



1st Aramean Young Leadership Programme: The Road to the Future

Report of the study session held by
SUA Youth Academy
in co-operation with the
European Youth Centre
of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Strasbourg
25 June – 2 July 2011



This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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SUA Youth Academy
Klockarvägen 104
151 61 Södertälje
Sweden
tel: +46 8 550 161 171
youthacademy@sua-ngo.org
www.sua-ngo.org/youthacademy

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I. Acknowledgements

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- **Suryoyo Sat**, the international Aramaic satellite channel for and by the Aramean people, for recording the study session, for recording a special TV program on the last day and for its eagerness to broadcast and promote all the material we have sent them. We are particularly grateful to the cameraman Mathay Aydin from Germany.
- **National federations**, for helping promote this important study session.
- **Participants**, for their tireless dedication and motivation to work on issues that concern them as Arameans from the Middle East as well as European citizens.

II. Introduction

In March 2011 the SUA Youth Academy started with the preparations of the 1st Aramean Young Leadership Programme: the Road to the Future which took place in Strasbourg, France (25 June – 2 July 2011).

This study session aimed at inspiring and motivating the youth to young leadership in order that young Arameans could learn more about human rights and minority rights and share this gained knowledge at home. In order to meet this aim the SUA Youth Academy needed the participants to be aware of the European institutions (Council of Europe, European Union) and how they operate. This includes the European view on human rights, but also the different youth policies and programmes within these institutions.

Throughout the whole study session, the main theme was 'leadership'. Taking that into consideration, the subject was more defined into subgroups, namely: identity, leadership, human rights and youth strategy. These groups were spread out over five days. As a result of this successful study session the SUA Youth Academy presents the current report.

III. About the Aramean (Syriac) people

Scholars note that 'Aramean/Aramaic' is the original self-designation of the Arameans and the equivalent of the Greek name 'Syrian/Syriac' which they adopted since the early fifth century AD. In order to avoid the oft-recurring confusion with the largely Muslim Arab citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic of Syria, the preferred self-appellation of this Semitic people in Western languages is the recently introduced and artificial term 'Syriacs' or their ancient endonym 'Arameans'.

The early Arameans were pastoralists who were an inherent and integral part of the Near East in 1550-1200 BC. In pre-Christian times, notably between 1150-700, they played a crucial role in the socio-political arena of the ancient world. As native inhabitants of Upper Mesopotamia (covering modern Southeast-Turkey, north-eastern Syria and northern Iraq), they were ubiquitous in this area as well as in Lebanon and South-Mesopotamia (corresponding to present-day South-Iraq).

Their Aramaic mother tongue enjoyed the status of international language of the Near East between ca. 700 BC and ca. 700 AD. Aramaic also features in the Old and New Testaments, was the mother tongue of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and left indelible traces in the Jewish and Muslim literatures (including the Mishnah, Talmud and the Qur'an).

Aramaic has for the most part been the main carrier of the identity of the Arameans, who were one of the first nations to adopt the Gospel in the early centuries of the Christian era. Besides the Syriac (Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant) communities, the Chaldeans, Nestorians (since 1976 officially called 'Assyrians'), Maronites and Melkites are also heirs of the ancient Aramaic heritage. For many centuries, their monasteries and churches functioned as intellectual centers and schools. Experts recognize the importance of the Aramean people and Aramaic language. For instance:

- a) The Aramean ancestry of the Jewish people is widely recognized, for example by Prof. Healey, who rightly observed that "the Israelites were part of the same movement of population as the Arameans and were conscious of a close relationship with that population group... The biblical writers are so strong on the point...that it must have some basis in fact."¹
- b) "The Greeks and Romans knew the Near East mainly through the Arameans, for it was they who united and canalized the sources of its culture, bringing together Babylonian, Persian and Hebrew elements and transmitting them to Christianity, and with Christianity to the West. From the West, at a later date, the Arameans were to bring to the East Greek culture, especially philosophy, which became known to the Arabs through the medium of Aramaic."²

¹ J.F. Healey, "Ancient Aramaic Culture and the Bible," in ARAM 1:1 (1989), p. 36.

² S. Moscati, Ancient Semitic Civilizations (New York, 1957), p. 179.

- c) Without Aramaic, “the expansion of Christianity in the Orient would have been unthinkable.” Among other essential things, this is “the historical debt which the world owes the Arameans.”³
- d) In a voluminous book about the Arameans, another expert stressed: “We see the Arameans as a nation that represents one of our cultural ancestors, as one of the points of departure for us in the West ... [because] western civilization originated in the Middle East.”⁴
- e) Rather than Arabic or Hebrew, “Aramaic is the only Semitic language spoken today whose history can be traced back, as a living language, to about 1000 B.C.”⁵

³ E.G.H. Kraeling, *Aram and Israel or The Aramaeans in Syria and Mesopotamia* (New York: Colombia University Press 1918), p. 139.

⁴ E. Lipiński, *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), pp. 12f.

⁵ E.Y. Kutscher, *Hebrew and Aramaic Studies* (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 90.

IV. Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA)

The Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA) was established in 1983 and is the global umbrella organisation representing the various Aramean (Syriac) national federations in the continents of Europe, America, Australia and the Middle East. SUA is the widely acknowledged voice of the Aramean people whose interests and needs it aims to serve, defend and promote.

Since 1999, SUA is the only Aramaic-speaking Non-Governmental Organisation in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and the Social Council of the United Nations. SUA is a socio-political and cultural organisation that works independently, transparently and on a democratic basis. Among others, SUA seeks close cooperation with national governments, the (agencies of the) United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe.

SUA is dedicated to answer the call to protect and secure the rights, liberty and equality of the Aramean people, safeguard and promote the cultural heritage of its ancestors, ensuring justice, and uniting all its people as a self-determined and internationally recognized Aramean nation.

One of the notable projects produced by SUA is The Hidden Pearl: The Syrian Orthodox Church and Its Aramaic Heritage (Rome, 2001). This multimedia project consists of three illustrated books with three accompanying DVD's. It summarises and portrays a living heritage of 3,000 years.

Another significant project by SUA in cooperation with its Federations is Suryoyo Sat (www.suryoyosat.com). In 2006, this satellite channel was established for the Aramean people. With a great variety of (live) programs in Aramaic, Suryoyo Sat reaches more than 80 countries.

V. SUA Youth Academy

The SUA Youth Academy is the branch of the SUA responsible for educating and connecting with the Aramean youth. Its objective is to inform the Aramean youth of the relevance of the SUA's mission and activities. The ultimate goal is to find talented young leaders with the intention of training and guiding them as the next generation of leaders in the local, national and international organisations of the Aramean people worldwide.

Importance of the study session

The Aramean (Syriac) people are a distinct ethnic and religious group, yet they are still not recognised in the homelands. Instead, they have constantly been persecuted, discriminated against and driven away from their ancestral lands. These and related factors have affected the Aramean national self-confidence and ability to deal with an uncertain future. SUA has taken command of re-establishing their national pride and fighting for the protection and development of the Aramean people, both in their homeland and the Diaspora.

In the Diaspora, the Aramean youth have been fortunate to experience basic human rights such as equality, freedom of expression, democracy and minority rights which were unthinkable in their homeland. Given that SUA is responsible for globally leading the Aramean people, the SUA is obliged to educate and direct the youth in order to translate these values into a direct improvement of the homeland situation. All this can be achieved while optimising their position in the Diaspora.

SUA must prepare today's young Arameans for tomorrow's leadership roles and guarantee new and qualified successors. The SUA Youth Academy will provide the youth with the requisite knowledge and prepare them for major challenges to successfully handle and organise the Aramean Diaspora, and lead an ancient stateless people towards a better and certain future. In short, SUA's focus and work for the Aramean people is in the homeland as well as in the different diaspora countries.

VI. Council of Europe

The Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg (France), covers nearly the entire European continent, with its 47 member countries. Founded on 5 May 1949 by 10 countries, the Council of Europe seeks to develop throughout Europe common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals⁶.

The primary aim of the Council of Europe is to create a common democratic and legal area throughout the whole of the continent, ensuring respect for its fundamental values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These values are the foundations of a tolerant and civilised society and indispensable for European stability, economic growth and social cohesion. On the basis of these fundamental values, we try to find shared solutions to major problems such as terrorism, organised crime and corruption, cybercrime, bioethics and cloning, violence against children and women, and trafficking in human beings. Co-operation between all member states is the only way to solve the major problems facing society today⁷.

The objectives are formulated as follows:

- to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law;
- to promote awareness and encourage the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity;
- to find common solutions to the challenges facing European society;
- to consolidate democratic stability in Europe by backing political, legislative and constitutional reform.

⁶ Council of Europe – Who are we? : <http://www.coe.int/aboutCoe/index.asp?page=quisommesnous&l=en>

⁷ Council of Europe – Our Objectives : <http://www.coe.int/aboutCoe/index.asp?page=nosObjectifs&l=en>

VII. Profile of participants

One of the SUA Youth Academy's goals is to create new Aramean representatives and leaders. For this particular study session it was also of great importance to introduce participants to the Council of Europe and its core values. In order to meet with both the Youth Academy's and the Council of Europe's requirements, the following criteria were used to select the participants:

- to be actively involved in an Aramean organisation, or having the intention to do so in the future;
- to feel a strong sense of responsibility to support their local associations and federations with the governance of those organisations;
- previous experience with youth organisations;
- willingness to invest in the future of the Aramaic organizations and share the competences gained during this study session at home;
- to get a deeper understanding of the Council of Europe (including the DYS), their Aramean organisations, their identity, human rights and strategy. And how to combine these while acting in a leadership role;
- aged 18 – 35, with the exception of a few;
- able to master the English language in word;
- to be committed to participate for the full duration of the study session.

After the selection of participants (and the passing of the deadlines), many more eager young Arameans applied for the study session hoping to still find a chance to participate. By gaining a larger pool of highly potential participants the preparatory team turned to their local associations and federation to ask about their experiences with the candidate participant.

The study session was so well received in Sweden, where by far the most Arameans live in the Diaspora that the course director had to request to grant additional participants access to the study session at the EYCs.

In the end, the total amount of participants (including the team) reached a number of 31 participants, of which 10 female and 21 male participants with an average age of 24. Many of the youth came from European countries (i.e. United Kingdom, Sweden, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland) and a few outside Europe (i.e. Jordan, Lebanon and India).

Profile of the participants

Including the team

Total	31
Male	21
Female	10
Countries	9
Average age	24

VIII. Programme and Methods

The study session was held in a non-formal setting, which contained traditional as well as experiential learning aspects. The participants had prominent speakers from within the Aramean community, the Council of Europe and a special guest from the European Centre for Law and Justice who shared their experiences and knowledge with them. They could use the newly acquired information for their exercises. In the traditional setting, the participants would go in to groups of five to discuss and brainstorm on the subjects and present their findings in the plenary room. Next to the traditional learning element, the participants also would simulate certain scenarios in which they could experience the difficulty to implement certain ideas and strategies.

	25/06 Sat	26/06 Sun	27/06 Mon	28/06 Tue	29/06 Wed	30/06 Thu	01/07 Fri	02/07 Sun		
8:00 – 9:00	ARRIVAL DAY	BREAKFAST							Lunch in downtown Strasbourg	
9:00 – 13:00		<u>Welcome and Opening Remarks:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome by SUA, SUA YA and EYCs ▪ Aims and objectives of the StS ▪ Sharing expectations ▪ Introduction to the programme ▪ About the SUA (YA) 	<u>Identity:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-awareness exercise ▪ Input on identity ▪ Working groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership workshops ▪ Feedback <u>Human Rights:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lecture Council of Europe ▪ Lecture SUA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SUA HR documentaries ▪ Guest speaker: Gregor Puppink ▪ Promotion Human Rights (Rui Gomes) ▪ Reimbursement travel expenses pax ▪ Visit to the Council of Europe 	<u>Strategy:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SUA support to Youth Strategy ▪ Council of Europe's support to Youth Strategy ▪ Brainstorm: how should the SUA involve the youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share outcomes working groups <u>Follow up:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning the future 			
13:00 – 14:30		LUNCH								
14:30 – 18:15		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group building exercise ▪ Sharing realities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share outcomes <u>Leadership:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Debate on leadership ▪ Situation sketch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simulation exercise on human rights 	FREE AFTERNOON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working groups (projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning the future 			
18:15		END								
18:15 – 18:45		Facilitator evaluation groups								
19:00 – 20:00		DINNER								
20:00 – 21:00		Team evaluation				Dinner in Strasbourg				
19:00 – 20:00		Cocktail Party	Rooftop energizers	Watching the game: Syrianska FC	Rooftop party	Free evening	Rooftop lounge	SuryoyoSat programme recording Farewell party		DEPARTURE DAY

1. Welcome evening

Saturday 25/06

After a very long flight for a few and a missing suitcase, the participants all arrived safe and sound. Everyone managed to check in at the front desk and get the keys to their room where they could rest after their travel.

The People Map | Once everyone got the chance to rest and get settled, the evening started. To get an idea where in the world the participants come from, the facilitators introduced the People Map. The participants of each country all gathered together holding a sign which states their country, afterwards all the participants stood in north, west, south or east to indicate where in the world their country is located. This showed the participants how dispersed and scattered they are in the world.

The Name Game | When the participants got a clear view on the home countries of their peers, it was up to the next game to get to know each other. The participants formed a circle to start the name game: Names and Gestures. Each participant had to mention his or her name following a gesture which is sort of the signature of that person's name. Next, the participant next to him repeated that person's name and gesture and then stating their own name with his own gesture and so on.

Now everybody got to know each other's names and home countries, they all socialised throughout the evening to learn more about each other.

2. Study Session

a) Welcome and Teambuilding

Day 1 – 26 June

The participants have experienced at the beginning of the study session (day 1 – Sunday 26 June) that it is important to have (realistic) expectations of the event. By sharing these expectations they made their expectations clear to both the SUA Youth Academy as well as themselves.

Sharing Expectations | The Academy first shared with the participants what they could expect from the organisation. The expectations of the organisation were for the participants to voice every idea they had and to give as much input as possible.

The Organisations | Once the Academy's expectations were clear, participants needed to learn more about the organisation which organised the study session: the SUA Youth Academy, but also the main organisation the Syriac Universal Alliance. The president of the SUA, Johny Messo, explained to the participants what the SUA is and what it stands for. With that he gave the participants insight on the past, current and future activities of the organisation in which the SUA Youth Academy plays a big role. In his introduction he explained the need for the youth to step forward and start planning their and their children's future. To make sure the youth get the guidance they need, the SUA created

the Youth Academy to provide this generation and the next an institution where they can prepare themselves to take up the task as representative or even leader of their people. Participants were given the time to ask questions and share their views.

After having heard the SUA's (Youth Academy) perspective, it was up to the participants to share their expectations. They were given two questions in which they shared their role during and after the study session on coloured post its. The participants spoke of contributing to the European community as a human being with both a European and an ethnic Aramean identity, motivating and inspiring their peers back home by multiplying what they have learned. To realise the latter, most of them already showed interest in joining the Aramean organisations in their country during this stage of the study session!

Group Building Exercise | During the group building exercise, the participants were split up in random groups to each go on a treasure hunt to answer several questions such as: 'What is the total age of the participants, including the team?'.

Study Session Guide Lines | This exercise was a fun way to learn about role division within a team. As the participants shared after the exercise, group members took on their role naturally. They learned what made their group work well and explicitly named those aspects. These aspects were the guidelines of this study session:

- Respect for the individual;
- Listen to each other;

- Assign tasks in conformity with our abilities, capabilities and skills;

- Important to mingle with everyone in the group; and

- Encourage others in the group to develop their talents and discover new ones.

Front Page News | Considering this was the first day of the study session, it was important for the participants to get to know one another not only individually but also in a group setting. Therefore, the groups were again mixed, based on nationality, gender and age to get the most out of the exercise.

For this exercise the participants were asked to translate the following questions onto a front page of their newspaper: who are the Arameans, what are the challenges and needs of Young Arameans, and good examples of projects involving the Aramean community in the diaspora.

They were given old magazines, newspapers, markers and a flip-over sheet to get their message on paper. Participants showed immediate enthusiasm for this exercise, since they could express their hopes and fears for their future. The outcome of the posters reached consensus within most of the group members, they could relate to that which they feared would happen (assimilation) and that which they strive for (contributing to the European community, while at the same time not only preserving but also promoting the identity (and individual Aramean identity) within the community: motivate the youth to stand out in their profession/talent – whether it be sports, economics, arts, science, etc.

When concluding the exercise, the participants thought of ideas to help solve or better promote their 'front page news'. This exercise helped them to guide themselves in the direction of their goals.

b) Identity

Day 2 – 27 June

Who Am I? | This part of the study session focused on the participants themselves as being ethnic Arameans. To get a clear view on what the participants feel about their identity they drew or wrote down what it means for them to be an Aramean - especially for those Arameans who originate from the Middle East but who have live in Europe today. The cards were placed in a circle in the middle of the room and the participants could look around and see what their peers expressed on their Aramean identity. Once they were done, the facilitators took out a few cards to briefly discuss.

Six Criteria of an Ethnic Group | After the participants expressed the importance of their personal identity, it was now time to reflect upon their collective identity. The question of identity presents many challenges and questions for the participants. Therefore, it is important to recognise one's (Aramean) identity on a personal level and then to see one self from a group perspective, as part of a collective identity: put your personal identity into a global perspective.

Because of their ancient Christian tradition and identity, most Arameans continue to profile themselves as a religious group. However, in order to profile themselves as an ethnic group within a Western context where the religion is no longer the determinant identity marker of a group, Johny Messo, president of the SUA, provided the reference points based on the six criteria of an ethnic group as often used by experts on identity:

1. A **common name** historically and presently connected with a population;
2. A set of myths of **common origins and descent** for that population;
3. Some **common historical memories** of things experiences together;
4. A **common 'historic territory' or 'homeland'**, or an association with one;
5. One or more elements of **common culture** (language, customs or religion), and;
6. A **sense of solidarity** among most members of the community, at least among the elites.

Five innovative ways to promote | The lecture was very well received by the participants and it got them excited to work on the next exercise: 'five innovative ways to promote'. In this workshop the participants were split into four groups to each think of ways to promote one of the following:

- Aramean name/identity;
The group that worked on this part expressed that the first thing is to promote the name, use it whenever possible. Aside from using the name it should also have body (identity), the participants then shared their ideas to create documentaries, set up associations at universities about the Arameans (and educate) to educate students and focus more on internet pages to attract the youth.

- Aramaic language:
This group had its eye on everything that involved language, from the actual use of it to the written form and grammar. Ideas that were mentioned included dictionaries, grammar books and educational tools for children, websites with the option to shift to Aramaic and films in the Aramaic language and Aramaic subtitles.
- Arameanism in politics,
The group first thought about where their national politicians are active, which platforms do they use in order to get their message across? The participants mentioned that it is important to have a good network of people who can help them achieve their goal. This means that they need a lobbyist at the international public organisations as well as contacts in the Aramean diaspora to give them feedback. Next to having these individuals, the group also emphasizes the need to be educated in networking and lobbying. The next step for them was to contact the media and adding them to your network to spread the word internationally.
- Aramean history.
The last group expressed the need for self-educating before teaching others. In this perspective they had ideas to create more available information on the Aramean history, creation of educational material and a curriculum for the teaching of this information to e.g. Sunday school children, the making of a historical documentary and an 'accuracy' certification for platforms (books, sites, etc.) that share information about the Aramean history.

One of the participants, a preschool teacher, mentioned: "the children of today need visual evidence when being educated; images, videos, documentaries, simple means to get the message across." Based on the outcomes of this workshop the participants agree on this quote as they all mentioned video and internet as a way to promote their subjects.

c) Leadership

Day 2/3 – 27 and 28 June

For or Against? | Before getting into depth on this new topic it was important for the facilitators to know how the participants felt about certain quotes presented. In this exercise the participants had to decide if they agreed, disagree or were neutral on the matter and then debate each other on the quote. After the participants gave their opinions it was up to the SUA President (Johny Messo) and SUA Secretary (Philip Hanna) to give their personal opinion as leaders to the quote, which would lead to a funny memorable imitation in a later exercise during the study session.

Decision making | Next, the participants were put in a situation where they could experience a decision-making process acting as the SUA board and about their leadership skills. The participants were again split into groups. Each group had a different decision to make in the following scenarios:

- The Turkish government agrees to enter into discussions with the Arameans on the condition that there is no mention of the Genocide; and
The two groups who worked on this issue both used a participative leadership style, which came down to a democratic way of decision making. Thinking of all possible stakeholders: the Aramean people, Aramean allies (Armenians, etc), and church

leaders that want to have a say in the decision. Even though they had the same style, the process of the decision making was a lot different. Where one group genuinely listened to each other and took their opinions into consideration the other group did the exact opposite but managed to overcome this hurdle by putting the decision to a vote. Both outcomes resulted in the decision that they would not give up the subject of Genocide. One would discuss it during the particular meeting and the other decided that they would not but emphasized that the subject would remain on the table. All participants found it fascinating to be in the shoes of the SUA Board. They learned to understand how challenging it can be to be in a leadership position, and thus expressed great appreciation to the SUA Board.

- Should we change the name of the Syriac Universal Alliance?

This question forced the other two groups to work in a democratic (and sometimes participative) leadership style. During the decision making process of this subject, the groups discussed the possible negative and positive outcomes of both decisions, which led to a big discussion in one group. At the end both groups came to the decision that they would change the name under the condition that the new name contained their original name (Aramean), but also their later adopted name (Syriac).

During the annual meeting of the SUA and its member federations, on 18 June 2011, all attendees unanimously decided that the Syriac Universal Alliance should change its name to the “World Council of Arameans (Syriacs),” shortened to “WCA”.

After all the groups explained the reasons of their decision they came to the conclusion that different scenarios call for different types of leadership styles.

Workshops | The next morning all participants were be divided into three groups and they would all attend the three workshops given (rotation system). These workshops were focused on leadership, communication and managing people.

1. **Characteristics of a Leader**

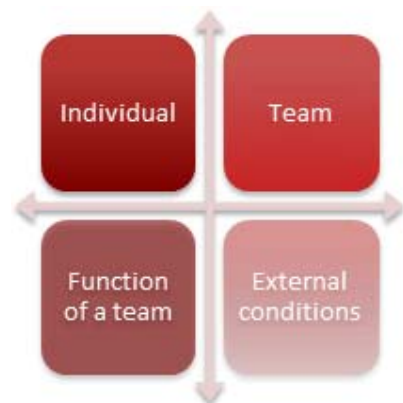
Before the participants started, they first received information on the habits (knowledge, skill and desire) of a leader and the fast changes the leader has to adapt to. Based on this information they created their perfect leader.

The message was that no matter what skills a leader has, good leaders need to be able to change their paradigms in order to listen to people, understand them and then act upon their own views.

2. **Managing People**

In this workshop the participants first thought of real life situations where they dealt with the management of a group of people. The facilitators then presented the participants to a four level model of management.

- Individual, where the focus is on the strengths, skills, personalities and values of each individual person;



- Team, which focused on the relations within the team;
- What is the function of the team; and
- External conditions, where subjects as budget, stakeholders and other aspects come to discussion.

The participants in this workshop were divided into four groups. Each group was assigned to a level in the above mentioned model, and write down all the different aspects they had to take into consideration in their level. To make the assignment more clear, the participants thought of a fictive event and used this as a reference point.

The purpose of this workshop was to know what you need to work on when managing people.

3. Communication

In this workshop the participants would first-hand experience what it is like to (try and) make decisions when there is no proper communication. The group was having their first meeting as the new SUA board. Each member in this meeting was given a role to play (what position they should take on the board relating to the distribution for the year's events) but they were not allowed to share their role with anyone. Because of the personalities of the characters (roles) the meeting of 20 minutes could not move forward at all and no decisions were made.

The participants then discussed their roles and what prevented them from making any progress within the meeting. They then expressed that when communicating in a group there should be:

- A clear leader. In the simulation there were multiple persons who wanted to be the leader;
- A moderator to break up any unnecessary discussions;
- A chairperson whom everybody respects and listens to;
- Respect towards one another (letting people finish e.g.).

The conclusion of the workshop was that it is impossible to make progress in a certain situation if the communication is poor. The facilitators wanted the participants to think about a way to improve communication.

d) Human Rights

Day 3/4 – 28 and 29 June

In the afternoon the facilitators kicked off the Human Rights section of the study session. The educational advisor held an interactive lecture with the participants to help them better understand the human rights, and more specific the Council of Europe's standpoint on them. Afterwards one of the facilitators spoke of the specific human rights of the Aramean people, which rights are currently being violated in their home countries. Both speakers emphasized that respect for human rights is an important value that allows everyone to live in peace.

Sleepyville | Participants got involved in a simulation exercise where they had to put themselves in someone else's shoes on a human rights conflictual topic, involving the

rights to education, culture and democratic governance of a state. In this exercise the participants live in the great fictive country of Sleepyville, in the last few years the population has changed significantly. There were people who migrated and emigrated. Now the country has a lot of minority groups of which the Arameans are one.

The Aramean group is pushing for the introduction of the Ottoman Genocide (Aramean, Greek and Armenian genocide) into Sleepyville textbooks. Of course, such proposals will not be liked by all. Therefore the Aramean group will debate with all groups that see themselves as stakeholders in this subject.

The participants were given the positions of all possible stakeholders and were divided into different groups, as the Minister of Education (chairperson), a bishop, different ethnic minorities, ambassadors, civil society representatives, researchers, Aramean community representatives.

All groups were given two minutes to share their arguments on why the ministry should or should not accept this motion. The participants showed real enthusiasm while doing this exercise. During preparations they looked up resolutions and studied the ECHR to better argument their standpoint. Some of the participants grew into their roles and characters, changing their voices and way of speaking. After every party was done it was time for the coffee break where the participants could lobby their cause to the opposite groups.

When the facilitators shared the outcomes of the Sleepyville exercise they found it interesting to look at the situation from an unusual point of view, and found it difficult at times to lobby for a cause which one is actually opposes in reality. Most participants found the lobbying during the coffee break the hardest since they did not know how to do this and when they tried there were a few groups who did not want to hear anybody's opinion and stuck to their own.

The chairperson also found difficulty in fulfilling her job simultaneously as the chairperson and the minister of education of Sleepyville. During the first round it was difficult for her to take everything in and listen to all the parties. She was also in the supposition that the groups would approach her (as minister of education) to pass or refuse the motion. However, she quickly realised that it was not up to her to make the decision but to the stakeholders (democratically).

Overall they found it good to know how it feels to speak at an 'international conference' where many different groups and opinions are presented.

Field stories | The next day the facilitators showed the participants footage of their activities within the international organisations and in the home country (spread out over Turkey, Syria and Iraq). This filled the participants with questions about the process of promoting the Aramean cause. The SUA board then shared their experiences with certain processes and what a battle it can be to defend one's human rights.

Speakers | Dr Grégor Puppincx shared his experience and viewpoint as the director general of the European Centre for Law and Justice. He also specifically entered into minority human rights violations which the Aramean people are currently undergoing.

The participants appreciated the knowledge Dr Puppinck shared with them. During the coffee break a large group of the participants continued the subject in the hallway.

After the coffee break Mr Rui Gomes, head of Education and Training Unit of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe spoke about the promotion of Human Rights. He attempted to have an interactive and a taboo breaking lecture. He turned to be successful in this, because it unleashed reactions from the audience which led to an interactive dialogue where many people were able to give their view on the topic.

Council of Europe and dinner | In the afternoon the entire group went to the Council of Europe (Palais) to get a tour of the building. The tour gave the participants a clear view of what happens in the Council of Europe, how and where once can lobby for what kind of issues and what the functions are of the rooms and the process of meetings held there.

After the tour (and reimbursement) participants were free to visit other places in Strasbourg. Later in the evening the group met up for dinner in the city centre and continued the sociability at the EYC where they went up to the roof.

e) Strategy

Day 5/6 – 30 June and 1 July

On Thursday it was time to start thinking of the future: what can the participants do and how can the SUA and the Council of Europe help? The latter two groups explained both their resources to involve the youth in the development of their organisation, such as decision making and promoting the values of the organisations.

How to involve the youth | Having heard what tools and support the SUA and the Council of Europe can give the participants, they split into groups and started to brainstorm on ways of how the SUA can involve young people. The participants then presented their findings in short, mid and long term strategies.

The short term strategy mostly contained ways to promote the SUA amongst the youth and standardise certain aspects of the events (e.g. lectures and social media) through the SUA Youth Academy. The mid-term strategy was set on organisational change: transferring the support to the youth onto the local and national organisations. The long term strategy emphasized on development: creation of educational material, more media and entertainment involvement (journalism, films and music) and successors for the boards.

Projects | After the participants agreed on the best way to involve their peers in the Aramean organisations, they thought of projects which would help to achieve that goal:

1. SUA Youth Academy – Mission Statement and Goals

A group of participants mentioned a clear mission statement and goals are needed for the SUA Youth Academy in order to give its target group an unmistakable picture of the organisation (what is the purpose of the organisation and what does it strive for).

During this project the participants took into account the European values (e.g. democracy, equality, human rights) in which they are familiar with, and implement these values in the mission statement and goals of the SUA Youth Academy.

2. Back to the Roots

This already existing project should give 30 young Arameans worldwide the opportunity to learn about their identity and the importance of it. Considering that the Aramean people live in diaspora, this group found it appropriate to have this study session in the homeland – Tur 'Abdin, in Southeast Turkey – to create a greater motivation amongst the attending youth (a lot of young Arameans have never been to their parents' homeland). The participants want to create a similar study session in Tur 'Abdin as they had in Strasbourg, only this time more focused on identity.

3. Fundraiser

Every organisation is in need of finance. There are a lot of organisations that sponsor certain projects, but then there is the need of finance to keep the organisation running. That is why this project group decided that they would hold a regular fundraiser event to help the SUA (and its member organisations) regular financial support from the Aramean people worldwide. During this event the participants also wanted the guests to know more about the SUA: its goals, mission, member organisations and their activities.

4. Youth Conference

The youth conference's main goal is to get the Aramean youth acquainted with their own identity and at the same time this team strives to excite the youth to be active within the Aramean organisations. Also, the conference would be an excellent medium to introduce the youth to the European institutions, and what role they can play in these institutions. During these conferences will be held in large halls where there is enough space to introduce the youth to their history, language and culture. The group's idea was to combine the social with the educational. The participants in this group planned to have this event annually at the end of the summer.

5. Online Educational Centre

The last group thought of a long term project. This project aims to have one central point where people – Arameans and others – can find accurate information on the Aramean history, culture and all other subjects that concern the Aramean people. The online website will have a library, newsfeeds on new additions to the website, information on the Aramean organisations and others. To keep the website open for discussion there will be a closed forum on the website where people can discuss the content of the website.

The future | During the final part of this day, the participants were sent off with the assignment to simulate their view of the future. They were all given 20 minutes to prepare their simulation and then each group would present it. After having received so much information during the previous days, the participants had quite some material to work with. The groups came up with the following:

- No matter how different we are, we are all Arameans!
These participants acted all as different individuals: one very spiritual, the other with a love for loud music, another a passionate fan of FC Syrianska (an Aramean club which acts since 2010 in the highest football league of Sweden) and the last one a typical bookworm. At the end of their sketch they would each say: I am Aramean, followed by the group together: we are Aramean.

- Step forward
This group expresses its concern for all the Aramean organisations if there are no succours to the current boards. The group imitated the current SUA board in a hilarious way mimicking each board member's characteristics. It takes place 50 years into the future and shows an elderly Johny Messo, Daniel Gabriel and Philip Hanna with beaten down voices but still giving everything they have to serve the Aramean people. With this sketch the participants wanted to show that the youth must think about getting more involved into the Aramean organisations in order to enter one day the SUA board before today's leaders are no longer capable for whatever reason to continue their work. The current board is operative since October 2008, but always stresses the need to the youth to become more engaged in community life and take over their leadership positions when they feel they are ready for it.

- Assimilation of the next generation
This sketch showed different generations of Arameans: the ones that immigrated to Europe, their children and their grandchildren. In the sketch there is an old couple who are still accustomed to their own culture and habits. They complain about a young Aramean man who is rude (he does not greet his grandparents, and keeps his sunglasses on inside the house) and disrespectful when answering their questions. They do not understand why the parents have not raised their son in the traditional culture (they named the boy Jason, which is not a typical Aramaic name). The participants showed the different values in generations and also the difference based on the country in which he generations grew up. This sketch showed the fear of assimilation from the elderly point of view.

3. Evaluation

In the beginning of the study session the participants were divided into so called facilitator groups. These groups (of five persons each) would come together and evaluate the day and share their personal findings on the subjects discussed.

The facilitators used different methods to evaluate the study session:

- The Backpack
In this evaluation method the facilitator would hand out a paper that showed a picture of a backpack. The idea was for the participants to write down what they would bring with them – in their backpack – back home, meaning: what have they learned today which they would like to transfer to their friends at home.
- Five finger hand
During this evaluation the participants had to mention one good thing (thumb), something they would like to point out (index), something they disliked (middle finger), something they would like to engage in (ring) and other things they would like to mention (little finger).
- Open conversation
The facilitators would also have open conversations with the participants. The participants automatically implemented the above two methods and discussed different aspects of the day.

IX. Main outcomes and final conclusions

The results of the study sessions met the aims and objectives of the SUA Youth Academy. With this study session the participants have developed a better understanding of different concepts such as: human rights, active citizenship, responsibility, leadership and Aramean vis-à-vis European identity. Throughout the study session they developed skills that helped them tackle potential problems that occurred during the exercises. When it came to the evaluation the facilitators noticed the change in behaviour. The facilitators pointed out that educational methods that had been employed helped the participants to think of creative new ideas instead of using more classic approaches.

To this day the participants of the 1st Aramean Young Leadership Programme: the Road to the Future are still highly motivated and have managed to transfer and implement the values of both the SUA and the Council of Europe.

The Swedish participants have, for instance, invited the SUA Youth Academy to organise a similar study session in cooperation with the two youth federations (Syriac Aramean Youth Federation and the Syriac Aramean Academic Federation). This study session took successfully place in Norrköping, Sweden, from 14-16 October 2011, and implemented many aspects of the Strasbourg event, including the non-formal training method and the Council of Europe Human Rights values. As in Strasbourg, the participants of the 3rd SUA Youth Academy Study Session (Sweden) responded enthusiastically to the training methods used and the contents of the study session. As a result of this study session this group has taken up four projects to multiply the outcomes of the third study session to be executed by both youth federations in Sweden.

The Swiss participants have taken the task upon them to enforce their country's federation, and help them with them with different activities which inform the Aramean people about the human rights situation of the Arameans in the home countries and promote the European human rights and active citizenship values.

The other participants have been more active within their own local community. Whether they are active for their association, federation or tv station the participants have truly embraced the outcomes of this study session and naturally have implemented these outcomes in their daily lives.

X. Appendices

1. List of participants and team members

Team	AYGÜN	Sara	Course director
	BAKIR	Sarah	
	GABRIEL	Daniel	
	HANNA	Philip	
	MESSO	Johny	
	SENER	Tony	
	GEORGESCU	Mara	
Others	AYDIN	Mathay	Cameraman
	PUPPNICK	Gregor	Lecturer
Participants	Belgium		
	ERGEN	Mécidé	
	GECER	Lydia	
	Germany		
	ALTUNKAYA	Ohanes	Absent (sick)
	BULUT	Johannes	
	OKTAY	Andreas	
	India		
	JOY	Anish	
	Jordan		
	SHAMMAS	Danial	
	Lebanon		
	BOU MAROUN	Charbel	
	Netherlands		
	ALAN	Ninwa	
	KARA	Maria	
	MUTLU	Daniel	
	MUTLU	Edesa	
	ONSAL	Emanuel	
Sweden			
ALTUNKAYNAK	Teodora		
BARHAIDO	Emanuel		
ECER	Antochia		
HARMAN	Andreas		
HARMAN	Jacob		
SAUMA	Michel		
VARLI	Jonathan		
Switzerland			
AYDIN	Severiyos		
EILO	Alfreda		
KAKUR	Habib		
ÜREK	Tony		

2. Summary of participants' evaluations

1. Please tell us how much we achieved our aim and objectives (1 not reached at all, 6 fully reached – it is possible for one participant to have chosen more than one score per aim):

- To initiate and develop Aramean youth leadership so that young Arameans can learn more about human rights and minority rights, share their knowledge with their friends at home and apply their individual and collective human rights;

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
PAX				3	16	5
%				13%	66%	21%

- To inspire and motivate the Aramean youth and make them understand, appreciate and realise the importance of socio-political involvement in their community affairs at home;

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
PAX		1		2	15	6
%		0%		0%	63%	25%

- Train and develop the competences of young Aramean leaders to be effective;

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
PAX		1		13	11	1
%		0%		54%	46%	0%

- Learn how the Council of Europe and the European Union work and to understand their youth policies and programmes, especially those which apply to the Aramean youth;

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
PAX			1	9	15	1
%			0%	38%	63%	0%

- Facilitate the young leaders of SUA member federations across Europe and Arameans from the Middle East and the Caucasus in sharing cross-cultural experiences;

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
PAX				6	13	9
%				25%	54%	38%

- Guide Aramean youth leaders in their process of reflection upon their distinct identity and assist them in contextualising their identity within the different societies they live.

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
PAX	1			4	8	11
%				17%	33%	46%

2. What were the most useful sessions in the daily programme of the study session?

When going through the evaluation forms, the first subject that stands out is **'Identity'**. Almost every participant has mentioned this subject and more specifically the lecture on the Aramean identity by the Syriac Universal Alliance president, Mr Johnny Messo. The next subject which also received high appraisal by the participants was **'Human Rights'**. The participants reveal that they very much appreciated the lectures given by the SUA's Human Rights and UN NGO Director, Mr Daniel Gabriel. He has given the participants a great insight on human rights and the human rights situation in the Aramean homeland.

Overall, the participants truly liked the set-up of the study session where they would first receive information and afterwards use that information in practice.

3. What were the least useful sessions in the daily programme of the study session?

A vast majority of the participants mentioned that they had expected more from the lectures given by Mr Rui Gomes and the lecturer at the Council of Europe. Many felt that Mr Gomes' lecture was irrelevant and that they lost focus on the human rights subject of that day. The other two guest speakers of that day presented their lecture in a dull way and that they could not keep the participants interest. During the visit to the Council of Europe many of the participants did not see any added value in the lecture given after the tour.

4. What do you think about the practicalities? The house, the food, materials, etc.?

All of the participants really loved the building. They expressed that they had the possibility to socialise and work on projects with their colleagues (lounge areas, Austrian room, terrace, etc.). Furthermore, they received all the materials they needed and could make use of the computers and other facilities when needed. They were very pleased with the assistance they received from the people behind the service desk.

Virtually every participant complained about the kitchen. They spoke of the unclean dishes and cutlery, sauces which exceeded the expiration date and the 'unhealthy' food.

The rooms were quite hot because of the summer period. Since there was no air conditioning in the rooms, the participants opened their windows. For the ones that slept in the rooms near the trees this was not possible because of the mosquitos that would enter the room. Some of the participants suggested some kind of climate control for these rooms since they could not open these windows.

5. What did you learn during this study session?

Most participants felt they knew about the situation of their people and what the SUA does, but at the end of the study session they learned there was so much more than they thought they knew. The study session gave them direction in the Aramean organisations and the Council of Europe (DYS), i.e. knowing how to contribute and support the organisations.

They mentioned they see the link between the Council of Europe and the Syriac Universal Alliance and how they both fight for respecting and championing human rights. The participants found this highly motivating. Overall, the participants expressed that the study session has given them more prospects in their contribution to society as Europeans but also as ethnic Arameans.

6. How do you evaluate your own contribution to the study session?

When a subject in the study session was actual, interactive, and concerned them as a person they would contribute more to that particular segment because they felt more connected with it. Some of the participants felt that this was the case throughout almost the entire study session.

7. How confident do you feel now to start working as a youth leader when you go back home?

The participants feel that they are more confident as they now know the vision of the SUA and the Council of Europe, which they can implement when working in their local organisations. The exercises they have done during the study session have greatly helped them to go about e.g. projects and meetings.

8. What feedback do you have for the team of facilitators?

According to the participants, the team dynamic was one thing that kept them interested in the study session. They very much appreciated the difference between the individual members: from students to professionals, age and so on.

A minor point of criticism was the high tolerance level of the team. Some participants felt that the facilitators should have been more strict when it came to starting the day on time.

9. If the SUA Youth Academy were to organise another international youth event in this setting, would you attend and why?

The participants almost unanimously agreed to enrol in a next study session, which would be a continuation of this session. A small group also stated that if the next study session would be a copy of the same session, they would be eager to give up their seat to fellow Arameans in order to let them experience the things they have learned at this study session (multiplying).

