



Interregional seminar for youth research experts

Salé, Morocco, 8-10 April 2013

Report

Final Draft

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May 2013

Strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Neighbourhood

Funded
by the European Union



EUROPEAN UNION



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

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1. Executive summary

The interregional seminar for youth research experts took place in the city of Salé, Morocco, and was carried out in the context of the **South Programme**, funded by the European Union and implemented by the Council of Europe, to strengthen democratic reform in the Southern Neighbourhood. The Programme was launched in 2012, in the aftermath of the **Arab Spring**, building on a number of existing efforts for dialogue and cooperation across the Mediterranean Sea. The purpose of the seminar was to contribute to the promotion of democratic governance and participation in the specific area of youth cooperation, by bringing together experts from both European and Arab countries. More specifically, the seminar aimed at:

- initiating a dialogue among youth researchers from European and Maghreb countries;
- exchanging information and ideas about projects and approaches on research about young people, in particular those dealing with autonomy and participation of young people;
- making proposals concerning the role of youth research in promoting democratic citizenship of young people;
- setting up the basis for further cooperation among youth researchers from all sides of the Mediterranean, leading to a better recognition of the role of youth research in interregional youth (and research) cooperation;
- and at supporting the development of youth policies and programmes based on evidence and the needs of young people.

In accordance with these objectives, the need for a **holistic approach** to the development of youth was reaffirmed throughout the seminar. Young people are thus perceived as a valuable resource and as partners in shaping the future. This implies the need for researchers, decision-makers and other actors to establish a dialogue with youth, as young people should not be educated in a patronizing way but rather equipped with the right skills to autonomously make good choices for themselves, as well as for society. In addition, for a dialogue to be fruitful, youth should not be seen as a monolithic entity, but as a multitude of individuals with different needs and different views. Accordingly, the individual, who has both a desire for autonomy and a need for affiliation, should be at the centre of attention when youth participation, as well as the development of youth policies, is discussed. Such principles were further illustrated through the presentations held during the seminar, mostly in reference to civic engagement and political participation, but also relating to youth sexuality.

Concerning the state of play and the status of youth research in the two regions, it was stated that a solid basis for research activities had been established in both European and Arab countries. However, the necessity for a proper evidence base regarding youth, and therefore the importance of research, would still need to be better explained to decision-makers on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. To that effect, participants of the seminar found it desirable to see the involvement of public actors in national, international and interregional knowledge exchange increase. In the short run, though, the establishment of stronger links between youth research and youth practice (youth organizations and other NGOs), along with the intensification of **international and interregional knowledge transfer**, was considered a priority, in particular with regard to the Southern Mediterranean. More or less institutionalized **links between research and practice** would enable youth researchers to build a solid evidence base on the reality of youth.

In return, by giving them a proper access to existing information, such an alliance would strengthen young people's position within society.

In view of future activities in the framework of Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation, the following **tangible solutions** were proposed:

- The creation of a **Pool of Arab Youth Researchers** would allow for a sustainable knowledge exchange between different actors in the Maghreb countries, without necessarily setting up new institutional structures. Furthermore, the existence of a European counterpart of this body – the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR) – was deemed to favour a rather flexible way of research cooperation on the international and interregional level.
- Similarly, the building up of a **network of national youth correspondents** in North African countries was considered a good way of managing and disseminating knowledge between the relevant actors in the youth field, regardless of national borders.

The seminar participants also discussed some additional issues linked to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation that could be further developed:

- The idea of Europe and the Southern Mediterranean as closed regions with completely different interests – although widespread – was contradicted during the seminar. As **important similarities** between the Maghreb on the one hand and Eastern or Southern Europe on the other hand were identified, **joint research projects**, namely in the fields of democratic youth participation, youth employment or social inclusion, were considered a precious occasion to foster mutual understanding between the regions.
- With regard to the promotion of equality of all citizens in both regions, the Council of Europe's **No Hate Speech Campaign** was mentioned as a possible basis for cooperation. However, it was emphasized that the aim of this activity is not to limit freedom of expression but rather to raise awareness for human dignity.

As for the immediate future, it was proposed to further deepen these and other recommendations rather soon: Given that a series of meetings will be held in **July 2013 in Tunis** – within the framework of the **Euro-Mediterranean University** – the seminar participants agreed that the preparatory group should attempt to extend the purpose of the event.

2. About the seminar

The interregional seminar for youth research experts took place from 8-10 April 2013, in the premises of the Association Amal Salé. The city of Salé is located on the right bank of the river Bou Regreg, opposite the Moroccan capital Rabat. A training course on democratic youth participation was carried out along with the seminar, with the opening session and several items of the agenda bringing the participants of both events together.

2.1. Background of the seminar in the Euro-Mediterranean context

Since the beginning of the new millennium, both the **Council of Europe** and the **European Commission** have been committed to increasing dialogue and cooperation across the Mediterranean Sea. Their activities have been based on the conviction that the promotion of peace, cooperation and human rights within Europe cannot be disconnected from the situation in neighbouring countries. For this purpose, the two institutions agreed to develop a framework of Euro-Mediterranean projects, namely in the fields of human rights education, intercultural dialogue, and youth policy cooperation¹.

The **Arab Spring** revealed the full relevance of such efforts. In January 2012, a three year programme entitled "Strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Neighbourhood" (**South Programme**) was launched in order to strengthen the respect of human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Southern Mediterranean countries. The programme is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Council of Europe, following a demand driven and targeted approach². Within the specific area of youth cooperation, the activities carried out by the **Youth Department** of the Council of Europe aim at promoting democratic governance and participation in and through youth policies in the Maghreb countries. Both the interregional youth research seminar and the training course on democratic youth participation were carried out in this context.

2.2. Objectives of the seminar

The purpose of the research seminar was to achieve a better understanding and knowledge about youth in Europe and in the Arab region, and about its role as a resource for developing societies based on democracy and human rights. The seminar aimed at bringing together European and Arab experts in youth research in view of initiating an exchange of experiences and approaches that support the implementation of youth policies based on the needs and on the participation of young people.

More specifically, the seminar programme expressed the following objectives:

- To initiate a dialogue among youth researchers from European and Maghreb countries
- To exchange information and ideas about projects and approaches on research about young people, in particular those dealing with autonomy and participation of young people

¹ EU-CoE Youth Partnership: <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/euromed/index>

² South Programme: <http://south-programme-eu.coe.int/>

- To make proposals concerning the role of youth research in promoting democratic citizenship of young people
- To set up the basis for further cooperation among youth researchers from all sides of the Mediterranean, leading to a better recognition of the role of youth research in interregional youth (and research) cooperation
- To support the development of youth policies and programmes based on evidence and the needs of young people

2.3. Institutions and organizations involved

As both the research seminar and the training course could only be carried out thanks to the cooperation with a number of institutional and non-governmental partners, the official opening session was held with the active participation of their representatives.

Participants were first welcomed by **Youssef Chfoui**, president of the **Association Amal Salé**, an independent and locally enrooted organization that has overseen a number of projects and services for the benefit of young people – namely in the fields of education, social inclusion, leisure and civic engagement. To achieve its aims the association is closely collaborating with both public authorities and non-governmental partners³.

The lion's share of the organizational and logistical tasks in connection with the two events was taken care of by the staff of the **Centre for Cross-Cultural Learning (CCCL)**. The CCCL is a private cultural institution founded and directed by Moroccan academics with many years of experience in cross-cultural education⁴. Academic director and co-founder **Abdelhay Moudden** pointed out the long history of international cooperation promoted by the Centre, thanks to which different kinds of researchers and civil society practitioners have been enabled to exchange their views and learn from each other.

Phinith Chanthalangsy addressed the question of youth participation on behalf of the **UNESCO** multi-country office in Rabat (responsible for Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia). As for the role of young people with regard to politics and civic engagement he provided an historical overview identifying three main stages of participation:

1. The 1960s and 1970s were clearly dominated by the clash of great ideologies. This often resulted in a highly politicized nature of youth participation, as young people were strongly involved in the debates of the time.
2. The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 made way for a global triumph of liberalism, which resulted in a widespread “disenchantment” of politics that also affected young people and their ways of participation.
3. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the global post-Cold War consensus has again been challenged. Accordingly, young people have been in search for new models of participation, as well as for a new role for themselves within society.

It is in the third stage where the work of UNESCO becomes crucial.

³ Association Amal Salé: <http://www.amalsale.org/>

⁴ CCCL: <http://www.cccl.ma>

The corresponding projects aim at meeting young people's willingness for participation by providing them with the necessary tools, namely the knowledge about the political system of one's own country and the intellectual skills to contribute to its development. Many of these efforts are made through schools, by elaborating appropriate schemes of civic education⁵. However, in order to increase their reach, such tools should be available to all youth, even outside the system of formal education. In this context, a manual on democracy for Tunisian youth⁶, published in 2011, is an instructive example.

The content and the development of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, as summarized before, were presented by **Giovanni-Battista Celiento** (coordinator of the Council of Europe's South Programme), **Mehdi Remeli** (for the Council of Europe's office in Rabat) and **Mohammed Bouguidou** (for the Delegation of the European Union to Morocco).

Despite not being particularly visible during the opening session, the following institutions also played a vital role in the preparation of the interregional seminar: the **Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR)**, the **National Youth Observatory of Tunisia** and the Sociology Department of the **University Mohammed V** in Rabat.

Common to all the above mentioned institutions and organizations is a rather **holistic approach** to the development of young people. According to their statements, they all perceive youth as a valuable resource to shape the future. Therefore they emphasize the need to equip young people with the right skills to autonomously make good choices for their own lives, as well as for society. The recognition of this approach is – on both sides of the Mediterranean – not necessarily a matter of course. Even in Europe, as **Rui Gomes** reminded the participants of both events, many instruments of youth participation have only been broadly accepted in the recent past.

⁵ Éducation à la citoyenneté.

⁶ Manuel d'apprentissage de la démocratie pour les jeunes en Tunisie:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002152/215297f.pdf>

3. The state of young people in the two regions

After the presentation of the individual participants, the seminar was divided into four working groups to discuss the *state of play* and the *status of youth research* in both European and Arab countries. Discussions within the groups were held in English (second group) or French, and topics were addressed rather autonomously, with a minimum of instructions from the preparatory group. Accordingly, each group chose some questions to focus on:

1. The first group (concentrating on the situation in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) considered youth research in the Southern Mediterranean to be in rather good shape, but given the *absence of intersectoriality* and a lack of interest in research findings, it is difficult for researchers to contribute to actual decision-making. With regard to youth participation they mentioned a specifically Tunisian *distinction between civic and political engagement* of young people, which should be kept in mind for international and interregional discussions to be fruitful.
2. The second group clearly focused on Libya, where the entire youth field – no different from society as a whole – has undergone deep changes after the fall of Ghaddafi. Future developments are very difficult to predict. However, the group was rather optimistic with regard to youth research, given that researchers are now able to exchange know-how internationally and to receive outside funding. As for the active participation of young people the group made the following recommendation: The youth community needs to organize itself in order to be able to address authorities and declare what young people need and, which may be important as well, what they don't need.
3. The third group developed a discussion about how youth is perceived in North African countries. Decision-makers often concentrate on harmful behaviour in young people. Even with regard to youth participation the prevention of – among other things – political or religious extremism, risky sexual behaviour and drug use appears to dominate the discourse. Prevention and protection usually rely on information and education. However, youth seems to be perceived as *a threat rather than a resource*, which would not correspond to a holistic approach.
4. Finally, the fourth group identified some important *similarities between the Maghreb and Eastern Europe*, despite their completely different geographical, historical and cultural contexts. In both regions young people's enthusiasm for participation clashes with a certain disappointment about policy realities, namely a number of institutional failures and a widespread disregard for their concerns. Accordingly, activism through social media does not necessarily lead to social inclusion and democratic participation. As for the status of youth research, the group observed a considerable reluctance of authorities and investors in both regions to support research projects.

In conclusion of this general and rather spontaneous introduction, provided by the seminar participants, it could be stated that a solid basis for youth research had been established in both European and Arab countries. However, the necessity for a proper evidence base regarding youth, and therefore the importance of research, would still need to be better explained to decision-makers on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea.

In the afternoon, the present situation of youth in the two regions was analyzed more deeply, as two outstanding youth research experts shared their knowledge, including their latest findings, with the participants of the seminar.

As for the Southern Mediterranean, **Abdessamad Dialmy** presented a comprehensive account of **the sexuality of young people** in Morocco. In addition to his work at the **University Mohammed V** in Rabat, Professor Dialmy is a member of several scientific networks across the globe and serves as an expert consultant for international organizations. He has published extensively on gender, sexuality, women, health and Islam in Arabic, French and English.

In Morocco, the current state of youth research with regard to sexuality seems to be somewhat fragmentary: Studies on sexuality are rare and often tend to neglect or even omit important questions, such as desire and enjoyment. Sexuality is approached only as a threat - through unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Comparability between studies is hindered by differences in methodology, sample sizes and other factors. Despite these shortcomings, Dialmy was able to portray the most important characteristics of youth sexuality in his country. Although forbidden both by religious taboos and by the law, sexual relations before marriage appear to be rather common in Moroccan youth. These relations were described as often being risky, given that many Moroccans become sexually active at a very young age without having the necessary knowledge to protect themselves from STIs or unwanted pregnancy. Such problems are further increased by sex with changing partners, sexual violence and a relatively important role of prostitution. Aware of the characteristics and the risks of youth sexuality, Moroccan society has come to a consensus that prevention and sexual education must be recognized as a public necessity. However, Dialmy characterized these joint efforts as an **amputated sexual education**: Sex education is dominantly limited to the propagation of sexual abstinence before marriage. The ministry of health and some national NGOs do provide more practice-oriented assistance in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies and the spread of STIs through the free distribution of contraceptives and condoms. But the erotic dimension of sexuality of young people usually remains obscured and is neither treated by education nor by health services; with the result that many young people rely on pornography to close this gap.

Based on these findings, and in accordance with the concept of sexual citizenship, Dialmy formulated the following recommendations on how to deal with the sexuality of young people in the future:

- Sexual norms need to be adapted to the modern context. As virginity and abstinence traditionally had the purpose of preventing births out of wedlock and preserve the stability of family structures, the availability of modern means of contraception should make the legalization of premarital sex⁷ possible.
- Sexual education needs to be completed by integrating the dimension of sexual pleasure as a human right, thus overcoming the **negative and purely problem-centered approach** to prevention. In addition, sexual education should support the battle against discrimination, in particular against sexism and homophobia.

Erik Amnå acquainted the seminar participants with an example from Europe by sharing his findings with regard to **youth civic engagement and political participation** in Scandinavia. Amnå is the coordinator of the research programme Youth & Society (YeS) at **Örebro University**.

⁷ Cancellation of Article 490 of the Moroccan penal code.

In addition, he is active as a member of several scientific boards and committees both in Sweden and on the international level – for example the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR).

Amnå highlighted that the Scandinavian situation is not typical for the region as a whole. More than the rest of Europe, Scandinavian countries have a long (and strong) history of civic education, as well as of the promotion of children's rights and gender equality. Having publicly funded youth branches of different political parties may also seem peculiar to some non-Scandinavians. However, with regard to participation important youth-led changes have taken place:

- Away from old, hierarchical organizations into younger, more ad hoc and project based activities (organizational move)
- Away from traditionally and collectively shared values into values of independence and rational-secular values (attitudinal move)
- Away from traditionally defined duties into self-actualizing activities (motivational move)

On the one hand, these changes represent successful steps towards individual autonomy. On the other hand, the representative democratic institutions, based on stable collective identities, face a major challenge in meeting recent developments. Different interpretations of the phenomenon lead to contrasting perceptions of young people: with one perspective portraying the contemporary youth as civically passive (demonizing view) and the opposite one stressing the abundance of alternative forms of youth engagement (romanticizing view). Amnå dismissed either view, as both portray youth as a monolithic entity, placing them at one end of the **passive-active continuum**, and thereby losing sight of the possible diversity in-between. Based on Amnå's latest studies on Sweden, the currently held assumptions about youth civic engagement⁸ need to be revised, as results show instead that young people are characterized by **diversity, latency and change**. In conclusion of the presentation, the following policy implications were formulated:

- Contemporary youths expect to being treated as knowledgeable citizens of today, not as the still premature citizens of tomorrow.
- A society unable in responding to the challenges of the future in a way that nurture a reliable hope does not get access to the youths' commitment or engagement.
- Offering young people opportunities to participate without a readiness to share the power is not a trustworthy way of involvement.
- Look upon youths as **agents of their own development** of civic engagement!

Although the two presentations – on first thought – seemed to cover rather distant areas, the subsequent discussion would soon shed light on the shared values both researchers intended to advocate. In either case the individual, who has both a desire for autonomy and a need for affiliation, is at the centre of attention. Decision-makers who accept this notion must be ready to share their power in order to give way to more decentralized, organic and often more authentic forms of participation. In **Dialmy's** concept of **sexual citizenship** youth sexuality is not to be approached exclusively through public interest, such as prevention of STIs and unintended pregnancies. Society should rather build on young people's desire for intimacy and intensity, which implies a need for interdependency and – in the ideal case – affection and responsibility towards other individuals.

⁸ Youth civic engagement is described as being 1) monolithic 2) manifest and 3) stable.

Outward orientations, feelings, knowledge and activities – in other words: caring for others outside one's own family – are also what civic engagement in general is about. **Amnå**, however, reminded the participants that this is not good *per se*, as destructive and even dangerous causes such as violent extremism⁹ are sometimes able to fulfill the same criteria. As for political participation, he pointed out that in a democratic society it should also be possible not to participate, and that (temporary or permanent) passivity is not necessarily a negative sign, unless the youths in question are disillusioned by structural disadvantages¹⁰.

⁹ In theory, Anders Behring Breivik, the perpetrator of the mass shooting of Utøya, Norway, could be portrayed as civically active.

¹⁰ e.g. in the Scandinavian case due to increasing inequality among youths: youth unemployment, high number of dropouts from school, xenophobia and "institutionalized racism"

4. Democratic youth participation: concepts, realities and challenges

The content for the second day of the seminar was mainly provided by the Southern Mediterranean participants, as five youth researchers from Morocco and Tunisia agreed to further deepen the subject of youth participation in their countries. Their contributions consisted in presenting a relevant research project each, treating different questions but all concerned with the problems, the attitudes and the hopes of young people in Northern Africa, as well as with the future of young people's civic engagement and democratic participation in the region.

An overview about *young Moroccans and the challenges of political and associative life* was provided by **Mokhtar El Harras**, professor of sociology at the **University Mohammed V** in Rabat. El Harras has conducted a number of studies on the development of Moroccan families, with special attention to women and youth; he is also responsible for several master and doctorate courses in this field.

After highlighting some relevant figures about the economic and social situation of young people in Morocco¹¹, based on a 2011 HCP¹² survey, El Harras described the history of civil society activities in his country:

1. He defined the 1960s and 1970s as a phase of repression, with public authorities trying to prevent any independent civic activity.
2. The 1980s were characterized as a phase of competition, as NGOs were entitled to their activities but faced the rivalry of similar organizations controlled by the state¹³.
3. Finally, since the 1990s, the state has fully accepted civil society activities but has also attempted to assimilate them, which was said to pose a dilemma for NGOs, especially those working internationally.

Based on these developments, El Harras identified civil society emergence in Morocco as a result of both top-down supply and demand from below. He illustrated this mechanism with regard to the recent constitutional reforms in the country: A high interest in politics among certain young people, combined with negative attitudes towards the existing political life, could be translated into positive pressure (civic activity and peaceful protest) from below that finally led to important change from above. However, El Harras reminded the participants that political knowledge in Moroccan youth, as well as dialogue between authorities and young people, is still rather limited. He expressed the need to improve this situation, also in view of the elaboration of an appropriate and comprehensive youth policy.

A more detailed account on *the political participation of young people* in Morocco was presented by **Hanane Zaïrig**, doctoral candidate at the **University Mohammed V**. In the Maghreb countries, young people would have a particularly high potential to influence politics, given their high share in the population.

¹¹ In Morocco, youth is defined as the age group between 18 and 44, on the basis of a higher life expectancy.

¹² Haut-Commissariat au Plan du Royaume du Maroc

¹³ The „Associations of rivers and mountains“

As opposed to that, Zaïrig described the political participation of youth as rather poor: Membership in political parties or interest groups, as well as participation in elections, is low and has even dropped considerably in the last decades. Among the factors that undermined young people's trust towards political parties and institutions she mentioned the absence of a dialogue between decision-makers and youth, a political agenda perceived as not meeting young people's needs and a tendency of the political elite to clientelism. Zaïrig, however, observed that most studies on the subject only considered traditional forms of political participation and didn't take into account possible instruments of political advocacy through civil society engagement and social media. Accordingly, a negative view of the political system would not necessarily exclude a high interest in tangible political questions.

The concept of a seemingly passive youth was also addressed by **Sénim Ben Abdallah** (on behalf of the Tunisian **Institute of Press and Information Sciences**) in his presentation on **local participation of young people** in Tunisia. With regard to the fall of the Tunisian regime in 2011 he illustrated the contradiction between the prevalent idea of a passive, de-politicized youth and their sudden rise to one of the "main motors of the revolution". Ben Abdallah continued by explaining the limits of civic and political youth participation. As one important obstacle to participation he identified young people's dependency from their families due to rampant unemployment. Although many young Tunisians are well-educated, they remain trapped in patriarchal family structures that keep them from discussing certain topics and therefore constrain their freedom of action. Ben Abdallah further deplored the attitude of political elites (both religious conservative and progressive) who don't view young people as partners to establish a dialogue with but instead try to educate them in a patronizing way. The situation of local politics in Tunisia was described as rather blurry, as the different actors and their tasks appear to be inaccurately defined. Ben Abdallah added two major challenges youth has to face: widespread corruption and religious extremism, often financed from abroad, aiming at recruiting especially the younger generations. In conclusion, he painted a rather dark picture for the future, as young Tunisians – drastically spoken – are left with three options:

1. To risk their lives in order to reach Italy
2. To deal in drugs and go to prison
3. To fight Jihad in Syria

Rashid Jarmouni, another doctoral candidate at the **University Mohammed V**, presented his local case study on **young people and religion** in the city of Salé. The subject of the study was approached both from an international and a national perspective. On the international level, a revival of religious values even in some industrial and post-industrial societies contradicts the paradigm of secularization, formulated by outstanding sociologists of the 19th and 20th century, that assumed an inevitable decline of religion in the course of industrialization and urbanization. As for the national perspective, the 2003 Casablanca bombings prompted a public debate not only about the prevention of violent extremism but more widely about the role of religion in Moroccan society. The study targeted a sample of young people¹⁴ in the city of Salé and consisted of both a quantitative survey and a series of qualitative focus group discussions. With regard to the findings, Jarmouni described a strong identification with religion and a high importance of religious practices (prayer, visiting mosque) among local youth. At the same time, religious knowledge was found to be rather limited.

¹⁴ 15-35 years

As another interesting finding, Jarmouni mentioned a considerable increase in female religiousness.

Finally, **Maryam Ben Salem** provided a short introduction to her recent film on the ***attitudes of vulnerable Tunisian young women to politics***. Ben Salem is a doctor of political science and works as a researcher for the ***Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)*** in Tunisia. The film portrays a number of young women in different parts of the country, their role within the respective family and local community, their attitude towards politics, including their hopes and their disappointments. An important issue treated in the film is the “myth of equality”, as democracy promises an equal say to all members of society, but inequalities such as the discrimination of women and economic disadvantages, also affect one’s ability to make political choices. As opposed to the traditional concept of (intrinsic) vulnerability, Ben Salem attributed the women’s exclusion and inability to participate chiefly to their loss of self-esteem and a negative view of their own skills and competences.

5. Discussion and findings

By their presentations the above described youth researchers provided a first important basis for drawing a comprehensive picture of the situation of young people, as well as some useful conclusions. The subsequent work was aimed at involving more participants in shaping the outcome of the seminar. This was done through another series of workshops that were to produce more useful results for the closing discussion and for the planning of possible follow-up activities.

5.1. Debate and exchange with participants from the training course

In the afternoon of the second day, the seminar participants benefited from the physical proximity in Salé, as another joint session also involved the youth representatives and civil society activists from the training course. The organizers of both events expected the direct encounter of youth research and youth practice (youth work, NGOs) to be fruitful. In this context, the concept of the ***Magic Triangle*** was introduced by the preparatory group in order to provide an instructive framework for the exchange between the participants. The Triangle illustrates the ***knowledge transfer within the youth field***, that is between youth research, youth practice and youth policy.

Four groups were formed, each consisting of members from both the seminar and the training course, and given the task to express their expectations and formulate recommendations regarding the cooperation within the Triangle¹⁵. Given that the development of evidence-based youth policies and the promotion of democratic citizenship are among the priorities of the seminar, the participants were reminded not to neglect the role of policy-makers.

Although the members of the four groups worked in separate places and in different languages (two groups in French, one in Arabic, and one in English) their approach to the task, as well as their findings, turned out to be quite similar to each other. Based on the effort to collocate themselves within the Triangle, the participants developed a rather flexible interpretation of the concept, as many of them would – so to speak – not be found in an angle of the Triangle but somewhere inside it, or at least on a line between two angles. With regard to the recommendations, all the groups decided to advocate a certain form of ***alliance between youth researchers and youth organizations***. Of course it was recognized that democratic youth participation and the elaboration of evidence-based policies pertaining to youth can only be achieved if policy-makers are capable and willing to seriously pay attention to the other partners in the youth field. However, as this was not expected to succeed in the short-run, the group recommendations concentrated on more or less institutionalized networks including the research sector and civil society organizations, preferably combined with mechanisms of interregional knowledge exchange. The creation of a website or online library for the management and dissemination of existing knowledge was mentioned as a possible example. One French-speaking group also addressed the question of research funding and therefore proposed to build extended networks that involve, in addition to researchers and civil society activists, business companies and different kinds of private sponsors, which would allow to bridge a possible lack of political support for youth research projects.

Europeans in the working groups were reminded of some existing structures in their own region.

¹⁵ e.g. „What do NGOs need from researchers?“, „How can youth practice help youth researchers?“, etc.

In the framework of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, for instance, two initiatives for the ***promotion of evidence-based youth policies*** would partially correspond to some of the recommendations made in the workshops:

- The ***Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR)***, consisting of 25 researchers and experts from all across Europe, is not only used by the European institutions that founded it. PEYR members can make their expertise available to any interested stakeholder¹⁶. Accordingly, four of them also contributed to the interregional seminar in Salé.
- An online database for the collection and distribution of reliable information about the situation of European youth is provided by the ***European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCP)***. The centre is linked to a network of national correspondents, responsible for the coverage of their respective countries¹⁷.

With regard to the role of private sponsors, the ***Youth Policy Review Series***, carried out by a German-based NGO and financed by the Open Society Youth Initiative, is probably worth mentioning: Within the second round of the series, a Tunisian country review is presently being prepared.

5.2. Outputs of the closing discussion

The third and last day of the seminar was again carried out separately from the training course on democratic youth participation. Nevertheless, the findings from the joint workshops would be kept in mind. In preparation of the closing discussion, the seminar was divided into working groups for the last time, with one group developing ideas for the future of cooperation on youth research and the other one considering appropriate ways of communicating research results in order to impact on national youth policies.

Apart from the necessity to tailor any message to one's target audience, the second group identified two major challenges in communicating research findings:

1. Given that any research project needs suitable funding, its results are usually owned by the sponsor who commissioned them. Accordingly, the communication of the findings is often times aligned to the interests of the sponsor, which implies a selection that may not always be appropriate in a researcher's opinion. The group established that youth researchers should above all defend the cause of youth and therefore -whenever possible - put young people's needs first when sharing their knowledge.
2. The media offer most welcome opportunities to transmit a message to a wider audience. In using these possibilities researchers need to find the right balance between inevitable simplifications, in order to reach a big enough share of the public, and the credibility of their findings.

With regard to the future of interregional youth research cooperation, the members of the first group felt it desirable to see the involvement of public actors in the Southern Mediterranean increase, notably of the respective national governments in the Maghreb region or the League of Arab States.

¹⁶ PEYR: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/research/PEYR_members.html

¹⁷ EKCP: <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/index>

Building on the concept of the Magic Triangle, it was established that youth research in the Maghreb countries should become a constitutive part of an **international network for knowledge exchange** that would – in the ideal case – integrate four other actors as well: civil society organizations (especially youth organizations), local communities, private companies and the responsible ministries. It was also agreed, however, that the presence of public actors should not be considered essential from the very beginning: As already recommended during the joint session the day before, youth researchers should start with the establishment of institutionalized links to youth organizations and other NGOs in order to build a solid evidence base on the reality of youth, and in order to strengthen young people's position within the field by giving them a proper access to existing information. By doing so, the **alliance between research and practice** would lay the basis for advocating future youth policies. With reference to existing European models the participants discussed the possibility of creating a **Pool of Arab Youth Researchers** and of building up a **network of national youth correspondents** in the Maghreb countries. The two institutions were deemed to work in a rather flexible way – by emphasizing personal relationships and informal contacts – and therefore to allow for a variety of both international and interregional cooperation, be it on the level of universities and their sub-entities, NGOs or political institutions.

As for the immediate future, it was proposed to further deepen these and other recommendations rather soon: Given that a series of meetings will be held in **July 2013 in Tunis** – within the framework of the **Euro-Mediterranean University** – the seminar participants agreed that the preparatory group should attempt to extend the purpose of the event.

5.3. Issues for further reflection

The seminar participants discussed some additional issues that could be further developed within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

Youth researchers and civil society activists in the Maghreb countries often deplore a lack of understanding, as well as interest, on the European side. The impression seems to be widespread that cooperation is only welcome when it serves European interests. The idea of two closed regions with completely different interests was contradicted very clearly throughout the seminar. Important similarities with regard to democratic youth participation were already identified between the Maghreb and Eastern Europe. In addition, the economic situation in Southern Europe makes young people's lives on both sides of the Mediterranean look more and more alike in terms of high unemployment, social exclusion and dependency from their families. **Joint research projects** in those fields could be a precious occasion to foster mutual understanding and new forms of cooperation between both regions.

With regard to the promotion of equality of all citizens in both European and Arab countries, the Council of Europe's **No Hate Speech Campaign** was mentioned as a possible basis for cooperation. Engagement against hate speech, racism and discrimination was found an important means of advocating mutual respect within and between the regions. However, the participants identified a certain potential for abuse or misuse of the campaign, as different kinds of extremists might try to protect themselves against legitimate criticisms by defining them as hate speech. It was therefore emphasized that the aim of the movement against hate speech is not to limit freedom of expression but rather to raise awareness for human dignity.

As for the acceptance of interregional initiatives in general, the participants underlined the importance for Southern Mediterranean actors to organize themselves within their region and to bring forward projects of their own. Otherwise the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation – despite honest intentions – might be perceived as a patronizing one-way process. In this context, the seminar participants also cautioned against (Arab and European) voices that try to define certain human rights¹⁸ as “imported” or imposed from abroad.

5.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the seminar participants confirmed their willingness and preparedness to contribute to future developments in the framework of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. They therefore expressed their approval to deepen the issues discussed in Salé on the occasion of the Euro-Mediterranean University meetings in Tunis (July 2013). With regard to all future activities, the necessity for a ***holistic and democratic approach*** to youth participation was reaffirmed, or in other words: Researchers and decision-makers are ***not to work about youth, but with youth***¹⁹, considering them as partners in shaping the future of society.

¹⁸ e.g. youth rights, gender equality, minority rights etc.

¹⁹ „Ne pas travailler sur les jeunes, mais avec les jeunes!“

6. Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank Rui Gomes, Robert Thomson and the other members of the preparatory group for entrusting me with the task of reporting the content of this important interregional exchange in the field of youth cooperation and participation. I hope that this opportunity will contribute in a modest way to future developments in the framework of Euro-Mediterranean activities in favour of young people. I would also like to thank Mohammed Bouguidou, Giovanni-Battista Celiento, Phinith Chanthalangsy, Youssef Chfouï, Abdelhay Moudden, Mehdi Remeli for making the seminar possible through the involvement of their respective institutions and organizations. I strongly appreciated the active contributions of Erik Amnå, Sénim Ben Abdallah, Maryam Ben Salem, Abdessamad Dialmy, Mokhtar El Harras, Rachid Jarmouni and Hanane Zaïrig in order to shed light on the present situation of young people in both European and Arab countries. My special thanks go to Najat Bassou, Laia Vila Carreres, Rayed Khedher, Asma Labidi, Mayssa Rekhiss, Younes Saâdi, Kateryna Shalayeva and Nassim Smaoune, who provided me with the findings of the different workshops, as well as to Abdelkarim El Ouazzani, Natia Jgenti and Jackie Lubelli, who, thanks to their organizational skills, enabled me to participate in the seminar. Last but not least, I would like to express my thanks to all the participants of both the seminar for youth research experts and the training course on democratic youth participation, the CCCL team and the staff of the Association Amal Salé.

Simon Bart

May 2013

Appendix 1: Agenda

Monday, 8 April 2013

09:00 **Welcome and registration of participants**

Practical and administrative matters

09:30 **Official opening session** of the seminar and of the training course on democratic youth participation, with

- **Youssef CHFOUÏ**, president of the association Amal-Salé
- **Abdelhay MUDDEN**, Centre for Cross Cultural Learning
- **Giovanni-Battista CELIENTO**, Council of Europe (South Programme)
- **Mehdi REMELI**, office of the Council of Europe in Rabat
- **Phinith CHANTHALANGSY**, UNESCO Multi-country office in Rabat
- **Mohammed BOUGUIDOU**, Delegation of the European Union to Morocco

10:30 Break

10:50 Presentation of the participants

11:15 **The state of play** – Working groups about the state of play and the status of youth research in the European and Arab regions

13:00 *Lunch*

14:30 **The state of young people in the two regions**

An example from Morocco: *The sexuality of young people*, by Prof. **Abdessamad DIALMY**, Université Mohammed V (Morocco)

- Questions and comments, opening to the Arab and Mediterranean regions

16:00 *Break*

16:30 An example from Europe: *Youth Civic Engagement and Political Participation*, by Prof. **Erik AMNÅ**, Örebro University (Sweden)

- Questions and answers, opening to other European realities

18:00 Conclusions of the day

Tuesday, 9 April 2013

09:30 Presentations

Democratic youth participation, concepts, status, realities and challenges

09:40 *Young Moroccans and the challenges of political and associative life*, Prof. **Mokhtar EL HARRAS**, University Mohammed V, Rabat

10 :30 **Presentations and case studies:**

The political participation of young people in Morocco, presentation by **Hanane ZAIRIG**, University Mohammed V, Rabat

11:15 *Pause*

11:30 *Local participation of young people in Tunisia*, by **Sénim BEN ABDALLAH**, Institut de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information

12:15 *Young people and religion*, by **Rachid JARMOUNI**, University Mohammed V and Namaa for Research and Studies Center

12:45 *Lunch*

14:00 *Attitudes of vulnerable Tunisian young women to politics*, documentary and debate with **Maryam BEN SALEM**, Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), Tunisia

15:00 Debate and exchange with:

- Moroccan youth organisations
- Moroccan civil society organisations
- Participants from the training course on democratic youth participation

17:15 Conclusions of the day

Wednesday, 10 April 2013

10:30 Workshops

- Cooperation on youth research (interregional and international)
- How to communicate research results and impact on national youth policies

11:15 *Break (in the workshops)*

12:45 Conclusions of the seminar

Evaluation and closing

13:00 *Lunch and departures*

Appendix 2: List of participants

Country of residence	Name, Firstname	Organisation
Algeria	BENADOUDA Brahim	UNICEF Apologised
Algeria	MARINO Katya	UNICEF
Belgium	KISEVIC Srđ	Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth
Egypt	DASSOUKI Chouaa	League of Arab States Apologised
Egypt	SUBEIH Mohammed	League of Arab States Apologised
France	CELIENTO Giovanni-Battista	Council of Europe - South Programme
France	GOMES Rui	Council of Europe - Youth Department Preparatory Group
France	HEDJERASSI Nassira	Université de Reims
Libya	ATTIR Mustafa O.	Centre for Sustainable Development Research
Montenegro	PETKOVIC Sladjana	Pool of European Youth Researchers National Youth Steering Committee of Montenegro
Morocco	DIALMY Abdessamad	Université Mohammed V
Morocco	EL HARRAS Mokhtar	Université Mohammed V
Morocco	SEKHER Hajar	Université Mohammed V
Morocco	ZAIRIG Hanane	Université Mohammed V
Morocco	JARMOUNI Rachid	Université Mohammed V Namaa for Research and Studies Center
Morocco	CHANTHALANGSY Phinith	UNESCO – Multi-country office
Morocco	REMILI Mehdi	Office of the Council of Europe in Morocco
Spain	DESRUES Thierry	l'Institut d'Études Sociales Avancées Apologised
Spain	VILA CARRERES Laia	Agence Espagnole de coopération au développement
Sweden	AMNÅ Erik	Pool of European Youth Researchers University of Örebro
Switzerland	BART Simon	Demokratie & Dialog – Youthpolicy Team Rapporteur
Switzerland	THOMSON Robert	Pool of European Youth Researchers Demokratie & Dialog - International Editorial Board Preparatory Group
Tunisia	ALLOUCH Ahmed	Tunisia Youth Policy Review team
Tunisia	BEN ABDALLAH Sénim	Institut de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information

Interregional seminar for youth research experts, Salé, Morocco, 8-10 April 2013

Country of residence	Name, Firstname	Organisation
Tunisia	BEN SALEM Maryam	Center of Arab Women for Training and Research
Tunisia	KHEDHER Rayed	Tunisia Youth Policy Review team
Tunisia	KHOUAJA Ahmed	Université de Tunis Apologised
Tunisia	SADDI Lotfi	Centre Méditerranéen de Développement Humain
Tunisia	JOUILI Mohammed	Observatoire National de la Jeunesse Preparatory Group - apologised
Turkey	Serkan SEVIMLI	Ministry of Youth and Sport Apologised
Turkey	Tarik KARKINCAM	Ministry of Youth and Sport Apologised
Ukraine	SHALAYEVA Kateryna	Pool of European Youth Researchers

Appendix 3: Links for further information

Association Amal Salé - Espace Socio Educatif d'Appui Aux Compétences Des Jeunes:

<http://www.amalsale.org/> (in French)

Blog of Professor Dialmy: <http://dialmy.over-blog.com/> (in Arabic and French)

Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR): <http://www.cawtar.org/>

Centre for Cross Cultural Learning (CCCL): <http://www.cccl.ma/>

Council of Europe – Youth Department: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/>

Demokratie & Dialog e.V. (D&D) – Youth Policy Reviews: <http://www.youthpolicy.org/reviews/>

European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP): <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/index>

Institut de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information (IPSI): <http://www.ipsi.rnu.tn/>

National Youth Observatory of Tunisia: <http://www.onj.nat.tn/> (in Arabic)

No Hate Speech Movement – Young People for Human Rights Online:

<http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org/>

Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR): http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/research/PEYR_members.html

South Programme – Strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Neighbourhood: <http://south-programme-eu.coe.int/>

Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe - Euro-Mediterranean Youth Cooperation: <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/euromed/index>

UNESCO – Manuel d'apprentissage de la démocratie pour les jeunes en Tunisie (2011):

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002152/215297f.pdf> (in French)

UNESCO – Multi-country office in Rabat: <http://rabat.unesco.org/>

UNESCO – Strategy on African Youth: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001875/187571e.pdf>

University Mohammed V in Rabat: <http://www.um5a.ac.ma/index.php/en/>

University of Örebro – Youth & Society (YeS): <http://www.oru.se/yes>