

The Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform aims at facilitating networking between youth organisations and all those involved in the youth sector in the Mediterranean and Europe.

It brings young people from the region together in an environment of tolerance and mutual understanding, facilitating networking between them, assisting in the capacity building of youth organisations, increasing youth participation, sharing of relevant information, and exchanging good practice.

We provide networking services for youth initiatives in the region by assisting in the search for partners for their project, facilitating the creation of networks of youth groups that have similar objectives, publishing a magazine in 3 languages, organising meetings, providing an on-line FORUM for discussion, researching the situation on young people in each country, and assisting youth groups in getting financing for their initiatives.

Our objectives are the nurturing of democracy and its established instruments, and fostering mutual understanding as well as improvement in the issues of racism, gender equality and minority rights.

Over **4300 organisations** from all European and Mediterranean countries have joined the Platform to date. The widest utilised tool developed by the Platform is the Partner Search facility. It has become a standard utility for anyone building youth projects and needing partners. This is probably one of **the most extensive lists of youth organisations** in the region in existence.

The FORUM is another on-line facility for discussing ideas, developing proposals and following-up projects, as well as a place for thematic discussions on anything from hooliganism in sport to xenophobia. It is also used as a notice board for those looking for partners and participants for their projects. For some of its users this is the only space for **free expression**. In contrast with standard fora, this is greatly simplified, without even a need for registration to guarantee anonymity.

The Platform embarked also on researching the **situation of young people** in each country. The uniqueness of this study is that it is not a treaty by academics, but the situation of young people as seen by young people themselves. This is a good reference tool for those working with a country for the first time. These opinions are available on line and have been edited in a book.

Another publication is the Magazine. This is one of the very few periodicals published in three languages – Arabic, English and French. The Magazine has two objectives: reaching out to those without easy access to the internet, and also sensibilising authorities on what is going on in the youth sector in the region. For this reason it is distributed to various Embassies, EU officials, and Ministries of Foreign Affairs. It is available on-line and in print.

We have also organised a series of three meetings aimed at enabling a more **equitable participation** in Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation. Youth leaders from countries with least presence were grouped in 3 geographical regions and targeted together. The first meeting was held in March 2004 in Amman, Jordan and targeted Mediterranean countries least participating, namely Algeria, Lebanon and Syria. Reasons for this lack of participation were identified and by the end of the encounter a number of projects were initiated.

The second meeting focussed on the countries joining this process recently, in order to facilitate their swift and smooth integration. These are the 10 latest entrants to the European Union less Malta and Cyprus, who have been already members of this process as Mediterranean partners. It was held at the Council of Europe's Youth Centre in Budapest in October 2004. This was the **first time for Syrians and Israelis** to participate in the same youth encounter. Youth leaders from these 8 countries were brought together with experienced counterparts from the Mediterranean region in order to facilitate this integration through peer education.

The last meeting of this series was held in Tunisia in February 2005 and focussed on EU countries that are least engaged with the Mediterranean, namely Denmark, Ireland and Luxembourg. This meeting broke another long-standing barrier, that of having **Israelis in an Arab country** for a youth event.

In October we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Agreement (Barcelona Process) with young people, providing them with a possibility for reflection on what has been achieved and what can be improved.

We also facilitate the creation of Euro-Mediterranean youth networks. The most advanced of these brings together young people active in trade unions dealing with **young people and work**. It tackles issues such as youth unemployment, exploitation of young people, legal and illegal immigration, child labour, relations between education and the labour market, life long learning, gender equality at the place of work, and the integration of young persons with disabilities into working life. In less than a year it has doubled its membership from the original 13.

We have also assisted in the establishment of a Euro-Med Student Forum.

A network in the making is for **youth involved in political parties**. The political youth groups Democrat Youth Community of Europe (DEMYC), European Community Organisation of Socialist Youth (ECOSY), Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG), International Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth (IFLRY), International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY), and European Liberal Youth (LYMEC) are involved in this project. The long term effect of such a network can be significant, considering we are bringing together at an early age some of the most likely future leaders in the Euro-Med region.

Other such networks are at different levels of development and include one for officers in **local governments** responsible for youth, one for those working with **sexual minorities**, another for those working on **youth trafficking**, and one for those working on **gender**-related matters.

Giovanni Buttigieg, Director of the Platform, has recently collected the 2005 **Newropeans Grand Prix Award** for contribution to democracy. The Grand Prix for Democracy jury is composed of some 1000 people of different ages and professions from different countries representing universities, schools, regions, cities, associations, foundations, media and companies.

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