

YOUTH POLICY – HERE AND NOW!



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Youth Policy here and now!

Introduction

The seminar “Youth Policy – Here and now”, took place at the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, 11-14 September, 2005. It was organised by the Ministry of Youth in Egypt, the Council of Europe – through the Youth Partnership with the European Commission - and the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs and the Swedish Institute in Alexandria. This report is a summary of the different sessions and questions discussed during the seminar. We hope it can serve as an informative background for future cooperation within youth policy development both in Europe and in the Middle East/Mediterranean countries. Young people are the future! And the present!

Background

Youth policy is progressively being acknowledged as one of the key factors and [an](#) important indicator for social and human development. However, the question is not so much about youth policy or not, but rather of which policy and how it is defined, implemented and monitored.

In the Middle East Region, a significant step towards developing common principles and standards was made at the Regional Seminar on National Youth Policies for the Middle East and North Africa, organised in Beirut by UNESCO with cooperation of UNICEF, Save the Children and the International Council on National Youth policy in December 2004. The aim of the seminar was to share experience in developing and implementing national youth policies. The experience and results of the seminar were taken into account in the preparation of this seminar and it undoubtedly had an influence on the participants from the Middle East region. The event definitely created a momentum, which the seminar we are documenting also benefited from.

This seminar therefore became the next step for young people, governmental employees, researchers and NGOs from Europe and the Arab world to meet and learn from each other, exchange experiences and identify challenges for youth policies. The seminar allowed for a deep discussion about the purposes, means and role of youth policy. The countries participating have all very different demographic structures, different histories of political democracy and also different approaches to youth policy. The seminar continued to develop a shared understanding of the importance of the role of youth policy and came up with ideas how to cooperate in the future and how to improve implementation of youth policies, both in Europe and the Arab world. The participants underlined also the value of such seminar in fostering intercultural cooperation and dialogue among professionals of youth policy. This is a pre-condition for any other type

of cooperation, especially in the broader context of Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation.

The development of the governmental bills on Swedish Youth Policy has met a lot of international interest during the last years. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, which is responsible for implementation of the policy, has been involved in as well as arranged study visits. Together with the Swedish government, NGOs and others there have been exchange of ideas between policymakers, youth workers and young people with other countries, for example Turkey, Chile and Palestine. The idea to arrange a seminar about youth policy in Alexandria emerged from these interesting experiences together with the cooperation Sweden has experienced through the Euro-Med Youth Programme and the Council of Europe where the question of living conditions for young people in Europe and in the MENA-region has been on the agenda for many years. Youth leaders and youth workers have met in exchanges, study-visits and training courses, and they have raised the need for exchanging experience about differences, challenges and achievements concerning youth policy in different countries.

In the seminar, representatives from seven countries participated: Sweden, Egypt, Palestine, Bahrain, Jordan, Slovakia and “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Each country had a delegation with three participants which also represented different levels in youth policy development: officials of governmental institutions involved in the definition and implementation of youth policy, representatives of national youth organisations and researchers actively involved in youth policy definition. Turkey was also originally invited and expected, but last minute personal problems prevented the delegation from attending.

Executive Summary

The seminar was a contribution to the youth policy developments and initiatives in the participating countries, and served to:

- Exchange practices of youth policy definition, implementation and monitoring
- Debate and exchange on the role and functions of youth policy in a democratic society
- Identify forms of youth participation and its role in developing cohesive youth policies
- Initiate dialogue and cooperation among youth policy practitioners in European and Middle East/Mediterranean countries
- Take stock of recent developments and initiatives in Europe and the Middle East regarding youth policy development.

The seminar outlined different steps in how to develop youth policy and identified six major topics for discussion:

Why do we need a youth policy?

There are a lot of challenges for young people today, both in Europe and in the Arab world. In Europe, there are a lot of factors affecting youth, such as a changing population structure, unemployment, the need to integrate ethnic minorities and distrust towards governmental institutions. In the Arab world, youth policies are not high on the agenda, despite the fact that young people are a majority of the population. Both Europe and the Arab world need to develop youth policies, and improve possibilities for influence, education, work and living conditions for young people. Youth policies represent, in many meanings, the way that a government envisions the future of its society and, increasingly, the present of its youth.

In Egypt, to illustrate problems facing Arab countries, there are three imminent problems regarding youth policies: a lack of cooperation by several ministries in youth policies (for example health, education and employment), the distrust of young people toward governmental authorities and the huge unemployment facing young Egyptians. Egypt has not yet a youth policy in terms of a unified document, and the country is also in the process of creating a National Youth Council (replacing the Ministry of Youth), where young people can be able to influence decisions.

What is the definition of a youth policy?

A national youth policy is a declaration of the commitment a country gives to its young people. It should be based upon national dialogue and a fruitful partnership of relevant stakeholders (i.e. partners). A youth policy shall, in concrete terms, define objectives, strategies, concrete steps, target groups, timeframe, monitoring and evaluation.

But one must also define youth policies in broader terms: What is a good society for young people to live in? Who is young today? What impact does globalization have on young people? Mr. Peter Lauritzen from the Council of Europe was asking those questions of great importance.

How can youth participation be organised?

A representative from the European Youth Forum (EYF) talked about how the organisation works to bring young people together in order to create a platform for participation in policies concerning young people. The EYF consists of 90 organisations: national youth councils and non-governmental organisations. Young people and their organizations should have a key role in the process of developing and monitoring youth policies. Very often, that role is not foreseen, it has to be fought and defended by the youth representatives. It is also important to constantly press that young people are a resource, not a problem.

A representative from a youth organisation in Egypt talked about the situation for youth organisations in the country. A huge change has occurred during the past ten years.

The main obstacles for NGOs in particular and participation in general, is financing, dependency on volunteers, the NGO law in Egypt and the lack of trust. Also, the political climate in Egypt does not encourage political participation. But there are many hopes for the future development for NGOs, and in particular for the role of the newly created National Youth Council. A very successful Youth Camp was organised in Sharm el Sheikh (by UNICEF and the Ministry of Youth) where young people came together and discussed the national youth policy.

In Sweden, the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) and its member organisations frequently make public statements on important questions.

How do you implement and then monitor the outcome of a youth policy?

The National Board for Youth Affairs in Sweden talked about the instruments for implementation and monitoring. When implementing a youth policy, it is important to have clear objectives and define the target group. It is necessary to perform regular evaluations of the outcome of a particular youth policy. In Sweden, the current system for follow-up for youth policies is built on sector specific goals. The two main objectives are that young people should have “genuine access to welfare and genuine access to power”. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs collects statistics from relevant authorities and compiles it, in order to describe the realities of young people and report it to the government. Indicators, quantitative data based on frequent analysis makes it possible to follow the development of the living conditions of young people. In Sweden, the 290 municipalities have the main responsibility for implementing youth policies at a local level.

Cooperation for the future

There are many programs focusing on youth in the Mediterranean region! The Euro-Med Youth Programme (the European Commission); the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Council of Europe are all engaged in different programmes for young people. Youth policy matters, and cooperation for this purpose, will hopefully acquire a greater relevance in the future of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

What to do next?

The most important conclusions involved pressing for more focus on youth policies, media campaigns, intensified research, research databank and statistics and reaffirm the importance of cooperation between different stakeholders; policymakers, researchers, NGOs, youth workers and others.

Why a Youth Policy here and now?

A youth policy is an important investment for the future. The knowledge we get about young people through research gives a fragmented image of what it is like to be young in the world of today. In fact, it is nearly impossible to describe youth as a separate social group; in all our societies, young people belong to different, social, economical and cultural realities. We know, for instance, not so much about what a “normal” life for a young person is about, but at the same time as we are clearly aware of the different problems that affect young people, for example unemployment. What we also know is that it is important to be able to have a good life when you are young in order to have faith in the future. A good life can be described as a good standard of living, possibilities to get a job, to be able to study, have good relations to family and friends, health and peaceful surroundings. All together this in turn will affect other choices made in life.

Why a youth policy?

Speaker: Mr. Per Nilsson, Director General of the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs.

Mr. Per Nilsson is Director General of the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, a governmental authority that works within the areas of leisure and associative activities and international youth programmes, stimulate the development of municipal youth policy, coordinates and follow up the objectives of the National youth policy.

Mr. Nilsson stated that in order to give young people possibilities to a positive development there is a need for cooperation between different actors, both on national and international level and further:

-Society today is in need not only of technical innovation, but more importantly, social and political innovation. In a nutshell, we have to learn from and about each other.

Mr. Nilsson listed the challenges for youth policy that Europe faces right now:

- The population structure is changing. Europeans are growing older and older and they are having fewer children. (Between 2000 and 2020, the proportion of the population between 65 and 90 years old is estimated to rise from 16 to 21 per cent of the total population in European Union, whereas the 15 to 24 year old people will slip to 11 percent from 12,4 per cent).
- The European societies need to involve youth earlier in the functions of society.
- A trend (or is it an effect of structural changes in the labor market?) is that young people are studying for longer periods and entering the work force later and later thereby prolonging the “youth period”.
- Political and administrative institutions are dominated by people in the 40+ age category.

- An increasing part of the young population in Europe comes from cultural and religious minorities. This increases the need to integrate youth from different cultural and religious backgrounds into the functions of the society. The integration must also take into account young people's opportunities to educate themselves, and to enter the work force within the European Union.
- Young people in Europe today are more flexible and focused on individual needs. The traditional organization of life in terms of education, career plans, marriage and family, are no longer standardized.
- Surveys among young people in Europe reveal distrust towards traditional international institutions, much because of their little interest in questions related to youth. Some of the effects of globalization are embraced by youth, for example: like cultural pluralism, travel opportunities and use of information technology.

Some of these challenges are common between both Europe and the Arab world, for example difficulties in the labor market and distrust towards international and national institutions. Others are different. In Europe 12 per cent of the population is between 15 – 25 years. In the Arab countries it's even more, 60 – 70 per cent. What about their future and their possibilities to work, to have education and good living conditions?

Case study Egypt: overview of youth policy problems

Speaker: Dr. Safei Eddin Kharboush, Advisor to the Minister of Youth in Egypt

Dr. Safei Eddin Kharboush focused on the recent development in youth policy in Egypt and the Middle East. Dr Kharboush stated that it was quite recently an increased interest in youth policy issues in the Arab countries could be noticed, especially after a seminar organised by UNICEF in Beirut in December 2004. This encouraged Egypt to organize a seminar in Sharm El Sheikh (summer 2005), where nine Arab countries attended. Dr Kharboush underlined the benefits of cooperation:

- The cooperation between Arab and European countries is very important, and it is important that it will continue to be enhanced. Many Arab countries now have an idea of their youth policy development at this point, and this gives opportunities for better interaction.

Dr. Kharboush pointed out that youth policy differs from other public policies, as it includes many policy areas and therefore demands cooperation between several ministries (such as education, health and employment). This cooperation – or lack of cooperation – is a problem in the planning and implementation stages of youth policy in a country. Another problem is the distrust many young people feel towards public or official institutions.

- It is crucial that this distrust is eliminated. In this light it is important that young people have their own organizations and that there will be forums for discussion of their views and policies. The government has to work together with these non-governmental

organizations (NGOs). The private sector should also be encouraged to support young people.

Egypt has not yet a youth policy in terms of a unified document. However, different parties and NGOs have helped the Youth Committee at the NDP (National Democratic Party) with drafting a National Youth Policy paper. The document will be discussed at the National Council with young people participation. Equal representation is guaranteed, as also Christian youth organizations are invited. The draft of the youth policy will then be submitted to parties and civil organizations. After discussion and the implementation of action plans, a final draft is to be adopted by all ministries involve in implementation.

- The role of the National Youth Council is not yet clear, said Dr. Kharboush.¹
- A presidential decree is expected to start the implementation phase. What may impede implementation are the multi-level organization and the ability to incorporate extra-government bodies into governmental work.
- The Council is open to any Egyptian group without discrimination. Most young people in Egypt have high hopes for the new Council, which I think will help in developing a strategy for youth policy development.

Dr. Kharboush stated the main priorities for the Egyptian youth policy: integration of youth issues into related national policies, empowering youth (and especially young women), increasing youth participation, eliminating discrimination of youth and decentralisation of youth related issues.

Unemployment is the biggest problem facing Egyptian young people. One of the initiatives of the Ministry of Youth to combat this problem will be to convert 4400 youth centers into productive units, with the help of the Social Fund for Development.

Identifying challenges related to Youth policy - outcome of group discussion

The participants from the seven countries were engaged in different working groups during the seminar. Here is the outcome of the dialogue about common challenges that the participants identified as related to youth policy development.

- Overlap between government ministries/organization and youth policy and lack of cooperation between ministries
- Government inefficiencies
- Financial challenge: Many countries rather put money into sports activities but not into writing documents etc.
- Youth's skepticism: Lack of cooperation between young people and government due to mutual lack of confidence; building trust will need time
- Lack of evaluation, measuring impact and follow-up
- Involving youth who are not involved in NGOs: How to reach reluctant youth?

¹ Due to a governmental reshuffle in Egypt in January 2006, the Ministry of Youth has been abolished. Its tasks have been taken over by the newly created National Council for Youth. At the time of the seminar, in September 2005, the Ministry of Youth was the leading governmental body responsible for youth.

- Finding the means or platform for NGOs with a youth focus to express themselves and have a voice
- Improve information exchange and access to information between stakeholders
- Youth policies must be changed according to a changing social reality
- Empowerment of stakeholders (skills, resources and political support)
- Legal support to youth policy (institutional)
- Decentralization of Youth Policy (strengthening local interaction, participation, decision-making, cooperation)
- Youth research
- Inclusion / Diversity
- Demography
- Definition of youth
- Implementation
- Continuity / Coordination of efforts
- Young people must be seen as a resource
- Unemployment

Definition of Youth Policy

It is important to define youth policy in order to be able to set up goals and objectives, as well as for evaluation. Youth policy can not stand alone. Cooperation is a key word.

Feed-back from the Regional Seminar organized by UNICEF on “National Youth Policies for the Middle East and North Africa Region”, Beirut (December 2004)

Ms. Amal Salam Al Dossari from the National Youth Strategy and Focal Point, Bahrain, gave a sum-up of the seminar organized by UNICEF in Beirut. In this seminar, nine Arab countries presented their Youth Policy programs and shared experiences in this field. The visions were not unified. One problem that was discussed at the seminar concerned the perception of age. In some countries you are “young” up to 35 years.

- Each country defines the age of who is young differently: 15-24 (UNICEF) or 15-30 in Arab countries. This means that the percentages of young people differ from country to country, said Ms Salam Al Dossari.

In Beirut, a definition of youth policy was stated:

“A national youth policy is a declaration of the commitment a country gives to setting and meeting the priorities and development needs of its young men and women and clearly defines their role in society and the responsibility of that society to the young people themselves.

Yet the National Youth Policy (NYP) is not a youth movement, and is in need of political commitment. It is based upon national dialogue and a fruitful partnership, since the role of stakeholders is imperative throughout the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. These should include the media, relevant government ministries, NGO's, international agencies, the young people themselves, the private sector and any other concerned body... The most important component for success is to include young people in the entire process.”²

The seminar also stressed the importance to outline a National Youth Action Plan that includes the following components:

- Specific policy objectives
- Strategies, programs and projects
- Activities and concrete steps

² “Regional Seminar on National Youth Policies for the Middle East and North Africa Region – Analytical Report” , Beirut, December, 2004.

- Target population as stemming from needs assessment and surveys
- Expected outputs and impact
- Responsible agencies – who can communicate with young people
- Supporting stakeholders
- Timeframe
- Resource implications and sources: financial, structural and human
- Impact indicators and measures of progress and success

There are five challenges faced by MENA countries:

1. Cultural and social obstacles
2. State institutions lack the capacity to undertake the NYP and its programs
3. Lack of political commitment
4. Difficulties to promote agreement and networking
5. Inability to evaluate the NYP

Approaches and tools for development include:

- Consultation
- Media involvement
- Formulation, monitoring, implementation and evaluation
- Partnerships between the government, young people, the private sector, development agencies and the media.

Participation of young people

- Is a right based on international conventions and commitments,
- Ensures that programs are appropriate,
- Challenges key obstacles regarding negative perceptions,
- Enhances their self-esteem, thus improving the life of society.

Role and Function of Youth Policy

Speaker: Mr. Peter Lauritzen, Council of Europe

Mr. Peter Lauritzen put many questions in focus: What is a good society for young people to live in? What is good education? What is the relation between the individual and the society or the family? The answers to these questions vary between countries and cultures. Sometimes the struggle for young people is for not more than survival, cultural and social production, the building of a nation, modernization and industrialization, ecological reform, social justice, development and democracy or human rights. These are not exclusively European questions, said Mr. Lauritzen.

It is often said that young people is our future, and that is true. But young people want the present and not the future. Young people and children are indicators of the future.

Just as the fact: “you cannot not communicate”, “you cannot not have a youth policy”.

- You have a youth policy either by neglect, by default or by intention.

Who is young today?

-Young people are better term than youth, but what is their age? In Europe it is 12 or 13 years up to 29 years. The reason for pushing the age limit higher is due to unemployment, which prolongs dependency. Unless you're independent financially you are not an adult. On the other hand, all kinds of activities start earlier now due to the fact that the age limit for the definition of “young” extends up as well as down.

The trends of young people are related to how society develops, for instance related to demographic development in Europe and this affects the questions that come in focus, but also change the living conditions and the opportunities for young people:

- Due to the fact that unemployment has increased, reliance on social systems has increased. Yet welfare systems are less responsive due to the aging societies in the Western world. Therefore the role of the family is increasing again, especially in terms of education.

Mr. Lauritzen stressed the importance of an integrated youth policy:

- Youth policies have to respond to many challenges: inequality of educational opportunities, violence, health risks and protect young people from alcohol. Many member countries in the Council of Europe have a one-dimensional youth policy focusing on one item (i.e. education / welfare / cultural). The Swedish example is better, where the youth policy is integrated with all concerned ministries involved. Young people are being viewed as a resource, and not a problem. Youth policies cannot stand alone but have to be linked to many other policies. It is a huge challenge that demands understanding on the governments' behalf and trust. But who is the driver? This is where many governments fail, due to organizational problems.

“Management by objectives” is the new trend in youth policies, being set with time frames, said Mr. Lauritzen. Governments must provide education to their young people, in order for them to keep up with globalization and competition. What are the opportunities, in specific, that public institutions should offer?

- Access to new technologies, career guidance, information, health , housing, work, mobility, justice, youth, rights, citizenship, sports, exchanges, and safe environment should be articulated in youth policies, emphasized Mr. Lauritzen.

The stage of formulating the youth policy is the most important, fundamental and difficult stage, as there are different views in different countries. Mr. Lauritzen said that the involvement of youth at an early stage is important, in order for young people to set initial guidelines and take into account their comments.

Youth participation

How the society treats young people gives us signs of what kind of a society we will have in the future. The influence and participation of young people are core prerequisites for an effective youth policy. Society, in every level, must invite young people to take part and see the possibilities in their capacity and scope for taking responsibility. Youth organisations play a crucial role here.

Innovation and challenges - The European Youth Forum

Presenter: Ms. Marta Escribano Carrasco, European Youth Forum.

Independently established by youth organizations, the European Youth Forum (YFJ) is made up of nearly 100 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organizations (INGYO), which are federations of youth organizations in themselves. It brings together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe, organized in order to represent their common interests. Representation, internal democracy, independence, openness and inclusion are among the main principles for the functioning of the European Youth Forum and its Member Organizations. The European Youth Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in the shaping of Europe and the societies in which they live, and in improving the living conditions of young people as European citizens in today's world.

-It is a platform for young people to get full participation in order to give young European citizens an important role in the shaping of Europe, said Ms. Escribano.

The European Youth Forum also has partners from other continents, beyond the scope of the European Union. There are certain criteria for membership, for example: the organization must be democratic. It is necessary to become an observer member to get full membership in the platform. YFJ also works on an international level, for instance it helps other regional youth platforms in other continents and their National Youth Councils and IYGNOs with coaching and help them to search for funds.

- The main task for the European Youth Forum is promoting youth participation and to active citizenship in the civil society.

How do YFJ reach and involve young people that are not part of any youth organisations?

- The main key is education, formal and non formal. But in order to promote participation of young people joint actions from the different systems are needed: schools, family youth organisations and civil society. It is a reality nowadays that the main challenge is to become citizenship as much active as possible to assume a strong role in the development and success of our societies, said Ms. Escribano.

- Working globally should mean working locally in the first place, in order to create a strong national policy, emphasized Ms. Escribano. We need to educate youth and elders that young people are resources and never problems. It is important to share information and create contacts with networks and work together. Cooperation is important to get a participatory democracy or just to have a better world.

Government recognition of youth organizations and ideas at a decision making level is an opportunity for young people to work with policymakers and for policy makers to improve the quality and the reality of their work, as well to enrich their points of view.

- We don't need to agree on everything, but the discussion itself is very important.

The European Lisbon Strategy aims to create Europe a region which economy is based on knowledge, starting 2000 to 2010. The strategy, after its mid-term revision in 2005, has special policies for young people in employment, which is the European Youth Pact.

- This European Youth Pact gives the opportunity to strengthen more powerful youth policies, which need to correspond and develop on all levels: national, global and local, said Ms. Escribano.

Regarding the work of YFJ in the Middle East, it is important to mention the Middle East Youth initiative, which will start in 2006. The main aim of this initiative is to contact youth organizations and establish cooperation between them and the member organisations of the European Youth Forum.

Examples of Youth participation: Egypt and Sweden

Egypt

Mr. Ehab Abdou, Nahdet el Mahrousa (NGO), Egypt

Mr. Abdou described the situation for youth organizations in Egypt:

- Today there is a vibrant civil movement in Egypt. This was not the case in the 1990s due to several reasons; youth organizations were either considered to be against the government or had a more religious aspect. Policy-making was not on the map.

According to Mr. Abdou, there are mainly four challenges for the NGOs in Egypt:

- Financing (local funding is very weak),
- Dependency on volunteers (and there are too few),
- The NGO law is impeding and amendments were disappointing,
- The lack of trust between youth NGOs.

What are the obstacles for youth participation, especially in political parties?

- The political system does not produce enthusiastic people. Freedom of expression does exist, but political parties are kept small and political participation is not encouraged. NGO bodies are not strong enough yet, but emerging. Slowly things will change, Mr. Abdou believes:

- At my organization, Nahdet El Mahrousa we voted to select “My responsibility as an Egyptian” as a slogan to mobilize young people. We can’t assume that no one wants to do anything.

What are the main activities of NGOs in Egypt?

- Arrange social activities, give mentoring sessions for young graduates, exchange experiences with young professionals in private businesses as well as hold awareness sessions about political issues.

Many positive trends and developments in Egypt can be identified:

- New NGOs are being formed and there are hopes that the creation of the Egyptian Youth Council will be a voice by youth heard by policy and decision-makers. On the regional level, Arab efforts are being mobilized. The EU is helping NGOs to empower Arab youth. The UN together with the Arab League is forming a network with Arab countries.

The Sharm El Sheikh Regional Arab Youth Camp on National youth policies, Aug 2005
Speakers: Ms. Amira Hossam and Mr. Mohammed Yassein (key facilitators at Regional Arab Team Camp on national youth policies at Sharm El Sheikh)

The Sharm El Sheikh Youth Camp was organized by UNICEF and the Egyptian Ministry of Youth under the objective of providing young people from different 9 Arab countries with a chance to discuss the National youth policies in Arab region and gain comprehensive knowledge on developing cross sectorial youth policies

It was a unique experience, from youth to youth, as a vigilantly selected group of youth were given the responsibility of being key facilitators of the training sessions on developing cross sectorial youth policies.

- The idea was that young people could come together and brainstorm and discuss the national youth policies in Arab region, said Ms. Hossam.

A three-day capacity building training involved developing cross sectorial national youth policies and preparation course for the young key facilitators.

The Sharm El Sheikh Youth Camp made Ms. Hossam, Mr. Yassein and all young key facilitators interested and eager to be more involved in youth policy development.

- Instead of waiting for others to act, we founded a youth initiative ,called the “**Third Eye Team**” that took upon ourselves the responsibility for advocating for increased youth

involvement in developing of the Egyptian National Youth Policy. We are holding training sessions and programs for young people on youth participation and developing cross sectorial youth policies to be able to partner not as a recipient.

To indicate to what extent we are enthusiastic, we found out about this seminar in Alexandria through the Internet and went to UNICEF to express the interest in attending it and so we are with you to share our experiences, said Mr. Yassein.

Sweden

Mr. Ninos Maraha, National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations, Sweden.

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, the LSU, was founded in 1949 to increase contacts between young people in Eastern and Western Europe. Today the LSU operates as a platform on different matters, on international as well as on national topics. Through this cooperation, the member organisations can share experiences, run projects and influence society. The LSU is a coordinating body for almost 100 Swedish youth organisations. The members come from all kinds of organisations, from the party political youth organisations, student movements, religious organisations, environmentalists to chess players.

Mr. Maraha explained that the objectives of LSU, as a coordinating body, is to: be a forum for matters of common interest in youth organisations, provide a network for both international and national organisations dealing with youth cooperation and work on the basis of the UN declaration on Human Rights and Children's Rights.

- LSU works on issues of common interest for young people. LSU and its member organisations cooperate through meetings, seminars, conferences and lectures with politicians and researchers.

- LSU gathers representatives and input from member organizations. There has to be openness between LSU and the member organisations and we make regular evaluations of how the cooperation is working. When LSU makes official statements on issues concerning young people, this is a guarantee of voice of youth, said Mr. Maraha. One question that LSU currently has on the agenda is to lower the voting age from 18 years to 16 years. What is the philosophy behind this and what is the political and public response?

- The idea is not totally new, at least not in Sweden, explained Mr. Maraha. LSU think it is the right way, as the participation in democratic elections has been decreasing in the past few years. It is therefore important that people are educated at an early stage about democracy. It is not a controversial step in our view. Sweden does not have a high percentage of young people, and therefore they need to be given access to influence.

Regarding funding, approximately one third of LSU's funding are provided through the Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Board for Youth Affairs. Only a smaller part comes from membership fees and other contributions. Two thirds of the funding is given on project basis by different funds. There is an ongoing dialogue about the support to NGOs.

- We want to stay neutral towards the government and maintain our responsibility towards the member organizations, said Mr Maraha.

Other examples of Youth participation

*Example from **Slovakia**: 85-90% of the young people have never participated in formally organised activities delivered by institutions or established organisations for different reasons. A program was created to help community organisations to re-think their way of providing youth services and attracting young people. Youth clubs started to work as meeting points for youth to spend time, discuss issues they were interested in and thus participate. For many it was the first time.*

*Example from **Palestine**: Over 300 organizations exist but only 6% of young people are members. Summer camps attracted youth as trainers or leaders; schools were used as activity centres in the afternoons. Youth initiatives and creative ideas have to be supported.*

*Example from **Jordan**: Young people wanted a computer centre. It turned out to be an awareness campaign as there already were lots of computer centres but all they needed was a map to find them. This shows the importance of working with young people to be able to see what their opinion is regarding services.*

*Example from **Former Republic of Macedonia**: After situation analysis of youth needs and problems which was supported with credit of World Bank (WB) in 2003, the process of creating the National Youth Strategy of Republic of Macedonia started. This process was facilitated by Agency of Youth and Sport (AfYS) of Republic of Macedonia. In October 2003 Youth Council-Prilep and other 4 youth organizations applied project “Youth National Action Plan” to Institute for Sustainable Community (ISC) Macedonia and USAID. The idea of this project was to contribute in creation and development of National Strategy for Youth in Macedonia, to mobilize youth NGO’s, other Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and Institutions interested in youth issues.*

The project started in January 2004 with establishment of Coalition of Youth Organizations “SEGA”. Coalition SEGA has had 29 youth organizations and more than 40 organizations that supported this process. SEGA organized 2 Youth NGO’s Forums aimed to define youth needs and problems and to suggest key point actions for youth in National Youth Strategy.

The AfYS organized 3 NGO’s Forums for discussions regarding the youth needs and concerns taking in consideration research in Macedonia in a document called “Study of youth trends” and preparation of the draft document of National Strategy for Youth (NSfY).

Coalition SEGA was a partner in the process of public debate considering the First Draft document of NSfY. For this purpose 15 public debates were organized in 15 of the biggest cities in the country with involvement on all stakeholders on local level with focus on youth participation in this process. Output of these debates was more than 130 suggestions regarding the Draft version of NSfY.

In September 2004 Coalition SEGA published a publication called “Contribution of Coalition of Youth Organization SEGA in preparing the National Strategy for Youth”. In this publication, Coalition SEGA suggest NSfY to be more focused and act on this priorities: protection of human rights, creation of legislations for youth participation in

society on different levels, creation of conditions for youth organizations, education and training for children and youth, support of processes of youth employment, development of creation and life skills of youth, development of education processes etc. This document also has concrete action plans regarding youth issues.

Implementation and Monitoring of Youth Policy

How do you successfully implement a youth policy? It is important to define the target groups, objectives and visions. Then there has to be an actor that will implement the policy and thereafter identify a separate body to regularly monitor the results. As youth policy per definition involves many different policy areas, it needs cooperation to be successfully performed. From national level, among ministers and ministries down to local level and different institutions as for example schools, health services and employment services.

The Swedish Experience: Structure, Resources, Political Mandate, Competence, Coordination and Challenges

Speakers: Lisa Modée, the National Board for Youth Affairs, Sweden and Tor Ohlsson, youth coordinator from the municipality of Lund, Sweden.

Sweden has over 30 years experience of Youth Policy, yet only recently it has become an independent political field. In 1990s, a system for cooperation between governmental authorities was created. The important part of the Swedish Youth Policy is to see young **people as a resource for society**. Young people will not only be valuable as adults but are already valuable, and can contribute to society's development through their youthfulness and their knowledge of what it is like to be young.

Ms. Modée briefly described the development. After long chain of events, which started in 1936 with governmental support to municipal youth centers, the National Youth Council was formed in 1959, which became a governmental authority in 1979. Sweden's first Youth Minister was appointed in 1986. In 1995, Sweden joined the EU and was as a member able to influence the White paper on youth policy that was adopted by the member states in 2001.

The first governmental bill on Youth Policy in 1994 focused on young people as a resource that should have an influence in society. It also pointed out the necessity of including all ministries concerned with youth related issues.

- The cross-sectorial approach is based on the understanding that a youth policy involves many policy areas: Labor, education, public health, culture, leisure, gender, integration, etc. Another important matter is to constantly have a critical eye. In 1998-99, the Council of Europe evaluated and criticized the Swedish youth policy for neglecting problems and ethnic groups.

- **It's necessary to perform regular evaluations of the youth policy** and the outcome. According to the results of evaluations, the Swedish government has changed and improved the system.

Currently the third government bill on youth policy, which was adopted by Parliament in 2004, is being monitored. It replaced the second bill on youth policy, adopted in 2000, which had two major weaknesses; the policy was neglected by other ministries and some of the objectives were not measurable.

- The current system for the follow-up on the living conditions for young people is built on sector specific goals. The two main objectives are that young people shall have genuine access to welfare and genuine access to power, and our task on the National Board for Youth Affairs is to collect statistics from other authorities and compile it in order to describe the realities of young people and report it to the government, said Ms. Modée. Sweden is using statistics to make politics.

There are challenges. The demographic trend in the European countries shows that there are fewer people, who are going to provide for a rising number of older people with much better economic standards.

- Young people will really be needed – but to what cost? If a large group of older people will keep all benefits, does it mean that young people will serve as their providers?

Economic and social injustice is one of the most important political challenges for two reasons, said Ms. Modée. It creates problems for young people here and now due to less education, unemployment and health risks. It creates problems in the long run – a rift between those who have and those who have not. Research shows that economic and social weaker groups in a society take less part in democratic elections.

- How we treat young people is important and if how we solve problems connected to their living conditions creates the heritage we give to the generation growing up, and it gives us a sign of what kind of a society we will have in the future.

The ministries involved in Youth Policy are: Education and Culture; Finance; Employment; Justice; Health and Social Affairs; Agriculture, Food and Consumers Affairs and last the ministry of Sustainable Development. Together with 16 governmental authorities and the National board for Youth Affairs, it creates a system for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Indicators, quantitative data based on frequent analysis will make it possible to follow the development of young peoples living conditions according to sex, ethnic background, education and socio economic background: for example the number of unemployed, the number of students and so on.

- Every governmental authority involved in youth policy has developed indicators of living conditions of young people according to their policy area, which they report to the National board for Youth affairs who is responsible for in-dept analysis each year, explained Ms. Modée.

In contrast to several countries, the municipalities have the overall responsibility for the living conditions of young people. Sweden has 290 autonomous municipalities and 9 million inhabitants.

- Each municipality has a municipal council, very much organized as a mini-government with boards and committees and lowest institutions that really meet the citizens as schools, hospitals, recreation centers, culture and so on.

The youth policy, determined by Government and Parliament, should be normative and easy to understand so that it helps the municipalities to design their own local youth policy. In addition to this normative approach there are also rules for institutions (for example schools) that every municipality is obliged to follow, in order to make equal possibilities for the citizens wherever they live. But monitoring of the municipalities youth policies can not be done by the government as it would affect the independency of the municipalities.

- The National Board for Youth Affairs shall in different ways support the municipalities in their work, for example through providing knowledge about young people, provide economic support to specific projects and also by providing questionnaires on a local level. Each year we also appoint one municipality as best youth policy municipality of the year. It's a very popular prize.

The City of Lund was awarded City of the Youth for 2004 by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs for their encouragement and effort to engage young people in local politics. For some years ago youth workers in Lund created a platform for young people in order to increase their influence. Together they put down a youth action program with long-term goals, simply through just asking young people what they want and what they thought was important.

- We, who are working with youth policy in Lund and all the young people themselves, are indeed very proud and happy about this award, said Mr. Tor Ohlsson (youth coordinator from the municipality of Lund). It has meant a great deal to us. Our politicians and head of all departments and boards have been aware of our work with influence in society and democracy. As a result they have allotted more money and more resources to our work.

The fact that the young people themselves have been given a lot of attention in many different ways has been very important and this has stimulated to further engagement, concluded Mr. Ohlsson.

The Swedish public sector is funded by tax money. If youth policy is dependent on project money and time-limited support the policy ends when there is no more money.

- A stable development of youth policy should therefore mainly be constructed within existing structures, concluded Ms Modée.

Cooperation for the future

There are different programs for young people and international cooperation within the field of youth and people to people exchange in the Mediterranean region. Here are examples of the ones that presented their visions and ideas at the seminar.

European Commission and Euro-Med Youth Programme

The “Youth Programme”, founded by the European Commission, is about giving the same opportunities to all young people. It gives young people within 31 countries, aged between 15 to 25 years, the same opportunities to participate in non-formal learning activities, whatever their background or current situation. As the Youth Programme provides many possibilities for young people, such as youth exchanges, volunteering abroad and support towards their projects, it seeks to be accessible to all young people, even those who, for educational, cultural, social, physical, economic or geographical reasons, find it more difficult to participate in youth activities.

In November 2001 the European Commission adopted its White Paper: “A New Impetus for European Youth”, which is an important paper for the future of long people in Europe. The consultation process involved many actors in the field: young people, youth organisations, youth researchers, national youth administrations and youth councils from Member states and accession countries. The objectives of the White Paper are: promoting new forms of governance via a large consultation process of young people, give youth questions a higher profile within EU and national policies, enhance the co-operation between Member States and develop a common vision and common objectives. This in light of the situation for young people in the EU today, in terms of demographic and social changes, a widening gap between young people and public affairs and the political need to involve young people in the debate on the future structure of Europe.

The Euro-Mediterranean Youth Action Programme was adopted by the European Union in October 1998, and it shares the same vision as the Youth programme above. The Programme has the *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Agreement* as a reference, and the recommendations issued from the Ministerial Conferences of Barcelona in 1995 and Malta in 1997. It is open for individuals, groups of young people, youth workers and local authorities in countries signatories to the *Barcelona Declaration*.

The aims of the Programme are the integration of young people in social and professional life, and ensuring the democratic process in civil society. This can be achieved by stimulating active citizenship within local communities, encouraging participation of youth and their organisations, and developing the employability of young people.

Participation in the Programme should improve mutual understanding in the Euro-Mediterranean region, promote dialogue, respect and tolerance, boost youth initiatives, encourage associative life, ensure training for youth leaders, strengthen civil society, promote the exchange of good practice between youth organisations, and set the basis for cooperation.

Anna Lindh Foundation – Youth Programmes

Anna Lindh Foundation has a program for “Our common future”, where the aim is to reach out to as many young people as possible. The program will give “value added” to the existing Euro-Med Youth Programme. There are projects within the program on popular music, Euro-Med program for schools (a regional virtual network that will connect existing international school networks and also includes a project for school papers) and educational courses for teachers.

Anna Lindh Foundation also has a program on “Multiperspectivity”. The overall aim with this program is that all education should encompass universal values such as non-discrimination, justice and tolerance. Projects within the program are: development of a Multilingual Education Server in English, Arabic and French (with the specific goal to provide learning resources for participation of young people in the dialogue between cultures) and a Euro-Mediterranean program for comparative research on school textbooks and curricula.

Anna Lindh Foundation further has a program on “Contemporary Creation” in fields such as theatre, music, modern dance and arts for young performing artists and creators. The foundation also has a program on “Euro-Med Heritage for Young People”.

The task of the Anna Lindh Foundation is to enhance young people's skills to participate in an international dialogue; to invite them to work and learn together. Active democratic citizenship is the base to respect cultural diversity and accepting it, and therefore youth policies must be re-orientated from the national to the international level.

Council of Europe – Directorate of Youth and Sports

The Council of Europe is a pan-European organisation committed to the development of parliamentary democracy, the safeguard of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the promotion of Europe's cultural diversity. Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe has always paid a particular attention to matters affecting young people, with a double perspective: to associate young people to the building of a European space of democratic participation and cooperation and to promote cooperation among member states with the view to address issues that affect young people.

The role of the Council of Europe in relation to youth policy has progressively increased since the International Youth Year in 1985. The last twenty years have witnessed a

reinforced inter-governmental cooperation in this field, through the creation of the European Steering Committee on Youth, the holding of regular Ministerial Conferences and, more broadly, through the programme of activities of the European Youth Centers and the European Youth Foundation.

The Directorate of Youth and Sport, the body dealing with youth matters, has in recent years engaged in a programme of national youth policy reviews, under which the youth policies of some 12 countries have been reviewed by a European team of experts and policy makers. This work has been complemented by research into national youth policy indicators and several field and assistance activities aimed at initiating or supporting processes of youth policy definition or revision.

The Council of Europe and the European Commission cooperate on youth policy matters since a long time. This cooperation was particularly fruitful during the process of definition and consultation about the Commission's White Paper on Youth. In terms of programmes for youth, the Council of Europe and the European Commission run a Youth Partnership programme, covering the areas of youth research, training of youth workers and Euro-Med youth work.

Ideas for future cooperation:

The representatives from each sector were asked to discuss in working groups ideas for future cooperation.

NGOs	Researchers / Experts	Governmental Institutions
Countries with Youth Policy to help in or contribute towards establishing Youth Policies at countries that don't have one	Knowledge-based youth research workshop (i.e. from the countries present at this seminar) connected to Youth Policy	NGOs, Research (Listening to needs of the youth at the nation level through communication with NGOs and research)
Focusing on the common points between NGOs		Exchange of experience
Platform and website between Arab Youth NGOs	Cooperation to solve the problem of polarization between the ones who have and those who do not have	Meetings (like this seminar)
Creation of National Youth Policies in all Arab countries	International seminars for researchers on how to develop statistics about young people etc.	Info exchange
Needs to form a formal structure to support the platform		
Realize Euro-Med project focusing on Youth Policy		
Strengthen the role of Youth NGOs as local experts on Youth Policy / service providers and consultants		
Enforce the coordination of Youth Policy implementation at local / regional / national & international level to enhance the dialogue and information sharing, including best practices		
Reevaluate communication channels of National Youth Councils and European Institutions outside Europe and including Middle East organizations in their info list		
Mobilize regional resources to strengthen youth civil society and organize seminars on active youth civil societies		
Build an informal network between the participants and share news on YP		

What to do next?

The participants came to the seminar with a set of unique experiences of youth policies. Through the seminar, they identified the main challenges for a successful youth policy, from their own and other countries experiences. The seminar gave the participants both knowledge and enthusiasm in order to return to their countries and try to further improve the youth policy, founded on specific needs for specific problems.

Palestine:

The Palestinian Youth Union identified the need to cooperate further with the Ministry of Planning on how to decentralize youth policy to a local level, and give more responsibility for implementation to municipalities. There is also a need to target young people in rural areas. On a governmental level, a body for follow-up and monitoring must be created.

Sweden:

The Swedish delegation suggested a seminar for youth researchers in Europe and Middle East to be arranged, focusing on statistics, developing methods and multidisciplinary sciences. The international cooperation must be further encouraged, as youth policies in particular has so much to gain from this. For example Sweden would like to: share results from youth workers and NGO's, exchange best practices with regard to unemployment, for example municipal projects on how to enter the job market, exchange programs within Euro-Med and sharing experience from the "Friend-city program" in Sweden.

The Kingdom of Bahrain

There is a need to improve mechanisms for youth policies in Bahrain: most urgently there is a need to form a National Youth Council, but also to form a coordinating body to look after implementation. Within this coordination body a team on NGO's and youth should be represented. NGO's in Bahrain should focus on awareness of youth policy among young people

Jordan

There is a need to create a national non-governmental forum working closely with the Higher Council for Youth (the youth government body) to contribute further in the implementation of youth policies. All actors working with youth must identify gaps for development of youth policies and cooperate to overcome those gaps. This can be done through: workshops, researchers meeting and innovative events such as a film festival. All NGOs working with youth, should also keep the Higher Council of Youth in the loop of activities as well as partners in the process. The international cooperation is also important: a suggestion is to form an email group to exchange information on best practices and to extend cooperation. Transfer the knowledge from the seminar.

Slovakia and Macedonia

There is a need to continue the cooperation between NGOs and the government, and a meeting between the two parties should be planned in both countries. They are also very interested in sharing knowledge and experience on how to establish a youth council and the problems involved, from other countries and experts in Europe and the Middle East. The continued cooperation between existing participants should be in a smaller scale, which would be more topic oriented. The theme could possibly be advocacy and lobbying of the governmental sector. A follow up from this seminar could possibly be in Europe in a year time, to discuss implementation in reality and operational experience.

Egypt

Young people should not wait for the government to act, they should independently start to organise meetings, for example as the participants who met in Sharm el Sheikh. One aim is to launch a youth federation within a few months. NGOs in Egypt have to continue to create workshops and invite government, NGOs and international organisations. A special focus for the discussions can be how to coordinate different sectors in society.

On an international level, it is important to target stakeholders for cooperation, for example schools, universities and NGO's. On a regional level, there is a need to create a website for all Arab countries that share experience on first steps of youth policies. One way to get attention for youth questions in the media could be to target the upcoming Arab Reform Conference organised by Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and try to put youth policy on their agenda. It is also important to establish an Arab youth association for training of evaluation and implementation. Also, cooperation and further exchange with Euro-Med Youth Programmes and Anna Lindh Foundation is important. There is also a need to coordinate a Euro-Med platform, with an NGO database on youth policy.

Summary of the conclusions

The participants from the seven countries reached the following conclusions:

- Youth policy related issues have to be taken into consideration in the political agenda of the countries in both regions.
- Media campaigns have to be designed so as to reach the youth not involved in youth activities today.
- More cooperation between researchers on youth policy due to the importance of knowledge-based research.
- Research databanks and statistics should be created and made available for youth policy stakeholders.
- Reaffirm the importance of the cooperation between different professionals in this field and between different stakeholders (NGOs, governmental institutions and researchers / experts).

Reflections of the seminar

The seminar was particularly successful to break the dichotomy of European (synonym of developed and rich youth policy) versus inexistent, poor or deficient youth policy (the image of Middle Eastern countries). While this stereotypical view carries elements of truth, the reality is much more complex and complicated within each region and country. This exploration of knowledge about each other has a very important function in the pursuance of intercultural dialogue and cooperation, especially in terms of learning from each other, an element that is of paramount importance in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Youth policy professionals are, after all, subject to the same stereotype and prejudice as anyone else!

Appendix

Country Profiles of the participating countries

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Context and definition of youth policy: The total number of inhabitants is 2 022 547, with 23.6% or 477 828 between 15 and 29 years.

With the negative birth rate, increased migration from rural to urban areas, an overall brain-drain, increasing violence and drugs, the costs for curative policies are higher than preventive youth policy programs. Young people, ministries and other relevant institutions played a main role in creating a National Youth Strategy.

Elaboration and development: Youth and student organizations, political youth wings, donors, ministries and other state institutions were involved in the national consultation in 2003. The stakeholders commented and proposed changes / activities in the three Youth Forums.

Low capacity and lack of cooperation are challenges facing the central / local administration and the youth sector. In addition, there is a lack of cross-sectoral approach and trust in young people and youth organizations. As for the public and young people, they need access to information and to re-build their trust in state institutions and to some extent the NGO sector.

Objectives and content: Social development through education and economic development through employment; better quality of life and youth participation is the consensus of partners in the "Baseline study on youth trends". The policy focuses on seven main areas of intervention, namely education, employment, quality of life, health, youth participation, youth information and local youth work.

Implementation and monitoring: Education, Labor and Social Affairs, Justice, Interior, Finance, Economy, Health, Agency of Youth and Sports, Education Development Bureau and others are involved in the process. Officials are not sufficiently trained in advocacy and lobbying capacity of the youth sector; networking among youth organizations; defining financial implications. The establishment of the Youth Policy Steering Committee is imminent.

Regional and international cooperation: CEI Working Group on Youth Affairs, Stability Pact-Working table 1, Intercultural Center Vienna - YouthNet network etc.

The Kingdom of Jordan

Context and definition of youth policy: Jordan adopts the international standard of 15-25 of age for youth, representing 23% of the total population in 2003. However, in the National Youth Strategy (NYS) that was developed in response to young people's needs and in line with His Majesty's King Abdullah II vision for youth to become a national priority, the age was extended to 12-30. The Jordanian society is youthful with 74% under 30 years old.

Elaboration and development: Jordan is at the stage of implementing its NYS with stakeholders and partners, including governmental agencies, NGOs, the private sector, voluntary organizations, international agencies and young people. The 18-month process involved research, consultation and listening to the views of youth at national youth voice campaigns.

The NYS acknowledges that there are age brackets with varying needs. The challenge is to bring together all stakeholders to integrate all those who work with young people at the national level.

Objectives and content: The NYS identified nine central themes: 1) Participation, 2) Civil rights and citizenship, 3) Recreational activities and leisure time, 4) Media and culture, 5) Technology and globalization, 6) Education and training, 7) Employment, 8) Health and 9) Environment, developed by national consultants. Cross-cutting principles are: participation, gender equity, representative, access, collaborative ownership and Jordan First – A Sense of belonging and identity.

Implementation and monitoring: Jordan is now in the process of implementation for the NYS five-year plan (2005-09).

Regional and international cooperation: In addition to various NGOs working at regional levels, the government has shared its experience with other countries in the region. The Higher Council for Youth hosts and manages the Euro-Med Youth Program. Together with UNICEF, the Higher Council for Youth and the Princess Basma Youth Resource Centre held a regional youth forum.

Ideas for development: Regional youth civil societies need to grow stronger and learn how to influence policy-makers and how to institutionalize participation.

Palestine

Context and definition of youth policy: The Palestinian Ministry of Youth and Sport defines young people to be between 15 and 30 years old while in the Youth Policy they are defined between 15 and 24. Out of 3,762,005 million inhabitants in the West Bank and Gaza, 729,896 (27%) are between 15 and 24 and 1,350 million (52%) are between 15 and 30 years old.

Elaboration and development: The National Policy for Adolescents and Youth, developed in July 2004, was adopted by governmental and non-governmental organizations. Next to the Management Committee, which includes the “Ministry of Youth and Sport” Development Studies Program of Birzeit University and UNICEF, there are the National Directing Committee, the Youth Directing Committee, the Media Committee and the working team participating in the following activities:

- Awareness, advocacy and support activities
- Program from youth to youth
- Media programs / website
- Capacity building
- Research (health, education, employment and recreational activities)

Challenges faced in developing the Youth Policy:

- Create a coordination body
- Define young people / Youth Policy
- Create common vision between official bodies’ working with youth
- Funding

Objectives and content: The axes for the youth policy are: Learning + training / Family / Recreational activities / Health + environment / Participation / Poverty + work.

- Set priorities framework to fulfill needs and develop programs
- Promote and encourage youth participation in decisions making
- Publicize youth duties and rights in the Palestinian society

Implementation and monitoring: A coordination body has to be established as all what exists is a proposal or outline for a youth policy and not a youth policy.

Regional and international cooperation: Cooperation with Sweden and a wish to cooperate with other countries active in the field to learn from their experiences by organizing study visits and international youth exchange programs.

Slovakia

Context and definition of youth policy: The Slovak Conception of State Policy towards Children and Youth until 2007 defines a youth to be 26 years old or below. 38% of Slovakia's inhabitants are 25 or younger, of which 1,005,903 are male and 962,803 are female.

The Slovak Youth Policy is based on Mutual partnership of generations; solidarity and social justice; active and participative citizenship; ensuring of social and economic integration.

Elaboration and development: The present policy was adopted in 2001 and is implemented at three levels: central (government, ministries and public administration), regional (territorial units) and local (communities and villages). It defines strategies for the resolution of youth problems. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the implementation, while youth organizations are present via the Youth Council of Slovakia. As the decentralization continues, regional youth centres, organizations and councils play a more and more important role.

The preparation of the Conception was preceded by a thorough analysis from 1990 till 2000, involving young people and representatives of the Youth Council of Slovakia. The following step, in the process of the Youth Policy Review preparation, will be to finalise the reports to be presented in Strasbourg in October 2005.

Objectives and content: The main objectives are being realized mainly in education, culture, economics, health and ecology. They correspond with those of the EU.

Implementation and monitoring: The lack of information of self-government representatives has to be overcome in the process of defining regional priorities and intensifying the cooperation of public administration representatives with young people.

The Ministry of Education initiates and coordinates public service activities, supports and cooperates with self-government and local offices. The next step is analysing the legislation and preparing a proposal for the Act on Youth to strengthen the National Youth Policy in consistence with reality and the existing legal system.

Regional and international cooperation: On a regional level, Slovakia cooperates with the Visegrad countries and countries of Central European Initiative. There are bilateral agreements and regular meetings. International cooperation is made especially through the membership in the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Sweden

Context and definition of youth policy: Out of approximately 9 million inhabitants, young people between 13 and 25 years old constitute 1.4 million or about 16 per cent in Sweden.

What's important to the Swedish Youth Policy is to see young people as a resource for the society. The two present goals of the National Youth Policy (NYP) are real access to power and to welfare for young people. *Riksdag* (the parliament) and the government decide the objectives for the NYP and set priorities. The National Board for Youth Affairs coordinates the cooperation between governmental authorities, compile statistics and make regular evaluations and reports.

Elaboration and development: The NYP was developed by *Riksdag*, The National Board for Youth Affairs, researchers, the National Youth Council of Swedish Youth Organizations (umbrella youth organization and main consultant) and non-governmental youth organizations.

The research is mostly done in decentralized independent universities. There are also official statistics, regular reports and studies. However, there is a lack of knowledge about methods in implementing a youth perspective in different policy areas and in successful methods of youth work.

Objectives and content: The Swedish youth policy has two main objectives: Young people should have genuine access to welfare and genuine access to power. The government has chosen four important perspectives for all national activities concerning youth: “The resource perspective” implies that young people’s unique knowledge, experiences and values should be utilized and given real opportunity to have an influence on the substance of public activities. “The rights perspective” implies the right to decent living conditions. “The independence perspective” implies that public ventures should support young people’s possibilities for independence and autonomy. “The diversity perspective” respects the diversity of young.

Implementation and monitoring: The latest bill is about to be implemented. Sweden is in the stage of developing a refined follow-up system, using indicators, annual in-depth analysis and evaluation. The implementation on the local level is based on the principle of municipal autonomy. The NYP is merely advisory for municipalities. One challenge is to implement a youth perspective in other policy areas.

Regional and international cooperation: Sweden has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 1995 and has been involved in different kinds of international cooperation and exchanges concerning youth policy. The National Board for Youth Affairs is also the national agency for the Youth programme in Sweden.

Kingdom of Bahrain

Context and definition of youth policy: According to the census of 2001, the total population of Bahrain is 650,604 people, with 112,858 between 15 and 30 years old.

Elaboration and development: The last study on youth was conducted in 1979 in coordination with UNICEF. The General Organisation for Youth & Sports (GOYS) developed a comprehensive youth policy tackling areas of concern to youth, such as education, employment and health. The policy was launched in April and a plan of action is in the process of being put together with the stakeholders, UNDP, ministries, national and international experts and youth organizations.

Ministries and government organizations were involved in addition to youth organizations, civil societies, professional societies, companies, the University of Bahrain Gulf University and private universities in the Kingdom.

Meetings were held at the initial stage of the process with representatives from the various youth groups and organizations in Bahrain mainly to identify key issues and areas to be tackled. Two out of the four paid employees in the project were from the target age group. Each thematic group with experts in the field included youth members, in charge of investigating an area and producing a comprehensive report. A 'Youth Voice' campaign was formed involving more than 200 youth members who conducted surveys and youth-to-youth interviews. The findings were inputs to the thematic group reports and in the final document. Electronic radio and a web-site for the NYS was established and maintained by youth, as well as forums focusing on the eight themes of the strategy. Youth conferences were held to update all youth on the progress of the process and feedback considered. This included the discussion of the final draft of the document. Feedback from the members of the youth organizations enriched the final document.

Many government organizations and ministries were intimidated by external 'interference' in their internal affairs! Some simply preferred the status quo!

Objectives and content: The implementation has not started yet, as a plan of action is still being put together.

Regional and international cooperation: UNDP is the main partner in this project, but there are also consultations with ICNYP and the Higher Council for Youth in Jordan as well as the UNICEF MENA Region Office. A study tour on the South African and the Namibian experience in developing their youth policies was made.

Egypt

Context and definition of youth policy: Egypt's total number of inhabitants is around 72 million. As per 2005 estimates, 69% of the population is "young" with youth defined to be between 18-35 years old.

Elaboration and development: Egypt has policies concerning youth in different ministries yet it does not have a paper on Youth Policy. The majority party (the National Democratic Party, NDP) has prepared a draft on National Youth Policy (NYP) that will be developed by the National Youth Council, a body to be established within a few months. Due to a governmental reshuffle in January 2006, the Ministry of Youth is now abolished, and has been replaced by the National Youth Council.

Objectives and contents: The NYP aims to create better conditions for young people who are an asset for any real progress and the main agents of development. The vision is to empower young people politically, economically and socially, increasing their role in public life as active citizens through increasing their role in policy formulation, evaluation and the implementation process. Furthermore, it targets the enhancement of

Egyptian girls and young women and the elimination of any form of discrimination directed against them.

A holistic policy that encompasses all policies affecting young people and that covers a wide range of activities from education, health, media, housing, employment, sport, environment, voluntary work, culture, social care, research and participation in public life including political.

Implementation and monitoring: The rising percentage of unemployed young people constitutes a huge challenge. The Egyptian government has presented many initiatives, for example a national project initiated by the Ministry of Youth to convert most of the existing youth centers into productive units encompassing information cafés and productive industries run by the youth. This, however, has not been sufficient, a matter that needs further help from our international partners. Furthermore, the role of the civil society needs to be increased in initiating and monitoring the NYP.

Regional and international cooperation: Egypt cooperates with many International partners in the field of youth activities, including the Euro-Med Youth Programme and youth exchange programs with many countries around the world.

PRESENTATION OF THE ORGANIZERS

The Swedish Institute in Alexandria started to make plans together with the Ministry of Youth in Egypt, and involved the National Board for Youth Affairs in Sweden and the Council of Europe which both has long experience and knowledge within the field of youth policy development.

THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH IN EGYPT

Founded in October 1999, the Ministry of Youth, Egypt (MOY) is committed to the youth development and empowerment for a better future, developing of youth policies and programs with a perspective to include young people in the formulation and implementation of these policies and programmes.

Over 19 million of Egypt's citizens are young people between the ages 15 and 29. The MOY is responsible for the national youth policy and deals with the governmental policies in the field of youth and sports both in monitoring and implementation.

The MOY policy is based on the adequate response to young people needs and problems, and cross-sectorial cooperation between different authorities. An emphasis on participation and partnership with youth organisations, both local and international, is an integral part of MOY policy.

As from January 2006 (after the seminar was held) the Ministry of Youth was abolished and replaced by a National Council for Youth, headed by Dr Kharboush.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe is the continent's oldest political organisation, founded in 1949. It groups together 46 countries, virtually the whole of Europe. The Council of Europe is committed to the development of parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, the safeguard of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the promotion of Europe's cultural diversity. The Council of Europe has always paid a particular attention to matters affecting young people, with a double perspective: to associate young people to the building of a European space of democratic participation and cooperation and to promote cooperation among member states with the view to address issues that affect young people. The European Youth Centres, in Strasbourg and Budapest, and the European Youth Foundation are among the Council's main tools for youth policy and youth work development in Europe.

In addition to youth policy development, the Council of Europe's youth sector has three other work priorities: human rights education and social cohesion, youth participation and peace and intercultural dialogue.

The Partnership on Youth between the European Commission and the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe and the European Commission cooperate on youth policy matters since a long time. This cooperation was particularly fruitful during the process of

definition and consultation about the Commission's White Paper on Youth. In terms of programmes for youth, the Council of Europe and the European Commission run a Youth Partnership programme, covering the areas of youth research, training of youth workers and Euro-Med youth work. The Euro-Med dimension of the Partnership has focused on developing quality of the programmes (e.g. through training courses for trainers and the development of educational manuals), deepening thematic objectives of the Euro-Med Youth programme and developing intercultural dialogue and human rights education activities.

The involvement of the Partnership in the seminar is the natural reflection of the experience of both organisations that youth programmes need to be sustained by consistent, embracing and explicit youth policies. The present seminar contributed to start taking into account the youth policy developments in the Euro-Med youth programme and in the other programmes of the two institutions aimed at cooperation between Europe and neighboring regions. Ultimately, it is expected that youth work project developed in the Euro-Med youth context communicate better with youth policy developments in the region.

THE SWEDISH NATIONAL BOARD FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is a governmental authority which works within four policy areas: allocating grants and work with method development within the areas of Leisure and associative activities and International youth programmes and stimulating the development of Municipal youth policy and follow up of the objectives of the National youth policy.

Over 1.4 million of Sweden's citizens are young people between the ages 13 and 25. The Swedish youth policy is built on cross-sectorial cooperation between different authorities. The United Nations International Youth Year in 1985, which focused on participation, development and peace, has had a great impact in the development of the Swedish youth policy, both concerning content and objectives.

Since 1985 the policy has been developed several times, and also evaluated for example by the Council of Europe in 1999. There are today two main objectives of Swedish youth policy, and they were adopted by the Swedish parliament in 2004:

- Young people are to have the genuine access to welfare.
- Young people are to have the genuine power to decide

The National Board for Youth Affairs is responsible for the national youth policy, both in monitoring and implementation. On a national level it is the coordinating body and on local level it supports interested municipalities in developing youth policy. The board is also responsible for presenting regular statistics and results from research on living conditions of young people and report to the government. Policy and suggestions of improvement should be built on knowledge of young peoples living conditions and launched through joint actions. Young people should be consulted and their knowledge

utilized as a resource. The purpose is to make them involved and also to have real influence in the making of youth policy.

THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE IN ALEXANDRIA

The Swedish Institute is dedicated to the dialogue of civilizations.

When Sweden joined the European Union in 1995, leading diplomats, scholars & politicians displayed a strong commitment to promoting intercultural understanding. It was felt that Sweden should contribute to building trust between the peoples of Europe and the Arab world. The Institute was established in October 2000 as an autonomous mission within the Swedish Foreign Service, following an agreement between the governments of Sweden and Egypt.

The Institute's main task is to promote broad contacts between Europe and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. The institute places strong emphasis on developing cooperation and networking in the areas of Youth, Media and Education/Research. It also follows closely the themes highlighted in the Barcelona process, giving priority to multilateral projects, involving groups of countries on both sides of the Mediterranean. The institute aims to facilitate dialogue on issues of common concern and to contribute to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

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