

Youth Partnership

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



EUROPEAN UNION



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YOUTH PLATFORM

NORTH-SOUTH CENTRE



CENTRE NORD-SUD

Seminar “Empowerment of youth organisations and youth-led civil society initiatives in the South-Mediterranean framework”

22-24 March 2012

Presentation

Call for participants

Background

The South-Mediterranean youth policy cooperation of the partnership between the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, the League of Arab States (LAS) and other actors started in 2005. The cooperation aims at developing a common understanding and exchange of issues of specific concern for youth policy in Europe and South Med region. Since 2006, other national and international stakeholders of youth policy in European and South Med countries have become involved and extended the framework of this informal cooperation. The activities carried out brought together youth researchers, governmental institutions responsible for youth policy and non-governmental youth organisations in European and South Med countries. Among other results, the cooperation has supported the process of the Euro-Arab Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (EACMYO), created possibilities for direct exchanges between South Med and European youth leaders through relevant youth forums, and provided opportunities for capacity-building of civil society youth organisations through training courses on human rights education, intercultural dialogue and youth participation.

The process of changes brought about by the “Arab Spring” in various countries provides the context and drives the need for re-visiting this cooperation. The seminar on empowerment of youth organisations and youth led civil society in the South-Mediterranean framework hereby presented, is the first step in this direction: it provides youth non-governmental organisations and stakeholders the opportunity to reflect upon recent developments and their implications for the future youth policy cooperation so as to safeguard ownership of the process among stakeholders and to ensure a sustainable long-term perspective.

Context

The events in a number of countries in the Arab region since the beginning of 2011 have imposed a new perception of young people’s capacities and aspirations. As crucial actors in the processes of political changes, young people have stood up for more freedom, equality and justice. But they also stand up for better future perspectives in education and work, economic and social development and participation in the decision making process.

Young people have legitimate aspirations to be listened to and respected, and to participate in decision-making about their present and their future and that of their nations. Youth is demanding a voice in the transition process towards real democracy. The new political environments need to take into consideration the stronger civic engagement of young people. Conversely, following the successful mobilisation for change in the political system, young people and civil society actors need to find appropriate ways in order to further shape the incipient transition process in the long term. The present window of opportunity should not close without young people making sure their interests are taken into account when it comes to the establishment of a new social order.

Furthermore the role and organisation of youth policy needs to be reviewed. International youth policy cooperation has also an important role to play.

Despite the obvious differences between the Arab and European regions, it is clear that both are affected by consequences of globalisation processes. The massive spread of global communication, and particularly social media, has become a new and powerful vehicle for young people to get organised and participate, to be informed and to spread information.

Youth organisations in Europe might be interested to learn from the efficient use of social networks and online media by youth organisations in the South-Mediterranean region.

Eastern European countries have a recent history of engaging in political transition processes towards democratic societies. Their experiences with regard to the construction of democratic societies and the development of a citizenship and participation culture can provide an enriching background for the current events in the Arab countries.

In reaction to the political changes in their Southern neighbouring countries, both, the European Union and the Council of Europe are strengthening their efforts to support these developments towards democracy. Young people in Egypt, Tunisia and other parts of the South-Mediterranean hold the key to the sustainable and peaceful development of their societies based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Understanding and taking into account their expectations and needs is crucial for all the institutional stakeholders, such as the League of Arab States, national youth policy authorities and youth organisations. The experience of young people from the Diasporas in Europe and their role in and perception of recent developments can also positively contribute to this process.

Purpose

This seminar will focus on the role and status of youth organisations/youth movements and the young people they work with as crucial actors in the development and consolidation of inclusive, participatory and pluralistic democracies based on human rights and the rule of law. Alongside a joint analysis on the impact of youth (organisations) on the Arab revolutions and vice versa, their role within the resulting transition process will be the focus of this seminar. In order to come up with well-grounded recommendations, young people supported by experts should be given an opportunity for exchange of experiences and needs assessment in the framework of working groups. Proposals for concrete projects (e.g. in the field of capacity building) to be realised by/in cooperation with youth (organisations) should also be discussed in this framework. A better understanding of the situation of youth and their needs after the Arab spring as well as of the new emerging civil society actors will ease the preparation of the forthcoming Tunis symposium on youth participation and contribute to a meaningful dialogue between policy, practice and research at that event.

Objectives

- To exchange on the current effects of Arab spring on civil society and develop a shared understanding of the current situation of young people in the South Med region as well as in European countries and their role in on-going processes of change;
- To understand the implications of this transition to democracy for the reality of youth, the youth agendas and for the landscape of youth led civil society organisations
- To strengthen and support the role of civil society and non governmental youth led organisations and networks by enabling young people to reflect on their needs in terms of capacity building and propose joint projects to be implemented on a long term basis in a wider partnership

Organisers

Maltese Youth Agency a (Aġenzija Żgħażaġh), EU-CoE youth-partnership, League of Arab States, North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, Euromed Youth Platform.

Date and duration:

22-24 March 2012 (2 working days) (21st arrival, 24th departure for participants, 25th departure for organisers and stakeholders).

Venue: Malta (details to be confirmed)

Participants:

The seminar will bring together thirty young people from Southern Mediterranean [MENA] (20) and European (10) youth organisations, facilitators, stakeholders and youth policy experts from the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Profile and Selection of participants

The seminar should be open for professionals and volunteers closely involved in youth policy processes in their youth organisations and countries, young multipliers closely involved in democratic youth movements in their countries, leaders of youth organisations having an active role in the developments of the Arab spring, bloggers and youth workers. Furthermore experts from foundations and agencies supporting youth policy programmes and studies will be invited.

Participants will be selected through an open call and nominated among selected experts and cooperation partners.

Language: The languages of the seminar will be English and Arabic. Interpretation will be available for the plenary and also partly for the working groups.

Draft programme

Wednesday, 21 March

Arrival of participants

17:30 Getting to know each other

18:00 Reception (tbd)

Thursday, 22 March

09:30 Official opening session: addresses by representatives of the organising institutions

10:30 Introduction to the seminar

Break

11:00 Kick off interventions: reality of youth participation during and after the Arab spring: experiences of active youth leaders

- The Tunisian Jasmine revolution
- The Egyptian experience
- The European experience

12:00 Participant questions

12:30 *Lunch*

14:00 Working groups: Civil society and youth NGOs - implications, needs and aspirations resulting from recent transformation processes in the Southern Mediterranean

16:30 *Break*

17:00 Presentation and discussion of the results of the groups

18:30 Evaluation and closing of the day

Friday, 23 March

09:00 Recap of Thursday by participants (reporters)

09:10 Research input on civil society participation in the context of democratic transition (expert tbd)

09:40 Questions and discussion

10:20 Working groups based on the results of the 1st day with a focus on civic participation beyond the revolutions: how can young people participating in youth organisation become further empowered to build democratic societies

Coffee break (working groups continued)

12:00 Presentation and discussion of the results of the groups

12:30 *Lunch*

15:00 Working groups: from perceived needs to coordinated strategies and projects

16:00 *Break*

17:00 Presentation and discussion of the results of the groups

18:00 Closing of the seminar and presentation of follow up steps

End of the official part

Saturday 24th March

09:30 - 11:30 Informal coordination meeting between institutions
present

Discussion of project ideas for a long term cooperation
and of follow up events based on the results of this
seminar

Practical and financial conditions

Timetable

The seminar will start at 09:30 on Thursday 22 March and finish at 18:30 on Friday 23rd March.

Venue and accommodation

The seminar will be held in Malta and accommodation and meals will be covered by the Euromed Youth Platform. Hotel venue will be confirmed to selected participants.

Travel and subsistence expenses

Travel expenses to and from Malta will be covered by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, and reimbursed according to the rules of the Council of Europe. The reimbursements will be made by bank transfer after the seminar.

Application procedure

The deadline for submitting applications: **13 February 2012**. Candidates will be informed about whether their application has been accepted or rejected, and if they have put on the waiting list, by 21 February 2012.

All those interested in applying to take part in the seminar are kindly requested to fill in their application on-line at: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/seminars/seminar_16.html

If you face any difficulty with the online application form, please contact the person below.

Interested persons residing in Arab countries should direct their **requests for application** to the League of Arab States on the following e-mail address: youth@poplas.org, admin@poplas.org

Further information:

Council of Europe member states: viktorija.karpatska@coe.int

League of Arab States countries: admin@poplas.org; youth@poplas.org