



MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS  
STATE OF QATAR



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



مشاركة الشباب والمساواة بين الجنسين  
Youth Participation and Gender Equality

“50-50” Euro-Arab training course

17-20 November 2018

Doha, Qatar

**Report**

## Background

Young people today in the European and Arab regions grow up in societies exposed to various pressures for change and resistance to change at the same time. This has an important impact on their understanding and exercise of active citizenship and on their role as agents for dialogue, cooperation and learning. The realities for youth participation vary from one to another context, which makes some young people closer to decision-making, and others further away. Youth participation is not an end in itself, but a means of achieving positive changes in young people's lives, giving them also responsibilities in building a better society. On local, regional and national level across European and the Arab regions, young people are striving to build more inclusive spaces to be active actors in shaping their societies.

The youth sector of the Council of Europe has been particularly active in intercultural dialogue and specifically in the Euro-Arab cooperation for more than 20 years. The Youth for Democracy programme 2018-2019 prioritises work on Euro-Arab cooperation based on intercultural dialogue and youth participation. Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that should be reflected in all activities of the programme.

During the 6<sup>th</sup> Arab-European youth forum hosted in the city of Fez in Morocco, both partners agreed to further their cooperation by co-organising a "50-50" training course on youth participation, with a specific focus on gender equality. Youth participation and gender equality are goals to many partners in Euro-Arab youth cooperation, including the Council of Europe and the League of Arab States. Both themes are often at the centre of tensions and challenges to dialogue, notably by the concerns that are sometimes addressed in tokenistic ways.

Learning together about how they are perceived and promoted in youth policy and youth work is a very valid and relevant way to engage in dialogue and meaningful cooperation.

This training course was co-organised by the Council of Europe Youth Department and the League of Arab States, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the State of Qatar and with the support of the European Youth Forum. The aim of this course was to enable and to motivate participants to develop and implement youth work or youth policy practices that support meaningful forms of youth participation and gender equality in a context of Euro-Arab intercultural dialogue.

The League of Arab States mission is to encourage cooperation between its member states, safeguarding their independence and sovereignty, on a range of issues including Human Rights, economic and social development, migration, rights of women and youth.

Cooperation with the Council of Europe in the youth field has become an important feature in the youth programme of the League, notably through the youth fora jointly organised by the two organisations.

The Council of Europe mission is to support its member states to promote and protect Human Rights, the Rule of Law and Democracy. The Agenda 2020 indicates that the aim of the Council of Europe's youth policy is "to provide young people – girls and boys, young women and young men – with equal opportunities and experience which enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society".

## Objectives

The aim of the training course was to enable and to motivate participants to develop and implement youth work or youth policy practices that support meaningful forms of youth participation and gender equality in a context of Euro-Arab intercultural dialogue.

In order to reach this aim, the team had defined the following 5 objectives:

1. To introduce the Council of Europe, the League of Arab States and the State of Qatar's work and existing standards and mechanisms that support youth participation and gender equality
2. To establish common understanding of gender equality, gender-based discrimination, and the strive for gender equality and justice
3. To foster intercultural dialogue that enables participants to identify common challenges, areas of cooperation and advocacy in promoting youth participation and gender equality
4. To explore practices of meaningful youth participation and understand how it empowers young people
5. To reflect how the training course outcomes can be transferred within participants' organizations/ institutions and in their daily activities

Knowing these objectives, participants' expectations were:

- To share experiences, to be challenged
- To get to know different people/ countries/ cultures and have an intercultural experience
- To broaden perspectives on concepts, discuss differences
- To gain new and more knowledge, skills, tools, methods related to equality, women in public sector, gender, youth participation, religion
- To reflect on policies related to the topics of the training

In order to reach their expectations participants wanted to contribute

- With their perspectives and experiences in working with different people, in NGOs or public services
- With their knowledge and lessons learned in breaking stereotypes, working with migrants and young people

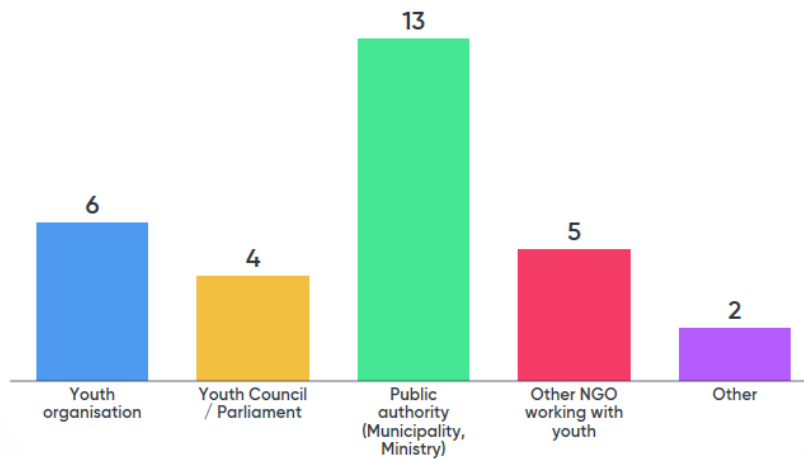
## The participants

The group was composed by half with people from different Arab states (Algeria, Djibouti, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Somalia and Yemen) and the other half with people living in Europe (Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation and Sweden). The group was also composed almost equally of representatives from NGOs (local, national and international levels), local authorities and ministries in charge of youth affairs.

The group was composed of balanced number of male and female participants. All participants also were supported by their organisations and institutions. Some of the profiles of participants included youth workers, trainers, project supervisors and managers, representatives of local youth councils and local authorities, youth campaigners on gender equality, gender identity, sexual and reproductive health and rights and others. Many participants from the Arab league were actively engaged with the ministries responsible for youth at the national level.

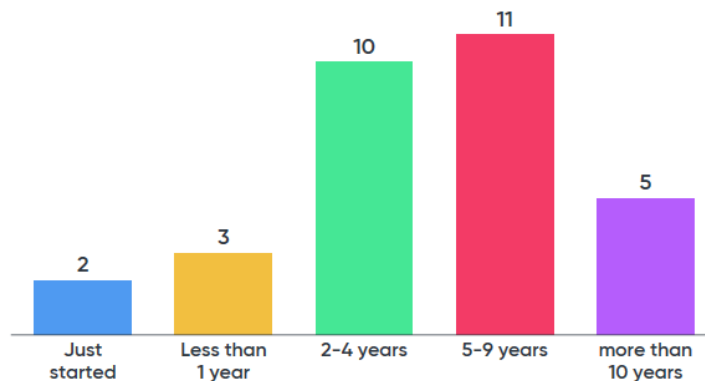
## Where do we come from?

Mentimeter



## How long are you active in the youth field?

Mentimeter



### Trainers team

**Fatima Al Mohannadi** is an analyst at Qatargas. She is a social entrepreneur and environmentalist and was selected as the only Qatari delegate to attend the One Young World Summit in South Africa in October 2013. She is involved in different civil society training initiatives aiming to empower young women to take up leadership positions in different work fields.

**Ajša Hadžibegović** has more than ten years of professional experience in developmental programmes focusing on Youth Participation and non-formal Education, Social Inclusion, Peace Building, Civil Society Development, Human and Minority Rights. Ajša was engaged in different capacities as programme manager, evaluator, researcher, trainer and facilitator. She has extensive experience in the peace building and reconciliation measures, policy development processes, recognition of non-formal education and inclusion of marginalized groups, especially children and youth, Roma, language and other minorities, in the decision-making processes and community development.

**Corinne Grassi** has worked in many different contexts, including Europe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Middle East and North Africa with the Council of Europe, the International Committee of the Red Cross, UN peacekeeping, the Anna Lindh Foundation. She has accompanied and coached NGOs (from local to international) in developing, monitoring, evaluating and valorising their projects. Her main interests are in the field of less privileged groups' empowerment, social development through arts in order to build a better living together.

**Rooda Omran Al-Qebaisi** Dynamic and hard-working professional with a Master's Degree in Human Resources -UK and professional experience gained through highly competent environments. Trainer licence of Social Responsibility from CSR regional network, Official trainer from Ministry of youth and culture -Qatar, official trainer from Ministry of administrative development labour and social affairs-Qatar. Facilitator in Arab European Forum 2016,2018 (QATAR).

**Noor Yaqoub** works as a project management expert and facilitator in Qatar and has extensive experience in project design, management of teams and evaluation of projects.

## Methodology of the Course

The Council of Europe introduced the "50-50" training course model as a way to support youth organisations and public authorities to work together in developing and implementing youth policy strategies and approaches. The "50-50" training courses are educational activities where half of the participants come from youth organisations and the other half from public institutions (local and regional authorities, national level ministries etc.). The course evokes also the spirit of co-management in place in the Council of Europe youth sector based on cooperation and communication between public authorities and organisations representing young people.

The course in Qatar focused on ways to increase meaningful youth participation based on the principles of the Council of Europe Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and relevant similar dispositions in the Arab region, more specifically by looking into how young people participate in the decision-making processes and in other forms of social and political participation. A specific emphasis was placed on gender equality, notably how to secure gender equality in youth participation and how participatory approaches can enable (better) gender equality. The role of human rights education – as proposed in Compass, the manual for human rights education with young people – was also addressed. The course resulted in proposals to further enhance youth participation and gender equality in and through Euro-Arab youth cooperation.

Through an active participative approach, the training used non-formal education methodology where participants' experiences are the basis for the learning process. The programme combined group work

and teamwork, theoretical inputs, discussions and reflections, simulation to take different roles, allowing participants to share their experiences, skills and practices.

Before entering the topics of the training, the first morning was dedicated to get to know each other, as well as the Ministry of culture and sports of Qatar and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, the organising institutions.

## Reflecting and learning together

The challenge was to establish a common ground to work with a group of very diverse backgrounds, with people who are not necessarily used to discuss and work together. In order to do this the course provided spaces for intercultural learning during the sessions (reflecting on gender equality and youth participation together), but also during the evenings.

The first end of the day was an **intercultural world café** to enable participants to explore and learn about each other's cultures, world-views and values discussing the following questions around a table with some others:

- How would I describe myself in relation to my culture and subcultures (citizenship, nationality, religion, music, reading, clothing style, etc)?
- What is the position of young people and of women in my society/community? How visible they are and how are they treated by society? How do I know that?
- Which values are hold high in my society/in my context? What drives me? Which values define the way I live? What am I passionate about?

There was an **organisational world café** at the end of the second day, inviting participants to explore and learn about each other's organisations, their mission and activities through the following questions:

- What is the aim, target group and types of activities we do in my organisation?
- What are the activities we do in my organisation to encourage people to participate in the society?
- Which best practice from the work of my organisation I can share with others?

The first two days the group was split in **reflection groups** with a trainer where participants had a chance to share their feelings, thoughts and reflect on what had happened during the day. It was also a space where they could ask questions regarding topics discussed and methods used. They also made suggestions for the programme (more energisers, being on time...) which the team considered afterwards.

## Understanding and experiencing the concept of gender

Reflecting on the importance of awareness towards gender stereotypes and how they developed in different cultures was opened with baby photos of some participants and trainers and group discussions to realise that, even in different cultures, there are already patterns at an early age and they can be often similar in Arab and European countries.

Then, the reflection was extended to the relations of gender with Human Rights thanks to an input of Rui Gomes, Head of Education and Training at Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

Gender equality has been a concern for the youth sector of the Council of Europe ever since its creation. The promotion of gender equality and combating any form of gender-based discrimination or gender inequality are at the heart of the Youth for Democracy programme of the Council of Europe. Youth organisations, in particular, have consistently contributed to keep theme up to date in the programme of activities of the European Youth Centres.

Gender equality is also present in the most popular educational resources of the Youth Department such as Compass, Compasito, Bookmarks and Mosaic. Sexist hate speech has been one of the most mobilising issues in the “No Hate Speech Movement” campaign. These are among the best examples of educational resources and action for gender equality with young people.

The Youth Department also encourages and supports its governmental and non-governmental partners to include a gender equality dimension in their activities. The Gender Impact Assessment of the Youth for Democracy programme and the Guidelines on Gender Equality in Intercultural Youth Activities contain various recommendations and proposals that are relevant to anyone in youth work and non-formal education.

## Understanding and experiencing the concept of youth participation

For the second day of the training participants were proposed to experience participation, getting roles in “**Shelter in Sleepyville**”, a simulation exercise. Here the exercise was adapted from the original version “[a mosque in Sleepyville](#)” to be found in [Compass](#), a Manual for Human Rights Education with young people published by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. The objectives of the exercise were:

- To experience real obstacles and conflicts that can arise in meeting the needs of diverse communities
- To explore the gender equality and right to participate
- To explore gender related stereotypes
- To develop skills of debate, analysis and negotiations

The modification of the activity included the same approach for a city council debate, but this time around the issue of construction of a shelter for women victims of (domestic) violence. The simulation allowed the participants to understand and share their ideas about the concept of citizen’s participation as well as how in practice it links to gender equality.

youth policies and youth work practice must support young people in realising their full potential as autonomous members of society, enabling them to develop life plans and exercise their democratic citizenship. Participation is an essential element of citizenship in a democratic society and a democratic Europe. Youth participation is not an end in itself, but a means of achieving positive changes in young people’s lives and of building a better society.

At the Council of Europe, the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, adopted in May 2003 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, was created to support and strengthen youth participation as the basis of a democratic society.

## Key topics and issues discussed

The group of people gathered in Doha for this training was highly diverse. People had different experiences and are working with youth participation and gender equality issues based on different pre-existing notions, understanding and approaches. Thus, we engaged the groups in defining five key terms to be able to discuss those issues. The terms that were given to groups are: **Intercultural dialogue, Respect, Participation, Team, Community**. Following is the account of definitions that the participants were able to agree upon while working together.

### Intercultural dialogue

- A process/tool/activity/value and experience which engages people from different cultural backgrounds and worldviews in an exchange which enhances openness, understanding, respect, collaboration and acceptance of diversity.

### Respect

- Taking care of dignity of other regardless of conflicting cultural norms.

### Participation

- Willing and informed actions in order to make the difference in the community. Prerequisite is having opportunities and experience.

### Team

- Group of different people aiming to achieve common goal. Being diverse we complement each other and then team is stronger.

### Community

- Group of people that have something in common and define what is “normal” and what are norms. There are communities that we are born into and those that we choose to be member of.

## Gender equality

The concept of “Danger of single story” was introduced and discussed as introduction to the exploration of concepts of gender equality and human rights concept. The participants also concluded that they miss objective and accurate data on which to base their opinion about Arab or European context, while also understanding that the situation is not homogeneous within those two. The opportunities to discuss with people from the “other” context and explore the gender equality and human rights concepts brought significant insights. Important insight shared by participants was that sharing their Arab and European perspectives helped them realize that some are very individual attitudes and can’t be fully affiliated to Euro/Arab prefix but rather to individual values.



The difference of experiences with issue of gender equality and human rights concept was further explored and conclusions made that there is quite serious space for improvements in this field in both European and Arab contexts, although with different specificities. Some joint issues emerged and were identified by participants:

- evident situation with less women in managerial positions;
- lack of understanding that societal norms bring difference in expectations and assign certain roles to either women or men;
- need to engage men to change the attitude and discriminatory practices against women;

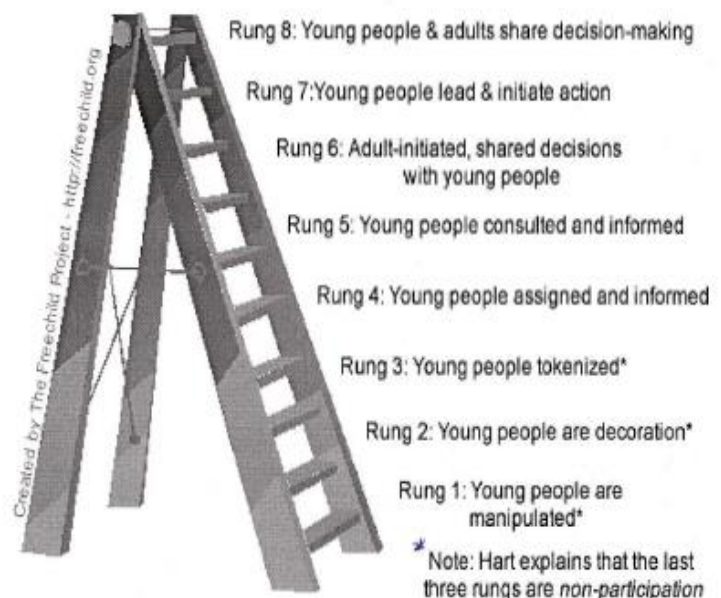
In the context of the Arab-Euro 50/50 training the participants also concluded that there is no one recipe for social change.

### Youth participation

The participants were experiencing participation mechanisms through simulation exercise of preparation for town hall discussion and advocating for different and competing issues. The experience brought additional insights to the group. Namely, that as youth participation and/or gender equality advocates we often misplace our focus and energy on irrelevant/less relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, participants stressed that existing participation mechanisms should be used, but that people need to be prepared, informed and equipped to participate and to critically assess available information and demand missing information before making decision. The experience of simulation has also re-confirmed to all involved how easy it is to resort to populist rhetoric and to omit the actual data and issues discussed. Coalition-building was singled out as the most powerful tool for advocacy that, during this simulation has demonstrated to have the prevailing say when it comes to the final decision. Role of media has proven to be very powerful in creating public opinion and/or creating perception of decision makers that public opinion will shift in certain direction.

The Ladder of participation was presented to participants who acknowledged that higher levels from the ladder are rather rare in context from which they are coming, while the non-participation levels: manipulation, decoration and tokenism are rather too often observed. While participants were sharing examples from their context for each level, it was clarified that in different situations each of participatory levels on the ladder are applicable and that not each situation demands or would benefit from the highest level.

### Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Glass-ceiling was another issue discussed by the group. The idea of the existence of glass-ceiling was introduced through role-play exercise “Step forward” where participants experienced how with certain situations they were not able to move forward. However, this notion was very difficult to process and be accepted by quite a few participants showing exactly how difficult it is to identify, acknowledge and deal with own role in creating/breaking different glass-ceilings in real-life. One of messages from working groups identifying glass-ceiling was:

---

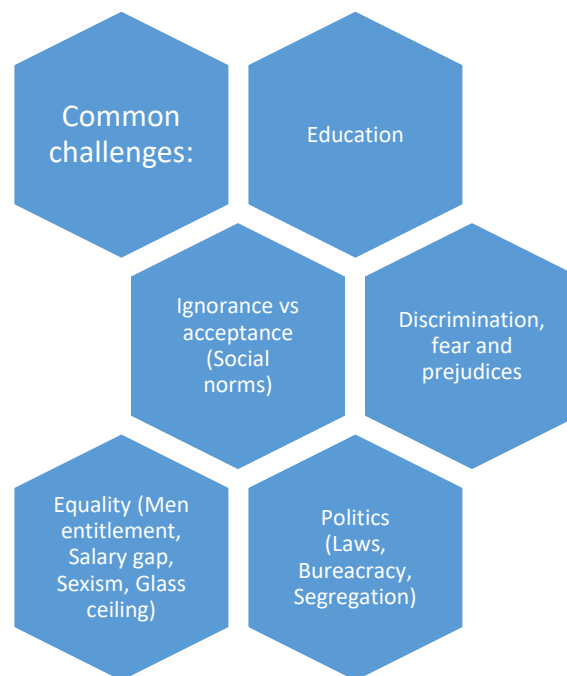
*“Glass-ceiling tends to be invisible until you reach it”*

---

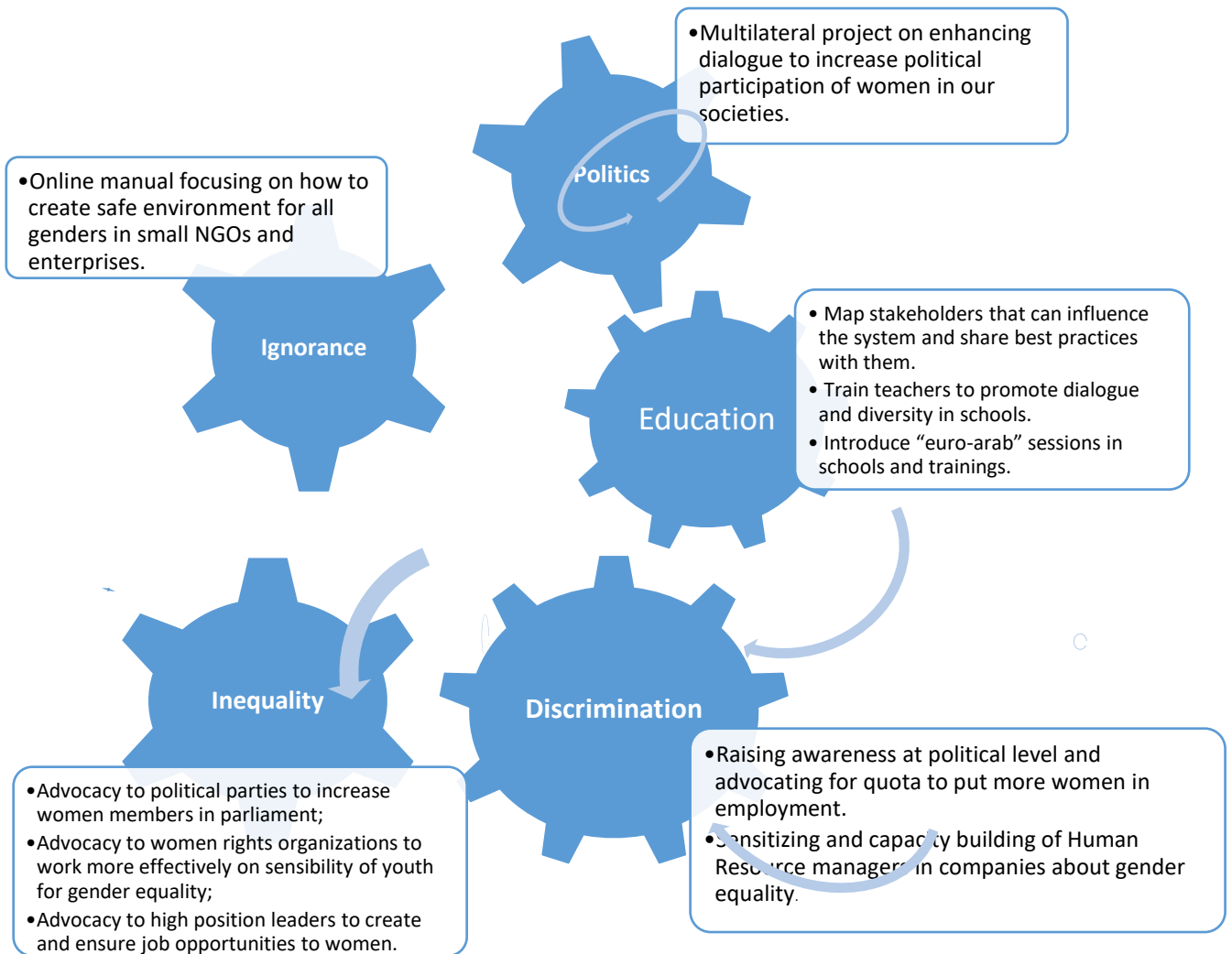
At the end, the conclusion was that the impact of gender, age and race on participation is significant.

### Identified common challenges and ways to overcome them

Looking at own realities participants were identifying challenges they face in youth participation and gender equality. Out of ~100 identified challenges by both Arab and European participants, eight has turned out to be those that are most frequently mentioned by participants coming from both Arab and European states. The top 5 common identified challenges are:



Once the participants defined the challenge in detail and determined its causes and its manifestations, they explored into designing possible solutions. The triangle of possible areas of interventions was provided as foundation for solution development. Those are: Policy, Procedures and Actions. The solutions that participants came up with included complex and comprehensive interventions, as well as concrete defined projects, as follows:



1. **Education** – the group focused on notion that lack of education brings ignorance. They have identified following issues within education field: lack of resources for education, decision making power only in the hands of top management, lack of consideration of local and regional realities, weak impact of education on citizens, lack of effective teacher training programs and evaluation of teaching outcomes, feedback and recommendations.

**Solution** – Several interventions on policy, procedure and action level: 1. Map stakeholders that are able to work on adapting education systems and share best examples to them to influence policy change; 2. Introduce “Euro-Arab” sessions in schools and trainings (procedures level); 3. Train teachers to promote dialogue and diversity in schools (action level).

2. **Ignorance vs Acceptance (social norms)** – the group was defining that ignorance is influenced by environment, existing gender (in)equality and immigration, while acceptance is influenced by the systems put in place.

**Solution** – Concrete project: Online manual focusing on how to create safe environment for all genders in small NGOs and enterprises.

3. **Politics (Laws, Bureaucracy, Segregation)**– the group was working on the issue of lesser political activity among women in different countries and then has identified specific challenge for each country present in the group: Iraq, Estonia, Macedonia and Lebanon. Specific challenges were identified: Iraq – president is not elected directly by citizens and he appoints Prime Minister; Estonia – lack of females interested in politics; Macedonia – corrupt system, wage gap, “political youth” pushed to youth organizations; Lebanon – children get the citizenship of the father which creates the problems.

**Solution** – concrete project on enhancing dialogue and thus influencing policies and practice re gender equality in different societies with the aim to increase political participation of women in those societies.

4. **Discrimination, fear and prejudice** – the focus of the group was on discrimination of women in employment realm. Namely, the group defined that in European context discrimination against women is present in work places and that there is negative salary gap in private sector, while in Arab context women face discrimination in the employment process.

**Solution** – two concrete projects aiming at two key stakeholders: members of parliaments and Human Resource managers in private sector. Project 1. Raising awareness at political level and advocating for quota needed to put more women in employment. Project 2. Sensitizing and capacity building of Human Resource managers in companies about gender equality.

5. **Inequality (Men entitlement, Salary gap, Sexism, Glass ceiling)** – the group identified key stakeholders that have power to influence existing inequality: political parties, women rights organizations and high position leaders. Furthermore, the group narrowed down the issues on: low number of women in parliaments; lack of sensibility among youth on the topic of gender equality and inequality and worst position of women at job market due to lack of job opportunities.

**Solution**–included elaborate advocacy campaigns to different stakeholders: political parties, women rights organizations and high position leaders. Campaign 1. Advocacy to political parties to increase women members in parliament; Campaign 2. Advocacy to women rights organizations to work more effectively on sensibility of youth for gender equality; Campaign 3. Advocacy to high position leaders to create and ensure job opportunities to women.

## Open space and topics/tools discussed and shared

The group was offered the space to explore deeper into solutions and offer to each other topics for further discussions, tools increasing gender equality and youth participation, opportunities for cooperation and support for cooperation project ideas, etc. The offer was quite rich and following is the overview of what was presented/ discussed and by whom:

<b>Topics</b>	<b>What was presented/discussed</b>	<b>Person offering</b>
<b>Youth Bank model</b>	The ideas of youth banks are a project which allows young people to fundraise and distribute grants for young people to help the community	Samanta
<b>Living library</b>	A presentation of the living library <a href="https://www.coe.int/fr/web/youth/living-library">https://www.coe.int/fr/web/youth/living-library</a> as a tool to fight against discrimination and hate speech	Khadija
<b>Social media tools</b>	A presentation of different tools to be used on social media and how to engage with audience on social media	Asila
<b>Gender project of AEGEE + Gender watch by YFJ</b>	Presenting 2 practical projects developed by AEGEE and the European Youth Forum to promote gender equality in youth activities. <a href="https://www.aegee.org/genders/">https://www.aegee.org/genders/</a>	Spyros
<b>Change my view (reddit)</b>	A presentation on how to use reddit to support debates and eventually encourage people to change their view on issues connected with gender equality	Margarida
<b>Sponsors and web impact</b>	Overview on how to achieve web impact and engage sponsors in producing content online	Nedir
<b>Self-coaching</b>	A session on how to set up own development and learning plans and how to become a self-directed learner	Noor
<b>Erasmus +</b>	Presentation of the Erasmus+ programme and opportunities it offers for global cooperation in the context of Euro-Arab dialogue	Ajsa
<b>Tips to develop project</b>	A session on project development – main steps on developing a project proposal.	Corinne
<b>To break the glass</b>	Discussion on the glass ceiling and strategies how to overcome it	Khalid
<b>#MeToo Campaign</b>	A discussion on the #MeToo Campaign and its' effects in Europe and Arab countries, its' national adaptations etc.	Niels

### Understanding the local context in Qatar

On the afternoon the group had the opportunity to visit [Bin Jelmoood House](#), a museum presenting the story of slavery. After the visit the group could learn about the work of the Ministry of culture and sports and hear about different opportunities for young people in Qatar to participate in like the network of youth centres throughout the country, the scientific club.

## Evaluation of the activity

An activity like the “50-50” is already a challenge because the point is to encourage trust, dialogue and cooperation between two parties, NGOs/ civil society and public institutions, which are not necessarily used to work together. In the present training the additional challenge was to also put together people from two different geographic regions in a context where there are also stereotypes, fears and mistrust and from different level of experiences, from local to international, from volunteer to decision maker. Giving this it was very ambitious to tackle two important issues like youth participation and gender equality within only 4 days. Hopefully this training has encouraged participants to go further in the topics and the institutions to continue to develop their cooperation.

### ***Achievement of objectives:***

For the majority of the participants the training met their expectations. They liked the dynamic, the balance in the methodology and the different ways used to encourage discussions and reflection. For few participants, maybe those with already more experience in such activities, the structure of the programme did not allow enough action and cooperation.

If some participants would have liked to learn more about the organising institutions, for others it was not the priority as they found more important the possibility to share and learn from others’ experiences, which gave them different perspectives. Relating to their contexts, it was inspiring to think about what could be applied to their societies and useful in order to share afterwards in their own organisations, even though some participants would have liked to go deeper on common understandings and on best practices linked to the topics.

### ***Learning achievements:***

#### *Learning from each other, putting down barriers*

According to the participants' evaluations the intercultural learning between young Europeans and young Arabs has been the most important learning achievement, even for some who took part in other training and youth activities before. For several Europeans the training was their first real field encounter with the Arab culture. Many participants mentioned the fact that they learned a lot from each other, clearly some barriers went down, challenging stereotypes some could have on the others.

#### *Learning from each other's realities, changing perspectives*

Sharing experiences on local realities and how people face and solve problems were another important part of the training and it encourage participants to reflect how issues such as youth participation, gender and discrimination are approached in the different countries and which mechanisms/ different stakeholders exist to support the work of their organisations.

#### *Learning from each other's practices, envisaging cooperation*

The discussions and exchanges allowed people to learn from others' work and organisations in the field of youth. The participants felt the discussions were enriching, expanding their horizon/ knowledge, giving them new perspectives and encouraging them to explore more opportunities to cooperate with the "other side", especially when they realised they could also have common challenges and different ways to approach them.

### ***Suggestions for improvement and changes:***

In training courses, there are always participants who would have liked it longer, with more topics tackled, more debates, more time to learn from each other, etc.... In the present training course part of the feedback reflects this, as well as the different levels of experiences of the participants with such event, who then may have opposite needs.

In their evaluations participants suggested:

- To invite participants to read some materials, do some researches before the training
- To take more time, to go more in-depth on real debates on the issues in the different countries, leading to concrete examples of good practices, concrete tools and actions
- To take more time to introduce both topics (gender and participation) with mechanisms, best practices, statistics so beginners can follow the waves around **OR** less time on definitions
- To have more advanced content
- To provide more information about the EU and Arab League structures
- To give more statistics on society trends and current issues in Arabic and European countries and to do countries and regions comparison
- To present the human rights session differently
- To have a better time management
- To have less camera and video during the event

### **Follow-up ideas**

Already few days after the training some participants shared at home their experience in Doha with peers at school, work or their organisations. Others intend to do so in coming weeks. Several also plan to use the knowledge acquired for their work as well as to disseminate it to colleagues.

Participants would like an online platform in order

- to keep in touch
- to see how proposals of the training course could be achieved together
- to work on shared future cooperation and projects
- to continue the cooperation with the Council of Europe, the League of Arab states and the state of Qatar.

The Latvian participant feels encouraged to contribute to good relationships between European and Arab countries and would like to establish and exchange programme between her country and the Arab countries based on the experience of an exchange programme between in Latvia and Japan

## Conclusions and recommendations

During the final day of the training course the participants had a chance to develop a list of recommendations for improving the youth participation and gender equality in the context of the Euro-Arab youth dialogue. This list is not exhaustive, but it reflects the experience of the participants during the activity and aims to provide guidance for ensuring youth participation and gender equality are intentionally supported as part of different youth activities. The recommendations are addressed to different stakeholders as follows:

### **For National and Local authorities**

1. To ensure that young people are involved in the work of each Ministry through a specific system that would enable young people to become advisors to their work. Youth participation should not be limited only to the work of the specialised authorities for youth issues, as young people face many issues which are in the responsibility of other authorities and Ministries.
2. National authorities should reduce the expected bureaucratic procedures for setting up civil society organisations, and should introduce a system to support young people to set up organisations faster and with less administrative requirements.
3. Youth organisations should have access to funding which will not be compromising their independent work. The existing funding options should be made accessible and known ideally on one platform.
4. Young people should have a clear say in setting up the priorities and choosing what kind of programmes and activities should be in place for them. In this regards, the co-management system as in the Council of Europe should be looked into. As a minimum, the participatory budgeting examples should give space for young people to decide on their priorities.

### **For the institutional partners of the Euro-Arab Youth Cooperation, notably the Council of Europe and the League of Arab States**

1. Ensure there is access to research-funding and adequate support systems for research focused on gender equality and youth participation in the Euro-Arab area. The research should provide with updated information that should be used for development of Euro-Arab youth cooperation activities
2. Enhance cooperation in ensuring more Human Rights and Citizenship education is part of the school curricula, including content such as understanding politics and political structures, media literacy and critical thinking. In the Euro-Arab area there are many good practices which should be used as a base for further cooperation to make them available in both regions.
3. Promote comprehensive sexuality education as a framework in which teachers will better understand the idea of gender and gender identity and will be able to provide lessons on these topics to their students.
4. Ensure there are ways (administrative, financial and educational) for young people and their organisations to develop projects in the Euro-Arab area. Now the spaces for such follow-up projects are very limited despite the need and interest to cooperate together.



### **For the National Youth Councils and International Youth Organisations**

1. Engage more directly with the national authorities in order to ensure there is more space for young people to have their say on issues that matter to them
2. Devise strategies and activities which allow more young people to find out about the work of the National Youth Councils and International Youth Organisations and become active members. If needed, some structures of the organisations should be created to make a welcoming and inviting space for non-organised young people to take part
3. Explore different ways how to provide information to young people in a youth-friendly and easy to understand way. National Youth Councils and International Youth Organisations are the connection between the youth policy processes and authorities, and the young people.
4. Provide capacity building training courses for young people as much as possible on the local level, so that young people can better understand how to take part in society and which are the possibilities to get involved.

### **For the local youth-led organisations**

1. Make sure that the decision-making process is inclusive and allows young people the space to have a meaningful voice over the issues that interest them.
2. Allow space for young people from the community to take the lead in developing and running different projects and activities themselves. The local youth-led organisations are best placed to support young people in developing and implementing their own ideas into projects
3. Ensure that there are specific set of activities in place for the continuous capacity building and support of young people.
4. Ensure that there is space for inter-religious dialogue in the activities of the local youth organisations. Often there is a lot of misconception and hate speech against specific religions which can be overcome by active local work enhancing intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.