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



Youth Policy Cooperation in the Broader Euro-Mediterranean Context

II International round-table

European Youth Centre Budapest, 22 and 23 April 2009

REPORT

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Budapest, December 2009

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Consultant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
REPORT	9
Background of Youth Policy Cooperation in the Broader Euro-Mediterranean Context	9
The Objectives of the Round-Table.....	10
The Participants.....	10
The Content of the Round-Table	11
1. Exchange of Projects and Programmes relating to Youth Policy Development	12
1.1. Inputs on Youth Policy Development and Implementation.....	12
- Conclusions of the Survey on the evaluation and follow-up of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Policy cooperation activities, organised in the framework of the Youth Partnership	12
- Principles and objectives of youth policy in the Council of Europe and in the Youth Partnership	15
- The Youth Policy Studies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.....	16
- Youth Policy in the European Union.....	18
1.2 Presentations of Participating Institutions	19
- League of Arab States.....	19
- Anna Lindh Foundation	21
- Bibliotheca Alexandrina	22
- SALTO-YOUTH Euromed Resource Centre	23
- Euro-Med Youth Platform.....	25
- European Youth Forum	26
- Council of Europe - The North-South Centre	28
- Council of Europe - Directorate of Youth and Sport.....	30
- International Planned Parenthood Federation – Arab World Region	32
- The Partnership on Youth between the Council of Europe and European Commission.....	33
2. Working session on youth participation together with the participants of the Training Course for Youth Leaders “Youth Participation and Intercultural Dialogue for Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation”	34
3. Perspectives and Priorities for Future Cooperation.....	36
- Discussion in Working Group 1.....	37
- Discussion in Working Group 2	37
- Discussion in Working Group 3.....	38
- Outputs of the plenary discussion; input for future cooperation.....	39
Issues for Further Reflection.....	39
APPENDICES	41
- Appendix 1. Agenda	41
- Appendix 2. List of Participants	43

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2005 the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, together with several national and regional partners, initiated a process of youth policy cooperation in the broader Euro-Mediterranean region aimed at fostering greater cooperation between stakeholders of youth policy. The process started in Alexandria in 2005, with the seminar “Youth Policy Here and Now”, co-organised with the Swedish Institute of Alexandria and the Swedish Board of Youth Affairs. It was 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 on youth policy.

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 Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission 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;
- To support intercultural dialogue among youth policy actors from the European, Mediterranean and Arab regions.

The participants in the meeting included the League of Arab States, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the Salto-Youth EuroMed Resource Centre, the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform, the European Youth Forum, the Council of Europe (the North-South Centre and the Directorate of Youth and Sport), the International Planned Parenthood Federation - Arab World Region and the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth. Representatives of the European Steering Committee for Youth and Advisory Council on Youth within the Council of Europe were also present at the round-table.

There were three main components of the programme: exchange of projects and programmes relating to youth policy development both in form of inputs and of presentations of the participating organisations; a joint plenary working session on youth participation together with the participants of the Training Course for Youth Leaders “Youth Participation and Intercultural

Dialogue for Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation”; and, small group and plenary discussions on the perspectives and priorities for future cooperation.

The first component of the programme was the exchange of projects and programmes relating to youth policy development both in form of inputs on youth policy development and implementation as efforts of different international institutions; and of presentations of the participating organisations on their cooperation projects and initiatives. Throughout the presentations, there was also a special focus on four aspects of youth policy cooperation: participation of young people; knowledge of and research on youth; mainstreaming and intersectoriality of youth issues; and the role for international cooperation.

Regarding knowledge and mainstreaming of youth policies, the presentations and discussions clarified some realities, which are full of contrasts in both European and Mediterranean geographies. Most of those realities were in line with the findings of the Youth Policy Studies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries¹: the majority of the young people in the Mediterranean region face the same difficulties and challenges, which could also be compared to those faced by their European counterparts, such as youth unemployment, youth immigration; conflict of living within patriarchal societies and young women’s position within society; drug abuse, violence and riots; a return of youth to religion; lack of interest and trust, in politics and governments; lack of, or limited provision for, non-formal education and resources; limited recognition of youth work and of volunteering; or keen wish of youth to be consulted, recognised and respected as active citizen. Difficulty of collecting reliable and comparable information about youth and youth policies are very diverse both in the European and Mediterranean countries.

Regarding youth participation, the presentations and discussions showed that many obstacles remain in order to support, promote and understand its multiple forms. The lack of a coordinating structure in the Mediterranean countries, which could be comparable to the regional role of the European Youth Forum, was also referred to as a challenge when it comes to bottom-up forms of youth participation and representation. The cooperation undertaken by the European Youth Forum, the League of Arab States and the Council of Europe in the framework of the Youth Forum of the League of Arab States, including the Euro-Arab Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations, was given as a good example with potential for substantial results.

Regarding the processes of cooperation, presentations and discussions demonstrated that there are several processes of cooperation going on among youth policy partners. Most of the processes overlap somehow, in relation to target groups, issues, partners or geographical scope, but the overlapping is not a synonym for cooperation partnership. This suggests, on the one hand, that each of these processes has its own purpose, meaning, target groups and cover specific youth policy areas; they can hardly be replaced by cooperation. On the other hand, it was felt that a more consistent exchange of information about the activities, their results and the findings about the situation of young people could significantly enhance the potential for success of those projects. Furthermore, it was sometimes felt that, in relation to youth policy, parallel processes seem to take place, without necessarily any coordination or information exchange. Institutionalised forms of cooperation, such as the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Union for the Mediterranean, are seen as factors that may significantly contribute to improve communication and coordination, but it was felt that their role in relation to youth policy is not always clear, especially in articulating public institutions, youth research and youth organisations.

¹ The Youth Policy Studies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries were undertaken by the Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit (RCBS) within the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme.

Platforms such as the Euro-Med Youth Platform and the Salto Euro-Med Resource Centre have also a clear and irreplaceable role in this respect.

The second component of the programme of the round-table was a joint plenary working session on youth participation together with the participants of the Training Course for Youth Leaders “Youth Participation and Intercultural Dialogue for Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation”, which was taking place at the same time with the round-table at European Youth Centre Budapest. The aim of this joint session was to bring together the youth NGO representatives and the representatives of the participating institutions of the round-table to provide a common ground to discuss on youth participation, an important component of youth policy development.

Started from the perception of youth participation in accordance with the Ladder of Participation model developed by Roger Hart (1997), this combined plenary session provided the opportunity for a deeper discussion on some major questions regarding participation:

- How do we practice participation?
- Where do we stand in the Ladder of Participation?
- Where would you consider your organisation in terms of youth participation? Why?
- What challenges do we face in our organisations, regarding participation as an ideal and realities such as possibilities and limits?
- How do we manage to climb the ladder together?

The major issues discussed in this plenary regarding participation can be summarised as:

- opening up possibilities for young people within the structure of the institutions;
- provision of enough space for participation as a shared responsibility;
- institutionalisation of youth organisations as a key actor of youth participation;
- ensuring quality of youth participation;
- considering the limitations and possibilities of youth participation in different contexts;
- the need for research on why young people do not participate;
- considering participation as a human right, as a condition for the success of youth policies; and,
- developing new ways of participation like electronic participation, as a way to overcome barriers before participation.

The third component of the programme was structured in a way to provide the opportunity for discussions towards defining, sharing and deciding on the perspectives and priorities for future cooperation. Having had the time for small group and plenary discussions, all the participants in the round-table expressed their wish to extend and deepen the cooperation and exchange of information. It was also agreed that some concrete activities could strengthen the cooperation and give a more concrete meaning to the exchange of practices and information, especially in areas of common interest to the partners. This could include:

- A training course on the use of information and communication technology for youth participation.
- One training course on youth policy cooperation, based on the “50%-50%” model, bringing together civil servants and youth leaders;
- A mapping study about the international youth policy actors in the Euro-Mediterranean region, with a special focus on the Mediterranean countries, which would be based on the common fields of action and specificities for reflection in the future. SALTO-Youth EuroMed has undertaken the responsibility of conducting the study within its 2010 work plan and the League of Arab States could translate it into Arabic.

- The Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth will continue with the model of cooperation in which it assumes the role of coordination and of being open and flexible to participation of the other partners of the cooperation where the ownership is shared. In this regard, the Partnership has undertaken the responsibility of making the relevant information available; and involving youth policy makers, youth workers and representatives in the cooperation process.
- The third round-table has been decided to be organised towards the end of 2010 in a non-European country, probably Morocco or Tunisia. An experts meeting could take place before the round-table.

In addition to concrete future actions, a number of issues have been raised and discussed throughout the round-table in order for achieving better success of the youth policy cooperation in the future.

An important issue in this regard was to reassure that in spite of the prolonged break in between two round-tables, the intention for youth policy cooperation has not weakened. All the participating institutions believe in the need to cooperate in this field and are ready to pool their resources and competences for further cooperation. It is seen natural that the main partners (the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth and the League of Arab States) take the responsibility to ensure the sustainability of the cooperation as well as to provide communication channels for all actual and potential partners of the cooperation.

Another issue for a better success of the youth policy cooperation for the broader Euro-Mediterranean context has been the sustainability and continuity of partners and the partnerships. Besides the main partners of the cooperation scheme, other partners have inevitably been changing from activity to activity and this process depends on the ownership of the results.

It is also important to note for the future of this cooperation that there is an increasing intention to enlarge the group of stakeholders in a way to include the decision-makers of youth policy from the national level. Such an enlargement would not only extend the areas of work, widen the target group of the cooperation and enrich the type of activities through increased possibilities for financing, but also would help avoiding repetitions and inefficient use of human and material resources in the future.

Last but not the least, difficulties in practicalities at different stages of the youth policy have been voiced as a factor negatively affecting the implementation of the cooperation scheme. Aside from uncertainties such as change of venue or dates of the meetings, a visible request of the participating institutions has been a more efficient in-advance planning. This particularly refers to the quest of receiving relevant information and invitations some reasonable time before the activities in order to ensure participation in the meeting and prior budget allocations.

REPORT

Background of Youth Policy Cooperation in the Broader Euro-Mediterranean Context

In 2005 the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, together with several national and regional partners, initiated a process of youth policy cooperation in the broader Euro-Mediterranean region² aimed at fostering greater cooperation between stakeholders of youth policy. The process started in Alexandria in 2005, with the seminar “Youth Policy Here and Now”, co-organised with the Swedish Institute of Alexandria and the Swedish Board of Youth Affairs. It was developed in Cairo in 2006, with an international round-table “Youth policy and research development in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework”³, 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 on youth policy.

That first international round-table was attended by a series of national and international organisations active in the Mediterranean region to share experiences and challenges met in the process of developing and implementing youth policy plans and projects. At the end of the round-table, the 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 these considerations, it was suggested to turn the exchange initiated with that round-table into a regular process that will bring all partners together to share information and progress.

The round table provided the basis for a series of follow-up activities undertaken by the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, together with regional and national partners, addressing different dimensions of youth policy, namely:

- A seminar on the role of youth research in youth policy development (Cairo, 2006);
- A seminar on youth participation and the role of youth organisations in youth policy development and implementation (Budapest, 2007); and,

² The “broader Euro-Mediterranean region” in this context encompasses the member states of the Council of Europe, the countries who are parties in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and other countries from the Middle East and Arab region interested in this cooperation.

³ The report of the international round-table “Youth policy and research development in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework” is available at: <http://www.youth-partnership.net>.

- Participation of youth policy actors in other activities of the Partnership.

Three years after the initiation of this process, the Youth Partnership has carried out a survey by independent consultants about the results of the activities and the expectations regarding the future of youth policy cooperation⁴. The survey provided evidence of the usefulness of the activities and made also several suggestions for the future of this cooperation.

Amongst its priorities, the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission seeks to provide a better understanding and knowledge of youth issues and youth policy development and to provide a framework for co-operation in doing so. In addition, it contributes 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 of fostering evidence-based youth policies, as well as to strengthen cooperation within the Euro-Mediterranean region and other regions. In view of the above, the League of Arab States and the Youth Partnership 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.

The Objectives of the Round-Table

The second international round-table aimed at 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;
- To support intercultural dialogue among youth policy actors from the European, Mediterranean and Arab regions.

The round-table was also 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 Participants

The round-table was open to representatives of the national governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations charged with youth policy development and implementation (youth ministries and councils, youth organisations and platforms); the regional and international agencies and organisations which promote or support youth policy projects and programmes in the Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Arab areas; the foundations and agencies supporting youth policy programmes and studies; and, the institutions carrying out or supporting youth research in the region. The actual combination of the participants included the League of Arab States, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource

⁴ For detailed information about this Survey, see Section 1.1.

Centre; the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform; the European Youth Forum; the Council of Europe (the North-South Centre and the Directorate of Youth and Sport), the International Planned Parenthood Federation - Arab World Region and the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The representatives of the European Steering Committee for Youth and Advisory Council on Youth within the Council of Europe were also present at the round-table.

The European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture, the Swedish Board for Youth Affairs, the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality of Sweden and the Hungarian National Youth Service "Mobilitás" apologised for their absence at the round-table.

The Content of the Round-Table

The meeting was opened with two speeches given by the representatives of the League of Arab States, Mr. Khaled Louhichi and of the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and European Commission, Mr. Hans-Joachim Schild.

Mr. Louhichi underlined the importance of the youth policy cooperation, which is currently occurring in a challenged moment due to the financial crisis and its increasing impact all over the world. As a result, the extensive number of people losing their jobs and going down to poverty and an increasing degree of xenophobia and racism necessitate that cooperation especially on youth matters must be more than any time strong and efficient. Mr. Louhichi also stressed the increasing role of League of Arab States in the youth policy cooperation since 2005 and the increasing visibility of the impact of those activities in the Arab region: around 300 people participated in these activities and many follow-up activities were pursued in platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Youth without Borders.

Mr. Louhichi stated that the cooperation continues with other international organisations such as the European Youth Forum in organising the Euro-Arab Youth Forum. He underlined the three priorities of the Arab Youth Observatory in the Arab region:

- challenges that young people face (such as youth unemployment, structural weakness in education system; and in participation) and, lack of mechanisms to deal with those challenges;
- the weakness of civil society, and
- youth policy measures and structures.

He also underlined the need for local initiatives and support for youth organisations; and the need to fill the knowledge gaps (e.g. surveys, qualitative indicators etc.)

In his opening speech Mr. Schild emphasised the development of the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, the 10th anniversary (1998-2008) of which was celebrated in 2008. Within the Partnership, Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and youth research have existed since 2003. He stated that in 2005 different pillar of the Partnership were merged and since then the Partnership has an enlarged regional focus. A new pillar was also added in 2009, namely the African-European youth cooperation through the North-South Centre. He mentioned that this youth policy round-table was included in the 2009 work programme of the Partnership, in addition to organisation of training courses especially on Human Rights Education and conflict transformation and the University of Youth and Development by the North-South Centre. He emphasised the importance of the new framework developed by the European Commission for the 2010-2013 period and restated the priorities of the Partnership as human rights education, citizenship and participation, intercultural dialogue,

social cohesion and youth policy development. He reiterated that the outcomes of this round-table are very important inputs to be taken into consideration in the new period.

These two opening speeches of the round-table pointed at four important aspects of youth policy cooperation: participation of young people; knowledge of and research on youth; mainstreaming and intersectorality of youth issues; and role for international cooperation.

The content of the meeting can be divided into three major parts: exchange of projects and programmes relating to youth policy development (both inputs from the experts and presentations of the institutions); a working session together with the participants of the Training Course for Youth Leaders “Youth Participation and Intercultural Dialogue for Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation”; and working groups and perspectives and priorities of future cooperation.

1. Exchange of Projects and Programmes relating to Youth Policy Development

In the round-table, there were two major types of presentations: inputs from experts in youth policy development and implementation; and presentations made by the participating organisations on their present and future projects, focusing in particular on results and challenges.

1.1 Inputs on Youth Policy Development and Implementation

Conclusions of the Survey on the evaluation and follow-up of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Policy cooperation activities, organised in the framework of the Youth Partnership, Mr. Ayman Abdul Majeed

The survey on the evaluation and follow-up of the Euro-Mediterranean youth policy cooperation activities⁵ was initiated by the Youth Partnership and conducted by two independent consultants in 2008. The survey covered the implementation of four Partnership activities, which were a part of the youth policy cooperation. These were namely:

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

The objectives of the Survey were:

1. To assess the benefits of the four key events held 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;
2. To determine the impact of the events on the participants, participants’ organisations and partners as a measure of their effectiveness; and,

5 The results of the survey can be consulted online at: www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/euromed/Euromed_Youth_policy.html

3. To make recommendations to feed into the design of the future activities and strategies of the Partnership based on the participants and partners' feedback and needs.

In terms of method, the survey included two stages: Analysing the nature of activities through literature review and counselling with organisers; and, surveying the stakeholders: participants, partners and organisers.

For these four activities, there were two types of partners: strategic partners and implementing partners. Regarding the feedback from those partners on the understanding of their roles, three objectives were mentioned by partners as reasons for their engagement in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the youth policy field:

1. To ensure that the seminars' objectives and themes are in harmony with their goals and concerns;
2. To learn more about youth policy development; and,
3. To build partnerships and cooperation by exchanging youth policy experiences.

Throughout this cooperation process, the cooperation between the League of Arab States and the Youth Partnership was considered a success story. Since 2006 to date, six activities were conducted at different levels: two Youth forums; one youth training course; two seminars; and one round-table and several future activities are already planned.

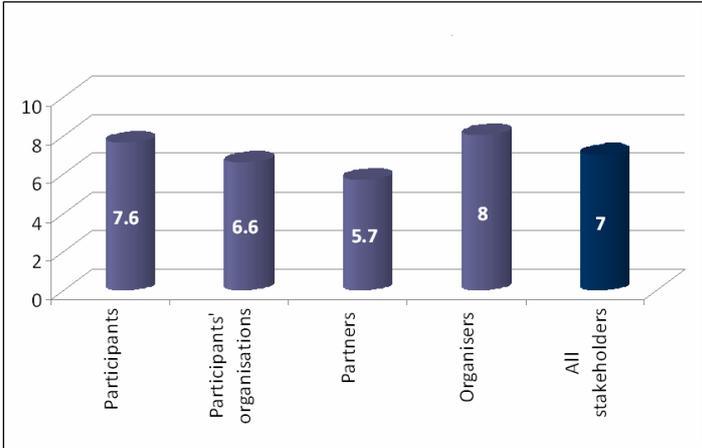
Input of the Survey Participants		
<i>Key benefits</i>	<i>Key outcomes</i>	<i>Key challenges</i>
Opportunity to network and share experiences with other countries.	The meetings motivated participants to take active roles in youth policy issues on a number of different levels: in their own organisations, local community, national level and Euro-Med context	Lack of knowledge on how to be efficient and organised in implementing activities.
Developed knowledge and understanding of definitions and concepts in youth policy, role of youth research and the importance of youth participation.	The events contributed to the development of the participants' organisations and enhanced the capacity of youth work and youth policy in different areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ projects and policy implementation ▪ the production of new manuals and publications ▪ training and advocacy work 	Language difficulties hindered the ability to learn from each other.
Increased motivation to take an active role in youth policy issues.	Participants reported that since the events, they have been able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide their organisations with useful information and contacts for future engagements ▪ network with organisations to share experiences and bring in different resources and materials ▪ serve as a reference for information in the field of youth policy 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 	The logistical difficulty of conducting a survey with other European and MEDA countries.
Opportunity to learn ways and methods to connect research with practice at local level.		Difficulty in expressing the issues related to cultural differences.
Developed new projects ideas and potential partners for the future.		Expanding new partnerships outside the Euro-Med region.
Ability to start identifying some priorities and needs in their countries that need the expansion of formal and non-formal education.		Obtaining visas to enter host countries, particularly for those in countries where there is political hostility.

For the four activities included in the survey, the partners mentioned that they faced two types of challenges: Those in relation to the content of the events, and those regarding the practice. Some examples of the former challenges are the lack of prioritisation; unclear goals; limited efforts in all processes; poor evaluation and follow-up; and limited participation from partners in various stages of the events. The challenges in practice can be exemplified as the absence of expert rapporteurs at the events, hence weak reports afterwards; limited time designated to the planning and implementation periods; difficulties related to work in groups consisting of several nationalities, cultures and languages; time limitations in communication which affected the development of a stronger common project; and no mitigation of the risk of participants having difficulty in obtaining visas to enter the host countries.

The results of the Survey also pointed out some recommendations in order to develop the quality of cooperation and interaction between the organisers, partners and participants in the future. One of the most important recommendations is to create a basis for building relationships between young people in the European and Mediterranean countries through the activation of relationships and dialogues, and to work on structural change. These areas are seen as being mainly dependent on the baseline study where work can be done on the construction of change through joint meetings, workshops, seminars, sectoral cooperation between youth etc.

Some other recommendations are:

- To define a medium-term strategy and action plan;
- To create a mandate for the partner organisations for the distribution of tasks and responsibilities between the partners;
- To strengthen follow-up activities (including dissemination of information and results);
- To ensure participation and communication with all relevant parties;
- To provide case studies to enhance understanding between different organisations;
- To give more attention to reports and documentation of the events;
- To define a bigger role for young people and youth organisations.
- To give particular attention to those countries that have not yet developed national youth policies;
- To improve the procedure of identifying and selecting participants and partners to ensure more balance and diversity between European and MEDA countries; and,
- To secure clearer connections between each activity and with the other activities of the the Partnership.



Graph: The overall evaluation of the respective goals and expected results by the stakeholders.

Principles and objectives of youth policy in the Council of Europe and in the Youth Partnership, Ms. Miriam Teuma

The objectives of the vision of the Council of Europe regarding youth policy are:

- To help and find ways to meet up with young people's challenges and aspirations, particularly the disadvantaged young people;
- To strengthen civil society through non-formal education and training for democratic citizenship;
- To promote and encourage participation for active citizenship;
- To support the development of youth policies with its legislation and structures;
- To seek the promotion of youth mobility.

The priorities of the Council of Europe regarding youth policy are:

- To promote of intercultural dialogue and respect for diversity;
- To combating racism, xenophobia antisemitism and intolerance;
- To access to information and new forms of technologies;
- Commitment to human rights and democracy;
- In a non-formal way, to train young people to assume responsibilities;
- Exchange of good practices and information;
- Encouragement of new forms of participation and organisation;
- Development of youth structures and ongoing analysis of youth policies.

Four general objectives of the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission are:

- Citizenship, participation, human rights education and intercultural dialogue;
- Social cohesion, inclusion and equal opportunities;
- Recognition, quality and visibility of youth work and training;
- Better understanding and knowledge of youth and youth policy development.

The implementation of these priorities and objectives are realised through various training activities, seminars, network meetings for young people, youth workers, researchers and policy makers. In addition, the Partnership produces publications such as the T(raining)-Kits and the Coyote magazine, to support the realisation of its objectives in the youth policy field. One recent development regarding the support to youth policy development from the Partnership is the establishment of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, which is an online platform which gathers different information from different countries where people can access and continue to build this vision of youth policy.

The discussion following the presentation covered some concerns such as whether or not there is any legislation or any reference documents regarding the rights of young people in Europe; which target group that policy targets at; and why there are rights defined for children but not for the young people in Europe. In response to these questions, it is stated that the Council of Europe and the Youth Partnership actually adopt priority actions such as national policy reviews, working with multipliers, and pays special attention to non-formal learning in promoting autonomy. The growing concern at the European level towards better integration of child and youth policies was

also underlined. Regarding any reference document in Europe for the rights of young people it was stated that the efforts from the Council of Europe and the Youth Partnership are not yet at this stage, but the policy of these organisations are towards supporting autonomy of “all” young people in line with the principle of non-discrimination. The issue of rights of young people is on the agenda of the European Youth Forum.

The Youth Policy Studies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries, Mr. Bernard Abrignani

In March 2006, the European Commission contracted the Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit (RCBS), based in France at INJEP to support the Phase III of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme. In this framework, 10 youth policy studies⁶, with a common executive summary and main findings, were foreseen to be produced on the evolution of the youth sector in the Mediterranean partner countries and funding systems of other donors working with the national youth authorities in those countries. Therefore, as part of its contractual obligation, RCBS launched, in February 2008, a call for experts to undertake the 10 studies.

The objectives of these youth policy studies were to identify the remit of existing youth policies, legal regulations and youth structures in the concerned Mediterranean partner countries and explore to what extent the national youth strategies addressed the various needs of young people; and to understand the role and work of youth NGOs, and of other relevant actors. The aim of the reports is to provide a picture of the actual situation in those countries, in order to provide a tool and a starting point that would allow stakeholders in the youth field and youth project organisers to gain an overview of the youth policies and provisions for youth existing in the 10 Mediterranean partner countries. Therefore, the resulting reports of the studies provide sufficient information on the current youth situation, the challenges faced by the young people, and provision made available, at variant standards, by national, public and non-governmental institutions and organisations to assist and help young people to become active citizens.

An important note is that that the content and quality of the studies very much depend on the availability of documentary resources as well as access to authorities, young people and other stakeholders who were willing to be interviewed and share their perceptions on the current situation for youth in their country. It should also be noted that that the reports are intended to be as objective as possible, based on concrete facts, information and observations supported by evidence, rather than on any recommendations and criteria or intention to evaluate.

Six main themes were proposed for research:

- Youth policy and legislation;
- Young people’s rights as citizens (to what extent the existing policy and legislations addressed the various needs and entitlements of the young people);
- Challenges faced by young people;
- Role and impact of non-formal education;
- Place of the EuroMed Youth Programme within the national youth policy; and,
- The place and role of other youth support mechanisms.

⁶ The Youth Policy Studies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries can be obtained online at: www.euromedyouth.net/studies-on-youth-policies-in-meda,027.

To conduct the studies, a call for experts was published and out of 64 applications seven experts of different nationalities (both from European and Mediterranean countries) were nominated to undertake research in the relevant 10 Mediterranean partner countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. These experts were invited to a briefing meeting in mid-April, during which the aim, objectives and themes of the studies, as well as a common structure for the reports were discussed in detail.

The methodology for the studies was based on two phases: home-based research; and locally-based active research, a 4-day field study at the relevant countries involving interviews and meetings with the representatives of relevant national authorities, youth organisations and NGOs, youth leaders, and with young people individually or within focus groups. During the preparation of the studies, each expert had the support of the RCBS's local short-term experts for identifying local contacts and for making the relevant local technical arrangements.

The structure of the individual country studies, devised on basis of the main themes, is as follows:

- Methodology implemented and challenges faced during the study;
- Situation of youth (Definition of youth; general statistics on age brackets; young people's rights and conditions; Youth culture and trends; young people's needs and challenges);
- Structural and institutional aspects of youth policy and legislation (provisions; institutional approach to the youth sector; non-formal education and youth work);
- Youth associations and NGOs;
- EuroMed Youth Programme and its place within the national youth policy;
- Other youth support mechanisms (such as international donors);
- Perceptions of the relevant actors (of national authorities; youth leaders; young people);
- Conclusive remarks;
- Various annexes, such as a brief country profile on basis of a provided grid; bibliography; glossary etc.

Among many other interesting findings, it can also be seen in the studies that except for some strategic differences and regional specificities due to political, economic, sectarian and cultural issues, the majority of the young people in the Mediterranean region face the same difficulties and challenges, which could also be compared to those faced by their European counterparts, such as:

- Youth unemployment and lack of appropriate housing (which limits young people's independence);
- Youth immigration;
- Conflict of living within a patriarchal society and European influences;
- Young women's position within society;
- Deviant reactions of youth – drug abuse, violence and riots;
- A return of youth to religion;
- Lack of interest, as well as of trust, in politics and governments;
- Lack of youth consultation and top to bottom decision-making;
- Lack of, or limited provision for, non-formal education and resources for youth centres;
- Few trainers and trained youth leaders and limited recognition of youth work and of volunteering;
- Keen wish of youth to be consulted, recognised and respected as active citizen.

Following a period of proof-reading and the process of coherency check through the 10 studies, the final versions of the reports were submitted to the Commission for comments and approval. The studies will be published and electronically available by May 2009, both in form of ten individual studies and as a combination of 10 executive summaries.

Youth Policy in the European Union, Mr. Hans-Joachim Schild

Since the publication of White Paper on Youth Policy in 2001, the European Union adopted a more coordinated approach in policy making applying the Open Method of Coordination. The main topics proposed in the White Paper are both issues such as participation, information, voluntary activities of young people, better knowledge and understanding of youth, and also horizontal policy issues such as employment, education, training, social inclusion, health etc. The relevance of these horizontal topics was confirmed by the European Youth Pact adopted in 2004.

In 2008-2009, the European Commission has organised a review of their policies since 2001 and is going to propose a new cooperation framework in April 2009 based on this review, which is entitled “Youth: Empowering and Investing” (working title). As far as public and known, it focuses continuously on mainly three policy issues:

- Social and professional integration of young people into society;
- Active participation in society;
- Mainstreaming and cross-sectorial cooperation, particularly in policy issues such as education, training, health, social inclusion etc.

The proposal is a two-fold approach regarding the implementation:

1. To foster the youth potential, which means that the policy should mainly create opportunities for young people; and,
2. Making every young person matter which means that the policy should provide access to rights and to possibilities especially for those who are excluded.

There are also different mechanisms foreseen to implement these policies especially at the European level. The most prominent one is the continuously structured dialogue, between policy makers, the European Parliament and youth organisations. The second one is the so-called open method of coordination, which is a kind of coordinated policy approach between the different institutions in Europe, such as European Commission, European Parliament, the member states, and the Council of European Union etc. Also the mainstreaming of youth policy will play an important role, which refers to the coordination between the different responsible bodies such as the Directorate General of Employment and the Directorate General for Culture and Youth. Another mechanism is the continuous knowledge production and knowledge provision about young people. In this process, peer learning between the member states is also an important issue, which refers to exchange of experiences among countries.

The most important tool for concrete action in the European Union for youth is the Youth in Action Programme. The Programme is running until 2013, and the European Commission has already started to reflect upon a new generation of programmes for the next period after 2013. Within the Youth in Action Programme, the Action 3 entitled “Youth in the World” is a particularly important tool for the international youth policy cooperation.

1.2 Presentations of Participating Institutions

The presentations of the participating institutions mainly focused on the most important issues and realities of young people covered by the policy of the institution; the main ongoing projects and activities of the institution regarding youth; and, the role of institutional cooperation in pursuing youth policy objectives and principles, especially in the broader Euro-Mediterranean context.

League of Arab States, Mr. Haythem Kamel

The *Arab Youth Observatory* (AYO) is a project of the Population Policy and Migration Department within the League of Arab States (LAS). It was established as an output of the recommendations at various platforms on youth empowerment (Khartoum Summit 2006, Arab Declaration on Youth Empowerment, Arab Parliamentary Conference on Youth Empowerment - 9th Annual Conference of Heads of National Population Councils 2006). Accordingly, the AYO is a permanent platform since 2007 to promote the exchange of skills and knowledge, youth dialogue, as well as the support of youth at the regional level, by including all involved parties in the field of youth.

The objectives of the Arab Youth Observatory are:

- Collecting and disseminating reliable, updated and significant data on youth at the Arab region (through research, studies, surveys, databases, websites, and publications);
- Formulating an Arab vision on youth empowerment and participation in population and development strategies and policies (through think tanks, seminars, meetings);
- Enhancing the capacity of institutions and national organisations working on youth empowerment and strengthen youth leaderships (through capacity building activities);
- Activating dynamic dialogue among different stakeholders to gain the support of decision makers on youth empowerment (such as advocacy targeting, decision makers, responsible parliamentarians).

The mechanisms and activities to support the Observatory are the League of Arab States Youth Forum (2007, 2008, 2009); the Annual Report on Arab Current Youth Issues (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008); Youth Advisory Committee; annual meeting with regional and international organisations working on youth; the Arab Youth Voice⁷ (a website for and from youth); the Arab Youth Summit; specialised and updated databases; and other meetings and publications.

The *League of Arab States* Youth Forum⁸ have been organised with different themes and in different locations: “Youth’s Participation in Localising and Achieving the Millennium Development Goals” (Egypt, 2007); “Youth and Cultural Dialogue” (Jordan, 2008); “Youth and Migration” (Morocco, 2009). Its main focus is:

- Arab youth network for R.H.
- Arab youth bloggers network;
- Arab Network for National Youth Organisations Networks (in process);
- Amman Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue; and,
- Many activities in preparation for the forum annually.

7 www.poplas.org/youth

8 www.lasyouthforum.org

The Annual Report on Arab Youth Issues is an annual publication covering major youth issues in Arab countries in light of the latest available data. Since 2005, the publication focused on different subjects:

- “Report on State-of-the-Art on Youth Data and Studies” (2005)
- “Arab Youth Dominant Values: Characteristics and Determinants” (2006)
- “Arab Youth Participation: Challenges and Prospects” (2007)
- “The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007: An Arab Lens”
- “Arab Youth and Cultural Dialogue” (in process)

The *Youth Advisory Committee* (YAC) members act as national focal points for the AYO projects and feed the AYO database with up-to-date information about youth activities, actors, and policies. The Committee helps in drawing strategies and projects, and conducts follow-up and evaluation of past projects; it prepares studies and opinion polls on youth in the Arab region; and follows up and promotes the AYO projects.

The first *Arab Youth Summit*⁹ was held in the LAS headquarters in Cairo in July 2008. The main outcome is the Cairo Declaration, which contains a set of recommendation and strategies to activate the role of youth in achieving economic and social development and the creation of the Arab Fund to support youth projects for youth empowerment, employment and protection from drugs. In addition, 50 Arab youth delegates participated in the Arab Economic and Social Summit in Kuwait, in February 2009 representing the Arab youth and present their proposals.

Establishing *specialised and updated databases* are also among the activities of the League of Arab States in relation to youth issues. These include statistical database on Arab youth; bibliographic database on youth issues; database on experts addressing youth issues in the Arab region; and database on Arab and international institutions concerned with youth.

The League of Arab States is also involved in *Euro-Arab Cooperation in Youth* through co-organising, attending in and hosting various joint meetings especially with the Council of Europe. The League participated in the Council of Europe initiative entitled “Youth Policies in the Broader Euro-Mediterranean Context” in Alexandria (2005) and Strasbourg (2007) and helped in co-organising it in Cairo (2006) and Budapest (2007). The Council of Europe and European Youth Forum first participated in (2007) and then became partners in the organisation of the LAS Youth Forum in 2008 and 2009. The Training Course for youth leaders on “Youth Participation and Intercultural Dialogue for Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation” and “Youth Policy Cooperation in the Broader Euro-Mediterranean Context Second International Round-table” are recent two events that LAS cooperated with the Council of Europe in the youth field. The League also participates in the Youth Partnership Sectorial Group meetings. The League also got involved in the Euro-Arab Coordination Meeting for Youth Organisations Rome (Amman, 2008) and participated in the conference entitled “Youth Participation in EuroMed context” organised by SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed in Paris in 2008.

Currently, the League of Arab States and the Council of Europe work on the preparation of a framework cooperation agreement in the youth field.

⁹ www.youtharabsummit.org, www.blog4dialogue.org

Anna Lindh Foundation, Ms. Vera Cerbara

The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures¹⁰ was founded in 2005 by the governments of the 35 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, within the framework of the Barcelona Process started in 1995.

Such process supported the development of Euro-Mediterranean relations in 3 spheres:

- Political: Common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue;
- Economic: Zone of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free trade zone; and,
- Cultural: Rapprochement between peoples through a social, cultural and human partnership.

It is in this third chapter that the Foundation works, contributing in an effective manner to the cultural dimension of the initiative and with a role that has been further reiterated by the establishment of the Union for Mediterranean in 2008.

The Foundation acts as a network of networks in each of the 43 countries of the Union for Mediterranean. As stated in its statutes Article XIII, the Foundation's function as a *network of networks* refers to its work as a network of civil society organisations working on intercultural dialogue, with the aim to:

- bring people and organisations together, spreading knowledge and sharing best practices;
- promote the visibility of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; and,
- contribute in an effective manner to the social, cultural and intellectual dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean in cooperation with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

The Foundation's *target groups* are women, migrants, and youth.

The identification of the Foundation's and its National Network's strategic priorities and the programme of activities is realised through the formulation of recommendations addressed to institutions and civil society organisations committed to the promotion of political and cultural dialogue in the EuroMed space.

The Foundation's *Triennial Programme 2009-2011* is based on six strategic fields: education; cultural production; media; religion, spirituality and values; cities and diversity; and, ideas and ideologies. For each strategic field, flagship projects are currently being developed, coordinated directly by the Headquarters, in collaboration with national networks and other strategic partners. All other activities developed by the Foundation are also expected to be consistent with the identified strategic fields.

In addition to the Flagship projects, a core element of the Foundation is its grant scheme, consisting in Calls for Proposals for short terms and long-term projects. The selection of granted projects is based on criteria reflecting the Foundation's strategic fields and target groups, with a special focus on youth.

¹⁰ www.euromedalex.org.

The Foundation has recently closed the Phase I and is opening the Phase II. In this process the main assets of Phase II are listed as the New Programme covering the period of 2009-2011; the incorporation of new staff; and joining of new Networks, increasing the number of countries from 37 to 43. Phase II also shows some challenges, including the implementation of the new programme, going from strategy to actual projects; and adapting it to impact of Gaza War and of the economic crisis; as well as the situation of the Union for the Mediterranean.

The Foundation is preparing to publish the first *Anna Lindh Report on Euromed Intercultural Trends* in 2010. The Report aims at presenting the long term intercultural trends in relation to intercultural dialogue within and between the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean space. This is to be considered a tool for the action of institutions and civil society organisations committed to the promotion of intercultural dialogue in the Euromed space and the definition and consolidation of the Union for Mediterranean as a shared project with a human and cultural dimension that is essential for its legitimacy. The Report will be built on a public opinion poll, conducted by a specialised company and on the *analysis carried out by leading experts* on intercultural affairs. For this year, the theme of the Report will focus on the “Impact of Media on Shaping Perceptions.”

The Foundation’s *youth projects* include, among others: Dialogue Café with Alliance of Civilisation; Plural+ with the Alliance of Civilisation; a Cultural leadership programme in collaboration with the British Council; a Bloggers’ project; and others currently being defined. Additionally, youth remain a priority target group in most of the Foundation’s projects and programmes.

Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Ms. Inas Abdelatif

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina¹¹ (BA), the new Library of Alexandria, is a youth-based organisation. It has about 2000 staff members, remarkably young (29-30 years old on average) and gender-balanced (56% female excluding security and custodial staff).

Bibliotheca Alexandrina works in the Arab Region where youth population exceeds 66 million¹². Its geographical coverage of youth is wide because 60% of the Arab World’s population is under the age of 25¹³ and Egyptian youth constitute around 30% of its population¹⁴.

Its main areas of focus under the Dialogue Forum Department are Dialogue and Understanding; NGOs and Civil Society Organisation’s Networks; Arab Reform Programmes; and Youth Activities.

The main youth event of Bibliotheca Alexandrina is the *Arab Youth Forum*. Since 2006, the Arab Reform Forum has been organising an annual Arab Youth Forum, in cooperation with the Egyptian National Youth Council, which addresses vital issues related to the Arab Youth. The main themes of the Forum are Arab youth employment; Arab youth and leadership; youth and their future visions; entrepreneurship education; youth participation in political, economic and social fields; the role of NGOs in empowering youth; freedom and tolerance in youth culture; and the culture of peace and democracy. Four annual Arab Youth Forums are entitled as:

11 www.bibalex.org.

12 Jad Shaaban, Executive Secretary of UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), February 2007.

13 Donald J. Johnston, *The Jordan Times*, Feb. 2005.

14 www.prb.org/Countries/Egypt.aspx (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2006).

- “Arab Youth Meeting for Reform and Thinking” (February 2006);
- “The Culture of Youth and Reform” (February 2007);
- “Youth and the Role of Media in Establishing Culture of Peace, Security and Development” (February 2008);
- “Arab Youth Culture and Identity in the Era of Globalization” (February 2009):

The number of participants of the Arab Youth Forum range from 300 to 350 and it increases remarkably every year, reaching at almost 600 in 2009. The average age of the forum participants is from 20 to 30 years old. The Forum is based on the notion of exchanging experiences; therefore, about 20% of the participants are young people who participated effectively in previous Arab Youth Forums. The Fourth Forum in February 2009 provided a space and opportunity for international NGOs, concerned with social services, especially youth empowerment, to exchange new ideas. The publications of the Annual Arab Youth Forum are: “The Role of Youth in Reform and Renovation”; “Youth Successful Stories”; “Youth and Culture of Reform”; and “Youth and the Role of Media in Establishing Culture of Peace and Social Security”.

Bibliotheca Alexandrina also involves in youth activities in an international context. One those is the Youth Employment Summit (YES). During the First Global Youth Employment Summit Campaign entitled “YES Alexandria 2002” at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, a “Decade Campaign of Action” (2002-2012) was launched. Dialogue Forum staff and other staff of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina participated in organising “YES Azerbaijan 2008”, within the Fourth Global Youth Employment Summit Campaign. In addition, Dialogue Forum Department of the BA participated in the Fourth World Youth Congress “Regeneration 2008”.

SALTO-YOUTH Euromed Resource Centre, Mr. Bernard Abrignani

SALTO-YOUTH¹⁵ EuroMed Resource Centre¹⁶ is one of the eight structures created by the European Commission to bring its technical and educational support and enhance implementation of the Youth in Action Programme by providing support and training to National Agencies (NA) and EuroMed Youth Units (EMYU). SALTO-YOUTH Euromed Resource Centre is hosted in INJEP since August 2000 and is a part of AFJEJA (French National Agency for the Youth in Action Programme).

SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource Centre’s intervention zone covers 31 programme countries (27 EU, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway and Turkey) and the Mediterranean countries which are involved in the Barcelona Process (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia).

The main aim of SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource Centre is to enhance the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of youth through five main axes: training opportunities; events; good practices; support to network; and, partnerships.

In cooperation with the national agencies and youth units, the SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource Centre proposes several thematic and some innovative training opportunities on EuroMed Youth priorities in order to allow participants to integrate these priorities into their own projects through short and long-term training courses and contact making seminars. Some

¹⁵ SALTO stands for “Support and Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities, within the Youth in Action Programme”.

¹⁶ www.salto-youth.net/euromed.

of these training opportunities for 2009 are: Training courses on “EuroMed Game”; “Building Quality in EuroMed Youth Exchanges”; “Art as an Intercultural Tool”; “Traditional Sport as an Intercultural Tool”; “Environment”; and “Mosaic seminar” qualification of trainers in EuroMed (together with the Council of Europe).

In cooperation with the national agencies and youth units, SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource Centre organises events such as conferences and seminars to offer opportunities to share, to test, to analyse, to transfer and to develop new project ideas and new partnerships. SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource Centre’s support includes activities such as developing concepts, leading workshops, advising promoters, and conferences. Some of the events for 2009 are Training Seminar on “NGO management in EuroMed”; Evaluation Seminar “Let’s Evaluate with our Neighbours”; 4th Tool Fair; and Training Seminar on “European Voluntary Service”.

SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource Centre is also in charge of compilation and dissemination of educational *good practices* in training and youth work in order to contribute to the creation of a common memory. In this regard, SALTO EuroMed coordinates the on-line “Toolbox¹⁷” offering different training tools; collects educational training course reports entitled “Bringing both sides together” (in English), and publishes the biannual magazine entitled “Meet In EuroMed”. In addition, EuroMed Resource Centre is also a member of the editorial board of “Coyote” magazine for youth trainers edited through the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and European Commission.

In order to provide *support to network* of NA, EMYU and multipliers of the Youth in Action Programme, EuroMed Resource Centre offers dissemination of specific information on EuroMed via the website; dissemination of educational good practices in youth work (through Toolfair, Toolbox, newsletters and the magazine); availability to EMYU’s and NA’s requests for intervention and/or support; and opportunities for job shadowing.

Partnership: Besides the National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme network and with the nine EuroMed Youth Units, SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource Centre works in partnership with other national and international institutional frameworks working on youth issues in the Euro-Mediterranean context, such as the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe; European Youth Forum, EuroMed Youth Platform, EuroMed Info Centre; Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures; and, High Council for Youth in Jordan.

Despite its little budget, SALTO EuroMed has a strong network, which is still active, based on shared values, and not only institutional but also personal relations. This means that the Centre is in contact with people and NGOs at local level (bottom-up) and has political and institutional connections (top-down) at the same time.

17 www.salto-youth.net/toolbox.

Euro-Med Youth Platform, Ms. Amanda Zammit

The Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform¹⁸ (EMYP) was officially launched in September 2003 and is now a body of that contributes to the implementation of the Youth in Action Programme. The Platform aims at bringing young people in an environment of tolerance and mutual understanding; facilitating networking between all those interested in the youth sector in Europe and the Mediterranean; and assisting in the capacity building of its organisations, increasing their participation, sharing of relevant information, and exchanging good practice. With its activities, the Platform contributes to developing co-operation in the youth sector between thirty-five countries¹⁹, parties to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Declaration).

The Platform provides networking services for youth initiatives in the region by assisting in the search for partners. The existing Database of the Platform includes round 6000 organisations and a partner search facility. There are also current efforts to update and renew this database with new sections.

The Platform also facilitates the creation of networks of youth groups that have similar objectives such as Euro-Mediterranean Youth Trade Union Network; Euro-Med Student Forum; networks for young people involved in politics, youth trafficking, youth workers in local authorities, sexual minorities, young entrepreneurs; and networks of gender.

The Platform increases its visibility through activities such as dissemination of information; participation in events; cooperation with Euro-Mediterranean stakeholders; publishing a magazine in 3 languages; and writing articles in magazines and journals. The Platform's website, which is recently renewed in content and appearance, includes links to Euro-Med stakeholders through the database; a news section for updates concerning Euro-Med Youth; a section on country profiles; and the EuroMed Platform Magazine.

In 2008, the Platform organised the meetings entitled "Euro-Med Youth Platform Re-launch and National Youth Federations Initiative"²⁰ (June 2008 in Malta), and "Results - 1st Working Group Meeting" (November 2008), which will continue to meet annually. A meeting foreseen for 2009 is going to be organised by the EMYP in cooperation with Malta National Agency, SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed, and Turkish and Greek National Agencies. The meeting will cover the presentation of research by EMYP and SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed and NGO and Project Management; with 50 participants on 16-22 November.

Currently, the Platform is performing a needs analysis of youth organisations in the MEDA region, as well as mapping stakeholders which provide funding opportunities and assistance to young people in the Euro-Med region.

18 www.euromedp.org

19 These are Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Morocco, Netherlands, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

20 The report of the meeting is available at www.euromedp.org/content/docs/report_malta_conference_final.pdf.

European Youth Forum, Mr. Giuseppe Porcaro

The European Youth Forum²¹ (YFJ) is made up of more than 90 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, which are federations of youth organisations in themselves. It brings together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe, and represents their common interests. Its mission is to empower young people to participate actively in the shaping of Europe and the societies in which they live; and to improve the living conditions of young people as European citizens in today's world.

The European Youth Forum works in several policy areas: education, with a specific focus on non-formal education; youth policy in Europe; employment and social inclusion; human rights and equality; sustainable development; health; training; mobility; and, global and regional youth cooperation. Regarding youth policy, the Forum aims at increasing the participation of young people in the shaping of the European policies concerning them and improve the qualities of youth policies and programmes.

Concerning youth policy, the European Youth Forum's broader goal as stated in its work plan is to increase the participation of young people in the shaping of European policies concerning them and to improve the qualities of youth policies and programmes. In concrete terms, this means that YFJ is now on a stage of youth policy development in which cross-sectorial and mainstreaming youth is quite accepted as it is the case at the European institutional level. However, acknowledging the need to concrete implementation of these at the national level, YFJ, in its new work plan adopted in November 2008, foresees to focus its action in the youth policy field and try to get more action, as well at the national level, and get more concrete results from the implementation side of the mainstreaming approach to youth policy.

Depending on the fact that there is no legal framework for youth rights in Europe, YFJ would like to promote a youth rights-based approach and provide the necessary tools to realise that. In this process, YFJ appreciates the efforts and tools produced in other regions of the world such as in Africa the African Youth Charter and in Iber-American space the convention on the youth rights and it takes these kinds of experiences as inspirations for similar developments in Europe. While appreciating the children's rights or human rights approach of the Council of Europe as a basis of right-based approach to youth policy, the YFJ also intends to learn from other regions to advance in the youth policy field.

In an effort to identify and refine its role in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the YFJ gathered the history of its relations with two overlapping regions (Euro-Med as in the Barcelona Process, and Euro-Arab definitions of Euro-Mediterranean as in the partnership between the Council of Europe and the League of Arab States) and started a strategic reflection on what and how YFJ move forward in this cooperation. The output of this strategic exercise was the strategy document adopted in 2007, in which YFJ put the geopolitical discussion as something that is flexible geographical space. This means that YFJ recognises that they are different processes in the area and recognises Euro-Med process as a specific history and as a specific institutional framework. In this context, YFJ recognises that the evolution of this Euro-Med is leading to the Union of the Mediterranean and the EU foreign policy. In addition, EYF also recognises the added value of the Council of Europe since the mid-1990 with a specific Euro-Arab dialogue. With the view that all these processes, which share the same geographical area, even though they overlap sometimes, contribute to foster the dialogue in the region and contribute to synergies in order to advance the lives of young people there. Accordingly, YFJ decided to take a holistic

21 www.youthforum.org.

approach to it and trying to approach the different processes both separately but also keeping the fact that they should be linked together.

In its strategy, the European Youth Forum also identified the main problem for civil society as the youth sector of the civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. It is basically that YFJ does not have a counterpart, an organised civil society, a bottom-up network on the other side of the Mediterranean. This has been an issue of main concern and reflection for the YFJ. However, this statement does not refer to any intention or mandate of the YFJ to create a platform as YFJ or as European youth organisations. On the contrary, YFJ supports the principles of having a truly endogenous process in the self organisation of civil society and the consequent institutional recognition that could come out of it. In this endogenous process, YFJ described its role as to help YFJ member organisations to be in touch with the Arab youth organisations and provide the occasion and opportunity to be together and start to plan making projects together. This process is not only to provide the space for Arab youth organisations to meet with European youth organisations, but also a space for Arab youth organisations to meet with themselves and start to speak and see how they want to proceed on a very autonomous basis.

With these developments, the *Euro-Arab Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations* (EACMYO) process started for the first time in 2007 in Egypt, with the League of Arab States Youth Forum where YFJ started to speak about the idea with the youth organisations and with the League of Arab States as the major institutional partner in the Arab region. This has led to a positive dynamic both with the youth organisations and with the League of Arab States and accordingly the first coordination meeting took place in Amman in November 2008. This meeting was attached to the LAS Youth Forum and also provided a frame for the European participants to participate in the Youth Forum of the LAS, with the support of the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe.

The outcome of this process was a framework for youth cooperation in the Euro-Arab cooperation, developed at the end of EACMYO. The main principles for Euro-Arab cooperation amongst youth organisations were stated as:

- Being based on and meet the needs of young people by involving them in all stages of action;
- Being built between democratic, independent and membership-based organisations; and,
- Respecting the principles of equality, autonomy and reciprocity.

Not only principles but also some recommendations were also agreed upon at the EACMYO:

- Advocating for the granting of legal status to youth organisations in the Arab region;
- Supporting the Arab youth organisations' initiative of establishing a representative and democratic pan-Arab youth platform;
- Mapping existing youth initiatives and organisations in the Arab Region; and,
- Fostering bilateral cooperation projects between European and Arab organisations.

In order to keep this process alive in a way to reinforce the cooperation in the future, EYF is currently working with the League of Arab States and the Council of Europe for a possibility of a training course for the facilitators for the next Arab Youth Forum planned in 2009 in Morocco, at the University of Youth and Development in Mollina. This is also a part of the idea of trying to link more initiatives and trying to make different efforts in youth policy cooperation connected.

Council of Europe - The North-South Centre, Mr. Marcos Andrade

The North-South Centre²² of the Council of Europe focuses on two areas: intercultural dialogue for human rights and global education for global citizenship. Youth as a cross-sectorial issue is an important part of the Centre. It works with four partners: parliamentarians; civil society and youth NGOs; government and local authorities, which reflect the importance given to participation by the North-South Centre. Its mandate in relation to youth dimension is to facilitate, to empower and to give visibility to young people and youth organisations, in a participatory way, as actors of global change and development. The Centre pursues an interregional approach in the way to build global interdependence.

For the activities of the Centre, Africa is a priority region. Africa-Europe Youth Summit is one of the activities, in which the declaration entitled “For a Better Africa – For a Better Europe – For a Better World” was produced. Poverty eradication is a priority in the Euro-African Cooperation, which aims at:

- achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- bringing good governance and democracy;
- ensuring peace and fighting conflict;
- tackling globalisation, trade and socio-economic development;
- managing climate change and sustainable development;
- fighting for decent work agenda and employment;
- addressing migration, mobility, intercultural dialogue and co-development; and,
- strategies and instruments for Euro-African Youth Participation and Cooperation.

Some of the results of the Euro-African cooperation are:

- Comprehensive contribution to youth policies in the Africa-Europe context as also reflected in the Declaration;
- Submission of a final declaration of the Africa-Europe Youth Summit to the Heads of State (9 December 2007);
- Increased understanding and dialogue between young people, and their organisations, in European and African countries;
- Informal network of youth leaders and organisations interested in developing Africa Europe co-operation; and,
- Renewed capacity of multipliers in youth organisations in Europe and Africa with skills to develop and run co-operation programmes.

The youth priorities in the *Africa-EU Strategic Partnership* are “Promoting the empowerment of Europe’s and Africa’s youth²³”; “Strengthening young people’s capacity to disseminate information and to get involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Joint Strategy²⁴”; “Facilitating moments of encounter and exchange between young Africans and Europeans²⁵”; and, “Mapping the existing African youth networks²⁶”.

22 <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre>.

23 As in 56. of the joint strategy, under the heading Human and social development.

24 As in 56. of the joint strategy, under the heading Human and social development.

25 As in 108, under civil society, and 108. under the heading Monitoring, evaluation and review mechanisms.

26 As in the action plan of the joint strategy under the heading Making it work: institutional architecture and implementation.

Institutional cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union covers training and capacity building for youth organisations (The Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and European Commission Directorate General of Education and Culture); and, support to youth work and non-state actors promoting youth policies (Joint Management Agreement – Council of Europe North-South Centre and European Commission – Directorate General of EuropeAid). In this framework, the North-South Centre provides training and capacity building activities such as the Long term Africa-Europe Training Course for Youth Trainers; Africa-Europe Training Course for Youth Organisations and Youth Leaders; and Training course for Youth Organisations of the African Diaspora Living in Europe. Regarding the *support to youth work and non-state actors promoting youth policies*, the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe is involved in the *Joint Management Agreement* with the European Commission represented by the Directorate General of EuropeAid. Some of the activities in this framework are institutional follow up meeting Africa Europe Youth Summit and Monitoring Working Group on Africa Europe Youth Work; sub-regional seminars on youth policies and the African Youth Charter; mapping of Africa-Europe youth cooperation/work; and seed funding for pilot youth exchanges.

The North-South Centre takes part in the Monitoring Group Meetings of the Africa-Europe Youth Summit together with the European Youth Forum, the Pan African Youth Union, the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, the European Steering Group on Intergovernmental cooperation in the Youth Field (CDEJ), the European Commission and the African Union Commission. There are two meetings foreseen for 2009: One in Lisbon (hosted by the Portuguese Youth Council); and one in the framework of the University on Youth and Development.

Another activity of the North-South Centre is the African University on Youth and Development, which will take place in Cape Verde in June 2009. Approximately 120 participants are foreseen to participate. The partners in this event are National Youth Council Cape Verde, Youth Forum of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), Portuguese Youth Council, Pan African Youth Union, European Youth Forum, The Youth Partnership (Council of Europe-European Union) and CPLP.

The Long Term Africa-Europe Training Course for Youth Trainers is another activity of the North-South Centre. Its first phase will take place in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, on 12-19 July 2009. The long term training course will train 35 youth trainers from African and European National Youth Councils and members of international organisations who are active in the Euro African Youth Cooperation. The first phase is 7 days intensive training; followed by the second phase of project implementation and third phase of residential evaluation seminar. The objectives of the long term course are to build capacity of youth trainers and multipliers in youth organisations in Africa and Europe; and to create a pool of trainers with expertise in dialogue, understanding and cooperation instruments between young people, and their organisations in Europe and Africa.

Another North-South Centre youth activity is the Training Course for Youth Organisations of the African Diaspora Living in Europe, which will take place in Portugal in December 2009. It is a five-day residential training course for 20 youth leaders from the African Diaspora active in youth organisations in the hosting societies or leading African Diaspora youth groups/movements, organised in partnership with Pan African Youth Union, SADC Youth Union and AISA.

One of the most important youth activities of the North-South Centre is the University on Youth and Development, which is jointly organised since 2000 by the North-South Centre of the

Council of Europe, the Spanish Youth Institute, the European Youth Forum, the Spanish Youth Council and other international youth organisations. The University brings annually to the CEULAJ (Euro-Latin-American Youth Centre) in Mollina, Spain, representatives of the youth organisations and youth movements from all over the world. Its main goals are to create a political space where youth can act upon and acknowledge the role they play in Global Development; facilitate a process aimed at defining and implementing projects within the field of youth; and, generate a permanent process to discuss, train and be trained around the main issues in the global agenda. The University acts as a space and a home for Global Youth Work and for the Global Youth Movement.

Council of Europe - Directorate of Youth and Sport, Mr. Rui Gomes

The Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sports²⁷ is the organisation's administrative unit dealing with youth and youth policy matters. The Directorate has several instruments for its work and policy, including the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, the European Youth Centre in Budapest, the European Youth Foundation, a Solidarity Fund for Youth Mobility and a Partial Agreement on the Youth Card.

The youth policy of the Council of Europe is essentially defined by the Conference of Ministers for Youth, which take place in every three years and which are the occasions to review the main priorities to take into account new issues and concerns of young people and the member states of the Council of Europe. The Directorate of Youth and Sport works for youth policy development in order to promote autonomy of young people and enable them to fully participate and feel included in the society, notably by developing their competencies, through non-formal education also by associating them to the promotion of the key values of the Council of Europe such as human rights, democracy and intercultural dialogue.

Ever since the creation of the youth sector in Council of Europe in 1972, youth participation has been central to the way it is perceived and managed. Accordingly, the youth policy and the instruments for and with young people started to support the participation of young people at European level, by providing opportunities for youth organisations to meet and to be able to organise international youth meetings in the 1970s. Later other possibilities for capacity building and training were added to the agenda, especially through the trainings of multipliers and trainers. Today still the basic approach is to develop the institution's programme according to the needs and concerns of young people and secondly to define and implement the programme according to co-management model.

The youth sector of the Council of Europe operates according to a system of co-management between youth organisations and governments. Co-management means that the statutory bodies, namely the Advisory Council on Youth and European Steering Committee on Youth decide together, as Joint Council on Youth, the annual programme and priorities of the youth sector. This means a high degree of participation by youth representatives even if it can be seen as very formal, referring to a certain level and type of representation and participation.

Promoting participation and active citizenship of young people is also one of the work priorities of the Directorate of Youth and Sport and many of its activities are intended to support youth organisations and youth work in general to enable them to get more active, be more involved, feel better part of or feel more able to contribute to the society. This is enhanced through training courses and sessions; youth policy instruments such as the Revised Charter on Youth

27 www.coe.int/youth

Participation at Local Level; and manuals, which are meant to help youth leaders and youth workers to develop participation strategies at local level and also in their own organisations, such as Compass and Have Your Say!, manuals for human rights education with young people and for youth participation, respectively.

For the Agenda 2020, the blueprint of the youth policy strategy of the Council of Europe in the years to come, youth participation is both an approach to the youth work and youth policy and a work priority reflected in many activities in its annual programme.

In recent years, knowledge about youth has been progressively recognised as an essential criterion in youth policy definition in the sense that youth policy should be needs-based and evidence-based. In order to get evidence about the priorities and needs of young people, the need for and use of research is acknowledged. The Directorate of Youth and Sport promotes the idea and ideal of triangle of cooperation between research, youth policy and youth work, where the main idea is that youth policy gain efficiency if it incorporates these three dimensions. With this being the general approach, The Directorate of Youth and Sport developed, in the 1980s and 1990s, the European Network of Youth Researchers, which has been to a great extent at the origin of the work with the youth research today. It was incorporated into the Partnership with the European Commission on youth research. Nowadays, youth research is mainly carried out within the Partnership, especially through research seminars and the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy, the online centre for information on youth policy developments in the member countries. The Directorate of Youth and Sport tries to include research in many of its activities, which is not a very easy task but has started to be established in time.

The Directorate of Youth and Sport has also the task of *mainstreaming* the youth policy in the Council of Europe. In doing so, it cooperates with other sectors of the organisation, including the North-South Centre. The mainstreaming of youth issues happens mostly through activities within the work priorities of the youth sector, which are participation, human rights education, intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and youth policy development.

There is a great deal of awareness in terms of *inter-sectorial work* in the Directorate of Youth and Sport. Since the youth sector works according to co-management between governments and youth organisations, in the meetings of Joint Council it often invites other sectors and other committees on a regular basis. This inter-sectorial approach is also in place in working with different priority issues. For example, for human rights education Directorate of Youth and Sport follows the principles of non-formal education with young people through programmes such as the Human Rights Education Youth Programme. In doing so, it also cooperates, for example with the Directorate of Education or the Directorate General for Human Rights to develop policy instruments to promote human rights education with young people, corresponding to a broader range of young people across Europe. Similarly, the Directorate of Youth and Sport organises activities together with different departments such as the Directorate General of Human Rights and Commission for Human Rights and make sure that formal education takes into account the specific needs of non-formal education and youth work. Another example can be given from the field of social cohesion, where the youth sector cooperates with the Directorate of Social Cohesion and for example with the Congress of Local Authorities, in realising a project on access of young people to social rights. This makes sure that the experience and expertise of other policy areas are taken into account and to make sure that having involved in such a project those institutions get acquainted with the priorities and concerns of the youth field.

The Directorate of Youth and Sport is involved in *international and inter-organisations cooperation*, such as the one expressed by the Youth Partnership with the European Commission. Cooperation includes many other international organisations which have an interest on youth, especially when going outside Europe, with the League of Arab States, ISESCO, the Asia-Europe Foundation, the Organisation of Iber-American Youth and the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

International Planned Parenthood Federation – Arab World Region, Ms. Catherine Nemr

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IIPF) was founded in Bombay in 1952. It is a large international NGO in the field of reproductive health. It promotes the rights and access of women, men and youth to authoritative information and high quality services in reproductive health. Its span of action is based on the work of more than 149 member associations in 182 countries. The IPPF is a Consultative Member within the United Nations. The IIPF regions are South Asia Region; Arab World Region; East and South East Asia and Oceania Region; Africa Region; and European Network. The IPPF Arab World Region²⁸ (IPPF/AWR) works through a network of 13 member associations in Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Syria.

IIPF strategies, the 5A's, include Adolescents; AIDS; Access; Abortion; and, Advocacy. It has also capacity building, resource mobilisation, governance and policy, and evaluation as its supporting strategies. The cross-cutting issue for the work of IPPF is gender and rights.

IPPF Arab World Region's strategic framework focuses on HIV/AIDS, the right and access of young people to reproductive health information and services, access to contraceptives, prevention and reduction of unsafe abortion, gender and rights, and advocacy.

Its goal is to make sure that all young people are aware of their well being and are prepared to make informed decisions and choices regarding their sexual and reproductive health. Regarding youth participation, IPPF policy is geared towards fulfilling youth needs through encouraging youth participation and member associations to support young people and ensure their access to information and skills in order to participate with efficiency in their societies.

The *Youth Regional Project* on youth protection (2009-2010) aims at:

- increasing consciousness of Arab youth concerning development and civilization, reproductive health and gender issues, in order to enhance their capacities to make right decisions and choices;
- capacity building of young people on advocacy and messages;
- sensitisation of decision makers in society and governmental organisation about the importance of supporting youth programmes on sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender in Arab countries;
- reinforcing the concept of sexual and reproductive health among microcredit providers by training them on how they could enhance the conscious of beneficiary; and,
- reinforcing the concept of peace among young people through religious dialogue emphasising on the role of media religious leaders and society leaders.

28 www.ippfawr.org.

The project framework covers gender; rights; advocacy; youth participation; information and services for youth; and providing information through microcredit service providers.

The activities of the Youth Regional Project are young people and parliamentarians meeting on the occasion of ICPD +15; Regional workshop on advocacy; workshop on the concepts of culture religious dialogue and coexistence; training on microcredit for Arab Gulf trainers; launching of youth website concerning reproductive health and gender issues; regional training on reinforcing the concept of peace among young people through religious dialogue emphasising the role of media, religious leaders and society leaders; producing information, education and communication materials (videos, brochure...); and regional youth group meeting.

Achievement of the IPPF Arab World Region's member associations can be exemplified as follows: peer education programmes; counselling units; hot lines; youth friendly centres; information corners/information, education and communication material; websites; working with vulnerable groups; youth networks established; sensitisation meeting with policy makers and religious leaders; partnership with parents and teachers; training of service providers.

Some of the youth projects conducted by the Member Associations (MA) cover sexual and reproductive health and rights among visually challenged people (Tunisia MA); youth friendly centres (Egypt and Morocco MAs); improving sexual and reproductive health of displaced women and young people (Sudan MA); and regional initiative to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender in Arab World Region (All MAs, Arab World Region Organisation and five 5 Gulf States).

The next steps in the IPPF/AWR's agenda are the focus on peer education approach; to develop AWR youth website; to produce the AWR newsletter "Shababyat"; to enhance efficient and effective participation of young people; to expand youth friendly services; to reinforce partnership; to follow with the MAs to implement the activities of the youth regional project; and, to replicate success stories at regional and national levels.

The Partnership on Youth between the Council of Europe and European Commission, Mr. Hans Joachim Schild

The Youth Partnership of the European Union and the Council of Europe²⁹ celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2008. The Partnership has developed considerably in this decade:

- 1998: Training of Youth Workers and Youth Leaders
- 2003: Training, Research, Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation
- 2005: Single Framework Partnership Agreement

The management structure of the Youth Partnership covers a Partnership Secretariat, a Partnership Management Board, three Partnership Sectorial Groups (on EuroMed, Human Rights Education, Intercultural Dialogue; European Citizenship, Quality and Recognition; and Youth Research and Youth Policy) and the Partnership Consultation Meeting. The Partnership budget was 3,525 million euro (including a grant for the European Youth Campaign All Different-All Equal) for 2007-2009, and provided by the European Commission and Council of Europe on 50%-50% principle (with the exemption of the grant of the campaign). Additional resources provided from third parties also increase this budget, but are not administered by the Partnership. The Council of Europe contributes to the Partnership budget through its

²⁹ www.youth-partnership.net.

Directorate for Youth and Sport, the Directorate for Strategic Planning, and the North-South Centre in Lisbon.

Current priorities and objectives of the Youth Partnership in the period 2007-2009 are European (active) citizenship, participation; human rights education and intercultural dialogue; social cohesion, inclusion and equal opportunities; recognition, quality, visibility of youth work and training; better knowledge of youth and youth policy development; and (in 2006 and 2007) support of the youth campaign All Different – All Equal.

The *Partnership in Training* covers European citizenship education and training of trainers. The *Partnership in Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation* focuses on human rights education, citizenship, intercultural learning, training of trainers and cooperation between youth policy, youth research and youth work. The Partnership in Youth Research and Policy concerns with thematic and regional seminars and workshops, networking of researchers, development of a MA European Youth Studies, and, knowledge provision through the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP).

The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy³⁰ is an online platform providing data and information on priority themes of European youth policy. It encompasses country information, potentially for each member state of the Council of Europe, a document and expert database, a glossary of terms and good practices section and works particularly through national correspondents nominated by the Member States.

The Partnership produces manifold information and publication through T(raining)-Kits, the Coyote Magazine, seminar publications, documentations, leaflets and brochures, the Newsletter and the webportal, including EKCYP.

The future Partnership covering the period of 2010-2013 prioritises the continuation and consolidation of its objectives and activities, a concentration on key priorities, such as the EKCYP as well as the provision of new activities.

2. Working session on youth participation together with the participants of the Training Course for Youth Leaders “Youth Participation and Intercultural Dialogue for Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation”

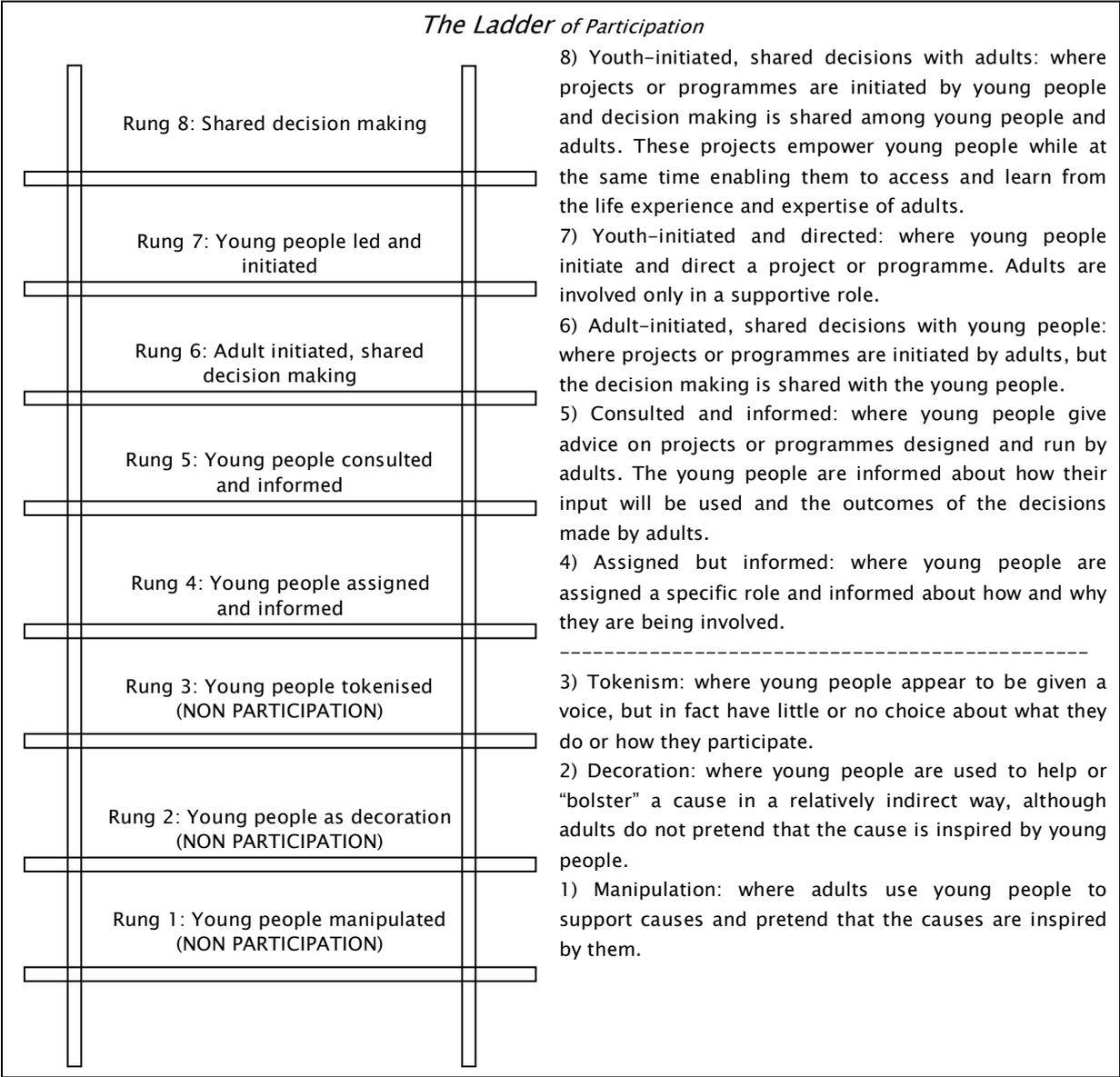
The participants of the round-table came together for a plenary working session on youth participation with the participants of the Training Course for Youth Leaders “Youth Participation and Intercultural Dialogue for Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation”, which was taking place at the same time with the round-table at European Youth Centre Budapest. The aim of this joint session was to bring together the youth NGO representatives and the representatives of the participating institutions of the round-table to provide a common ground to discuss on youth participation, an important component of youth policy development.

The session started with the presentations of small working groups training course participants, within the context of their daily programme, on the perception of youth participation in

30 <http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/index>.

accordance with the Ladder of Participation³¹ model. These presentations gave way to the start of a deeper discussion in plenary on some major questions regarding participation:

- How do we practice participation?
- Where do we stand in the Ladder of Participation?
- Where would you consider your organisation in terms of youth participation? Why?
- What challenges do we face in our organisations, regarding participation as an ideal and realities such as possibilities and limits?
- How do we manage to climb the ladder together?



31 The Ladder of Participation is a model, developed by Roger Hart, for thinking about youth participation, which can help youth workers to analyse the level of participation in youth projects. In the model, the bottom three rungs describe youth involvement that is not true participation, while the top five rungs describe true participation, where there is no hierarchy between the rungs (4-8), but it always depends on the situation. Hart, R. (1997) Children’s Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care. Earthscan, London and UNICEF, New York. This model has been based on S. Arnstein’s “ladder of citizen’s participation”, published as “A ladder of citizen’s participation”, JAIP, Vo. 35, No.4, July 1969, pp. 216-24.

The major issues discussed in the plenary can be summarised as follows:

- Opening possibilities for young people within the structure of the institutions is an important aspect of participation and those who go higher in the ladder also have the responsibility to bring lower levels up.
- Provision of enough space for participation is a shared responsibility. It is also important not to blame those who are not participating.
- In addition to the institutions dealing with youth, other key actors of youth participation are the youth organisations. There are many organisations, but while youth work can be organised, it is not always institutionalised.
- Quality of participation is an important aspect to keep in mind. The challenge is to make sure that those who participate represent a significant part of young people. A lot of young people do not participate and it is difficult for the organisations to reach those young people. Not so many young people are included in organisations. Where are the other young people? What about marginalised young people, for example, those who do not have access to internet and elite initiatives?
- “The values people are committed to when they participate” is also an important issue.
- Participation is related to the context. Participation has different meanings in different cultures. The political and social context of countries also changes the rate of participation.
- There is participation and there are realities such as limitations and possibilities for participation. Challenges regarding ensuring participation are different today. For example, in Europe there is a demographic challenge. Less people are voting and the population is getting older. Another challenge is the sustainability of participation and to take responsibility and initiative.
- There is a need for research on why people do not participate. Perceptions can be different. For example, governments may tend to create an image of active youth participation (tokenism), but the actual levels and quality of participation, for example within youth organisations, can be very low.
- Question of motivation is relevant in discussing participation. Question of passing the message is a huge responsibility of the organisations and this is often lacking.
- A right-based approach to participation is needed. Participation is a human right. It is a condition for success for youth policies. For everyone (youth organisations, researchers, governments etc.) the question is if they feel practicing participation at high level, how to bring the others at lower levels in. And it is also important to see that participation is not a static status, it sometimes moves up and down in the ladder.
- New ways of participation such as electronic participation are often accepted as an important way to overcome barriers, and they are important factors to consider.
- Optimism in evaluating one’s own organisation with high levels of participation is an interesting finding. However how does one make sure that it is not only formal representation? It should be kept in mind that the way people evaluate their work is always subjective.

3. Perspectives and Priorities for Future Cooperation

Following the presentations of the participating institutions and input from the experts, the participants were divided into three groups in order to discuss the ways in which youth policy cooperation can be continued and further developed both for youth policy at large and in a geographically broader sense. This exercise was intended to make better use of all resources at hand rather than creating new structures and to improve efficiency of youth policy cooperation for each participating institution.

Also taking into account the issues and points raised throughout the opening speeches and presentations of the institutions, the working group discussions focused on three major questions:

- What could be the medium-term aims for youth policy cooperation, for the following two or three years?
- What could be the key issues and activities for young people and youth policy within such a cooperation scheme?
- In a practical way, what roles do the representatives of the institutions of the youth policy cooperation foresee for their own and other institutions, and what can be suggested as such a role?

Discussion in Working Group 1

A number of needs in approaching the youth policy were considered:

- The need to move to a rights-based approach in youth policy, rather than a problem solving approach, in order to identify common standards and empower young people, which goes hand-in-hand with continuous support through trainings, research etc. This implies a paradigm shift where young person is seen as a right-holder and facilitates setting standards and defining where the responsibilities lay to achieve the rights. Such an approach also includes the recent trend in Europe of looking at young people as a resource rather than as a problem. An important issue is how to transfer this approach, in which youth policy is based on human rights, to the member states of the international organisations;
- The need to develop synergies between different efforts towards youth policy development of different institutions in order to create a bigger impact;
- The need to identify already existing knowledge and research about young people. There are scattered surveys, statistics etc. but they are not sufficient in number and they are often indicative samples. Some knowledge exists but they are often culturally determined or politically controlled, which creates a deficit of information on many subjects. The collected information is often incomparable, so there should also be some statistical modelling, for example by year of age, which also facilitates comparability. This need refers to creating opportunities to share and produce knowledge, which also leaves cultural determinants out of the content.

Regarding the role of partner institutions in the youth policy cooperation, the working group proposed that the institutions involved in youth policy cooperation should be involved in a mapping exercise, in which several questions such as who does what, with what resources etc. could be identified. A division of tasks between different institutions in terms of producing knowledge, data and information on youth is also proposed. This also necessitates information sharing and more networking among various institutions such as the UN agencies; Euro-Med Youth Platform etc. In addition, the institutions can also be involved in monitoring youth policies in their member states. Policy reviews or peer reviews similar to those initiated by the Council of Europe could also be adopted by other organisations such as the League of Arab States. This issue also refers to the identification of a common ground and common standards.

Discussion in Working Group 2

Preliminary considerations of this working group were as following:

- This kind of activities and meetings are good ways of sharing information and knowing each other but remain rather informative.

- The next steps of the youth policy cooperation should be starting to move from knowing each other towards identifying common causes and purposes to serve, without interfering each other's agenda.
- Considering the fact that there is a long period between the first round-table and the second, there is a need to build a memory of the youth policy cooperation and this round-table, so that the process builds upon the output of each meeting rather than starting all over again.
- The institutions involved in the youth policy cooperation can mutually invite other institutions to their own activities relevant to the aims of this cooperation.
- Combining the series of round-tables with some other activities would be useful in creating synergies between meetings and activities of different institutions.

The working group also proposed some concrete action:

- In order to contribute in memory building, a simple mapping of youth policy actors in the Euro-Mediterranean youth field would be very useful. The Euro-Med Youth Platform and SALTO Euro-Med were suggested as the institutions that can take the responsibility of such a study.
- Write articles about the institutions' activities in the Partnership newsletter was suggested as a way of contributing to build the common memory.
- The organisation of a seminar or workshop on the use of information technology for youth participation was suggested as an important future topic and activity.
- The Youth Partnership was suggested to organise a training course for people involved in the youth policy cooperation including civil servants and youth workers.
- Next round-table was proposed to be attached to the Euro-Med meeting, with the help of SALTO Euro-Med.
- IPPF/AWR proposed to collaborate with the League of Arab States for the next youth forum in which a large number of Arab youth is expected to participate. IPPF/AWR also suggested involving European youth in that event to advocate for youth participation.
- The need to enlarge the circle of stakeholders towards decision-makers, inter-parliamentarians or intergovernmental involvement was underlined.
- Having the round-table was seen as an important component of the cooperation. If it is not realistic to organise it every year, an 18-month period between the round-tables was suggested to be manageable in order to meet and ensure the continuity of the youth policy cooperation.

Discussion in Working Group 3

Key issues and activities of the discussion in this working group were focused on youth participation; youth policy development; information and communication technologies and youth participation; and the knowledge gap, that is, the shortage of information and knowledge about youth issues. The working group discussed how the knowledge gap could be filled in. The organisation of training courses for capacity building and for multipliers; providing incentives; and realising projects were suggested as the means of supporting the youth policy development and cooperation.

The working group suggested conducting a survey on stereotypes as a framework for further work. Regular meetings for youth policy cooperation once in a year were also seen as an important part of action. Development of further cooperation between the partners, especially between the League of Arab States, United Nations, Council of Europe and the European Union, was underlined. Having a coordinating body (the League of Arab States or the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe) for meetings and facilitate communication was seen crucial. As ways of sharing and exchanging information and communication, the working

group suggested to use the websites of EuroMed Youth Platform and Youth Partnership to post information and updates in the youth policy cooperation; and to establish an e-communication forum.

The working group envisaged two levels of a partnership: Partnership between decision-makers and youth NGO representatives (CDEJ, European Youth Forum, National Youth Councils, Arab Youth Forum, Executive Secretary of Arab Youth Ministers...), where the focus was suggested to be on how to organise dialogue between young people and decision-makers. In addition a thematic seminar could be used as a tool before the round-table meetings, where “dialogue” or “open network meetings” could be among the themes.

Outputs of the plenary discussion; input for future cooperation

After exchanging ideas, needs and proposals for future action of each working group in the plenary, the participants collectively agreed upon the following steps as concrete action for future cooperation. Those concrete outputs of the round-table also reflect a commonality of needs and proposals for future activities of all working groups.

- ⇒ One training course on the use of information and communication technology will be organised (Youth Partnership).
- ⇒ One training course on youth policy cooperation, based on the 50%-50% model, will be organised (Youth Partnership).
- ⇒ The third round-table has been decided to be organised towards the end of 2010 in a non-European country, maybe Morocco or Tunisia, following an expert meeting to take place before the round-table.
- ⇒ A mapping study will be conducted about the international youth policy actors in the Euro-Mediterranean region, with a special focus on the Mediterranean countries, which would be based on the common fields of action and specificities for reflection in the future. SALTO-Youth EuroMed has undertaken the responsibility of conducting the study within its 2010 work plan. League of Arab States has assumed the task of translating it into Arabic. The publication of the study will also be taken into the agenda of the Partnership group.
- ⇒ The Youth Partnership will continue with the model of cooperation in which it assumes the role of coordination and of being open and flexible to participation of the other partners of the cooperation where the ownership is shared. In this regard, the Partnership has undertaken the responsibility of making the relevant information available; and involving youth policy makers, youth workers and representatives in the cooperation process.
- ⇒ The participants of the round-table have also decided to contribute to each others work whenever it is possible and in line with the aims and objectives of the youth policy cooperation.

Issues for Further Reflection

Throughout the round-table, a number of issues have been raised and discussed in order for achieving better success of the youth policy cooperation in the future.

An important issue was to reassure that in spite of the prolonged break in between two round-tables, the intention for youth policy cooperation has not weakened. All the participating institutions believe in the need to cooperate in this field and are ready to pool their resources and

competences for further cooperation. It is seen natural that the main partners (the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission and the League of Arab States) take the responsibility to ensure the sustainability of the cooperation as well as to provide communication channels for all actual and potential partners of the cooperation.

Another issue for a better success of the youth policy cooperation for the broader Euro-Mediterranean context has been the sustainability and continuity of partners and the partnerships. Besides the main partners of the cooperation scheme, other partners have inevitably been changing from activity to activity and this process depends on the ownership of the results. For example, the active partners of the previous activities such as the Swedish Institute of Alexandria and the Swedish Youth Board were not present at this round-table. More active involvement of other important stakeholders such as the European Commission and various UN agencies would enrich the variety of concrete outputs and enlarge the future impact of this round-table. From the experience of the previous activities of the youth policy cooperation and the composition of the participants of the round-table, the lessons could be taken to develop the cooperation further in the future.

Also in relation to the issue of partners, the need to explore and increase the possibilities for further cooperation with other organisations working on youth issues and youth policy development has been brought into attention. An important example of those organisations is the Alliance of Civilizations. Throughout the round-table various efforts of this initiative has been mentioned. Similarly, the impact of the foundation of the Union for Mediterranean on the youth policy cooperation has also been discussed. It is also important to note for the future of this cooperation that there is an increasing intention to enlarge the group of stakeholders in a way to include the decision-makers of youth policy from the national level. Such an enlargement would not only extend the areas of work, widen the target group of the cooperation and enrich the type of activities through increased possibilities for financing, but also would help avoiding repetitions and inefficient use of human and material resources in the future.

Another important issue throughout the round-table has been in relation to the meaning and definition of a “Euro-Mediterranean context”. Depending on the realm of the institution in question, the participants have tended to define it in various ways such as covering the countries in the framework of the Barcelona process; as a group of Arab countries; as a region excluding some countries such as Turkey or Israel for various reasons. In that sense, definition of the context in a “broader” sense has ensured the inclusion of wider variety of countries, which often refers to overlapping circle of countries in geographical and political terms. Adopting a broader approach to the Euro-Mediterranean context for the youth policy cooperation has also ensured the involvement of institutions with varying range of competencies and responsibilities towards their members in a safer and accountable manner in line with their own priorities and objectives.

Last but not the least, difficulties in relation to practicalities at different stages of the youth policy have been voiced as a factor negatively affecting the implementation of the cooperation scheme. Aside from uncertainties such as change of venue or dates of the meetings, a visible request of the participating institutions has been a more efficient in-advance planning. This particularly refers to the quest of receiving relevant information and invitations some reasonable time before the activities in order to ensure participation in the meeting and prior budget allocations.

Appendix 1.

AGENDA

Wednesday, 22 April 2009

09:30 Round of introduction of the participants and the organisations represented

09:45 Opening of the round table, by:

Mr. Khaled Louhichi, Director of Population Policy and Migration Department, League of Arab States

Mr. Hans-Joachim Schild, Coordinator of the Partnership on Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission

10:15 Introduction to the background, aims and objectives of the meeting, by:

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

10:30 Presentation of the conclusions of the Survey on the evaluation and follow-up of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Policy activities, organised in the framework of the Youth Partnership, by Mr. Ayman Abdul Majeed

11:00 Principles and objectives of the youth policy in the Council of Europe and in the Youth Partnership, by Ms. Miriam Teuma

11:30 *Break*

12:00 Exchange of views on existing projects and programmes relating to youth policy development in the Euro-Mediterranean framework (each organisation represented will have 15 minutes to present an outline of their objectives and projects relating to youth policy)

- League of Arab States, Mr. Haythem Kamel
- Anna Lindh Foundation, Ms. Vera Cerbara
- Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Ms. Inas Abdelatif
- Salto Euromed Resource Centre, Mr. Bernard Abrignani

13.00 *Lunch*

14:30 Exchange continued with:

- Euro-Med Youth Platform, Ms. Amanda Zammit
- European Youth Forum, Mr. Giuseppe Porcaro
- Council of Europe:
The North-South Centre, Mr. Marcos Andrade
Directorate of Youth and Sport, Mr. Rui Gomes
- International Planned Parenthood Federation - AWR, Ms. Catherine Nemr
- Youth Partnership of European Union and Council of Europe, Mr. Hans-Joachim Schild
- UNFPA, Mr. Robert Thomson

16:30 Break

17:00 Working session on youth participation together with the participants of the Training Course for Youth Leaders “Youth Participation and Intercultural Dialogue for Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation”

19:30 Dinner and boat trip on Danube together with the participants of the Training Course for Youth Leaders “Youth Participation and Intercultural Dialogue for Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation”

Thursday, 23 April 2009

09:30 Opening of the day

09:45 Youth Policy studies in the Euro-Mediterranean Partner Countries within the Youth Programme framework, by Mr. Bernard Abrignani

10:15 Youth Policy in the European Union, Mr. Hans-Joachim Schild

10:30 Working groups on the perspectives and priorities for future cooperation

11:00 Break

12:00 Reports from the working groups & priorities and approaches for follow-up

13:00 Conclusions by the chair

13:15 Closing of the meeting

Appendix 2.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Organisation
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