



the middle east and north africa committee...
لجنة الحوار المتوسطية
مجلس أفريقيا **menac** @menacommittee - Mar 23
We talk, @FedericaMog listens and takes notes. Our chance to get our message across! #YoungMedVoices #MENA #EU

The EU High-Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, launched on 23rd March in Brussels a major new Youth initiative aimed at “opening all channels for youth engagement” and giving a significant boost to youth agency and partnership across the Mediterranean.

The initiative, Young Med Voices Plus, was jointly conceived through a very first dialogue encounter of its kind involving EU high-officials and young change-makers from the Arab region and Europe. It represents a major achievement in a process driven by young Mediterranean voices, a pioneering network of debaters established in 2011 after the historic Arab uprisings with the support of the Anna Lindh Foundation and the British Council. The network brings together young teachers, journalists, environmentalists, social entrepreneurs, and peace activists from North Africa, the Middle East and now Europe.

The inaugural dialogue of 23rd March, organised by the Foundation and the European Youth Forum, established the scope of action of Young Med Voices Plus focused on: opening a parallel “public diplomacy track” to the Young Mediterranean Voices debate programme; launching large-scale communication campaigns with EU Delegations across the region; introducing mechanisms to engage youth in the co-design of EU programming; and reinforcing the EU’s central role with the UN on youth, peace and security.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

- The role of young Mediterranean voices in providing analysis and action-orientated proposals to “help the EU and regional institutions get the narrative right” as HR/VP Mogherini underlined. This will provide a central mandate to members of Young Med Voices Plus as a ‘think and do tank’, to provide inputs, analysis, and ideas aimed at positively shaping policy narratives, co-designing programming with EU services, and making operational the new policy instruments of the EU (Global Strategy, European Neighbourhood Policy, Joint Communication on International Cultural Relations).
- Embedding through EU cultural diplomacy a strategic focus on education reform and legislation that promotes the development of youth associations. The HR/VP proposed to reaffirm an “education track” within the EU diplomatic missions to the region, stating that “education, cross-cultural skills and critical thinking are the basis of political participation and active citizenship”. It was also underlined that the development, sustainability and operational space of youth associations in the social, cultural and artistic domain was a priority for Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, and that “funding for local NGOs is crucial to support youth communities”.
- Investing in large-scale communication campaigns to raise the visibility of existing youth agency. HR/VP Mogherini announced on the occasion of the inaugural dialogue the expansion of an EEAS strategic communications team and its enhanced capacity to partner in Young Med Voices Plus. This partnership will centre on leveraging expertise and media networks to build and implement communication strategies that promote positive stories of existing youth-led action, reinforce evidence-based advocacy on youth voice, and contribute to positive narratives in the face of extremist discourses. “We must amplify the positive stories about what you do and we do together” stated Mrs Mogherini.
- Involving young Med voices in co-designing EU programming for cultural mobility. Building on “Erasmus +30”, and ahead of new EU programming for 2020, the HR/VP underlined the opportunity “to work together in widening the reach and impact of mobility schemes” across Europe and its southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood. The dialogue in Brussels also underlined that opportunities for mobility remain limited and not equitable in their distribution, that the political will among Member States to actually make this happen is underwhelming, and that there are opportunities to combine enhanced programming for face-to-face encounters with virtual exchange that can counter entry barriers to mobility.
- Reinforcing the EU’s role as central actor and model for youth participation. The HR/VP’s inaugural meeting with young Mediterranean voices was as important in terms of process (its format and approach) as it was for its outputs. Evaluation carried out with youth delegates and partners underlined the value placed on the frankness and openness of the dialogue, modelling a new partnership dynamic with youth. The EU’s firm backing of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security – announced by the HR/VP at the dialogue – presents a further platform for EU leadership on promoting the visibility of youth voice, agency and leadership.



CLUBdeMADRID @CLUBdeMADRID · Mar 24
Politicians genuinely listening to youth! @FedericaMog engages with #YoungMedVoices



UN Youth Envoy @UNYouthEnvoy · Mar 23

Speaking at #YoungMedVoices #EEAS event, @FedericaMog of EU explains the importance of civil space for #Youth4Peace | #ActOn2250 #scr2250

GLOBAL ISSUES & ANALYSIS

The inaugural dialogue with HR/VP Mogherini brought together for the first time young Arab voices with peers from Europe to identify and analyse converging issues and priorities among youth communities to the south and north of the Mediterranean. This was the focus of the working sessions of 22nd March, co-chaired by [Paul Walton](#) (Anna Lindh Foundation) and [Tina Hocevar](#) (European Youth Forum).

- **Orientations and expectations**

[Enrico Petrocelli](#) (Cabinet of HR/VP Mogherini) underlined in his opening remarks that the dialogue with the EU High-Representative is “just a starting point for a sustainable conversation that can help shape policy narratives and bring about real change”. Following this, Paul and Tina facilitated a dialogue to explore expectations for the new initiative with the HR/VP, that underlined the collective importance place on: (1) supporting youth agency to significantly increase the reach of opportunities to diverse youth voices and get into the real life of communities; (2) shaping policy narratives to better reflect youth-orientated agendas related to education, employment, environment, and mobility; (3) ensuring concrete outcomes, “do-able actions”, and focusing on transforming youth policy from debate into action. As one of the delegates stated during the opening session: “Youth are done with the talking era. It’s now time for the doing era”.

- **Lessons from Young Arab Voices**

This session focused on “lessons learnt from young Arab voices”, facilitated by experienced social activists [Aissam Benaissa](#) and [Khadija Ali](#) who shared insights emerging from issue-based debate work across the Southern Mediterranean since 2011. This included: addressing the deficit of “transferrable skills” such as critical thinking and fostering at a young age a culture of dialogue and debate; addressing youth detachment from traditional media through partnerships with the media sector; providing a wider framework of opportunity through support for creative enterprise; empowering young people at the local level through sustainable support to NGOs; the importance of engaging youth in the co-design of programming that must be both “long-term and quick action”; and the opportunity for promoting regional collaboration, mobility and knowledge networks to support youth-led action across the Mediterranean region.

- **Acting locally, thinking globally**

The lessons from the southern Mediterranean were the basis for identifying, through intercultural working groups, converging priorities and opportunities emerging from youth voice in Europe and the Arab region. The thematic priorities identified in working groups were summed up as: Education Reform and Economic Citizenship; Media, Communication and Narratives; Mobility, Civil Society and Creative Space. Following the presentation of the outputs, the Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Foundation, [Hatem Atallah](#), shared feedback with the group and underlined the convergence among issues, strategic thinking, and values that was at the heart of the future young Mediterranean voices. The importance of taking into account local context as well as emerging regional dynamics was also underlined through the exchange.

- **New data on Intercultural Trends**

New public opinion survey data was presented by [Femke Dekeulenaer](#) (Ipsos-MORI) followed by analysis and further research insights by [David Knox](#) (British Council). The Ipsos-MORI data, commissioned by the ALF as part of its forthcoming Intercultural Trends Report, provides insights to the opportunities and challenges for a new dialogue agenda across the Mediterranean, including 'Gains and Expectations from Euro-Med cooperation'(with 'Youth Opportunities' and 'Education' perceived for the majority of respondents as a main gain) and 'Tackling Radicalisation through Dialogue Action' ('Supporting youth-led initiative' is perceived as the most efficient measure to prevent conflict and address root causes of radicalisation). More broadly, it was underlined by the group that "analysis is essential to find solutions" and "debate and policy work are main tools to go to the next level in making youth voices heard".

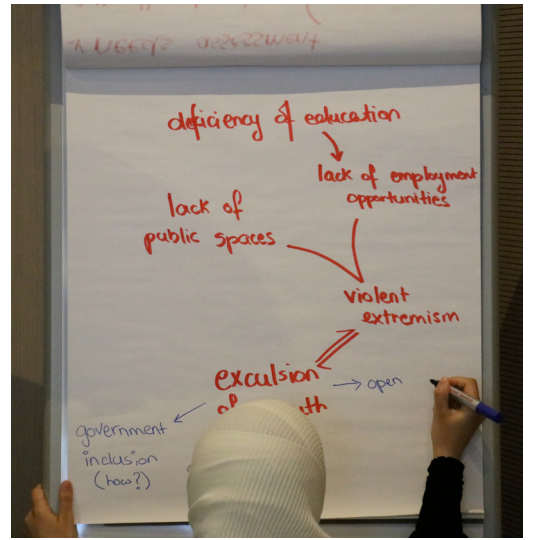
- **UN and EU Policy Frameworks**

UN Security Council Resolution 2250, the first of its kind on Youth, Peace and Security, was presented as a major opportunity for youth voice, agency and leadership. Working groups were run by [Ali Altioik](#) of the United Nations joint secretariat in New York for the Progress Study on 2250, and [Meg Villanueva](#) peace campaigner and advocate. The discussions also highlighted strategic issues that represent the policy space youth leaders can move into, for example "positive security", social inclusion, and a prevention agenda aimed at opening space to youth agency to address underlying causes of conflict and violence. [Karima Saqui](#) (DG Neighbourhood and EU manager for Young Med Voices) and [Claire Herrmann](#) (DG Education and Culture) presented insights on new regional programming for young women and men across the Mediterranean. This led to a discussion on opportunities and potential gaps (for example, resourcing for the Youth Strand of Erasmus+) and the potential of young people being further engaged in the co-design of future programming.

- **Media and Strategic Communication**

A final session on communication was co-led by BBC Arabic journalist [Rima Marrouch](#) and [Stephanie O'Keeffe](#) of the European External Action Service (Strats. Comms). There was a particular focus on strategies and tools to engage youth communities at large, and youth participation in the creation of alternative narratives to extremist discourse. The EEAS also announced that its "Task Force South" (on outreach and communication to the Arab World) will have a strategic focus on amplifying the visibility of positive stories. A Strategic Communications Regional Seminar will be held in Tunis from 15-17 May, bringing together communications staff and political officers from EU Delegations and Headquarters, and representing an important milestone in the immediate follow-up to the Brussels dialogue.





“A number of questions related to education, immigration, mobility, the role of media, and security wouldn’t be effectively addressed without the possibility of bringing together young activists, from both banks of the Mediterranean, around that same table to discuss, advise and influence. Hence Young Med Voices.” (Participant, Inaugural Dialogue with HR/VP Mogherini).




EVALUATION & NEXT STEPS

A debrief and evaluation session was held on the evening of 23rd March, capturing the following main points:

- **Starting point.** Through the evaluation, the group acknowledged the significance of the dialogue with HR/VP Mogherini as a starting point for something bigger, with Anas (Jordan) highlighting: “We should be proud of five years of work which have led to this stage, and now we have a huge opening for the next level.”
- **Commitment to action.** Hella (Tunisia) and Sophie (Germany) informed the group that they had already initiated work on a communication campaign to capture and raise the visibility of positive stories. Jakub (Netherlands) confirmed that he will be disseminating to his organisation the UN SCR 2250 as a strategic opportunity for youth.
- **Ownership.** Rory (UK) underlined the level and feeling of ownership the initiative with HR/VP had already generated (“a process where I felt respected”), while Manal (Algeria) stated “I felt we really own the programme and how it will go in the future”.
- **Diverse voices.** Peter (Egypt) shared his personal commitment to working to deepen his work in engaging with “hard-to-reach” organisations in Upper Egypt, while Sara (Morocco) stated that it was now time to spread the programme to communities at large across the Mediterranean region.
- **Converging priorities.** Michelle (Spain) said that the encounter had created “empathy towards new and shared topics” as the basis for working together as a Euro-Med advocacy team, and Esmat (Egypt) underlined “I am really taking on how our challenges are the same at the Euro-Mediterranean level”.
- **Outreach potential.** While the inaugural dialogue was a closed-door event, it already demonstrated the potential for communication, with #YoungMedVoices global trending in Belgium, reaching 800,000 online accounts and an exposure to 6.7 Million users in less than 48 hours (twitter impressions).

According to the evaluation question on “How do you feel following the dialogue?”, the most common recurrent words were: “Proud”, “Hopeful”, “Inspired”, and “Committed”.

 **UNOY Peacebuilders** @unoy_peace · Mar 23
EU HR Mogherini at #YoungMedVoices #EEAS : "Tomorrow I want to go to Rome with the future in the eyes. You are this hope"

 **Tina Hočevvar** @Tinessah · Mar 23
Inspired, excited, committed, proud, ready.. these are reflections of #YoungMedVoices after the dialogue with @FedericaMog @Youth_Forum
↳ 2 ♡ 3

 **Hella Grichi** @hellagrichi · Mar 24
Back in Tunisia. Time for deeds! Thanks to #YoungMedVoices my spirits are uplifted. Thanks @AnnaLindh @eu_eas for making this possible!
↳ ♡ 1

Next steps and outcomes were also outlined in a series of follow-up communications:



HR/VP Mogherini launches pioneering 'Young Med Voices Plus' initiative: <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/23339/hrvp-moghe>



Cooperation agreement between the Anna Lindh Foundation and European Youth Forum: <http://www.youthforum.org/pressrelease/new-cooperation-framework-launched-by-the-anna-lindh-foundation-and-european-youth-forum/>



Announcement of EU collaboration on the first UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security: <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2017/03/announcement-eu-collaboration-first-un-security-council-resolution-2250-youth-peace-security/>



Mogherini: Investing in a Generation is key to the future of the EU and its Neighbourhood: <http://www.annalindhfoundation.org/news/future-europe-young-mediterranean-voices-inspire-eus-call-invest-generation>

About Young Mediterranean Voices

Young Mediterranean Voices is the region's flag-ship debate programme aimed at empowering young people to enhance a culture of dialogue and create a shared understanding with peers across the Mediterranean on how to address issues of common concern to their communities. The programme builds on its successful predecessor, Young Arab Voices, co-founded by the Anna Lindh Foundation and the British Council in 2011, and is being expanded with the support of the European Commission and a consortium of strategic partners including the World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid, the Centre for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) and World Bank Group, the Government of Finland, Friends of Europe, the Euro-Med Media Network, Soliya, Facebook, and MEDAC.

Young Med Voices Plus is an initiative of the EU's High-Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, to launch a parallel track aimed at reinforcing large-scale communication and advocacy actions with youth, and "opening all channels" to youth voice, agency and leadership in shaping public and media narratives.

For further information on the Brussels Dialogue:

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