

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



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YOUTH POLICY MANUAL FOR ARAB COUNTRIES

How to develop
a national youth strategy

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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) or contact us by e-mail at youth-partnership@coe.int.

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Abbreviations and glossary

Many 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), http://hub.coe.int/
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, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm
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, www.lasportal.org
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, www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/
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), http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en

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, www.unfpa.org
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund, www.unicef.org
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 International¹ 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 billion.

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.

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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.