



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group Vienna, 12 July 2021**

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#### **EU statement: Unlocking potential, securing the future: youth human capital as untapped resource of the Mediterranean region**

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The EU warmly welcomes today's speakers to this meeting of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group. We also thank the Polish Chair of the Group for bringing up this pertinent topic of the potential of the youth human capital.

The European Union is built with the future in mind. Accordingly, youth is an essential element of its action. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union tasks the Union with encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life and developing a vocational training policy for youth.

With the aim to engage, connect and empower youth, in November 2018 the Council approved the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. Through dialogue with youth, we have developed eleven European Youth Goals, such as gender equality, Inclusive Societies, Moving Rural Youth Forward, Quality Employment for All and Sustainable Green Europe.

When talking about youth, we have to underline the Erasmus+ programme. Created in 1987, it aims to improve the quality of higher education by promoting transnational cooperation and encouraging student mobility. The Programme includes numerous partnership agreements with academic institutions of our Mediterranean partners. Over the next six years, 10 million Europeans will benefit

from the programme with a budget of €26.2 billion. The programme for 2021–2027 seeks to be even more inclusive and to support the green and digital transitions. Erasmus+ will also support the resilience of education and training systems in the face of the pandemic.

The EU and its Member States are strong supporters of initiatives aimed at enhancing the potential of young people through international forums, including the UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015), which gave rise to the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

We have made numerous efforts to increase the role of youth within the OSCE. The 2017 Conference on Youth and Security in Malaga, co-organised by the Spanish Government, and the adopted Malaga Decalogue, represent milestones for the OSCE in the way it tackles the issue of youth. The Milan Declaration of 2018 enhanced the means for a dialogue on youth and the OSCE Group of Friends of Youth and Security continues to be a valuable forum for exchange. At its last meeting in June, it discussed the establishment and promotion of an OSCE Youth Parliamentary Forum and the creation of a networking platform connecting youth in the OSCE space.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit young people particularly hard, especially their employment. Figures show that young people face major obstacles in continuing training and education, moving between jobs and entering the labour market. To avoid the emergence of a lost generation we need to tackle the issues of youth with the utmost rigour. The EU has reinforced Youth Guarantee Schemes and Youth Employment System, which also act as bridges to green and digital jobs. But more needs to be done.

International cooperation within our Mediterranean partnership should be used in this common endeavour. Young people comprise more than half of the total population of the Mediterranean region. Furthering the education and training of young people will help our efforts to recover, repair and emerge stronger and more resilient from the crisis. The time has never been more ripe for the OSCE and Partner countries to focus on the next generation.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.