



## Dialogue and co-analysis among the youth researchers across the Mediterranean need to be more systematically utilised in knowledge-based youth policy

Youth houses and youth centres are important facilities for better youth inclusion as well as youth-led activities and initiatives. These spaces also have important roles towards employment as the EU-funded SAHWA research project of 15 research organizations explains. One aim of the project is to strengthen the dialogue and co-research between youth researchers across Mediterranean, and from there contributing better towards youth policy of the European Union's Euro-Mediterranean co-operation, European youth policy, and youth policy processes in North Africa.

"The cross-border dialogue has been crucial in our working method, allowing us to reach out to differences and similarities. Particularly on this current era, having fruitful dialogues between the researchers from the global north and south is a necessity," underlines Finnish Youth Research Network's research team leader **Sofia Laine**. "Similar to Finland, youth political participation in Southern Mediterranean is low. In 2011, in connection with the popular uprisings, our media reported crowds of young protesters who had taken the streets. The recently published SAHWA Project Policy Report shows that young people in the Arab Mediterranean countries are no longer interested in politics. The main problems for them are the economic situations of their country and the difficulty of finding a proper job. The youth have lost their faith in variety of institutions," Laine adds. "Youth face many challenges in their transitions to adulthood, including finding employment and getting married. These challenges have been seen as elements of youth discontent during the 2011 uprisings, and for the most part they have not withered away", explains post-doctoral researcher **Henri Onodera** from the University of Helsinki. He is one of the key-note lecturers in the Annual Conference on Youth Studies.

There are more young people than ever before in the world. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) there are 1.8 billion young people aged 10 to 24 years, and the figure is expected to reach 2 billion by 2050. Approximately 85 per cent of young people live in the developing countries in the Global South. The XV Annual Conference on Youth Studies focuses on young people's global movements, particularly as a youth policy issue related to the current situation of young asylum seekers in Europe and the uneven life opportunities for youth in crisis-affected regions. Addressing youth narratives in different geographical contexts, the conference highlights the global responsibility in youth research.

## Youth unemployment a big challenge for young people in North Africa

"In particular, youth unemployment is a huge challenge in North Africa. For example, in Morocco youth marginalisation can be explained by young people's lack of confidence in institutions such as education and employment policies. At the same time, it is important to recognise the role of virtual and alternative spaces of youth practices to offer them new opportunities", says Professor **Fadma Ait Mous** from University of Casablanca. She is one of the keynote speakers at the Annual Conference of Youth Studies and a member in the SAHWA Project. In her speech in Helsinki, she focuses on Moroccan youth unemployment, youth policy and young people's diverse employment strategies. Her research on the Moroccan young people reveals youth marginalisation on the structural level. This significantly limits Moroccan youth, who strive toward individual



autonomy, to participate in political, social, and economic lives. "Education in the Arab world has been inadequate with no improvements in the past five decades. However, the key element for any change or positive development in economy or politics is education, which should be first developed", explains **Basma Serag**, researcher from the American University in Cairo and a member of the SAHWA Project Community. Her paper in the conference tackles the education reform in the Arab world.

### A documentary about young people's everyday life

The Annual Conference of Youth Studies in Helsinki 7–8 November 2016 also shows a documentary film titled *Khamsa* ("Five") from the SAHWA Project. The film tells the stories of five young people coming from five southern and eastern Mediterranean cities. The film has been directed by the journalist and documentary filmmaker **Marc Almadóvar** but the footage is young people's. The documentary film as well as all the other research reports are open access.

### Further information:

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- Finnish Youth Research Network (FYRN) researcher group's policy report "*Towards more inclusive youth political engagement in Arab-Mediterranean countries*" can be downloaded in its entirety here: <http://bit.ly/2fxTjrA> and an extension of one of the statistical tables from the report can be found here: <http://www.youthresearch.fi/images/hankkeet/sahwa/press-release-biggest-problem.jpg>
- SAHWA project website: [www.sahwa.eu](http://www.sahwa.eu)
- All the SAHWA project publications can be found collectively from the FYRN's site: [http://www.youthresearch.fi/images/hankkeet/sahwa/publication\\_links.pdf](http://www.youthresearch.fi/images/hankkeet/sahwa/publication_links.pdf)
- Documentary film, a press pack as well as images for a press use: <http://www.sahwa.eu/EVENTS/SAHWA-events/SAHWA-Documentary-is-available-online>
- The Annual Conference of Youth Studies, Helsinki 7–8 November 2016: <http://www.youthresearch.fi/research/the-annual-conference-of-youth-studies/programme>

Professor Fadma Ait Mous and post-doctoral researcher Henri Onodera will give their key note lectures at the Annual Conference of Youth Studies on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> of December at 13:30-15:30. Their key notes will be streamed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lu3czZoFdvY>

Ait Mous and Onodera as well as Sofia Laine and Basma Serag are available for the press and interviews right after the keynote lectures at the same seminar hall (University of Helsinki, Main building, Small hall 4050).

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