



European Economic and Social Committee

Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum

Brussels, 29 – 30 April, 2014

REPORT

This report has been prepared by the Event Coordinator and reflects the views of Forum participants only.

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1. Context

The task of developing potential responses to Commissioner Füle's call for the 'creation of mechanisms for regional structured dialogue among and between civil society, authorities and the EU in the Southern Neighbourhood' has been developed through a number of channels: the work of the EU Inter-Institutional Steering Group on Civil Society to set a framework and provide resources for the activities; meetings of civil society representatives in Malta and Jordan to progress discussions; and the work between meetings of a selected Core Group of experts around the various themes of the meetings. The Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum in Brussels (29-30 April, 2014) provided an opportunity both to broaden the discussions to larger numbers in the CSO community and to put the Commissioner centre stage to offer his thanks for the work done and to confirm interest in continuation of the process.

The European Economic and Social Committee hosted the Forum in the Rue Belliard conference facilities.

2. Format

The Forum was structured into three separate phases

- An opening session followed by a debate with and among a panel of youth representatives of the Neighbourhood South.
- The Commissioner's speech, followed by input from other panel members and then a debate with participants.
- Four working groups, selected on the basis of their areas of expertise: media, academics/think tanks, CSOs and youth and specialist civil society representatives.

3. Participation

Suggestions for participation were drawn from participation in previous meetings, supplemented by new participants provided from members of the Inter-Institutional Steering Group, EU Delegations and from Core Group members. The diplomatic community in Brussels and international organisations were also invited, in particular to Commissioner Füle's speech and the debate on the morning of 30 April.

Participation mainly comprised:

- Members of European CSOs and relevant networks with interest and activities in the South.
- Members of Southern CSOs and relevant networks.
- Specifically selected members of youth organisations in the South.
- Participants from academic and think tank backgrounds with an interest in the South, in civil society activity or training in dialogue.
- Media and other communication experts, North and South but largely with involvement in the South.
- Local members of the diplomatic community and international organisations.

As with previous events, many of those who participated have the capacity to multiply their information and reactions to peers across the region.

4. Working group philosophy

Unlike previous events in this consultation in which working groups have been constituted for discussion of separate themes, participants in Brussels were allocated to working groups according to their specific profession, role or interest:

- Media
- Academics, think tanks and associated interests
- Civil Society Organisations
- Youth and specialist organisations

This was done to allow participants to reflect their own areas of expertise and to see if there are any specific differences in approach between the groups. As noted below, this segregation provided detailed views of particular perspectives but also offered sufficient commonalities to give confidence about the potential for the future dialogue.

5. Outcomes and conclusions

Full rapporteur reports are available as an annex but are summarised here: the points listed are those that arose in two or more of the groups, illustrating commonality of thought.

- Positive response to the EU focus on civil society as a dialogue partner, as in the Commissioner's speech and the detail of both the past consultation and plans for the future. Emphasis was laid on civil society being an equal partner in the tripartite dialogue and on acknowledgement from those in the North that many of the problems cited in the South were shared across the Mediterranean.
- The position of the EU vis-à-vis governments of the Neighbourhood South should be strong, consistent and transparent. A civil society role in monitoring these relationships should be a target.
- It was noted that the work of civil society is being supplemented by social activism in the South and this needs to be factored into discussions. The form of democracy being developed may well be much more active than that seen as traditional in the North (though recent years have seen similar activism in the southern EU) and it will be necessary to look at different models.
- The continued dialogue will need carefully defined structures, agreed rules and acceptance of background modes of behaviour. These should be based around proper respect for human rights and associated values: while the dialogue should be as inclusive as possible, anyone not abiding by these principles cannot be admitted.
- Support needs to be maintained to current regional, national and local actions. The focus of this regional dialogue should be action-oriented, as described by the Commissioner.
- There was support for greater networking, more alliances and sharing of experience, skills and information. New connections need to be made in some cases and relationships made to work better in others. Systems that allow sharing of information and provide support are important.
- Acceptance of the need to engage with media, both as a civil society actor in its own right and as broadcaster of information. Caveats: the independence of the media involved should be assured, with state-owned media not always capable of meeting this specification; the importance of social media needs to be acknowledged and its potential better understood; and media identified as independent must be treated as such, with no requirement to support any specific agenda.

- There is a need for training and trust-building between the proposed partners in this dialogue and also, for youth groups, in civic participation to complement current activist approaches. Forms of dialogue need to be tested to see what fulfils needs.
- The focus on civil society does not preclude participation by the private sector, so long as the context of such inclusion is respect for human rights and associated values of transparency and accountability.
- Detailed planning of the next stages of the consultation is essential and transparency of the actions must be assured as the process goes forward.

The key messages for continuation were:

- A wish to see civil society brought closer to the heart of the administration of EU-South cooperation, as a true equal partner and not simply as an aspect to be considered.
- The need for an appropriate structure for the dialogue that is transparent yet abides by commonly-held values codified into rules that will guarantee positive participation.
- The wish to see proper preparation and reporting of what is done, so allowing intentions and outcomes to be appreciated by all: this was particularly stressed in relation to the 2015 Forum.
- Commitment to trust and confidence-building exercises between all dialogue partners, so long as the structures for such exercise and the background shared aims and values are agreed in advance.
- Acceptance of the need for increased networking, enhanced communications systems and better mutual understanding to support the aims of the dialogue.

Annex: rapporteur reports

Working group 1: Media

We see the statements made by Commissioner Stefan Fule in the forum as recognition of the good work that has been done in the past by participants. In this light, we discussed ways of identifying the role of media in regards to civic society, and how the media can support dialogue between the different entities involved.

We need to establish media communication resources for dialogue, and this is also something that Commissioner Fule said the EU supports, so there is a commitment to the media, and to help the media report on civic society in a fair and representative manner. Our discussion was to find concrete objectives and platforms together with a time scale for action.

Is Media Part of Civil Society?

The media have different functions. They have a duty to be educated about civic society and their role, and to report that fairly to the public. We rely on the media to deliver the message without necessarily turning into activists. Journalists have to be activists of professional values.

Relationship between Media, Civic Society, and Government - basic principles:

- Access to information and free flow of information are very important.
- Exposure of the work of civil society through the media is very important.
- Freedom of the press has to be guaranteed.

Mechanisms / Role of governments

It is important to set up a permanent network of journalists who are partisans of free flow of information and professional values. Governments should be part of the dialogue as they are part of the whole ecosystem. However, we need to establish a strong network first before engaging governments. Have a formal body with a permanent secretariat (like they have for the Eastern civic society dialogue) with a small staff and a coordinator to work on reviewing the available literature on the region

We tried to identify media that will be most impactful. We agreed that television is currently the most powerful medium, and we should focus on that. We need to properly address media literacy, particularly in the Arab region. We recognize the fact that private television is a potential window of opportunity for media freedom but we also recognize that there needs to be a set of regulations and conditions for their functionality. Transparency is key to that process. We need to channel the mainstream media in individual countries to serve to equip civic society.

We also recognize the importance of social media as an agent of information transfer and societal change by the people. We need to work on enhancing the use of social media by the civic society and by individual citizens. NGOs should be taught strategic and powerful use of social media.

We need to keep in mind the role of the government according to the political situation in that country, because in some countries, the governments are playing against the civic society rather than with it. The EU already has the “more for more” principle, and we need to pressure the EU into pressuring the governments that are not abiding by universal standards. We need to ask the EU to stick to the “more for more” principle and to formulate its yearly report based on interviews with a representative sample of

civic society. In this regards, the EU needs to reach out more to the civic society before publishing its annual report.

We need to look into research on the media situation and the legal frameworks thereto pertaining. We identified a good deal of research already out, including reports by the Open Society Foundations, the European Broadcasting Union, and the Anna Lindh Foundation that we should make use of. We need to have a platform where the available research is shared on a website that is user-friendly and accessible. We need to be able to commission new research if need be or to commission someone to map out the already existing research.

Have a conference on civil society and the media in 2015. Debriefing from the civic society about what the EU can do to pressure the governments. Find out what existing structures there are that could help

- At the political level
- At the institutional level (Group of Venice..., rules for professionals)
- At the professional level (code of ethics...)
- Monitoring of media coverage

Eventually, we might want to work on a universal code of ethics to be shared among the members of the proposed network.

Specific Demands

We need funding to do the following:

- Establish a permanent network of professional journalists who are advocates of free flow of information and professional values of journalistic reporting. That body should have a secretariat with a small staff and a coordinator.
- Convene a conference, possibly in Tunisia, on civic society and the media.
- Conduct media literacy programmes for civic society to train them on the professional and strategic use of social media as well as on establishing relationships with the traditional media.
- Establish a platform for easy access to existing research as well as to new research commissioned by the network or analysis by network members.
- Remind the EU of its role as a facilitator and perhaps a watchdog in certain situations according to its “more for more” principle.

Working group 2: Academics, think tanks

Opening Points:

EUROMESCO and FEMISE are existing think tank networks that we know about it; questions about their suitability and effectiveness now vis-à-vis civil society as they were products of their time

Can we accommodate trilateral aspects of this dialogue into govt., civil society and EU?

Should we adapt existing networks or create new ones? Build on what works.

1. Democratic Club think-tank in Tunisia... important to be ideologically independent from political parties, it's not just about structural independence from government or sources of funding. But this issue of maintaining independence when part of a network is difficult.

2. Involvement of the media (with the right relationship) to influence public opinion, different working / operational cultures between media and think tanks e.g. soundbites versus more nuanced analysis... joint study tours can be a way to build shared understanding.
3. Agree – networks are important.
4. Structured dialogue requires more authority. Other parties in tri-lateral relationship need to recognise the legitimacy of the others in order to build trust. Create opportunities for the tri-lateral work (bring in the EU delegation reps)
5. Need to institutionalise right of participation; civil society is a new central actor in the Maghreb and needs to secure a place in this dialogue i.e. get a seat at the table that was previously denied to them.
6. We haven't properly experienced classic representative democracy in our societies; we need to build it but we must also reconcile this with building the kind of new open, participatory democracy that civil society is demanding. There's a tension here. Can we do both together?
7. This new form of open, participatory complements classic democracy, And all new political parties and formal political actors are paying lip service to its importance but do they really believe in?
8. To build trust we need more visibility and understand the role of different actors eg. civil society, elected representatives; to determine what each can and should do.
9. There are two parallel dialogues going on at present. And there seems to be some embarrassment about the dialogue between the EU and the government and between the EU and civil society. EU in its dialogue with govt. seems to treat civil society as a sector... it's not. It's a central actor in the new partnership arrangements that are emerging in the Maghreb.
10. Need to involve civil society from the beginning so that it can monitor as well as contribute to the process and then provide feedback to other civil society actors, not just keep the discussions to themselves.
11. Can we develop practical pilots that build trust, supports constructive engagement and positions civil society to then deal with scarier issues that are of real concern. Find a non-threatening entry point.
12. Funding is not sustainable currently for research in the region and duplication is a factor. To avoid this, can we have an umbrella of initiatives led by legitimate/experienced think-tank partner.
13. Creating felt need amongst government... help government understand the benefit of think tanks... paint a picture of what constructive engagement with external think tanks.
14. Serious empirical research falls into second place behind networks and media soundbite preoccupations.
15. Proposition – find an existing structure that we're already happy with to pilot, see how it goes (looking into various thematic areas) and get this network/structure to decide upon its future. Would this structure become a self-sustaining organisation?
16. Response - is this specific enough? What is the role? Need to define in order to set learning objectives so that government is clear about why.

Preliminary position to EU:

17. Civil society needs to connect. Channels for media, web and mobility need to be free eg. cultural visa, EURO-pass idea. Make EU hear our voice.
18. Remind EU of tradition of local-level politics and values from French Revolution i.e. liberty, equality, fraternity.
19. Participatory research will help where the problems are.
20. Need to update our understanding of what freedom and democracy are. Society has changed and is changing e.g. smoking outside, family types etc.
21. Independence of networks is important but so is diversity not a replication of academic orthodoxy. We must fight against this risk. And challenge EU around this.
22. Political education is required in its best sense. Give us the tools to interpret the world around us. It's not a bad thing to welcome academics who have specific connections to political parties and ideologies.
23. Women Participating in Public Life Project... combining action research, participatory research on the part of civil actors themselves builds ownership and is better than European experts doing it on behalf of local actors.
24. Must not forget involvement of / engagement with private sector
25. Provide capacity building, experience of research work for young unemployed people.
26. Networks shouldn't be forced by EU as a condition of funding. A network between think tanks in the region would be useful for sharing of experience and help with benchmarking in the region for regional issues. Network can help point government in right direction of which think tank or academic resource is appropriate to their needs and support international links eg. a regional network linked to
27. Arab Reform Initiative is an existing network of independent that we shouldn't forget.
28. The issues are not regional, they're universal. We should look at this as an exchange of experience, peer to peer. Be more egalitarian between north and south and look at transversal issues.
29. EUROMESCO is not just one-way traffic. We (in the North) are learning from the South. We need to find a way of adapting these networks to facilitate exchange between think tanks/academic exchange.
30. Local empowerment issue really important... can we propose to the Delegations workshops run by local think tanks with local authorities and international community (members of the think tank network). Important that local think tanks can demonstrate their pulling power and influencing ability to local authorities.
31. Need to develop sub-granting mechanism... action-oriented approach. Help us find and support new actors to deliver research. The European Endowment for Democracy approach.
32. Yes, themes are universal. Main difference is evolutionary and related to country-specific details. Applied and participatory research emerging from think tanks is very important. The one thing that connects the 4 working groups is leadership. Civil society isn't afraid anymore. Plus ca change in Egypt despite regime change.
33. Graduates of Mubarak regime are back holding the reins of power. Challenge for us is to create new leadership and this is where academic and think-tanks have an important role to play.

34. Responsibility is for us to make civil society a key actor in the tripartite dialogue. Economic and social councils across the region should become network leaders for civil society
35. Need to develop a charter for participation between civil society and government; this can be used as a point of reference for the different actors i.e. the rules of the game, spelling out civil society's role. EU can support this by working to ensure that civil society becomes a critical actor in this process of governance and define through its programming what the role of civil society should be.
36. Collaboration between civil society and academia is important. Need to understand more about what's happening during current transition and build skills/capacities for young generation. We can do this together. Benefit of collaboration needs to be understood. Bear in mind that that much of academia is disconnected from the real issues of transition as many of the region's education policy makers are graduates from the ancient regime.
37. Priorities between Europe and S. Neighbourhood are different. Need to recognise this. National agendas are different due to diversity of situations. But a regional platform would be useful. We need to know each other, share expertise. This will help South-South exchange and diversity. We also need to challenge each other. We need interaction to support empowerment. EU conditionalities require a European partner as expert... this isn't good. Can we include a conditionality to require an additional southern partner as well. Let's be honest in our interaction not just focussing on problems in the Arab World whilst denying problems back in Europe. This will help people look at the EU as a partner not just a source of funds.
38. Need to recognise that some issues take priority over others e.g. security. How prepared is the EU to look at issues that are not top priorities for them but important to the southern neighbourhood.
39. Some countries of northern neighbourhood may have more in common with some southern neighbourhood countries than southern neighbourhood countries have with each other (despite the obvious cultural connections).
40. EU is more fragmented than you think
41. Take risks with a practical proposal, be prepared to fail. What's the skill set required.
42. Communication channels need to developed
43. Should we be mapping CSOs in readiness for October conference. What are their roles? What are their priority interests. Group them together.

Working group 3: civil society organisations

The participants agree that the working group has had a very extensive discussion, many aspects were raised and discussed and many issues have met consent but there was not enough time to reach an agreement on all points. This is why we consider very important to dedicate for the next Forum more time to deepen the discussion and reach consensus on the main aspects.

Main recommendations:

- The definition of civil society to be part in the dialogue should be value based (adherence to international human rights values)

- Dialogue with civil society should be genuine and well prepared based on relevant documents
- For a proper civic engagement in the structured dialogue there is a need for a full transparency in all the processes and access to information; moreover, the tools and facility used for the SD require transparency as well; they should take into consideration the participation in all the preparatory processes and properly
- For the next meeting (including the one in June in Tunisia) there should be a one-day (or at least one long session) meeting for civil society representatives for a better coordination and exchange so the participation will be strengthened.
- The next event within the EU Southern Neighbourhood Forum with Commissioner Füle before he ends his mandate should deal with a discussion and evaluation of the national and regional ENP progress report and action plans
- The process should provide support to existing, independent, regional and national civil society networks and initiatives; with the necessity to support coordination mechanism among them; it is beneficial to conduct an assessment survey for the existing initiatives funded by the EU in order to improve their performance
- The commission should enhance partnership and mutual accountability between with the independent civil society for the leadership of “the structured dialogue initiative” (based on the Fiduciary relations)

I- Good governance in the Civil Society Structured Dialogue: general considerations

The Dialogue needs to be real, transparent, documented and disseminated, engaging the different actors; it should be inclusive and non-elitist. The dialogue should respect the independence of Civil Society and its diversity, good governance of the initiative of structured Dialogue.

The relationship between the EU-CSOs as well as CSOs-governments would require enough time for the dialogue. The dialogue needs to be open, critical and daring: a “courteous” type of dialogue will get us nowhere. It needs to be a right-based and safe haven for associations to deal with challenges and freely discuss among them.

There is a necessity to set clear and explicit rules and regulations for the dialogue, as well as concrete and agreed upon subjects. For example, the Respect for universal human rights needs to be a precondition to commence any dialogue.

Another example can be given in this regard: It is required to have a list of participants in this meeting, unlike what happened during the last meeting where we convened without having any idea about the participants. The participants should be selected according to clear criteria, and there should be a collective process of selection. The core group (or the steering committee) should be announced and known to all the outcomes of the meetings should be made public, at least for the participants.

Structured Dialogue ought to start with confidence building; the lack of transparency does not support mutual confidence and trust. There is a need to dedicate funding and resources to secure efficient consultation processes as well independence and diversity of the involved CSO. Transparency should include the process of the selection of the consultants as well as the budget accorded to the consultancy. The language of the structured dialogue (the consultations, the dialogue itself and the working groups) is not a technical issue and it should respect the different languages in the neighbourhood south. In

particular, all the documents need to be written in the three languages of the region: Arabic, French and English. Original languages should be used for the national and local consultations; promoting local consultants, and not to rely only on the translated documents.

Each country in the Southern Mediterranean region has its own specificity. Dialogue with government should not take place according to a 'one-size-fits-all' – in some countries dialogue is difficult due to the nature of the governments in place. It should be tailor-made to local needs and challenges as well as the existing potentialities. Yet, dialogue should be at the national and multinational levels; these two levels should be dealt with in different ways.

The EU recognizes the centrality of Civil Society and its engagement and participation; whereas in practice and on the ground CSO are marginalized in the Southern neighbourhood. They are never consulted when it comes to the local development plans jointly implemented with the governments. Governments in the southern neighbourhood tend to exclude CSO, or to be very selective and ad hoc when dealing with them. The EU should make sure that these consultations are taking place and in a proper manner, especially when it comes to the aid and development policies and economic cooperation. These consultations might be bilateral (CSOGov. and CSO–EU) as well as tripartite (CSO-Gov.- EU)

The approach of these consultations is so far based on the assumption that the problems are in the south and the solutions are in the north. That poverty is in the south and money is in the north. That ignorance is in the south and knowledge is in the north etc... This is unacceptable, especially that we share the same problems of inequality, poverty, unemployment, education, health besides many others across the Mediterranean. Moreover, there is a mutual interest in enhancing the relations between the EU and the Neighbourhood south in the right direction since stability for the EU should be based on the political and economic stability as well as justice, and this should be addressed seriously and properly

We should learn from the Eastern partnership experience

II- Stakeholders to the Structured Dialogue

Recent history has showed us that dialogue in the Mediterranean area as well as in Europe has different ways and expressions. It can take form of massive non-violent protests, sit-ins and or even violence in the streets. It can also mean pressuring governments to change laws and legislations with advocacy campaigns. Dialogue does not happen only around a table. However, this "new way" of participation is mainly about stakeholders that lobby the EU and the national governments through bilateral and tripartite dialogues. This induce the necessity to include them in the Structured Dialogue, taking into consideration that they are not only NGOs and youth but they include other social movements such as labour and worker movements, as well as women and other marginalized groups including people with disability and minority.

The Forum should ensure appropriate representativity: Participants cannot be only representing themselves as individuals but their different organizations or networks.

1. EU-CSOs Dialogue

EU-CSOs dialogue partners needs to explicitly adhere to the main European values of democratic good governance, human rights and the rule of law. In this context it is important to have a value-based definition of civil society and a database/inventory of relevant CSOs in the country. Civil society should independently organize itself in each country, prepare its own agenda for dialogue, and organize

consultations amongst themselves: the more they are engaged the more influential they will be. This should also take into consideration the dedication of the necessary funding to ensure the realization of these preparatory processes.

The facilitation of this dialogue should be made in partnership between the different parties, with a leading role for CSO both at national and multinational levels. Independent regional networks should be invited to take part in this dialogue; they should be empowered and supported by the EU, because they can play a major role in the sustainability of this dialogue like they used to do previously, since the beginning of the process in Barcelona in 1995.

There should be a different approach between the “mainstream media” which is not fully independent and the independent media that is in fact considered to be part of the CSO. The role of the independent “traditional media” is as much as important like the social media.

2. CSOs-CSOs from both shores of the Mediterranean

“Partnership should be between equals, so no one party can dominate or impose the rules on the other”, consequently civil society wants to be an equal partner in the dialogue. We need to define what we want and what our objectives to pursue are. Capacity-development of CSOs is of paramount importance, not only for the South but also for the European CSOs. They need to understand what the issues at stake are and coordinate accordingly.

National and regional alliance building and networking amongst CSOs in the south should be strengthened and empowered, as well as alliances and networks between CSOs in the Southern Mediterranean and in the north. We need to promote further cooperation between CSOs from both shores of the Mediterranean beyond any EU-led structure.

3. CSOs-Governments

The fact that the EU money goes directly to the government without any consultations with the civil society, the latter will not have any power to influence or even have space for dialogue. This requires the adoption of an effective “disclosure measures or policies” to inform CSO and enable them to monitor and to hold the different parties accountable, Preferably to expand these consultations locally to ensure that people present at the regional and multinational consultations reflect the local opinions/ideas.

The third party to this dialogue, i.e. the governments, should be present in these consultations to ensure success. The governments in the Arab countries are not homogeneous nor do they have for the most part the “institutional memory” or “continuity” that will enable the dialogue to continue when governments change (which happens often). This dialogue should thus give special importance and priority to the local authorities who work closest to the ground often with local associations.

Effective administrative decentralization should be encouraged in every country in the Mediterranean, as local authorities are the best ones to take care of local needs of citizens. This relationship between civil society and local authorities should be strengthened and should also be part of structured dialogue. Enforce capacities of local authorities should also be in the EU agenda.

4. Other stakeholders

There is a fourth party to this dialogue which is the private sector. Chambers of commerce and firms and enterprises can be included at one point in the Dialogue along with the CSOs However, the inclusion of the private sector should be according to strict norms and standards; Private sector should abide to

human rights by all means and be transparent and accountable. Trade and labour unions ought to be included as the stockholder in the social dialogue especially when the business sector is included,.

III- Concrete proposals for a follow-up to this meeting

The working group on Civil Society suggests the definition of the core themes of the dialogue. The dialogue needs to deal with the challenges at hand in the Arab region: i.e. poverty, social exclusion and cohesion, human rights, space for NGOs to work, etc... not necessarily or only issues of concern to European governments such as the environment, climate change, energy, transportation and depollution of the Mediterranean. The structured dialogue ought to work thematically, e.g. local authorities, mobility and visa facilitation, economic and social equality and human rights.

The civil society proposes to be better involved in reviewing the national action plans within the ENPI process including the preparations of the progress reports at the country as well as at the regional levels.

Each country needs to set its own priorities for the dialogue; those priorities should be made visible to the public through media.

About the next meeting in June in Tunisia: it needs to be preceded by at least a long preparatory session one day before for CSO. We suggest the creation of a new Working Group including around 40 additional representatives. This group will discuss on one hand the general rules, regulations and criteria of the dialogue (building trust, protecting the independence of CSOs, be effective and influence over policies) and on the other, the most urgent topics of concern (state of human rights and democracy, social cohesion, mobility and visa facilitation, employment, economic relation, etc) generally inspired by the ENPI progress reports, but not necessarily restricted to it.

The first bigger meeting proposed by the Commissioner Stefan Fule by the end of his mandate should exclusively focus on the challenges faced by the CSO and their relations with both the EU and the national governments.

In the next Forum in 2015, governments should be invited, once the civil society input has become more organized and strengthened.

Working group 4: youth and specialist organisations

OVERVIEW

The starting-point for the Working Group session was the group feedback on the Forum's opening panel debate in association with the 'Young Arab Voices' programme, and the key-note intervention of the European Union's Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy.

The opening panel debate revealed how youth of the region have not given up on their societies but they feel sidelined after playing a major role in the 2010-11 uprisings across North Africa. It was emphasised in this regard that policy-makers should find practical and engaging ways of harnessing the best of what young people have to offer. From a Euro-Mediterranean perspective, the panel underlined the common challenges faced by youth in the Mediterranean, from rising unemployment to disengagement with traditional formats of political participation. Policy-makers should also be aware of the emergence of new forms of social activism, and support the development of enterprising models of organisation.

Regarding the intervention of the EU Commissioner, participants to the working group underlined the importance of his message about 'equal partnership', 'working side by side', and 'an action-orientated

dialogue'. A key point raised was also the fact that the centrality of youth has now been established across different international policy frameworks, and therefore the important challenge to address was how to ensure innovative formats to engage diverse youth in specific areas of policy dialogue and common activity with decision-makers. The importance of long-term investment in the capacity of youth CSOs was also underlined, with attention to supporting various forms of organisation models such as social enterprise.

The Working Group then tackled questions related to the proposed 'regional mechanisms for dialogue involving CSOs, Authorities, and the EU'. Firstly, it was highlight that the rules of engagement for such a dialogue should be established, including respecting the Other's opinion and the stress on active listening. Secondly, there are models of good practice involving youth and decision-makers which should be promoted, including recent local debate initiatives in the Arab region and the use of digital media to provide safe spaces to exchange ideas on policy dialogue. Thirdly, the implication for capacity-building with Youth CSOs, with an emphasis on skills for lobbying and advocacy with institutions.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Ensure increased coordination among EU institutions and international donors related to youth policies, programmes and youth 'offers'.
- (2) Promote an action-orientated dialogue, focused on getting different players to work on common projects, based on equal partnership.
- (3) Support a long-term investment in the capacity of youth CSOs and youth leaders for institutional lobbying and advocacy campaigns.
- (4) Reinforce mobility schemes at the South-South and South-North level, and concentrate political lobby work with Member States on visa issue.
- (5) Adapt outreach work to target and engage youth in the process from diverse geographical and socio-economic backgrounds.
- (6) Invest in long-term training schemes that combine skills for civic participation with employability and educational attainment.
- (7) Promote the right to information across the Euro-Med region, including ensuring translation and local community engagement.
- (8) Raise the profile of dialogue models with youth and local authorities, and good practice about social media as tool for policy dialogue.
- (9) Increase opportunities and spaces for youth-led debate, whereby participating youth can set the dialogue agenda.
- (10) Publish a Euro-Med manual on guidelines for structured dialogue with youth and authorities, underlining active listening skills.
- (11) Run a series of Young Arab Voices' thematic debates via NGOs, schools, universities, cultural centres, and digital platforms, leading up to EU forums.
- (12) Use the occasion of the Italian Presidency of the EU and related Anna Lindh Foundation gathering to organise a follow-up activity with Youth and Media.

(13) Put in place a specific long-term training scheme for Youth Leaders in the model of the Malta Euro-Med Info and Training for Diplomats.

(14) Ensure an effective feedback mechanism for all consultations, and an independent monitor to assess / communicate the impact.