

EUROMEDPLATFORM •
magazine

ISSUE NO.4 - JUNE 2008

THE EURO-MED YOUTH PLATFORM MAGAZINE



IN THIS ISSUE: NEW WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN > EURO-MED YOUTH PROGRAMME III > EURO-MED YOUTH PROGRAMME... THANK YOU > EXPLORING CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH EURO-MED > TARGETED MEETING, ISTANBUL > FALAFEL > ART IS A COMMON LANGUAGE > THE FEDERATION OF EGYPTIAN YOUTH NGOs > MEDA YOUTH PARLIAMENT > DOORWAYS FOR A EURO-MED FUTURE > ASSEMBLING VISIONS > PROJECT HOPE



Education and Culture DG

New windows of opportunities for youth across the Mediterranean

The first semester of 2007 has been an especially intensive period in the youth field on both sides of the Mediterranean.

On the one side, after a long process of consultations, negotiations and preparations, the brand new Youth in Action Programme is now up and running!

On the other side, the suspension is over and Euro-Med Youth is back, with a new, decentralised and deconcentrated management system!

Whilst ensuring continuity with its predecessor - the YOUTH Programme (2000-2006) - Youth in Action aims at mobilizing young Europeans' potential and at fostering their active citizenship with a renewed impetus and a series of new actions and features. As for the past, the ultimate goal is to provide an increasing number of young people with the unique chance to get involved in highly enriching, non-formal learning experiences.

Open to all young people without discrimination, Youth in Action features, among others, an enlarged age access (the Programme is open to the 15-28 year olds and in some cases even to the 13-30 year olds!) as well as a wider geographical scope, which opens up the possibility to cooperate with almost all the countries of the world.

The new action 3 - 'Youth in the World' - encourages cooperation among young people and youth organisations from the EU and beyond, with a special focus on the

neighbouring regions of the EU - the Mediterranean area, South-East Europe and Eastern Europe and Caucasus.

All the Mediterranean partner countries are eligible for youth exchanges and training and networking activities under Action 3.1 'Cooperation with the neighbouring countries of the European Union', but projects shall take place in one of the Programme Countries (EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey). If activities are to be hosted in one of the Mediterranean partner countries, then applications shall be submitted to the newly created Euro-Med Youth Units under Euro-Med Youth III.

Although management and financial rules may vary between these two programmes, which are managed by two different Directorate Generals of the European Commission (respectively DG EAC and DG AidCo), Youth in Action and Euro-Med Youth III are very complementary. The two DGs have been cooperating closely in order to ensure the maximum consistency between the two programmes and continuity with the past.

Cooperation has always been a key word in the history of Euro-Mediterranean relations and the Euro-Mediterranean relations in the youth field in particular have shown us that there are quite a number of actively involved stakeholders who are committed to making this cooperation a success.

Since its creation in 2003, the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform has been one of

these active stakeholders. Due to its geographical position, it has always played an important bridging role between the two sides of the Mediterranean, acting as a sort of 'central stage' for exchange, cooperation and networking in the region.

The challenge will be to keep up this role and ensure support to the numerous project promoters and potential beneficiaries interested in both the newly-born Youth in Action Programme and the reshaped Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme.

Thanks to these two Programmes new windows of opportunities have opened up across the Mediterranean. It's now up to you, the youth that makes the richness of the Euro-Mediterranean region, to explore them and take advantage of them!

Good luck!

Marzia Conte

Programme Manager
Euro-Med & Information Unit
Youth Programmes
European Commission DG
Education & Culture

Dear friends!

The Euro-Med Youth Platform magazine is back and revived after a long absence of over a year. But this doesn't mean we will provide less opportunities than before. The opportunities are there for you to take, for you to make use of, for you, the youth (at least at heart) out there to make your life more interesting and intriguing.



JUNE 2008

editorial



editor Amanda Zammit

info@euromedp.org

This magazine comes amidst a variety of new opportunities for young people which have come about through a number of initiatives in the Euro-Med region. 2008 also brings about the decentralisation phase of the Euro-Med Youth Programme III which aims at reinforcing partnership between the European Union and the Mediterranean partner countries. Euro-Med Youth Units in the MEDA region have been set up, applications have now been received, projects accepted and activities are underway. This gives youth coming from the Mediterranean countries the opportunity to become active in civil society.

The year 2007 also brought about the establishment of the Euro-Med Youth Parliament, an initiative which promoted the Barcelona Process and gave birth to a number of follow-up projects such as the Mediterranean Youth Parliament, and a Euro-Med Academy for Young Journalists.

Special thanks goes to the former officer in charge of the Platform Sharon Attard, who dedicated a lot of time in the creation of this magazine. The Euro-Med Youth Platform has embarked on a National Youth Federations Initiative for the MEDA countries which has started in Alexandria last December and which shall continue in June this year in Malta. The aim behind this initiative is to improve youth activity and cooperation at national level. June will also bring about the re-launch of the Euro-Med Youth Platform under its new Secretariat. Amongst other things, amendments to the website and database entry procedures will be done, a research of the new needs within the Euro-Med region, as well as increasing cooperation with the Euro-Med actors involved in the youth sector.

With all of these activities underway, it is now up to the young people, youth leaders, youth workers and stakeholders in the field of youth in the Euro-Med region to make use of the opportunities at hand.

Enjoy your read!

Amanda



cover photo: A. Saliba

PUBLISHED BY

Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform

HOSTED BY



EUPA, 36, Old Mint Street, Valletta VLT 1514
MALTA

CONTACT

[t] +356 2558 6142
[f] +356 2558 6139

CONTRIBUTORS

info@euromedp.org

WEBSITE

www.euromedp.org

DESIGN & LAYOUT

JP Advertising Ltd
www.jpadvertising.com

TRANSLATION

MSL Limited

THIS PUBLICATION IS SUPPORTED FINANCIALLY
BY THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY BUT DOES NOT NECESSARILY
REFLECT ITS OPINIONS OR THE OPINIONS OF
THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN YOUTH PLATFORM

* Editorial note: As of 4th May 2007, the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform falls under the European Union Programmes Agency in Malta, an independent authority set up under guidelines by the European Commission's DG Education and Culture.

The Euro-Med Youth Programme is a regional programme set up within the framework of the third chapter of the Barcelona Process entitled “Partnership in Social, Cultural and Human Affairs”

EURO-MED YOUTH Programme III

Ready to start!

Bernard Abrignani
Salto-Youth Euromed Coordinator
& RCBS Team Leader
abrignani@injep.fr

It promotes the mobility of young people and the understanding between peoples through three types of actions:

- Youth Exchanges
- Voluntary Services
- Support Measures.

Background

Euro-Med Youth I (1999-2001) and Euro-Med Youth II (2001-2004) were primarily run by the European Commission from the headquarters in Brussels. They were sub-delegated by the Directorate-General of EuropeAid to the YOUTH Unit of the DG Education and Culture (DG EAC) Euro-Med Youth III Programme, launched in October 2005 focusing on mobility, non-formal education and intercultural learning.

Its geographical scope comprises 35 countries: the 25 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom); as from 1st of January 2007 Romania and Bulgaria will also join the European Union and become eligible for Euro-Med Youth III; and the 10 Mediterranean partner countries, signatories of the Barcelona Declaration (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey).

Current context

The novelty of this phase is the **decentralised implementation of the programme**, the aim being

to reinforce the partnership between the European Union and the Mediterranean partner countries, to take action as closely as possible to the beneficiaries and to adapt to the diversity of national systems and situations in the field of youth. Applicants (project leaders) from the Mediterranean partner countries will directly apply for grants to their own youth national authorities, now responsible through the **Euro-Med Youth Unit (EMYU)** for grant awarding and the overall management of the programme.

Main actors

For the implementation of Euro-Med Youth III, the Euro-Med Youth Units (EMYU) of the Mediterranean partners will operate in collaboration with the following key actors:

- The **Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit** (RCBS, located in Marly-le-Roi, France) will provide institutional capacity building and coaching to the EMYU in relationship to their new role. It will also participate in the set up of the evaluation committees and to increase the visibility and dissemination of the regional programme.
- The **Delegations of the European Commission** in the respective Mediterranean partner countries are responsible for monitoring the EMYU, in co-operation with the Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit (RCBS). The Delegation also participates in the evaluation committees of project proposals as an observer.
- The **EuroAid Co-operation Office** in Brussels will supervise the RCBS and is the final responsible for the programme. The EMYU will closely collaborate with the other parties involved with the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and the





EU Youth in Action Programme:

- The **National Agencies** of the 'Youth in Action Programme' in the EU Member States;
- The network of the **European SALTO Resource Centres**, particularly **SALTO Euro-Med**;
- The Euro-Med Youth Platform based in Malta;
- The Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the area of Youth;
- The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures.

The funds for the Euro-Med Youth Programme are allocated from the MEDA Programme, the financial instrument of the European Union for the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

The overall objectives of the third phase of the Euro-Med Youth Programme

1. Fostering mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue among young people within the Euro-Mediterranean region.
2. Promoting young people's active citizenship and a sense of solidarity.
3. Enhancing the contribution of non-governmental youth organisations to civil society and democracy.
4. Contributing to the development of youth policy.

The specific objectives of the Programme

- Promoting the practice of fundamental values such as, respect, tolerance, and dialogue among young people from different cultural backgrounds.
- Combating prejudices and stereotypes that prevail across the Mediterranean and determine mutual perception.

- Providing non-formal intercultural learning opportunities for young people.
- Ensuring that opportunities for active participation are equally available to young men and women, and that gender balance is fostered in all actions.
- Giving young people opportunities to take an active part in the development of the society and to express their personal commitment.
- Contributing to the development of non-governmental organisations in the field of youth and enhancing their capacity by fostering exchange of information and good practices at regional, sub-regional and national levels.
- Enhancing the skills of young people including interpersonal skills, sense of initiative, creativity and solidarity.
- Promoting the acquisition of new skills and exchange of best practices among youth and those responsible for youth structures and youth policies.
- Developing sustainable partnerships and networks among youth organisations.

The thematic priorities

A number of key areas are considered central for the development of the youth sector at the Euro-Mediterranean level. The Euro-Med Youth III Programme will fund projects that promote one or more of these thematic priorities:

- Fighting against racism and xenophobia;
- Active citizenship;
- Gender equality;
- Minority rights;
- Heritage and environment protection.

Gender balance and inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities will be promoted as crosscutting issues of the programme.

Current situation

Concerning the Mediterranean partner countries and their Euro-Med Youth Units (EMYU) nine

countries out of ten will participate to the Euro-Med Youth Programme III and they signed their contract until 2008.

Unfortunately Egypt refused to sign, which means Egypt cannot host activities. With the new phase, Euro-Med Youth changes its procedures and will function on the basis of Call for Proposals to be launched by the different Euro-Med Youth Units. The first will be launched for 31 March 2007 (midnight).

There are strict rules governing the way in which contracts are awarded. These help to ensure that suitably qualified contractors are chosen without bias and that the best value for money is obtained, with the full transparency appropriate to the use of public funds. The procedures follow the one established by the European Commission for procurement under the relevant EC external aid programmes.

On 1st April, 8 countries were in time: Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

Unfortunately, Algeria was not. Nevertheless the Commission have accepted to defer the deadline to 1st November 2007 in spite of 1st December as the original rule envisaged. If Algeria is still not ready to present their work plan, their entry in the programme will be deferred to 1st February 2008!

Today, we know that 5 countries are ready to start for 1st June 2007: Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Turkey, and hopefully Syria. Algeria, Jordan and Tunisia will be on time for the next deadline: 1st November 2007.

Now we invite you to follow the evolution of the programme on our website:

www.euromedyouth.net

My first year of university was the beginning of my social activities. Actually, it was like a gate to my new life. I began to enjoy every moment of getting involved into society through NGOs. By the end of 2003, I started my journey with the Euro-Med Youth Programme, through youth exchanges, a multipliers training course and other training courses. For me it was an initiative to know more about 'the other', whom I only knew through the media or some cultural stereotypes. All that was quite useful for me, till I reached the most important part of my experience of the Programme - an EVS (European Voluntary Services) in Greece.

Shaimaa Bahaa El Din Hessen

Cairo, Egypt



Euro-Med Youth Programme... Thank You

I knew that I was the first Egyptian female to take part in EVS, and the second Egyptian to take part after an Egyptian guy who participated in EVS in Italy. That was a risk for me, and it was also very difficult to convince my family to allow me to live abroad alone for six months for the first time in my life, due to all our customs and traditions, and especially because we are considered as a conservative, religious family. But I did it.

It wasn't my first time travelling, but it was my first time staying abroad for such a long period with different people from different cultures, backgrounds and religions. I remember it was also my first time to see some nationalities, and it was definitely the first time for a lot of people there to see an Egyptian. I discovered that it's not only me who brought cultural stereotypes with me, because I had to face many other stereotypes over there. Some told me that they thought we still ride camels and live in tents in the deserts. They gave me the feeling that if they came to Egypt Cleopatra would be waiting for them in the airport, and King Tutankhamun would check their passports.

I still remember the first day I arrived at my home and met my flatmates (a German girl, an Estonian girl, and a Swedish guy). We spent all night talking and discovering things about each other.

In my first week, there was the election going on for Prime Minister. It was my first time to live such a political experience, especially since it ended with a great change that had not happened in Greece for a long time.

The organisation that I worked for was involved in the field of heritage protection and youth awareness. In my free time I also helped a French friend of mine that I met there in her future capital, which was about raising environmental awareness, especially for children. I enjoyed working with her so much, and as a result I realized the importance of child awareness. They are our future, or in other words 'today's seeds are tomorrow's trees'.

I have to mention how nice Greek people are. All that you have to do is learn some simple Greek words to have a place in their hearts. It was so easy to integrate into Greek society. However, I also cannot avoid mentioning that I met some problems from different people, especially during the arrival training with other volunteers. These problems were based on stereotypes. Some called me a fanatic, others called me a terrorist, all because I am Muslim. However, I found a great support from the majority, who gave me a push to continue. That was a very important lesson I got from EVS, which was to face my problems alone in an independent life, and without depending on my parents.



Spending six months in a foreign country gives you the chance to discover the real life of its people, to know more about their customs and traditions, and to be a part of their lives.

After coming back home from Greece, I worked more with different NGOs in various fields that had not drawn my attention before, such as human rights, women and children, and development in rural areas.

Now I have just had the honour to be one of four Egyptian participants in the first Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament in Berlin, and at the same time I am still exploring other useful Euro-Med Youth programmes.

Euro-Med Youth programmes. Thank you, you have changed my life for the better.

Exploring Cultural Diversity through Euro-Med



Euro-Med... a place where we can taste a bit from any culture in the Euro-Mediterranean area, and a stage where we can act together our common values, and a ground to share, improve and go through unique experiences.

Ayfer Erdogan



The Euro-Mediterranean Region has been the home of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity for centuries and it is this diversity that makes this region a place where civilisations meet, intermingle and new civilisations are born by means of this intersection. It has been this diversity that makes the Euro-Med Region so colourful, unique and a place and home for civilizations for centuries. However, diversity causes several problems when people don't show respect towards differences and build empathy between 'self' and 'the other'. Considering the current situation in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, we can see that there are several conflicts going on due to intolerance, racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and the existence of different ethnic groups, creeds and religions. This growing racism and intolerance affects the stability of this region in both political, economical and above all, social aspects. Furthermore, the violation of human rights as well as the backstage of women's role in society are the other crucial problems faced in this region.

Lastly, the environment and heritage protection is a significant issue when we consider the current situation of Euro-Med and the misuse of resources.

The Euro-Med Youth Programme tries to build a bridge between both sides of the Mediterranean sea, which is essential and of great significance to change the current frame of this region, which is either black or white, into a frame where a variety of colours meet making this frame a more colorful and peaceful place to live in. We as young people have this capacity and opportunity to change this frame and it is through Euro-Med Youth Programme that we can realize this change with the very idea of understanding, tolerance, and above all intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

The Euro-Med Youth Programme offers young people the opportunity to meet youth coming from different cultural backgrounds and build this bridge between European and Mediterranean cultures. It aims to sophisticate them with knowledge and skills on certain thematic fields and the technicalities of implementing new youth initiatives and youth projects in this program. The experience and knowledge gained through the Euro-Med Youth Programme is reflected not only in the participants' own viewpoints and perspectives but also in youth work and civil society through their role as 'multipliers'.

How to Build a Bridge between European and Mediterranean Cultures?

Intercultural and Inter-religious Dialogue through Euro-Med

Intercultural and Inter-religious dialogue is a must for social cohesion and integration and it is the most effective way for conflict resolution and for peace. The Euro-Med Youth Programme offers the opportunity for young people who come from different cultural backgrounds to come together and share, exchange ideas, experiences and good practices in their local community and work together with the aim of coming up with a joint piece of work. By bringing together young people from both sides of the Mediterranean, the Euro-Med Youth Programme acts like a bridge between European and Mediterranean Cultures breaking the stereotypes, eliminating prejudices and fostering intercultural understanding, dialogue, human rights education and active citizenship.

Think Global, Act Local!

Active Citizenship and Participation through Euro-Med

Only through active citizenship and involvement in the society, can we, as young people, exert our power on the society to change it for the better. Individual development is part of this change, however, and as long as we are not actively involved in the civil society and do not take action to make the change happen, the European values and awareness that we want to foster will remain as an ideal instead of a reality. It is through youth work, voluntary work and participation in NGOs that active citizenship and participation in the society can be realized. Before this experience, I had common stereotypes towards cultures thinking that there is a big cliff between European and Mediterranean Cultures and it is hard to share and understand each other due to cultural differences. Now that I have had the chances to meet young people from both sides of the Mediterranean, I can certainly claim; "We are more similar than different", and when we have the will, there is always a way to overcome the difficulties that come with cultural diversity. After all, isn't it the diversity among us that make each of us unique and the world we live in such a colorful place?



Targeted Meeting

ISTANBUL, Turkey 15th-19th November 2006

Networking meeting

Since its launch four years ago, the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform has actively worked to facilitate networking and to assist in the creation of sustainable Euro-Med Youth Networks. Through such networking for various youth initiatives in the region, it has become possible for youth groups and organisations to build on their existing capacities, increase participation on various levels, and share relevant information and good practices with one another in strengthening the work that they do.

The scope of the meeting in Istanbul, Turkey was to improve the capabilities of young people in the region involved in networking. During the meeting, the participants took stock of what had been achieved to date, analysed the tools available for networking, and developed skills useful for making better functioning networks. Shortly before the meeting, Bulgaria and Romania became included in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

agreement, and as a result we were able to include a participant from Bulgaria in one of our targeted meetings for the first time.

The trainer for the event, Mr. Francesco Mollace, stated that he would be using informal methods with the participants in order to help them explore the concept of Euro-Med networking using their own initiatives. The human relationship was considered as very important for this as it is what underlies any successful networking activity. During the next few days, the participants shared their past activities in the field of networking, explored the skills that are needed as part of a network, and gained a deeper understanding of what networking is in general.

In the open space technology towards the end of the meeting, the participants were given the opportunity to promote and share ideas for new projects, and to bring possible partners on board. A

number of suggestions for future projects were made, and the months following the meeting witnessed the growth and development of some of these initiatives. One of these initiatives is EMYAN, the Euro-Mediterranean Young Artists Network, serving as the voice for young artists in the Euro-Med region. Further information on the network is available on www.emyan.org.

The networking meeting in Istanbul also saw the launch of Euromedist, a youth organisation whose aims are to foster the Euro-Mediterranean partnership with specific projects which have not been done before. Euromedist also aims to increase civil society's role in youth policy development and implementation in the European and Mediterranean countries.

For information on any future meetings organised by the Platform, please visit our website www.euromedp.org

FALAFEL - Network of political youth organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean



Over 2005 and 2006, a group of youths from both sides of the Mediterranean gathered in a network meeting for political youth organisations. As a founding meeting, we organised a Contact Making Seminar in Berlin from 4th to 8th December 2006, in which we discussed the future aims of the network. The network aims at being a platform for political youth organisations to meet, exchange ideas, best practises and opinions and work together on the topics where we have a common aim. Topics such as peace, human rights and democracy are focused on to promote the participation of young people in decision-making processes and to learn about different cultures and opinions. We believe youth participation to be a

very vital topic for our network, for we have found out that the possibilities for youth participation are very different in our countries. However, in all cases they need to be improved. In some countries, our partners have no possibilities whatsoever to make the voice of young people heard and to participate in the decision-making processes, even if they directly concern young people. We believe that young people should be involved in all decisions, since it's not only the budget for youth clubs that has an impact on young people, but every policy, be it on climate change or the labour market, will affect young people. Still, youth organisations and young people often have no possibilities to voice their concerns, and we see it as our common aim

to work on this and improve the situation.

We want to involve political youth organisations from both sides of the Mediterranean. As 'political' we define 'policies' rather than 'politics'. This means that you don't have to be a youth wing of a party in order to fall under our target group, as long as you do policies. We also welcome individuals to join our network - they can play an active role even though the network defines itself as a network of organisations.

For December 2007 the network is planning its first youth exchange to be held in Bursa, Turkey. The topic will be peace and conflict prevention. We will deal with existing conflicts in the Euro-Med region, how these

conflicts affect our lives and how they can be solved in a peaceful way. Our aim is not only to learn about the topic. We want to bring young people from the region together - young people who are active in their organisations and like to meet people who face similar problems and challenges and together find ways of networking, tackling problems and joining forces.

You can also join the FALAFEL network and be part of our mailing list to share information, discuss issues, prepare events etc. You can join the network by sending an email to shay.even@gmail.com and ska@fyeg.org with a short description of your organisation. For more information about the network see www.falafelnetwork.net

Art is a common language

in our world and it's the most understandable one among the different cultures. The network is going to emphasize on art as a tool for communication, social change, education and mutual understanding by strengthening the relations between young people from the both sides of the Mediterranean. It will involve anyone who has an interest in art as an expression of feelings and emotions through online and offline meetings. Its aims are to spread peace in the region, and to create a broader level of involvement of individuals irrespective of their race and disabilities.

EMYAN will also be targeting civil society actors who are excluded from gaining intercultural experiences for some reason. Furthermore, it will promote art as a new communication tool between cultures, which transcends difficulties in communication due to language restrictions and beliefs. Moreover, the network will strive to build a realization of art as an expression of feelings through intercultural exchange.

EMYAN will be involved in several art activities and will propose discussions on art and its aesthetic environment. It will also work on promoting and protecting

young artists' professional, social and economic interests. The Network and its members will seek to influence topical issues involving young artists and cultural policy, such as funding, scholarships, mobility, etc. The network has already managed to make strong partnerships with different organisations and fundraisers that work in the supporting the mobility of young artists.

The structure of EMYAN is based on establishing national networks in each member country run by an appointed coordinator. The nature of the Euro-Med region and its fascinating cultures propose many applicable ideas to be set up.

The ongoing and upcoming projects proposed by the network are varied and interesting, and everyone is welcomed to take part.



The Federation of Egyptian Youth NGOs

Egypt, a country with a large population of nearly 76 million inhabitants, incorporates the biggest percentage of youth in the Middle East. Young people aged between 18 and 30 comprise 60% of Egypt's total population. Although these youth are the future leaders of their country, they face educational, social and cultural obstacles that prevent and discourage them from reaching for their dreams. The high percentage of unemployment diminishes their desire and ability to assume productive roles in society, and raises several other problems that could face the society as a whole.

At the beginning of the new millennium, a kind of youth movement started to appear in the world. Several youth initiatives and new programmes began targeting the youth and their leadership. At the same time, Egypt was not far away from that. Several youth initiatives and organisations were established and a common vision appeared, in which most of those organisations were led by young people to serve the young people in several fields (such as education, entrepreneurship, support, training, charity, health, awareness, employment, culture, and other various types of organisations where the main focus was Youth).

Those young people started to organise some events together in universities and culture institutions. Then in a youth meeting in the Goethe Institute in Cairo, the idea of establishing the Federation of Egyptian NGOs appeared, followed by a couple of meetings to set the strategies. The mission and the vision of this Federation is to gather all the active youth organisations that serve youth and are led by youth in Egypt. This was followed by the official registration procedures, which were finalised in 2006 from the Ministry of Social Solidarity. The Federation of Egyptian Youth NGOs was registered in January 2006 at the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity, and is considered the only official umbrella and hub of all Egyptian NGOs working in the area of youth development. The Federation was founded by 10 of the most active youth-led NGOs in Cairo, Alexandria and Minia, with the target to constitute all youth-related NGOs in Egypt.

The Federation's main objectives are: first, to build the capacity of its member NGOs; second, to coordinate the development efforts among its member NGOs; and third, to improve communication and coordination between the youth civil society (including NGOs and others) and other sectors like the donor, private and governmental sectors in their youth development activities. Since its establishment, the Federation is expanding to include other active youth NGOs in Egypt. It currently includes active and credible development-oriented youth-led NGOs:

1. Nahdet El Mahrousa, Cairo: www.nahdetmasr.org
2. Youth Association for Population and Development (YAPD), Cairo: www.yapd.org.eg
3. Egyptian Young Bankers' Association, Cairo: www.eyba-online.org
4. Entrepreneurship Business Forum, Alexandria: www.ebf.org.eg
5. Sustainable Development Association, Alexandria: www.sda-web.org
6. Dreamers of Tomorrow, Cairo: www.dreamersoftomorrow.org
7. Fat'het Kheir, Cairo: www.fat'hetkheir.org
8. Egyptian Association for Youth and Community Development, Minia: nageh_hosney@yahoo.com
9. Development No Borders (DNB) Association, Cairo: www.dnbegypt.org
10. AIESEC in Egypt, Cairo: www.aiesec.org/egypt
11. Meshwar Association for Community Development, Cairo: www.meshwar.net
12. Alashanek ya Baladi
13. AFCA: <http://www.afca.blogspot.com>

Since its inception in April 2005 as a concept, the Federation has become a hub that promotes linkages, opportunities and support to its member organisations and beyond. Its activities can be summarised in:

- Capacity Building activities: Youth NGOs and Activists' Capacity Building Workshop, Goethe Institute, Cairo, June 2006.
- Networking & Promoting Youth Civic Engagement: Yoam El Shabab, June 2005 & "Agaza Begad" event, Sawi Cultural Centre, July 2006.
- Legal consultancies for member NGOs through the partnership with Sharkawy & Associates law office.

The major project of the Federation recently:
EFG-Hermes Foundation for Youth Viability & Sustainability

The establishment of a **National Fund for the Institutional Development of Youth Initiatives** falls squarely within the objectives of the Federation. As a result, the Federation will play a key role in starting up, coordinating, and sustaining the fund. The Fund will be created through private sector contributions to an endowment, the annual interest of which will be utilised for financial support to NGO's*.

Goal

The main goal is to empower youth to be able to represent themselves well and address their problems, as well as those of their communities. The Fund aims to support and contribute to the growth and sustainability of an effective and vibrant Egyptian youth civil society, by providing the necessary financial and technical support to existing and emerging CSOs.

Objectives

More particularly the Fund aims at:

1. Improving the sustainability and professionalism of the Egyptian youth civil society through supporting social ventures/enterprises among other means.
2. Widening the circle and expanding the Egyptian youth civil society to ensure its inclusion and representation of the majority of youth, mainly more marginalised groups in society.
3. Promoting greater support and creating sustainable mechanisms for the Egyptian philanthropic and private sectors towards youth development.

International representation

For different local, regional and international workshops and events, the Federation is serving as a hub that is recognised by regional and international entities such as the League of Arab States, the Swedish Institute of Alexandria, the Anna Lindh Foundation, and the different Euro-Mediterranean programmes for representation in such events.

For further information, membership and partnership opportunities please contact:
Federation of Egyptian Youth NGOs
18, Mahmoud Bassiouni St., Downtown, Cairo, Egypt.
Tel/Fax: +20 2 2575 1888 Mobile: +20 10 522 8089
Email: info@efyngo.org
Website: www.efyngo.org

*Initial calculations estimate that an endowment fund of EGP 4 million, will result in an interest that covers the needs of around 30 NGOs.

MEDA Youth Parliament: a new initiative toward building a strong association

Wadia Ait Hamza



During the first ever session of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament in Berlin, that took place from the 26th of May to the 3rd of June 2007, the youth of the MEDA [MEDA is the name given to the Mediterranean partners countries in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Declaration)] countries decided following a resolution calling for the establishment of a parliament for the southern countries of the Mediterranean that signed the Barcelona Declaration. Still, the founding members do not exclude the possibility of having other countries joining such as Libya which is a key actor in the region.

MEDA Youth Parliament will be a counterpart to the European Youth Parliament. The founders see it a group of two regional organisations that will be grouped in the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament. In order to develop and enhance this newborn institution, a MEDA Youth Parliament seems to be one of the best opportunities for a continuity of the event, as well as a resource that will be managed by youth from the Mediterranean area for a better enhancement of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. The creation of the MEDA Youth Parliament will be an opportunity to foster and strengthen South-South dialogue and relations. It will also make it possible for youth across the region to become familiar with

international relations, political debate, democratic parliamentary procedure and policy-making. The first action was the creation of National Committees that latter chose their representative for the first activity that will be hosted by the national committee of Lebanon in Beirut on the 7th-9th of September 2007. The first activity will be the official launching of the MYP, which will be during a press conference. National EMYP/MYP Committees exist to promote the objectives of the EMYP as well as MYP in their country. It is basically an open forum for discussion of the fundamental issues linked to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and trying to enhance the role of youth in politics as well as in decision-making.

The general objective of the MYP will be:

- Creating a forum to foster and strengthen South-South dialogue and coordination;
- Establishing a think tank;
- Simulating a parliament;
- Coming up with resolutions and solutions to common problems affecting MEDA countries;
- Developing youth leadership; communication, critical thinking, and other skills; and
- Encouraging youth involvement in politics.

For more information please visit:
www.medayouthparliament.org

Doorways for a Euro-Med Future

Nader Houella Lebanon

The Euro-Mediterranean region is in the heart of our world. Multicultural, rich with many of the world's resources and opportunities, this region holds a great part of humanity's history. However, it remains surrounded with crucial challenges that will definitely affect its nearby future. As Euro-Med citizens, it's our responsibility to take daring steps, and now is the time.

For a region that suffers a long list of problems that range from human rights breaches to decades-old conflicts, a doorway to its future would definitely begin with empowering its younger generation. The Euro-Med youth have proven to be promising agents of change once they were given better training opportunities. Whether it was leadership skills, group dynamics, team building, project planning and other training programs, such opportunities are necessary for the youth to enable them to make a change in their local communities. Besides, we should never forget that there are many young individuals in the Euro-Mediterranean region that are deprived of their right to learn, and face many difficulties whenever they try to evolve. Another doorway towards a better future for Euro-Med would be giving the citizens of that region a

bigger role in the decisions affecting their lives. Citizens of the Euro-Med region, especially in countries where the level of corruption is high and where some minorities might be marginalised, should feel more involved in the decision-making process in their countries. For that to happen, a new relationship between Euro-Med governments and their citizens should be developed. They should be consulted and listened to when it comes to issues such as employment, health, education, safety, retirement and other socio-economic policies that may become burdening worries if not addressed properly.

But how is this possible? There's one tool that has proved to be very effective: the media. There is a need for more focused talk shows on social policies, increased promotion of local and regional socio-economic workshops and conferences. The Euro-Med civil society deserves more emphasis and appreciation from the media outlets that can influence and mobilize public opinion towards issues that matter to our region the most. After all, how can the civil society's hard work make a difference if it remains unheard of and sometimes neglected? Last May, I participated in

the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament in Berlin, Germany that gathered more than 100 people from around the Euro-Med region. Together we came up with daring resolutions promising projects that relate to our worries, fears and ambitions towards our own future. Together, we joined hands in an aim to pave the way for a future that we dream of and wish to live. We spoke out, teamed up, worked for long hours each day, danced and enjoyed a multicultural atmosphere that helped us develop new relationships that bridge the gaps.

Events like this should become annual at least, be better promoted and involve more young people from the deep grassroots of each Euro-Med society. It should also receive proper media coverage, in hope that more decision-makers would give us a listening ear and put our suggestions in their agendas.

By empowering the Euro-Med youth and shining a light on the efforts of the Euro-Med civil societies, the region will be able to properly and more efficiently address the problems facing it. Those steps are not only important, they are also very much possible. Let's get to work!

Last May, the first Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament was held in Berlin under the auspices of the German Foreign Ministry. More than 100 delegates from the countries of the EU, North Africa and the Middle East came together to discuss current issues of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation, to develop visions for a common future and to kick-start concrete projects to develop the Mediterranean partnership in the course of the Barcelona process.

Assembling Visions

The first Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament (EMYP) convenes in Berlin



In the course of the session - which was based on the methodology of the European Youth Parliament – participants were divided into committees, each of which discussed a specific topic, from migration and workers rights to the reciprocal perception the different regions have of each other, and how to overcome common prejudices.

The conclusions of these discussions were formed into resolutions, which were discussed, amended and voted upon in a parliamentary setting.

In preparation for the discussions in the committees, participants were put through a two-day teambuilding course by their moderators. This initial phase focused on co-operation, problem solving and trust to help break the ice between the participants and gain a strong basis from which to build the common visions for the MEDA area in the groups.

Teambuilding was concluded with an 'egg-

basket' competition, in the course of which the committees each had to construct a vessel which would protect 'their' egg from shattering after a two-storey fall.

This proved crucial during committee work, when, in some cases, values and world views collided. These needed to be resolved before being able to tackle the actual topic at hand – a lesson for all social leaders, as often enough, the failure to come to an agreement or compromise is based largely on opposing value systems that have not been mutually understood.

The EMYP, which was organized as part of the EU Presidency of the Council of the European Union, not only took the Barcelona Process another step forward by suggesting further steps and initiating new projects. It also presented an important starting point in overcoming mutual reservations between the neighbouring regions. By bringing together young people active in youth organizations in

both regions, a basis was laid for a deepened and meaningful future co-operation with the aim of reducing prejudice, trust-building and peaceful conflict resolution.

As one participant said: "It was so inspiring to see young people from countries that distrust each other so deeply working together, laughing together and agreeing on how to move forward together."

The session was initiated by the German Foreign Ministry, the Goethe Institute and the Heinz-Schwarzkopf Foundation together with partners from the Euro-Med region, and was carried out by organizers from the European Youth Parliament and the Goethe Institute.

The eggs the participants dropped during teambuilding can be seen as symbol of the fragile ties of trust that are growing between the Mediterranean and the European countries. Many eggs survived the fall. We hope that they will soon hatch.



Project Hope:

A Grassroots Initiative aimed at Young Palestinians



It is never easy growing up; especially for teens. Yet Palestinians face a world of difficulties their European counterparts could never even imagine. While European teens are preoccupied with such personal ‘crisis’ as what clothing to wear, what music to listen to and which parties to be invited to, Palestinian teens have heavier concerns. Not only do they have the concerns of any other teen but they have to deal with the problems of growing up in the midst of a bloody, decades-long conflict. As though teen angst were not enough.

At home many Palestinian teens face problems such as poverty, violence and the loss of a family member to prison or death. Just leaving the home can itself be dangerous. There is the threat of regular invasion by soldiers, being caught in a crossfire between soldiers and fighters, or caught in a pitched battle between stone throwing teens and heavily armed soldiers. School offers little escape, when it is safe to get there. Classrooms are overcrowded and many pupils suffer from a traumatic stress disorder that makes concentrating difficult. Often pupils did not sleep the night before because of a raid by soldiers on their neighborhood, or even their homes.

Even leaving their city or town is nearly impossible due to strict restrictions on movement from surrounding soldiers, checkpoints and roadblocks. Their future seems bleak with a rapidly shrinking economy and a society being torn apart by factional violence.

We at Project Hope (Humanitarian Opportunities for Peace and Education) believe this is no way to grow up. We are deeply and sincerely committed to making the lives of these young Palestinians better. Seven years into the Second

Intifada we still think it should be possible for children to be children, teens to be teens, and youth to be youth. Not only is this the humane way of acting, but the only chance for long-term peace and stability in the region.

Working out of the devastated West Bank city of Nablus, which is flanked by four large refugee camps, Project Hope is providing young Palestinians with an alternative to violence. Every month we provide hundreds of young Palestinians with the chance to participate in activities such as music, art, drama, discussion groups and language classes. This provides them with the chance to channel their feelings, frustrations and aspirations into constructive activities within a supportive group setting.

Every year Project Hope welcomes international volunteers from around the world to participate in its activities as instructors, tutors and mentors. They work and live alongside Palestinian colleagues. Activities led by foreign volunteers who are physically and emotionally uninvolved in the conflict provide a break to Palestinian children and youth from their difficult daily lives. Young Palestinians show an almost insatiable curiosity for the outside world which they are

cut off from. Foreign volunteers are a real-life window to this world. They bring life to languages for children and show the usefulness of learning another language. They give young Palestinians the opportunity and confidence to share their ideas and personal experiences. Open dialogue, whatever the topic, facilitates an exchange of ideas between cultures that both acts as an emotional outlet for Palestinian youth and helps to establish the foundations of mutual understanding.

The unique aspect about Project Hope's volunteers is that there are no stereotypes. Its body of volunteers is composed of all sorts of people from all sorts of backgrounds, from all ages, professions, religions, nationalities and creeds. Yet they have one common and binding principle where their ideals converge: to make the lives of ordinary children better. To this end they devote their time, energy, skills and knowledge.

Project Hope welcomes volunteer applications and project proposals from around the world. For more information visit www.projecthope.ps or email: projecthope@mail.com