocco) and another one on ways in which young people in Scandinavia deal with political and civic affairs by Prof. Erik Amnå (Örebro University, Sweden). Thomson also highlighted that issues of interest for research could be young women and participation and young migrants in Europe. In his presentation he underlined the importance of finding ways of co-operation on youth research and means to communicate research results that may impact national youth policies.

He further presented some research results concerning the symptoms of Internet addiction disorder. The research focuses on ways in which technology can be used for improving adolescent health and how social networking web sites are used to investigate how adolescents portray health risk behaviors, sexual activity, and substance use on certain websites.

Sofia Laine - from the Finnish Youth Research Network - presented research projects of the Institute related to social media. She firstly made reference to the Finnish Media Barometer for Children that seek to analyze children's media relations on a national level and to produce information for profiling and developing media education. Another project currently undertaken by the Institute concerns Youth Street Politics in the Media Age and focuses on a comparative study of the suburbs of Helsinki and London.

Methodologically, the project combines street and media ethnography in a novel way, while strengthening the dialogue between science and art in data collection and reporting. The Fair Wind Evaluation project aims to evaluate and research development

processes, which are used to enhance digital media skills and bring new technology and web-mediated interaction methods into youth work. The Youth Against Drugs Street team evaluation project investigated how young drug attitudes can be influenced at the grassroots level, in youth culture environment and the campaign has been very active in social media, while the evaluation research was also done partly on *Facebook*.

Sofia made some recommendations concerning the use of social media in youth participation that can be summarized as follows:

The use of social media should be increased in promoting participation. The connection to the off-line world should be structured so that the use of social media will have practical consequences in decision-making. Concerning the use of social media for promoting youth participation, there is a need for including a variety of tools, such as blogs, wikis, or even virtual worlds, instead of only social networks. Using social media, it is possible to combine bottom-up Internet activism with the top-down structures of political decision making.

Finally she made reference to a report on Youth Participation - Good practices commissioned by the EU-CoE youth partnership and the Council of Europe Congress for Local and Regional authorities. The report focuses on different forms of regional and local democracy, where the use of social media is presented in an individual chapter. The paper recommends using a broad scope of democracy in policy planning while documenting existing practices all over Europe. She highlighted that examples of how internet activism (bottom-up) could be connected to (top-down) political decision making are scare in research data.

Badi Melki from the Institute of Applied Science in Humanities of Tunis University presented his research results of the role played by Internet in the "Tunisian Revolution". He mentioned that the Web 2.0 marked a change in social behavior on the internet and social networks. Young Tunisians didn't hesitate to make use of Facebook which played a key role in youth mobilization and contributed to the sociopolitical changes in Tunisia.

He mentioned that Tunisia under the Ben Ali regime was a rather repressive country for Internet users due to surveillance and censorship on Internet. The pioneers of cyber-activism in Tunisia were **TAKRIZ**[7], created already in 1998 by two students but their webpages were censured by Tunisian authorities in 2002. Members of the Tunisian diaspora played also their role in the revolution. Other initiatives were the website **Réveil Tunisien**[8] and **Nawaat**[9]. He also made reference to the 2011 Anonymous

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[7] TAKRIZ : Tunisian cyber think tank & street resistance network since 1998. http://www.takriz.net/
http://www.facebook.com/takrizo
[8] http://www.reveiltunisien.org/

initiative which launched the Opération Tunisie that blocked the websites of the Presidency of the Republic and that of the principal Ministries.

Badi Melki identified three phases of activism on the Internet in Tunisia. The first phase (1998 - 2008) was mainly led by bloggers, a vast majority of which were educated and politicized young people residing abroad and opposing the regime "authoritarian practices (censorship, repression, non-respect of human rights). The second phase (March 2008–14 January 2011) was influenced by diverse social turbulences, namely the Gafsa revolution[10], the Ben Guerdène protests[11] (August 2010) and the revolutions and public revolts after the death of Mohamed Bouazizi[12] on the 17th of December 2010.

The third phase refers to the post-revolution period which was translated into a mass reaction of citizens on the Internet, focusing mainly on Facebook to participate in online social movements. Images of the revolution "travelled" all over the world and the Tunisian diaspora played a crucial role in this direction. Badi Melki concluded by saying that "it is difficult to draw conclusions on the impact of social media mainly because of the lack of empirical data and serious researches on emerging technologies." The use of social media put the basis for a new social environment for civic engagement and the impact will be visible in the years to come.

A space for dialogue was provided where participants had the opportunity to address questions to the researchers. Main questions raised were how these research results could be visible and available to youth workers and how could those engaged in working with young people use available data for improving their work.

6- Recommendations for effective e- youth participation

The session on Effective youth participation aimed to wrap up the issues that were addressed during the seminar in order to allow participants reflect on what they consider important elements for effective youth e-participation. Participants were divided in smaller groups and were asked to discuss the topic and agree on certain elements that were presented later on in plenary. Summarizing the results of the smaller groups, the following elements were mentioned:

- Effective youth participation through social media could be a subject matter in formal educational settings;

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[9] http://nawaat.org Independent collective blog which give voices to Tunisians activists, launched in 2004 and censored since
[10] Check for further readings http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gr%C3%A8ves_de_Gafsa
[11] For further readings http://nawaat.org/portail/2010/08/15/tunisie-ben-gardane-est-le-theatre-devenements-sans-precedent-la-population-reclame-ras-jdir/
[12] For readings http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohamed_Bouazizi

- Effective youth participation should be based on ethics code;
- Effective youth participation requires the use of the advantages of the tools provided through Internet;
- The possibility to participate in an anonymous way online should be further explored;
- The use and inclusion of feedback is important for effective e- youth participation;
- Institutions should support further the civic engagement of young people through online platforms;
- Youth organisations and especially grassroots movements can function as vehicles that offer platforms for expression of young people online;
- The digital divide should be taken into consideration, referring to the divide that exists between generations but also access to Internet in different areas and countries;
- There is a need for sharing success stories of effective youth e-participation to allow reflection and inspiration for other young people;
- There was a proposal to designate a Day for the celebration of youth participation and social media.

Annexes

I Programme

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DAY 0 (Tuesday 2nd July)

11: 00 Opening Session of the 1st Euro-Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship

15:00 - 19:00 Round table on Youth and social media organised by the Council of Europe North-South Centre in co-operation with the EU-CoE youth partnership (separate programme)

DAY 1 (Wednesday 3rd July)

09:30 Welcoming words on behalf of the institutions (Mohamed Jouili, Observatoire National de Jeunesse, Philipp Boetzelen, EU-CoE youth partnership)

09:45 Introduction to the Workshop (Karima Rhanem, Matina Magkou, facilitators and social media experts)

10:00 Getting to know each other

10:30 Presentations of participants & expectations

Facilitation: Matina Magkou

11:30 Coffee break

12:00 Social media and youth participation: statement exercise and debate

Facilitation: Matina Magkou

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Debate on the potential of social media and youth participation

Keynote inputs

1) Social media is becoming a must-have tool for communications in terms of grassroots and Non-Profit (NGO) Khalid El Ahmed, social media instructor

2) How can social media increase participation, Elise Drouet, European Youth Forum

3) An insight from practice Nikolas Stamboulopoulos, New Diaspora

Followed by discussion & debate

Facilitation: Karima Rhanem

16:00 Coffee break

16:30 Impact of social media on youth participation and change - what is my role? (Radu Cosmin Seuche, youth trainer and social media expert, Romania. Ismail Alaoui, social media expert)

Input and reflection

Facilitation : Matina Magkou

18:30 end of Day 1
19:30 Dinner

DAY 2 (Thursday 4th July)

09:30 Opening (link to the previous day/ presentation of the programme)

10:00 Ethics in social media and youth participation
(Adil Aklei, Onmagharebia)

Facilitation: Karima Rhanem

13:00 Lunch

10.00 Effective e- youth participation (sustainability, good practices, tools...)

Facilitation: Matina Magkou

Working groups

11:00 Coffee break

14:30 Media Diversity & Combatting Hate Speech online
(Rui Gomes, Council of Europe, Khaled El Ahmad, social media instructor)

Facilitation: Karima Rhanem

16:00 Coffee break
16:30 Evaluation and Follow-up
17:30 Closing words

II Participants evaluation

The last session of the seminar involved an evaluation in plenary. The aspects that were evaluated were:

- Learning outcomes
- Content of the seminar
- Link with the rest of the University
- Team
- Speakers
- Diversity of participants
- Logistics
- Knowledge sharing.

The outcomes can be seen on the image below:
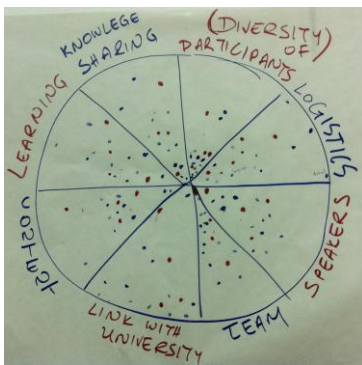
It is important to note down that despite the variety of opinions on the different elements, it is quite obvious that the link with the rest of the University needs to be reinforced. An evaluation form was also distributed to participants. The results can be summarized as follows:

Participants according to the evaluation are overall satisfied with the training (9 agree, 6 remain neutral and 3 were not satisfied). Most sessions were rated at an average of 4 **(1 = not achieved at all, 6 = fully achieved)**

As to how far the methodology of the seminar responded to participants needs, mixed feelings were expressed. While some liked more the debates and the games used to explain the content, others thought non formal learning was heavily used, therefore not responding to some participants needs. Some participants also expressed concerns about the limited time of the seminar as well time management issues due to the

number of topics discussed per day. They also found difficulty of interaction due to participants' different levels of understanding and backgrounds.

Participants recommended that in future seminars, more emphasis should be made to improve communication between participants in the context of Euro-Arab dialogue, pay attention to time management, improve Wi-Fi connection, encourage more working groups and less formal presentations by experts, connect to the Mediterranean university and focus on social media tools and strategies while highlighting practical real case studies. Participants also recommended having more time to informally meet, discuss and share experiences.

Recommendations

To increase youth participation through social media, participants recommended the following:

- Mobilize youth and CSOs around the democratic participation and social media and opening debates
- Adapt programs and school manuals to the use of network and social media
- Promote de-centralization efforts and invite grassroots organisations and small groups instead of only relying on large and bureaucratic institutions
- Support creativity and reconstructing the mainstream media's cultural values
- Change educational pedagogy to combat Hate speech online