



Quadrilogue Seminar

# “Broadening the Space for Youth, Peace and Security”

14-15 June 2019  
Hammamet, Tunisia

in the framework of the  
7th Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship (MedUni)

Organised by



In collaboration with



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## GENERAL OVERVIEW

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Following the [recommendations of the Lisbon Forum 2018](#), the Quadrilogue Seminar “Broadening the Space for Youth, Peace and Security” aimed at enhancing youth participation in structured dialogues with decision makers, while tackling current topics related to the [UNSCR 2250 “Youth, Peace and Security \(YPS\)”](#), such as youth in peacebuilding and countering violent extremism.

The seminar sought to engage quadrilogue participants from a wide range of backgrounds including international organisations, researchers, responsible persons for youth policies as well as youth leaders who, during the previous days of the MedUni2019, took part in the training workshop “Alternatives - Countering Hate Speech and Injustice through Dialogue and Human Rights Education” promoted by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in cooperation with the national campaign committees of the No Hate Speech Movement in Morocco and Tunisia.

The presence of the latter was fundamental to build up inclusive dialogues and to align the project to the [Council of Europe’s Strategic Priorities for Youth 2018-2019](#) and ensured complementarity with the [Euro-Arab and Arab-Mediterranean Youth Forum](#).

During the two days of Seminar, the challenges in the current policy and programmatic orientations related to peace and security in the Euro-Mediterranean region were explored and the needs of young people to better interact in peacebuilding related decision-making processes were assessed.

Suggestions were made on improving the support for informal youth peacebuilding initiatives in order to ensure their relevance at the institutional level, namely through cooperation spaces and encouragement for increasing the exchange of good practices between relevant actors in the Euro-Med region in the area of Youth, Peace and Security.

Moreover, by creating a space in which youth and decision makers discussed these issues, an important step was made to address the trust-gap between the different stakeholders in the field of Peace and Security.

Finally, youth leaders also shared their personal experiences regarding the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, whose contents cannot be disconnected from the mission and mandate of the Council of Europe.

## SESSIONS’ INSIGHTS

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The Quadrilogue Seminar was organised around a series of presentations, group discussions and working groups across seven sessions<sup>1</sup> which were implemented throughout both days.

### **Session 2: Identifying Challenges and Developments**

The session started with a presentation focused on the implementation of UNSCR 2250 in the Kingdom of Morocco, presented by Mr. Yassine Isbouia\*. From the analysis of a country-based scenario, the participants were then invited to zoom out looking for regional challenges: the participants split up into five working groups to identify the challenges in the Euro-Med region:

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<sup>1</sup> Session 1 is omitted from the report, as it mainly served to create a shared understanding of relevant terminology.

Working Groups	Identified Issues
<b>Hate Speech / Discrimination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vagueness and subjectivity of the definitions of the terms “hate speech” and “discrimination” make the operationalisation of the terms difficult.</li> <li>● No control over social media, where hate speech is most prevalent, result in acts of violence in the ‘offline realm’. Regulation is both needed and at the same time difficult to implement due to concerns about censorship and privacy violations.</li> <li>● There is inefficient control on bullying, which is often connected to an attitude of victim-shaming</li> </ul>
<b>Human Rights / Human Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inadequate implementation of the universal Convention against Torture across the region.</li> <li>● Ineffective protection policies for civil rights. (e.g. Algerian protests, “gilets jaunes” in France etc..)</li> <li>● Insufficient Human Rights Education especially in countries that are in the process of democratic transition.</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of regional cooperation and national policies to mitigate the effects of climate change and to promote environmental protection.</li> <li>● No systematic control on land-grabbing results in destruction of land and displacement of vulnerable groups.</li> <li>● Promotion of consumerism over collective responsibility is still limited and results in inefficient economic and social behaviors.</li> </ul>
<b>Migration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spreading fake news and one-sided narratives on immigrants results on a negative perception of migration as a process.</li> <li>● Scarcity of support centers for integration and increasing scrutiny regarding funding for integration.</li> <li>● Populist response to anti-migrant narratives results on borders closure increasing in this the critical exploitation of migrants in the “transit route”. (e.g. black labor, black market, sexual trafficking, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Democratic Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discouragement to engage in the democratic process from the side of political parties unless it is during election period.</li> <li>● Difficulty to participate in democratic process with alternative means to voting (e.g. youth councils, campaigning).</li> <li>● Tokenistic involvement of youth, minorities and women due to lack of independence but also of political education among young people</li> <li>● Widespread corruption, lack of transparency and accountability across the region.</li> <li>● Difficulties in access to information and no awareness raised on youth-related legislation.</li> <li>● Lack of cooperation among civil society organizations and other actors.</li> </ul>

### Session 3: Catalysing Positive Youth Involvement

The presentation “Youth Peacebuilding in post Jasmine Revolution Tunisia” by Ms Shadi Rouhshahbaz\* outlined peace-related initiatives in Tunisia since the revolution, following the peace education “flower petal model” and then grouping them into three main focus areas: peace education, civic engagement and preventing violent extremism.

### Findings

- Peace Education
- Civic Engagement
- Preventing Violent Extremism

Peacebuilding : Activism for Positive Peace



The next presentation by Mr Laszlo Milutinovits\* outlined a number of contributions from the Council of Europe to the Youth and Peace agenda, such as the toolkits “[youth transforming conflict](#)”, the revised [European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#) and the [Peace Camps](#): an opportunity for youngsters from conflict-stricken regions to meet and to build their capacity to develop future conflict transformation initiatives.

Mr Milutinovits finally presented the next [Euro-Arab Youth Forum](#) (November 2019) having as main thematic focus “Youth Peace and Security”.

Subsequently, participants were asked to split up into working groups to discuss:

#### **Group A: the role and space youth-led organisations have in the international scenario on peace and security.**

##### **FINDINGS:**

- The actual shrinking space phenomenon for civil society affects youth organisations more than other CSOs: youth organisations do not usually have strong connections with media and policy-makers.
- Youth organisations are generally perceived as less trustworthy than other CSOs. On the other side, youth organisations do not generally have much faith in the work of decision makers: trust-building is required to overcome the trust deficit on both sides.
- More public policies in support of youth organizations are required in order to increase the impact that youth work can have.
- There is a need for more public recognition of youth organisations: the significance of their work must be better clarified and communicated to institutional stakeholders.
- Bigger and well established organizations must collaborate more with youth organizations, also to contribute to their empowerment.
- Scarcity of funding opportunities and difficulties in accessing to them limit the potential that grassroots organisations could have. The existing funding mechanisms often take too long to make a decision, leaving organisations in limbo which at times results in their dissolution. Some grants require the receiving organisation to advance payments, which is untenable for many youth associations.
- Youth organizations should not wait for top-down support measures, rather they should proactively look for support from individuals or key individuals in established institutions.

Group B) Triggers and barriers influencing youth participation in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.	
<u>FINDINGS:</u> Triggers and Motivators	<u>FINDINGS:</u> Barriers and Challenges
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Desire to fight injustice and inequality.</li> <li>2. Capacity to express dissatisfaction within the existing system without fearing repercussions.</li> <li>3. Willingness to create safe spaces in an hostile public environment.</li> <li>4. To become an active members of the society.</li> <li>5. To foster a sense of responsibility.</li> <li>6. To be recognize as role model for peers</li> <li>7. For personal development, (e.g. increasing self-esteem).</li> <li>8. To create institutions independent from official bodies.</li> <li>9. To contribute to the rule of law, by applying laws and creating stronger constitutions.</li> <li>10. Encouragement from international organisations and local bodies.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To deal with long, tiring and demotivating bureaucracies takes away much of the initial momentum youth organisations rely on.</li> <li>2. Lack of trust between youth and politicians due to stereotyping and negative (or absence of) experiences.</li> <li>3. Corruption at all levels of the political system hinders progress.</li> <li>4. Lack of training for people in positions of power.</li> <li>5. Logistical issues (e.g. mobility and visas)</li> <li>6. Unengaged and inefficient education systems which are not able to adapt to modern challenges.</li> <li>7. Exploitation of political issues during sensitive times and mobilisation/ manipulation of youth by political actors.</li> <li>8. Misrepresentation of issues related to peace and security. (e.g. ‘threat of migration’, fake narratives, etc.).</li> <li>9. Lack of access to information about funding schemes or capacity building opportunities.</li> <li>10. Difficult to keep activities sustainable due to turnover of human resources.</li> </ol>



### Session 4: Exploring Good Practices

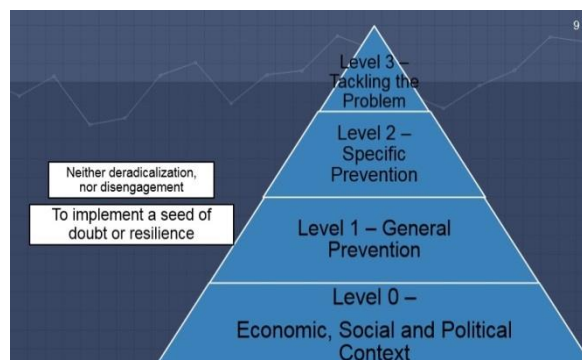
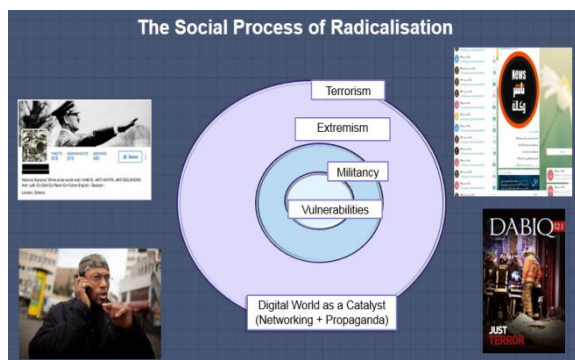
Participants, both youth leaders and decision makers, were asked to present their work. The sharing of experiences and subsequent discussions about them allowed for the collection of common lessons learned:

#### **Lessons learned from the sharing of good practices:**

- To counter and prevent radicalisation, the methods that were proven to be successful in engaging youth stakeholders are: storytelling, living library and nonverbal communication.
- A good approach in fighting extremism is to focus in inspiring hope instead of exploring the negative aspects.
- It is fundamental to include follow-up activities from the beginning in order to increase both impact and sustainability.
- It is usually better to adapt programme to the different contexts instead of using the same approach for the implementation of the programme in all the contexts.
- To avoid perfectionism is important (regardless of the funding situation) as this can significantly slow down process without resulting in significant improvements.
- A genuine involvement of women in all stages of a project is not only essential to guarantee inclusivity and gender balance, it also opens up new perspectives and allows to take advantages of often underutilised resources.
- Consider to invest in finding synergies and in creating safe spaces for dialogue.

### Session 5: Bridging the Gap between Peace and Security

The session started with the presentation “Youth and Security: A Comprehensive Approach for Stability” by Mr David Ruah\*. The strategies of terrorist groups and of the psychological warfare to conclude with the “Social Process of Radicalisation” and the “Prevention Pyramid” were presented.



The debate after the presentation pointed out the reasons why young people should be involved in security issues:

- young people have peer-to-peer access to networks that include vulnerable young people;
- young people have already developed counter and alternative narratives;
- young people have a high resilience to violent extremism and other forms of conflict;
- young people are innovative and creative, which are fundamental elements to set up strategies to prevent radicalization;
- young people are used to working with social media and by involving them in security topics it would be possible to better understand the way how young people look at the world and what grabs their attention.

It was concluded that youth empowerment (mainly on critical thinking) is a key element in security issues and that initiatives such as [Youth-CAN](#), [Humans of Tomorrow](#) and [RAN Young \(Radicalization Awareness Network\)](#) represent good examples of youth involvement that brought positive results.

After the presentation, two working groups discussed complementary topics in order to find comprehensive findings on the relation between “youth and security:

<b>Group 1:</b> How to tackle issues related to youth radicalization and criminalization of youth	<b>Group 2:</b> The challenges for an effective involvement young people in stability and security policies and actions.
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**COMMON FINDINGS:**

- The relation between youth and security is closely influenced by the mistrust and hate between youth and institutions represented by older generations. Such mistrust is both cause and effect of stereotypes which limit youth agency in contributing to security and the older generation to be shunned away.
- Youth become actors of rebellion and revolution, sometimes in an extremist way, towards governments who fail to maintain safety and security.
- Where youth are actually part of security systems, such as the army, they are often position at the bottom of the ladder, while older people hold stronger and more stable positions. This position limits young people proactive involvement in stability and security actions.
- In many countries military service is obligatory for youth: in these circumstances the capacity of avoiding violent confrontations is limited and the overall atmospheres in the army influence attitudes and creates certain phenomenon of manipulation that increase radicalization.
- Most of educational systems do not foster critical thinking and do not prepare young people to deal with insecurities and vulnerabilities. A reform in the educational systems should include the use of non-formal education, theatre and media and information literacy skills.
- Socioeconomic marginalization greatly contributes to security issues. Reaching out to rural areas and marginalized neighbourhoods and seriously tackle youth unemployment are necessary measures.
- Social and cultural activities should be also considered as means to tackle youth radicalization and criminalization.
- It indispensable to use the UNSCR 2250 as a legal framework to recognize youth work as a key element of a prospering civil society while also leading more young people and governments towards cooperative decision-making processes at local, national and international level.

## **Session 6: Assessing the Needs of Youth**

Participants split up into five groups to explore five questions and come back with five main key findings:

<p><b>What are the needs of young people to better interact at policy level with the relevant institutions?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To invest in capacity building not only for young people but also for decision makers to act in the framework of structural dialogues.</li> <li>2. To have the possibility to interact with decision makers in different spaces and using different methodologies other than the usual formal and official settings: open spaces, world cafes, virtual platforms etc.</li> <li>3. To benefit of the freedom of speech.</li> <li>4. To build common grounds and mutual trust.</li> <li>5. To increase recognition of youth participation and involving youth in legislative and policy writing.</li> </ol>
<p><b>What are the needs of young peacebuilders in the Euro-Med region?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To foster exchanges between regions to strengthen and develop networks.</li> <li>2. To include Peace Education and Human Rights approaches in the curricula to eliminate discrimination and injustice.</li> <li>3. To Increase the collection of data and research on the situation of youth (e.g. <a href="#">Global Peace Index</a> etc.).</li> <li>4. To develop youth strategies using an inclusive approach to engage more people also through non-formal activities.</li> <li>5. To support and encouraging youth leaders to stay in their countries and contribute to the improvement of the situations locally instead of investing their future abroad.</li> </ol>
<p><b>How to enhance the recognition of grassroots and informal youth initiatives for peace?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Following the <a href="#">Council of Europe Youth Work Recommendations</a> (e.g. expanding youth centres)</li> <li>2. Showcasing their work and their good practices at global level (e.g. PeaceMaker 360)</li> <li>3. Opening possibilities for informal groups to join international networks (e.g. <a href="#">UNOY</a>)</li> <li>4. Sustaining long term blended learning and residential educational activities at national and international level</li> <li>5. Respecting the pillars of the UNSCR 2250 by creating partnerships between Europe, the Mediterranean and other countries.</li> </ol>
<p><b>How to increase trust and mutual understanding between youth organisations and institutional representatives?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expanding existing networks connecting all the stakeholders also by creating on-line application that works as platforms for dialogue.</li> <li>2. Investing in institutional transparency and accountability while protecting personal data</li> <li>3. Increasing support for registration of youth organizations, facilitating bureaucratic processes and allow proper spaces for youth initiatives.</li> <li>4. Foster a change of attitudes and values: become receptive to feedback and criticism, discourage elitism, and recur to youth expertise.</li> <li>5. Avoid tokenistic consultations and youth event organised by institutional where young people have a tokenistic role.</li> </ol>



What are the commonalities and differences between the needs in Europe and in the Mediterranean?	
<b>Common needs</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To deal with lengthy bureaucratic processes</li><li>2. To invest more in cooperation between youth networks at regional and global levels</li><li>3. To focus on common objectives for common goals</li><li>4. To get access to the variety of opportunities available to engage youth</li><li>5. To deal with a non-genuine involvement of Youth and women in democratic processes</li></ol>	<b>Different needs in the two shore of the Mediterranean sea</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Visa issues</li><li>2. Influence of cultural ties and traditions</li><li>3. Limited access to resources</li><li>4. Degree of Democracy and Security</li><li>5. Communication standard and mechanisms.</li></ol>



## **CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS**

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- To recognize the role of young people in peace building is the inevitable starting point to fight against violence and to promote human rights and social cohesion. For this purpose, youth need the support of state institutions when it comes to legitimacy, funding and capacity building.
- The trust gap between young people and decision makers is among the key issues to address: in order to bridge this gap, it is fundamental to create spaces and platforms for dialogue and exchange. Dialogue initiatives such as the Quadrilogue seminar are huge opportunities, but subsequent initiatives promoted by different actors should follow to maintain the opened channels operational.
- Both youth and decision makers from political parties and institutions are keen on working together, but both need to make bigger efforts for managing their different approaches and expectations.
- Institutions should improve their channels and mechanisms to communicate their policies, programmes and opportunities in the field of Youth, Peace and Security in order to be recognized as entities able to respond to the current challenges as exposed in the YPS Agenda.  
In case they are currently lacking such initiatives, they should immediately start working on it taking the opportunity to make the process more inclusive and accessible for youth, women and minorities.
- The interregional cooperation, shared responsibility, multilateral governance and political involvement through inclusive and comprehensive mechanisms are the objectives that should be pursued both by youth and representatives of institutions.
- An increase in financial instruments/funding mechanisms aiming at supporting grass roots initiatives without passing through big bureaucratic hurdles is needed.
- Any initiative in the field of YPS should not be limited to engaging official and big networks of organizations, but open to the grassroots level following the principles of “leaving no-one behind” on the common path to achieving the global goals of the Agenda 2030.

## FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

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In the last session the facilitators carried out a series of exercises to collect feedback, insight and evaluation elements both at individual and group levels:

- The seminar was useful and motivating, but also intense and too short to reach all the objectives.
- The opportunity to share experiences, expertise, also taking into account the geographical diversity, was really enriching and made clear the need of a multilateral approach on Peace and Security.
- The variety of participants’ profiles and the differences in viewpoints they represented was constructive and clearly reflected the approach of the North-South Centre.
- The model of the quadrilogue is inspiring and effective but there is a need to engage more representatives especially from local and regional authorities.
- Participants were impacted by the quality of the presentations/lectures, even though sometimes it was difficult to maintain the focus when the session was not properly balanced with non-formal education activities.
- The practical and implementation-based approach of the UNSCR 2250 made this seminar different from other similar events where they used to have a more theoretical presentation on this UN resolution.
- The seminar helped to better realize how important is to broaden the geographical scope when tackling issues related to Peace and Security.
- The seminar made clear that the YPS resolution is pertinent and is applicable everywhere, not only in countries affected by conflicts.



## **FOLLOW-UP**

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The *Quadrilogue Seminar* will be followed-up by a series of activities targeting each of the specific findings gathered during the two days of the quadrilogue seminar:

- Building the capacities of youth organisations: a six-day training course addressed to youth workers, human rights activists and young peacebuilders will increase their competences on political participation and their knowledge about the complementary relationship between democracy, human rights and peacebuilding. The course will take place in the framework of the 20<sup>th</sup> University on Youth and global citizenship (Mollina, Spain / 15-21 September 2019).
- Financial support of grassroots initiatives: a seed funding scheme will be launched in August 2019 with the objective of sustaining regional and local projects of youth-led structures dealing with combating violent extremism, preventing radicalizations, addressing social exclusion and promoting human rights and peace education.
- Interregional cooperation for youth participation: a two-day follow-up seminar of the Lisbon forum 2018 seminar will provide the space for youth representatives and decision makers to increase their mutual confidence identifying together how interregional cooperation and the exchange of knowledge can support the definition of youth-inclusive national and local strategies on Youth, Peace and Security.



\* A short biographical-note of all contributors and facilitators is included in the document [“Concept note and Agenda”](#).