



Directorate-General for Education and Culture

**DIALOGUE BETWEEN PEOPLES AND CULTURES:
ACTORS IN THE DIALOGUE**

**The Euro-Med Youth Programme:
Dialogue and intercultural exchange
between young people from the
European Union and the
Mediterranean partner countries**



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Contribution to the conference

“Dialogue des peuples et des cultures: les acteurs du dialogue”

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The EURO-MED YOUTH Programme

The EURO-MED YOUTH Programme is one of the cornerstones of the Commission’s activities in the field of youth in cooperation with third countries. It is one of the regional programmes set up within the third chapter of the Barcelona Process entitled “Partnership in social, cultural and human affairs”.

The EURO-MED YOUTH Programme enables **intercultural dialogue and non-formal education activities** for young people between the age of 15 and 25, from 35 Euro-Mediterranean partners (i.e. the 25 Member States and 10 Mediterranean countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey). **It is a tool to prepare future generations for a closer cooperation at Euro-Mediterranean level, based on mutual respect and tolerance.**

The aims of the programme are the following:

- to improve **mutual understanding** among young people across the Euro-Mediterranean region based on and committed to mutual respect, tolerance and dialogue between the various cultures;
- to **integrate young people into social and professional life** and to stimulate the democratisation of civil society;
- to **increase the importance of youth organisations and to develop young people’s active citizenship**, especially that of young women, and to promote the exchange of information and experience between youth organisations.



The Programme started in 1999 and can be considered as a prolongation of the European Commission's YOUTH Programme in this particular region. It involves **3 actions of the YOUTH Programme: youth exchanges, voluntary service and support measures**. The Commission's budget for the period 2002–2004 is 14 Mio € In addition to this, project beneficiaries contribute to the implementation of the projects with some co-financing. The Commission wishes to maintain this level of funding for the period 2005–2006.

In terms of the number of projects, the Euro-Med Youth Programme has taken a positive development. In fact, **the number of projects submitted and accepted during the past 5 years has been steadily increasing:**

1999: 26 projects accepted;

2000: 77 projects accepted;

2001: 108 projects accepted;

2002: 158 projects accepted;

2003: 185 projects accepted.

This adds to a **total of 554 projects** which received funding **between 1999 and 2003**. If we add to this the projects that have been accepted in March 2004, we reach **more than 600 projects**. This will have enabled **about 14.000 young people and youth leaders** to participate in international youth mobility activities in the Euro-Mediterranean area. The Euro-Med Youth Programme has a good overall gender balance, since **51 % of the participants are women**. 52% of the participants come from EU member states while **48% of them are from Mediterranean countries**. This can be considered as a very good result in terms of geographical balance.

The developments described above show that the programme is making good progress. However the Commission does not want to stop here. The ambition is to make progress **not only in quantitative terms but also in qualitative terms**. The Commission would like to further improve the quality of the projects which should, as a result, contribute to achieve the aims of the programme. The 2 main strategic priorities to reach these objectives are:

1. Stimulating **capacity building of youth and youth organisations in the area** through partner finding measures, information and training. These actions are very important for the **development of human resources** that will allow the development of high quality projects;
2. **Consolidating the structures of the Programme**, i.e. the network of National Coordinators, National Agencies, SALTO Euro-med Resource Centre, the recently created Euro-Med Youth Platform and the partnership between Council of Europe and Commission.

The National Coordinators in the Mediterranean partner countries play an important role in this respect. Their role is to inform the public about the programme, organise training events and support national, regional and local organisations to submit projects. The Commission's priority is to further consolidate the role of the coordinators. **The Commission would like to enhance support and training actions for coordinators, particularly through the SALTO Euro-Med Resource Centre and the National Agencies'/National Coordinators' network.** The twining/tutoring system established among National Agencies in EU Member States and the National Coordinators should be strengthened in order to allow mutual orientation, information and advice.

The idea to create a forum of youth organisations from the Euro-Mediterranean region to support cooperation had been formulated already at the Amman Conference in 1996.

The Euro-Med Youth Platform was created in September 2003 with a light, flexible but permanent structure. The launch event in Malta gathered about 100 youth organisations from the whole region to discuss about their expectations and needs in terms of the role of the platform.

Consensus was found about the **core activities** that the platform should concentrate on in order to take off. These include mainly **networking** (database, tools for partner-finding, information in French, English and Arabic), a **discussion forum** (exchange of good practices, identification of common problems and solutions) and **organising thematic/regional meetings**.

The first "Targeted meeting" took place in Amman from the 11th until the 14th of March and gathered European as well as Jordanian, Lebanese, Syrian and Algerian organisations to reflect about the situation of young people and find ways to increase their participation. On the basis of the evaluation of the first year of activity, the strategy of the platform will be assessed and modified accordingly.

The partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe on Euro-Mediterranean Youth Co-operation in the field of training constitutes an important additional tool in this respect. It contributes to increase the quality and quantity of Euro-Med intercultural youth projects and helps to develop skills and abilities to deal with issues of common concern, such as human rights, citizenship and democracy, women's rights and minority rights, environmental protection, etc.

The Commission is convinced that targeting these two strategic priorities will help further increasing the number of activities, improving the quality of projects and enhancing the partnerships between youth organisations across the Euro-Med region. Other targeted goals are developing the profile of the Euro-Med Youth Programme, having an impact on young people's role in society and stimulating the democratisation of civil society and the dialogue between our civilisations.

Examples of funded projects and trainings

"Follow the women" is a unique bike ride organised by a group of women to cycle across a number of "hot" countries in the Middle East. Why? To raise awareness on how the current situation within the Middle East affects the lives of women (and children) as well as to raise support for a move towards peace and greater understanding. Women being less involved in decision making are often the ones who are socially oppressed and suffer consequences of those decisions. "Follow The Women" will give women the opportunity to have a say, be in control and have a powerful and influential impact on those around them. Hundreds of women all cycling at the same time is not the norm in the Middle East and will therefore attract attention so that people will take notice. This is

what the project is aiming for in order to gain publicity, sponsorship and to capture the hearts and minds of as many people as possible. It will show commitment and support by women throughout both Europe and the Middle East, and educate a wide audience as to the situation facing all women living in an area of conflict (for more information, please see: <http://www.followthewomen.com>).

“Different but united against Xenophobia and Racism” is a project which took place in Jordan and which offered the opportunity of interaction for young people from European and Mediterranean countries with different cultural and religious backgrounds. The 34 participants came from different religious, social and ethnic backgrounds from Jordan, Spain, Cyprus, Portugal, Greece and Egypt. The project aimed to give the young people an opportunity to express opinions of their culture, learn about and better accept other cultures, teach them how to be tolerant and demonstrate methods to fight xenophobia and negative stereotypes. Workshops and discussions were held on the topics of Islamophobia (paying special attention to conflict resolution in young people’s lives), intercultural and interfaith dialogue, different lifestyles, the fight against racism and xenophobia. The sessions were based on active participation of young people aided in some cases by professional facilitators. Visits to historical and religious places focused attention on the common history between the Muslim and Christian countries and provided information on local community life.

As a result the project was an interesting intercultural learning experience for both the European and Mediterranean participants. It had an impact on their opinions and helped them to better understand differences between different cultures and religions. In addition to encouraging personal development and increased understanding and tolerance, the project had a strong impact, particularly on the local young people who do not have much access to international contacts. The participants established friendships and have stayed in contact since the project via e-mail.

The objective of the project **“A Conflict – A Solution”** was to help young people deal with inherited conflict. Sessions were organised in which participants from both sides of a particular conflict told their story as they had experienced it to the other young people in the group. The five conflicts chosen were Cyprus, Israel–Palestine, Northern Ireland, Spain-Basque region and the Spain-Morocco conflict on Perejil.

The objective was to try to understand the point of view from the other side of the conflict, and contribute to the resolution of other conflicts. Debates were held after the presentations of the issues and chaired by someone from a neutral country. Leisure time was equally as important as the sessions and played a crucial role to reflect, deal with the pain, express views informally, enjoy each other’s company, and realise that on the other side of the fence they are human beings too.

The project included visits to former battle fields and areas designed for warfare. The activities included a specific session on the Barcelona Process and the Euro-Med Youth Programme. The objectives of this were to increase awareness on the possibilities that exist, and to serve as a kick-off to a discussion on how to develop co-operation between participants and involve others. Another session was dedicated to conflict resolution conducted by an expert in Peace Studies.

As a result the project succeeded in its main objective - that of giving a space for young people tormented by conflict to express what they feel to their ‘enemy’ and understand the latter’s point of view. A resolution was drawn up towards the end, and participants struggled hard to agree on a text that could be approved by everyone. A Yahoo group that was set up by the original organisations before the application is still alive and is

now used by all participants, and also their friends, even if the topics vary from current employment to pets.

A long-term training course “Youth Participation and Intercultural Exchange in Euro-Med Youth Projects” aims at developing the capacity of youth workers to plan, manage and evaluate sustainable youth projects.

It includes a series of local youth pilot projects addressing the priority issues in Euro-Med cooperation. The initial training seminar was held at the European Youth Centre Budapest, from 15th to 28th February 2004 and it brought together 27 youth workers from across the region. A project development process is taking place at the time of writing and a consolidation and evaluation seminar is planned for February 2005 (for more information, please see: <http://www.salto-youth.net/euromed/?SID>).

A **“Training Course for Trainers”** will be implemented in cooperation with the SALTO Euro-Med Resource Centre. The course will develop and consolidate the skills and competence of 30 trainers active with projects in the region. It will also contribute to the development of quality of training in general and the existing informal pool of trainers in particular. Two different phases are foreseen between (end 2004/beginning 2005, for more information, please see: <http://www.salto-youth.net/euromed/?SID>).

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