

# YOUTH POLICY MANUAL FOR ARAB COUNTRIES

## How to develop a national youth strategy



Revised version

### Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



EUROPEAN UNION



COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# **YOUTH POLICY MANUAL FOR ARAB COUNTRIES**

How to develop  
a national youth strategy

**by Finn Yrjar Denstad**

author of the 2009 original version

and

**Robert Thomson / Abdeslam Badre**

editors of the 2013 revised version  
for the Arab world and Southern  
Mediterranean region

*The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the European Commission or the Council of Europe, their member states or the organisations co-operating with the institutions.*

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be translated, reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic (CD-Rom, Internet, etc.) or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the Directorate of Communication (F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex or [publishing@coe.int](mailto:publishing@coe.int)).

To receive further information about the European Union-Council of Europe youth partnership projects, including this 2015 youth policy manual for Arab countries or the original *Youth policy manual* from 2009 please check our website ([www.youth-partnership.net](http://www.youth-partnership.net)) or contact us by e-mail at [youth-partnership@coe.int](mailto:youth-partnership@coe.int).

Cover photo: Shutterstock  
Cover design:

Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe.

Layout: Jouve, Paris  
Council of Europe Publishing  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex  
France  
<http://book.coe.int>

ISBN 978-92-871-8162-6  
© Council of Europe and European Commission, October 2016  
Printed at the Council of Europe

# Contents

---

<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1. WHAT IS A NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY?</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1. A clearly defined government authority on youth	16
1.2. A clearly defined intended beneficiary group	16
1.3. A concrete and transparent strategy	18
1.4. A knowledge-based policy	19
1.5. Young people as a resource, not a problem	20
1.6. Promoting youth participation	21
1.7. A cross-sectoral, integrated approach to youth policy	23
1.8. Inter-ministerial co-operation	24
1.9. A separate budget	25
1.10. Established links between local, regional and national levels	25
1.11. In line with international practice	26
<b>2. YOUTH POLICY INTERNATIONALLY AND REGIONALLY</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1. The League of Arab States	28
2.2. Youth policy in the MENA region	29
2.3. The Council of Europe	33
2.4. The European Union	38
2.5. The youth partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe	41
2.6. The United Nations system	42
<b>3. WHY YOUTH PARTICIPATION – AND HOW?</b>	<b>47</b>
3.1. Why youth participation?	48
3.2. Why youth organisations?	50
3.3. How to involve youth in decision making	53
<b>4. SOME IMPORTANT ISSUES TO ADDRESS WHEN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY</b>	<b>59</b>
4.1. Youth policy and youth development models	60
4.2. Why do we need a national youth strategy?	60
4.3. Ownership	61
4.4. Process focus versus goal focus	65
4.5. Confidence, transparency and accountability	66
4.6. Legislation	67
4.7. Cross-sectoral co-operation at the governmental level	68
4.8. Vertical co-operation at the government level	69
4.9. Expecting the unexpected	70

<b>5. SETTING THE STAGE: PLANNING THE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS</b>	<b>73</b>
5.1. A budget for the process	73
5.2. The need for research	74
5.3. Identify the stakeholders	74
5.4. Develop a project design for the process	75
5.5. Drawing the timeline	82
5.6. Different levels of a strategy	83
5.7. Developing a publicity and communications plan	86
5.8. Monitoring and evaluation	88
5.9. A strategy document and an action plan	89
<b>6. DEVELOPING A YOUTH STRATEGY IN SEVEN STAGES: AN EXAMPLE</b>	<b>91</b>
Stage 1: early preparations	92
Stage 2: getting started and the first consultation	93
Stage 3: the second consultation	93
Stage 4: developing the first draft	95
Stage 5: the third consultation	96
Stage 6: final draft for adoption	97
Stage 7: developing the action plan	97
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>LITERATURE</b>	<b>103</b>

# Abbreviations and glossary

---

**M**any international organisations and United Nations' agencies have special co-ordinating bodies on youth, some of which are included in the following glossary and list of abbreviations and acronyms common in youth policy discourse.

AC	Advisory Council on Youth in the Council of Europe: 30 representatives from youth NGOs and networks who provide opinions and input on all youth sector activities
ALF	Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures
CDEJ	European Steering Committee for Youth in the Council of Europe: governments of the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention designate representatives to oversee the Council of Europe's programme in the field of youth
Council of Europe	A pan-European intergovernmental organisation, established in 1949, with 47 member states (as of 30 April 2013), <a href="http://hub.coe.int/">http://hub.coe.int/</a>
Congress	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, one of the principal bodies of the Council of Europe
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture, led by a Commissioner of the European Commission responsible for issues relating to youth policy and the Commission's programme for young people, <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm</a>
EC	The European Commission, executive branch of the EU, consists of the College of Commissioners and several Directorates-General (DGs) that are comparable to ministries in a national government
EU	The European Union, a supranational European intergovernmental organisation of 28 member states (as of 1 July 2013)
EMYC	Euro-Mediterranean Youth Centre in Turkey
EMYP	Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform in Malta
EMYP	Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament
EYF	European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe

ILO	International Labour Organization
IMWG	Inter-ministerial working group, a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LAS	League of Arab States, <a href="http://www.lasportal.org">www.lasportal.org</a>
LCP	Local consultation partner, a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy
MDGs	The Millennium Development Goals are eight international development goals agreed upon by United Nations member states in 2000 with a target deadline of 2015
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NC	National co-ordinator of the process to develop a national youth strategy as proposed in this manual
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NGYO	Non-governmental youth organisation
NSC	North-South Centre of the Council of Europe: European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity
NYS	National Youth Strategy
OMC	The open method of co-ordination is a mechanism within the EU for harmonising policy in areas where member states set their own national policies, rather than having an EU-wide policy laid down in law. Among these is youth policy
SC	Steering committee – a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy
SALTO	Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the European Erasmus+ programme
SALTO RC	SALTO Resource Centres. Eight have been established by the EC to focus on training within the Commission's youth programme in the following areas: cultural diversity, Eastern Europe and Caucasus, European-Mediterranean co-operation, inclusion, South-Eastern Europe, training and co-operation, participation and information, <a href="http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/">www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/</a>
TWG	Thematic working groups, a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy
UN	The United Nations
UN CRC	The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, currently 196 states parties (July 2013), <a href="http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&amp;mtdsg_no=IV-11&amp;chapter=4&amp;lang=en">http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&amp;mtdsg_no=IV-11&amp;chapter=4&amp;lang=en</a>

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization hosts a Youth Forum every two years
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund, <a href="http://www.unfpa.org">www.unfpa.org</a>
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund, <a href="http://www.unicef.org">www.unicef.org</a>
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WHO	World Health Organization
WPAY	World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond – an international strategy on youth adopted in 1995 in which UN member states committed themselves to follow up on 10 priority action areas. In 2005, the number of priority areas was extended to 15
YFJ	European Youth Forum. The pan-European umbrella organisation based in Brussels and consisting of more than 99 member organisations, national youth organisations and international non-governmental youth organisations. YFJ is a main partner of the European and international institutions on issues relating to youth policy issues



# Foreword

---

Young people today live in a very different world from young people a generation ago. In 1988, Europe was still divided between an East and a West, the European Community was a “rich men’s club” of 12 member states focusing on economic development, and travelling abroad was considered a luxury for most people. Today’s dominating communications technologies were unimaginable back then. In January 2011, the Arab world was largely unaware that those very same technologies of the Internet and the camera-equipped mobile phone would be the means of co-ordinating an uprising that would result in the toppling of long-standing governments, of exposing to the world the injustices perpetrated by dictators and for communicating the voice of young people driving those regime changes. Much can be said about the incredible changes that have taken place in the last 20 years and this youth policy manual is not the place for so much history. It is rather a means of supporting the efforts of Euro-Mediterranean countries to improve the lives of young people and involve them at all levels of decision making on issues that have an impact on them. Across the Arab world, as in other parts of the world, governments are developing and revising national youth strategies, youth action plans and youth policy positions in an unprecedented attempt to ensure political and economic integration of young people.

By 2020, according to the United Nations, 3.6 billion people in the world will be aged below 30, and these will constitute the “new global power reshaping the world”. The Middle East and Africa regions will have the youngest proportion of population aged below 30 at 63.9%. Young people have an immense potential for economic development and the creation of economic and social prosperity. However, from an economic perspective, large numbers of young men and women might be seen as a challenge to any government, since the latter has to provide various services, in addition to creating decent job opportunities. That can pose fiscal risks, particularly for such already heavily indebted Arab countries as Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. The potential opportunity innate in a large youth population could also be a source of national instability when government policies and programmes fail to turn youth aspirations into assets by providing young people with the right set of skills as well as equal opportunities. A report by Euromonitor International<sup>1</sup> revealed that developing economies in Africa such as Algeria and Morocco, as well as those in other regions, entered a “demographic window” in 2010; Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other countries will enter this phase by 2025. These countries will benefit from an increase in the working-age population – a demographic window that stretches between 30 and 40 years – that will bring improvements in society by allowing more investments in education, health care, technology, and skills to support a growing economy.

---

1. Euromonitor International (2012). Available at: <http://blog.euromonitor.com/2012/02/special-report-the-worlds-youngest-populations.html>.

However, the mismanagement or lack of education and investments in infrastructure and job creation may have lamentable consequences on a young population. In many Arab states, job creation remains low due to the lack of government intervention to create policies and programmes that will lead to an increase in employment, in addition to the mismatch between a “higher education approach” and job-market demands. Speaking of education, the insufficient educational opportunities pose another challenge, as education is a critical factor in determining the level of economic development and the business environment of a country. For example, in Morocco and Yemen many universities have low-quality education due to a number of structural problems, despite the expensive annual investment in the sector. Parallel to the social unrest induced by the “Arab Spring” in the Middle East and North African regions, high unemployment and lack of opportunities for young people caused an unprecedented malaise in developed economies like Greece, Italy, France and the USA in 2011. According to the International Labour Organization, of the 620 million economically active youth between ages 15 and 24 globally, 81 million or 13% of that age group were unemployed in 2009 due to the international economic crisis.

Population trends over the next few decades will largely be governed by decisions made by the 3.5 billion young people aged below 30 in 2012, which is the largest generation to enter adolescence, and their decisions regarding size and birth spacing of families will shape population and consumer trends over the coming decades. The Middle East and Africa region had, at 66.8%, the highest proportion of population aged below 30 in 2012, owing to higher birth and fertility rates and improvements in child survival. On the other hand, developed economies in western Europe are facing an ageing population. In 2011, Germany had the highest median age (44.1 years), followed by Italy (43.1) and other economies in Europe. There will be an unprecedented increase in the working age population, giving the labour force a “bonus” of human resources and hence more potential for economic development. Between 2012 and 2020, the working age population in emerging and developing economies alone is forecast to grow by 9.8% to reach 4.3 million.

It is clear that countries and regions have much to learn from each other’s experiences, although policies must, of course, be adapted to a local context. Still, amid the significant and growing literature on the subject of youth policy, there have been few publications easily available which provide concrete advice and practical examples on how to develop a national youth strategy. For this reason, the original version of this manual from 2009 has been revised and adapted for the modern Arab world and translated into the Arabic language for further adaptation and use in Arabic speaking countries.

This youth policy manual aims at providing concrete and useful information on how to initiate and develop a national youth strategy. It presents examples of how young people can be involved both in the design and the implementation of the strategy, and provides an overview of how regional institutions, as well as the United Nations, work in the youth policy field, and whether it is relevant to speak of an international standard of youth policy. The manual also suggests a model for

how a national youth strategy can be developed from start to finish. However, it must be emphasised that it is just that – a suggestion. There is no unique formula on how to develop a youth policy. But there are a number of principles that should be followed, and these are elaborated in the manual.

In concluding this foreword, some words of acknowledgement are due: James Doorley, Wasel Elgayar, Danijela Jović, Yael Ohana, Aleksandra Vidanović and Howard Williamson for advice in developing the original and revised manuals; youth strategy processes undertaken in several countries (including Algeria, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Switzerland and Tunisia) in which Finn Denstad and Robert Thomson were involved provided many useful insights; Robert Thomson and Abdeslam Badre were key persons in rewriting the original manual that had been drafted by Finn Denstad and for bringing it closer to the realities in the Arab countries; Marta Medlinska, Hans-Joachim Schild and Philipp Boetzelen from the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership were instrumental in ensuring the quality of both versions; and finally Susanne Shomali and her team provided the translation into Arabic, profiting from their wide experience in Euro-Mediterranean youth co-operation.

We believe that the success of a national youth strategy in Arab countries lies in its ability to promote the dignity and celebrate the diversity of young people. It is our hope that this youth policy manual will contribute to that process.