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*Euro · Arab
Youth Forum*

MEETING OF INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS IN EURO-ARAB YOUTH COOPERATION

Friday, 8 November 2019

European Youth Centre Budapest, Hungary

REPORT

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Opening and welcome

Antje ROTHEMUND, Head of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, opened the meeting and welcome all the participants (see list of participants). She expressed her satisfaction at the good representation of the two institutional partners, as well as the youth organisations. She welcomed the participation as observer of Great Silk Way Youth Union; the UNFP Office for the Mena region was also invited but they had to cancel their participation.

Abdelmeneim A. ELSHAARY, Director of the Department of Youth and Sport of the League of Arab States, welcomed the participants on behalf of the League. He expressed the high hopes of the League that the partnership will be strengthened.

2. Purpose and expectations of the meeting

As with the two previous meeting in Strasbourg (2015) and Fez (2017) the meeting of partners is held to exchange information about developments relevant for Euro-Arab youth cooperation among the partners and to plan the upcoming biennium – i.e. until the 8th Arab-European Youth Forum.

Antje ROTHEMUND recalled the decisions taken in Fez. She noted that most decisions had been implemented, notably the holding of the 50-50 training course on gender equality and youth participation (Doha, Qatar, November 2019), which was followed by participation in the Youth Forum for the Alliance of Civilisations.

These meetings are useful and contribute also for the stakeholders to better know each other. They are also an important signal for the participants of the Euro-Arab Youth Forum that their work is listened to and taken into account by the co-organisers.

3. Review of recent developments in programmes and policies

The Council of Europe

Antje ROTHEMUND recalled that the youth sector of the Council of Europe had gone through a very difficult process in 2019. Its continuation was at risk due to a contingency plan put into place because of the non-payment of the financial contribution of a member state to the budget of the Council of Europe. She thanked all the partners for their support in that period. She invited the representatives of the co-management bodies to share the major recent developments in the youth sector.

Ivan HROMADA, current vice-chair and chair-elected of the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ), informed the meeting about the successful finalisation of the [Council of Europe youth sector's strategy 2030](#). This strategy, valid for the upcoming decade, is based on 3 dimensions,

- strengthening young people's access to rights
- deepening youth knowledge
- broadening youth participation;

and has 4 thematic priorities

- revitalising pluralistic democracy
- young people's access to rights
- living together in peaceful and inclusive societies (including global solidarity, peace, diversity, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue and environmental sustainability)
- youth work

In April 2019, the Committee of Ministers approved a [Recommendation on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood](#). The recommendation is important because it calls on member states to temporarily extend the protection provided to them under the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child after they turn 18. The recommendation also recognises the important role of youth work and non-formal education in supporting the social inclusion of young refugees in their transition to adulthood. The recommendation implied consultations with and involvement of various ministries in national governments.

Ivan also informed the meeting about the results of the closing conference of the No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign which culminated in a [Declaration of the Committee of Ministers](#). Several national campaigns continue, such as those in Morocco and Tunisia, supported by the Council of Europe Youth Department during the MedUni in 2018 and 2019.

Pegah MOULANA, representing the Advisory Council on Youth, introduced the [Recommendation on Youth Work](#), adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2018. The recommendation places youth work at the centre of the youth policy in the Council and recommends various measures for member states to improve and support the quality of, and access to, youth work.

Pegah also explained the role of the youth organisations in the co-management system and shared her experience in contributing to various processes, including the portfolio of Euro-Arab youth cooperation. She expressed the hope that the success of co-management would be an inspiration to institutions and youth organisations in the Arab region so that the voice of organised youth from Arab could be better visible and head at our common activities and meetings. Pegah also gave as example of the recognition of this work the recent [award to the co-management system by the Future Policy Awards](#).

Graziano TULLIO, youth programme officer at the North-South Centre, started by sharing information about the status and role of the centre, a Partial Agreement between 17 European states and Algeria, Cape Verde, Morocco and Tunisia. The centre's main work is focused on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, which includes the Mediterranean Youth University (MedUni) held every in Tunisia and which the League of Arab States has sometimes participated in. The 2020 edition of the university will be dedicated to the role of young people in building strong institutions. The North-South Centre has also taken up work on UN SC Resolution 2250 on Youth Peace and Security especially since the 2018 Lisbon Forum. In this context, the centre will be holding an interregional seminar on Youth, Peace and Security in Amman in December.

The League of Arab States

Abdelmeneim ELSHAREEI provided an update on developments in the League of Arab States. The programme of activities is based on close partnerships with ministries responsible for youth and sport and this functions very well. There are more than 40 activities in the 2019 programme of the League, including various activities against extremism and terrorism, in the follow-up to the campaign presented at the forum in Fez. The League is currently discussing launching a campaign on youth empowerment (for young men and young women) which should start in spring 2020. He also informed of the holding of a Forum of Arab youth which was held during a conference of Ministers of Labour on Youth Employment. The League of Arab States established a bi-lateral co-operation agreement with the African Union and would like to explore the possibility of a similar agreement with the Council of Europe.

Yassine ISBOUIA provided information about the Forum of Arab Youth organized by FOMEJE, Scout movement organisations and the Youth and Sports Department of the League, which was held last year in Assilah. This meeting is different from the Employment youth forum presented by Mr Elshareei; it could result in a network of youth organisations in Arab countries.

For the League of Arab States, the definition of "youth" includes people up to 35 years of age.

The European Youth Forum

Benjamin GÜNTHER, member of the bureau of the European Youth Forum (YFJ), informed the meeting participants that the Forum is in the process of adopting their strategic priorities for the next 4 years. It is expected that Euro-Arab inter-regional cooperation will remain a priority. Sustainable development and a human rights-based approaches should be

closer to the work of the YFJ; climate change will also be given more attention. A survey conducted on Agenda 2030 reveals that SDGs 4, 5, 16 and 17 are the most important ones for youth organisations, hence the importance of the peace and security agenda. The results of the 7th Euro-Arab Youth Forum will be taken into account in the preparation of a policy paper on Youth, Peace and Security by the YFJ expected for March 2020.

Regarding the future of the cooperation, the YFJ proposes that the dates of future activities be agreed upon and communicated as early as possible so as to be included in the Work Plan of the Forum, hence securing the necessary resources for them.

Great Silk Way

Aytan ALIYEVA, president of Great Silk Way International Youth Union (GSWIYU), introduced the work of the organization dedicated to promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue and peace-building and brings together 33 organisations from 33 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. The organization, which has also good relations with China, has youth entrepreneurship is high on its agenda. Aytan thanked the Council of Europe and the League of Arab States for the invitation to the forum and to this meeting, which follows the cooperation initiated in Fez. She reiterated the readiness of her organization to continue the cooperation.

4. Impressions on the process and results of the 7th Euro-Arab Youth Forum and follow-up to the conclusions

Rui GOMES recalled the preparation process initiated with the meeting in March. The preparation calendar was adequate but too many details were left to the last weeks prior to the forum. The participants were excellent, and the results are very good. As suggested by the 6th forum in Fez, the participants were at the centre of the forum and this shows in the quality of the projects that they prepared and, it seems, they expect to implement.

The representatives of the League of Arab States acknowledged the positive atmosphere and results but regretted the problems of visas prevented half of the Arab delegation from attending. Only the participants who applied in Cairo got their visas; this came as a surprise after the experience of 2015 in Strasbourg where everyone received their visa.

Antje ROTHEMUND regretted the problems which often also came as a surprise to the Council of Europe as in the past Hungary was more expedite in providing visas to participants in the activities of the EYCB. She reminded everyone that the Council of Europe cannot issue visas, which remains a prerogative of the national governments. She advised the League to use the diplomatic channels to address the Hungarian consular authorities about non-issuing of visas to holders of diplomatic passports. She also hoped that in the future the timely preparations that respect the deadlines for visa applications will prevent future similar situations.

Overall, the partners praised the quality of the programme and the relevance of the work and projects of the participants. Communication between the partners before the forum should be improved; it was very difficult to discuss programme issues between the March meeting and the forum. The partners should take advantage of the forum to engage in dialogue themselves.

Now the partners should also pay attention to the supporting the projects of the participants and the follow-up activities in 2020. The conclusions proposed by the participants will be further circulated to collect additional comments and amendments. Pegah was thanked for her coordination of the process leading to the conclusions document.

5. Findings of the study on 10 years of Euro-Arab youth cooperation

In accordance with the decisions of the partners meeting in Fez and the preparatory meeting held in Fez, the Council of Europe contracted a consultant, Mary DROSPOULOS, to carry out a survey and evaluation of the past 10 years of cooperation, corresponding roughly to the first six Euro-Arab fora. In addition to the presentation done during the forum, Mary added that

according to the study, 92% of the respondents stated that their participation in the activities had been very useful. This was confirmed by other questions and interviews. She advised the partners not to betray the expectations that participants placed on the cooperation. They look for more practical tools, methods and partners. She recalled recommendations issued from the study:

- (To the League of Arab States) young people believe in the cooperation but many don't know how to do it; they ignore how they can contribute to or benefit from the work of the Youth and Sports Department. Other ways should be considered to not always depend on national authorities to nominate the candidates to the forum (whose qualifications are not in question)
- The creation of a joint fund to support participants Euro-Arab projects and to support further training on critical spirit and open-mindedness remains a necessity and both institutions should "seriously reflect about it".

All former participants call upon the Council of Europe and the League of Arab States to remain faithful to their commitments.

Mr ELSHAARI clarified that the profile for the participants in the forum are the same for the League and for the Council of Europe. The main difference is that the League is obliged to recruit through the national youth governmental authorities. Some of these authorities (mostly ministries of youth and sport) recruit through open calls; some do not.

6. Possibilities and expectations for future cooperation in 2020 and 2021

Antje ROTHEMUND recalled that according to previous agreements, the Council of Europe should host a follow-up activity in 2020 and the League should host the 8th forum in one of its member states. She proposed that the Council and the League could in 2020 run a training course for trainers in human rights education. This could be a contribution of the two organisations to the United Nations World Programme on Human Rights Education whose next phase will be focused on youth. Participants in the 7th forum involved in implementation of projects could be specifically invited.

Abdelmeneim ELSHAARI expressed agreement of the League with this proposal and proposed that the 2020 training course have a specific focus on youth participation and empowerment so as to echo the future campaign of the League. He also proposed that activities be held at the latest in September, before the beginning of the university academic year.

Finally, the partners agreed on:

- An **evaluation meeting of the forum**, combined with the preparation of the 2020 training course, to be held in **April or May 2020**
- A **training course**, to be held hopefully in Strasbourg in the course of month of **September**, focused on **human rights education** with a specific emphasis on **youth participation and empowerment**.

The Council of Europe will propose dates for these activities. Antje ROTHEMUND reminded participants that agreements of the Programming Committee on Youth are required to secure the Council of Europe budgets for these activities.

7. Possible venue and partners for the 8th Arab-European Youth Forum

Abdelmeneim ELSHAARI informed the meeting that there are three candidates to host the 8th Arab-European Youth Forum: Algeria, Kuwait and Bahrein. This should be decided by the evaluation meeting in Spring 2020. Regarding the thematic focus of the forum, climate change and refugees were mentioned as relevant to all partners.

8. Conclusions and follow-up to the meeting and to the forum

The partners agreed to take into account the conclusions of the study by Mary Drosopolous in the preparation of the activities in 2020 and 2021 once the study is finalised. The proposals about the activities in 2020 and 2021 were confirmed (point 5). Like with the Council of Europe, the representatives of the League warned of the need to present the proposals of the forum and of this meeting to the consultative and decision-making bodies of the League.

9. Any other business

Yassine ISBOUIA called for the translation of more Council of Europe manuals into Arabic. In this respect, it was recalled that a glossary in Arabic and English of terms used in the cooperation would be most useful and facilitate dialogue. There was no other business. The interpreters were thanked and the meeting was closed.



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Council of Europe

Ivan Hromada, Vice-chair of the European Steering Committee on Youth (Slovakia)

Thierry Dufour, European Steering Committee on Youth (Belgium)

Pegah Moulana, Advisory Council on Youth

Carlotta Muston, Advisory Council on Youth

Antje Rothemund, Head of the Youth Department

Gordana Berjan, Executive director of the European Youth Centre Budapest

Rui Gomes, Head of the Education and Training Division, Youth Department

László Milutinovits, Educational advisor, European Youth Centre Budapest

Graziano Tulio, North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

Mary Drosopoulos, Consultant

League of Arab States

Abdelmeneim Elshareei, Director of the Youth and Sports Department, League of Arab States

Anyce Mehalla, Director - Youth Department - Ministry of Youth and Sports of Algeria; member of the Technical Committee dealing with youth affairs at the League of Arab States.

Michal Al-Humdani, Youth Committee, League of Arab States

Ali Omar Khalaf, Youth and Sports Department, League of Arab States

Yassine Isbouia, consultant

Khalil Raihani consultant

Fatma Al-Mohannadi consultant

European Youth Forum

Benjamin Günther, Board member

"Great Silk Way" International Youth Union (guest/observer)

Aytan Aliyeva, President

Apologised:

United Nations Population Fund (guest/observer)

Samir Anouti, Regional Adviser, Youth & HIV/AIDS, Arab States Regional Office