

Policy Report

TOWARDS MORE INCLUSIVE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ARAB MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to provide recommendations to the Youth Partnership between the European Commission (EC) and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy through listening and learning from the experiences of the youth in five Arab Mediterranean countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. We intend to better understand young people's aspirations and to acknowledge them, we call for support for evidence-based youth policy in Arab Mediterranean Countries (AMCs), in particular, to ease intergenerational relationships, i.e. how the older generations listen, understand, and collaborate with young people. In this paper, we draw on rich qualitative and quantitative material collected in the framework of the EU-funded SAHWA research project. From our analysis, the most important element to highlight is the impact of the marginalisation of young people: the absence of political tools to influence the management of state affairs and resources and the grave challenges blocking the way to attaining hoped-for life chances due to structural obstacles to the labour market. There is also a need to open new horizons of non-violent civic engagement for young people and to facilitate confidence-building measures by offering meaningful roles in public debates and decision-making processes. This can only be achieved in the more inclusive societies that the Arab Mediterranean youth aspire to build. Euro-Med Youth Cooperation can play a part in achieving this ambitious goal. Doing so, however, necessitates a profound reshaping of these cooperation policies in the near future. Although the EU is in the process of implementing its Youth Strategy (2010-2018) and mainstreaming cross-sector initiatives in this regard, the youth dimension remains to be mainstreamed in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which affects its cooperation with countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

Keywords: Arab Mediterranean countries (AMCs), Euro-Med Youth Cooperation, young people, political participation, inclusion.

Introduction

Moroccan youth are diversified and we don't emphasize on this aspect enough. The diversity doesn't only concern urban/rural differences. It's much more complex. Nowadays, Moroccan youth are different in terms of values, expectations, aspirations, religious beliefs, will lifestyle... the identities are multiple. And young people for me are ultimately a reflection of change, of social change ... I think the young acts primarily as a citizen but the impact of political changes especially after 2011 was just, I think, this awareness of being young, that light up on youth ... this awareness of identity, of belonging to a social group and therefore from there ... the youth can claim a place in society, to participate in the policies that concern them, in the institutions, and in political parties as well (MA_FG_2: 4).

The words of this 24-year-old female echo the desire of many Moroccan young people to participate in their society but also the reductive ways in which young people are envisioned, both from within their country and from the perspective of Europe. The aim of this paper is to provide recommendations to the Youth Partnership between the European Commission (EC) and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy through listening and learning from the experiences of the youth in five Arab Mediterranean countries (AMCs): Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. We intend to better understand young people's aspirations and to acknowledge them; we call for support for evidence-based youth policy in AMC countries, in particular, to ease intergenerational relationships, for example: how the older generations listen, understand, and collaborate with young people.

In this paper, we draw on rich material collected in the framework of the EU-funded SAHWA research project in which youth researchers have gathered qualitative and quantitative data on youth political engagement in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon¹. The data used in this paper emerges from the SAHWA Ethnographic Fieldwork 2015 dataset (consisting of narrative interviews, focus groups and life stories)² collected in the 5 countries under analysis, as well as quantitative data samples from Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon from the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016, all collected between April 2015 and January 2016.³ Information collected in the National Case Studies provided by the 5 partners from the AMCs has also been used for the analysis. What is more, we use a case study from Sofia Laine's longitudinal research project on youth political engagements in Tunisia.⁴

Though our perspective is transnational, we still keep in mind the specificities of the countries. This policy report is a result of a mixed-method content analysis of qualitative studies and more descriptive analysis of statistical data. We claim that this unique data bears witness to processes of structural marginalisation of the youth in the AMC's which have to be addressed. This marginalisation is visible simultaneously in the political and socioeconomic fields. In the political field, young people's lack of confidence in both national and international institutions, including the EU, often leads to active and passive forms of disengagement from public political processes (Ekman and Amnå, 2012: 283). By passive disengagement we refer to citizens who perceive politics as something that does not interest or concern them in any way, and by active disengagement those actors who actively avoid anything that has to do with politics as a form of resistance against what they perceive to be a distant, closed, and corrupt sphere that serves national and international power elites. In the socioeconomic field, the marginalisation mainly relates to young people's challenges to improving their life chances in the future. More specifically, it relates to the difficulties young people face when trying to match their educational background with the demands of the labour market.

To address these challenges, we underline the important principle of "learning with the South". Following Teivo Teivainen's idea we try to challenge the Eurocentric and neocolonial structures of knowledge production that are dominant in our world: "Without denying the usefulness of some forms of traditional development co-operation, a more democratic co-operation would be based on the idea that both partners can learn from each other" (2002: 630). Therefore we take seriously the proposition that donor institutions and countries (including the EU) should not hold onto their roles as the prime development or pedagogical agents in the global South. We have carefully listened to the empirical data in order to find ways to propose different processes of learning together. We will return to these at the end of this paper.

In the field of youth policies, Göksel and Şenyuva (2016) have analysed three main European youth cooperation schemes for the southern Mediterranean region, for example, the Euro-Med Programme, the Youth Partnership between European Union and the Council of Europe, and the youth-related initiatives of the Anna Lindh Foundation. By drawing on

the principle of “learning with the South”, our paper takes its cue from three of their recommendations regarding European and Arab Mediterranean youth policy and co-operation schemes:

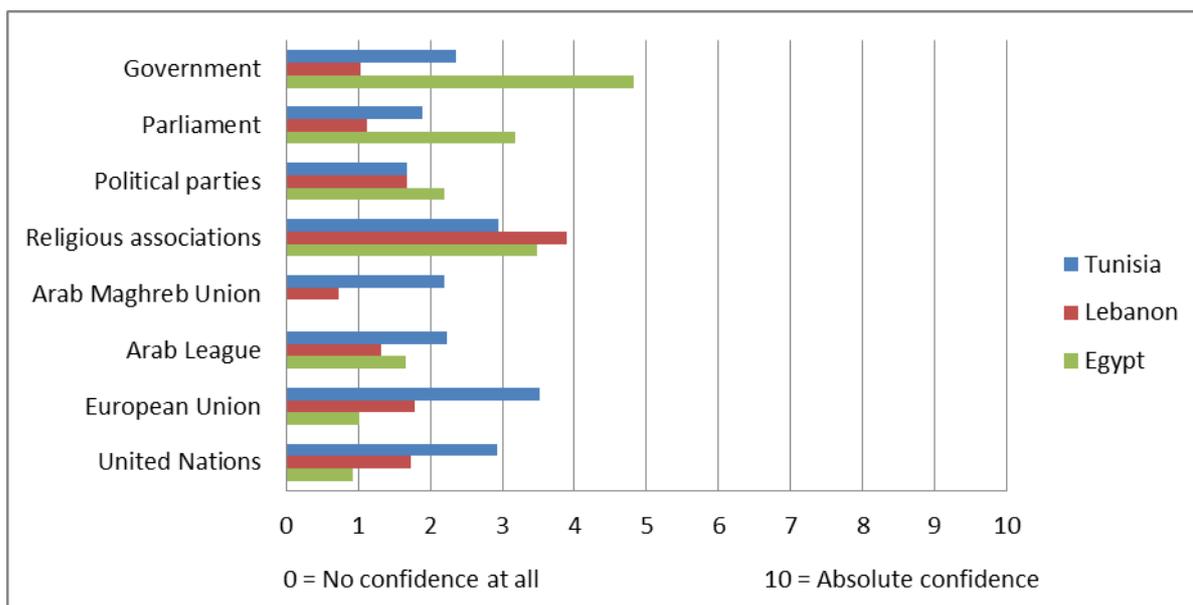
1. These cooperation schemes should be designed in line with evidence-based research about the actual needs of the young people in the southern Mediterranean countries, and the instruments to fulfil those needs should be identified accordingly.
2. The cooperation should guarantee increasing participation of youth organisations and young people.
3. There is a need to develop better mechanisms to identify and support concrete topics for youth policies in line with the problems and needs of young people in the southern Mediterranean (Göksel and Şenyuva 2016: 47-50).

In this paper, we first present the political marginalisation of the youth and the responses they have established, taking examples of alternative modes of youth engagement or disengagement. Then we turn toward socioeconomic issues to introduce young people’s difficulties in the current situation. Consequently, we also engage in the more general discussion on youth aspirations with reference to the United Nations Security Council Resolution “Youth, Peace and Society” (UN, 2015). Finally, we conclude with recommendations of how to work towards more inclusive youth engagement in Arab Mediterranean countries through Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation schemes.

Youth inclusion and confidence in political institutions – including the EU

What appears common to the youth in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon is the fact that they have little confidence in public political institutions in the mid-2010s. In the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016 young people were asked about how much confidence they had in each of the different institutions. Some of these results are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Confidence in political institutions (averages)⁵



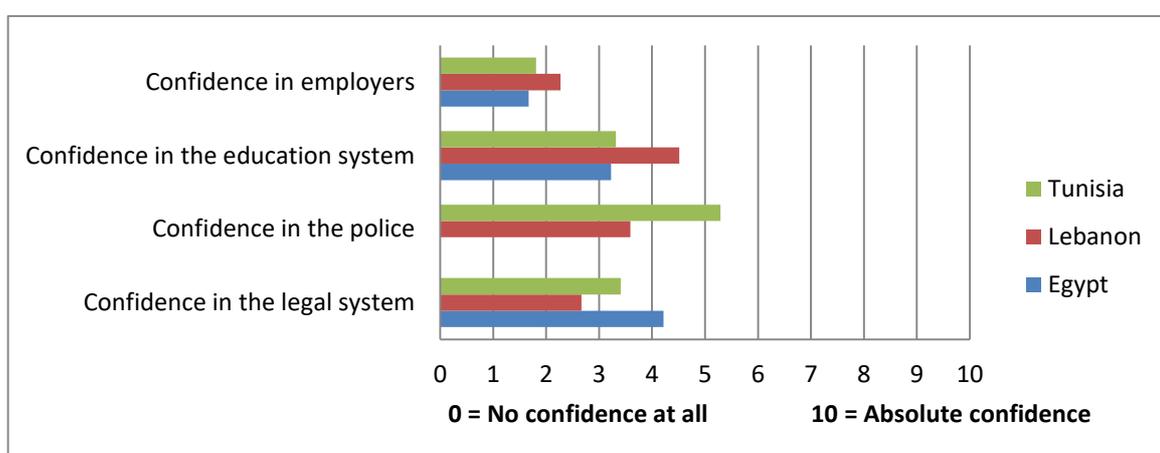
Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

As Figure 1 shows, the general level of young people’s confidence in different institutions in Tunisia, Lebanon and Egypt is low, mostly way below the midway point of the scale. Countries seem to differ in relation to which political institutions are considered more or less trustworthy. In Lebanon religious associations are the most trusted, while in Tunisia it is the EU and in Egypt the government. In Egypt national political institutions seem to be more trusted than international, while in Tunisia and Lebanon this kind of trend cannot be seen. In Egypt the confidence in government, parliament and political parties is stronger than in the other two countries, while international institutions such as the EU and the UN are less trusted: in Tunisia 33%, in Lebanon 47% and in Egypt 73% of the young people do not trust the EU at all.

We are aware of the tense political situations in Tunisia and Egypt when the survey data was gathered. In Tunisia the state of emergency law was put in place in November 2015 after several terrorist attacks, and extended several times (it is still in place at the time of writing). The law allows, for example, the banning of strikes, meetings, the temporary closure of theatres and bars as well as measures to control the media. In Egypt the team reported a widespread reluctance among respondents to speak about their own participation in the uprising and the respondents seemed to “fear to announce that they are affiliated to a certain

political or social group” (National Case Study, Egypt: 16). This has most probably had an effect on the results where strong national trust and strong international distrust is expressed in Egypt. In Tunisia confidence is generally relatively higher than in Lebanon – the only exceptions are the religious associations. In Lebanon religious associations are then the only political institutions that obtain a slightly higher level of confidence (almost 4), while all other institutions do not even obtain level 2.

Figure 2: Confidence in employers, the education system, the police and the legal system (averages)



Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

Similarly, we looked at confidence in employers, the education system, the police and the legal system in Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. It appears that confidence is not much higher here. Only confidence in the police in Tunisia is above the mean of the scale. This part of the data is lacking from Egypt. From Figure 2 we want to highlight the low confidence in employers, which might have a connection to the discomfort of experiencing high levels of corruption and nepotism but also reflect the economic situation and, more specifically, high levels of unemployment as well as a mismatch between the education and labour market. To conclude, the prevailing image that surfaces is one of distrust and distancing of the youth from their environment. They seem aware of the situation of their country, including corruption, nepotism and calls for democracy, but have the impression of being abandoned/disenfranchised. As a young Algerian female student explains:

Sometimes I feel excluded. I tell to myself that I didn't succeed because I didn't reach the university level. But then I go to ANEM (National Employment Agency) and I meet young people who have the baccalaureate degree +3 or +7 and still they couldn't get a job. We are being said that there young people would be helped, but in fact there is nothing. If you don't have acquaintances or you don't practice corruption, you won't have anything (DZ_NI_1, p. 3–4).

This response from the female student echoes the multiple barriers young people are compelled to navigate when growing up in the post-2011 era. While the promises of the “Arab Spring” were short-lived, both qualitative and quantitative data indicate that young people experience exclusion, marginalisation and “waitthood” in many facets of their lives, facing high unemployment, delayed marriages and limited access to public political roles.

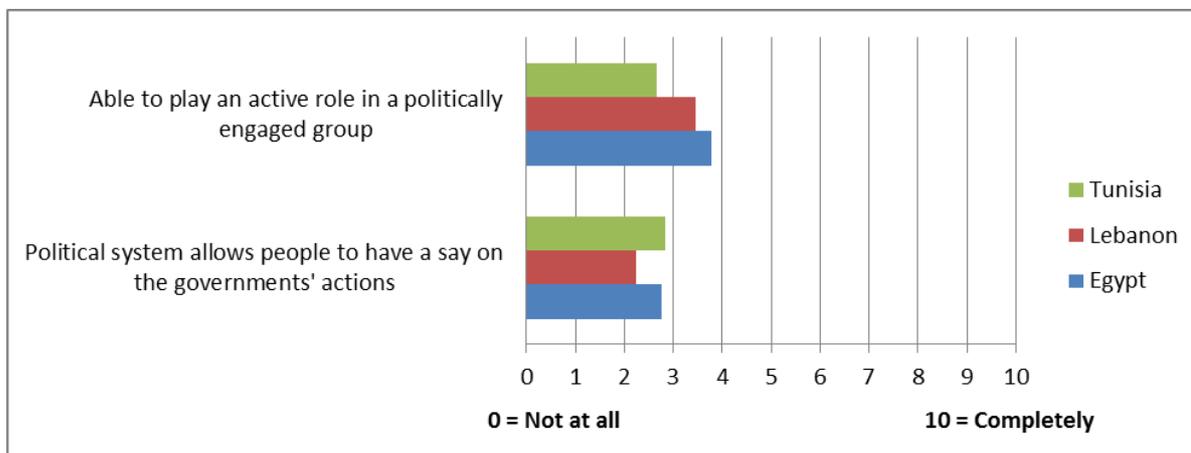
Youth political engagement in the AMCs

A majority of the surveyed young people consider politics and politicians corrupt and/or disinteresting. Public political processes continue to be dominated by parties that reflect a patriarchal societal environment, often led by middle-aged or elderly men. The political parties have little concrete initiatives to meaningfully educate new political generations. The parties in general have only partial contact with local constituencies and limited resources to attract new members from the youth population. This can be partially explained by the low confidence in political groups that profile themselves more through rhetoric and ideological platforms at the expense of tangible concrete actions and policy outcomes as emerge from the qualitative data.

As a Moroccan young, I don't know enough on politics even if my father is affiliated to a political party. Within my family, we don't understand what politics means, we always keep thinking that politics is not important, it's blabla, so can we expect to participate? So if I want to learn, whom should I contact? What are the institutions that are there for me, I'm here and I want to learn ... Then there is the civil society, one has to search, seek associations. Now with the existence of internet, it makes things easier. You look for and you find some NGOs, offers for training, and you start at some point. But unfortunately, not all youth do have such reflex to seek to be engaged, to search for doing something. [...] We can't talk about politics because the majority lack confidence, they are unaware of the political process and how they can be active and participate, except apart from to

give their voices, but this problem is not just for youth since the majority of citizens are lacking confidence on politics (MA_FG_4, p. 5).

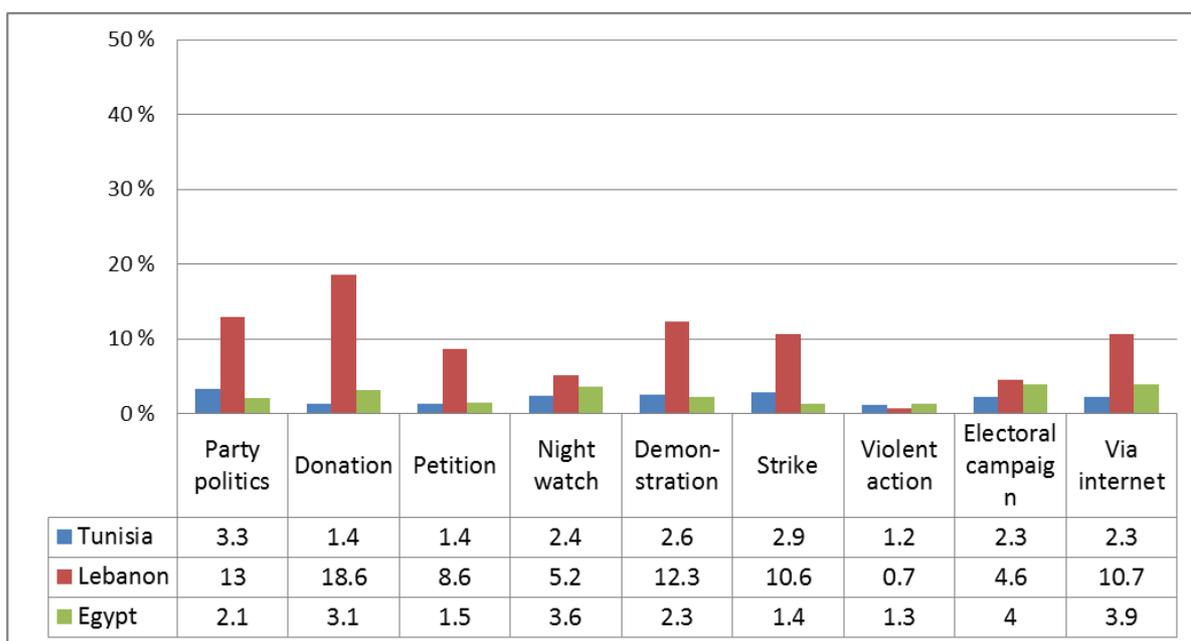
Figure 3: Experiences of the possibilities to play an active role and have a say (average)



Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

As Figure 3 shows, in Lebanon young people are more confident of their possibilities of playing an active role in the politically engaged group than having a say in the political system, indicating the poor functioning of the current governmental situation in Lebanon. In Egypt the confidence is similar, but on average the young people experience their possibilities as a bit higher. What is more, in each country the number of young people who answered “Not at all” when asked about their possibilities of playing an active role in a politically engaged group was high: Egypt 50%, Tunisia 37% and Lebanon 26%. In Egypt, the situation is the most polarised, as 20% of the respondents answered that they can “completely” have an active role, in Lebanon (1.1%) and Tunisia (2.5%) this answer was very rare.

Figure 4: Participation in different political activities at least once during the last 12 months (%)⁶



Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

From Figure 4 it is evident that participation is much more active in Lebanon than it is in Tunisia and Egypt. Still, the percentages for participation remain low in Lebanon too.

We also made sum variables of “youth political engagement” for Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon.⁷ For the Tunisian case around 92% of the youngsters confirm that they have not participated in any of the political activities under analysis in the last 12 months and do not belong to a political party or movement at any level. In Egypt the level of activity is nearly same: 89% of respondents answer that they have not been participating in any political activities. In the case of Lebanon, and visible already in Figure 3, the young people seem to be a bit more active: the number of young people that have not participated in any political activity is around 71%. At a general level, one reason behind the higher activity level in Lebanon may be a reflection of the different traditions of civil societies in these three countries (Lefort, 2013; Onodera, 2015; Honwana, 2013). Over the last decades, civil society has been more active in Lebanon than in Tunisia and Egypt, which have traditionally been ruled by authoritarian governments – Mubarak (Egypt) and Bourguiba/Ben Ali (Tunisia) – and where the civil society has been much more controlled. Another reason

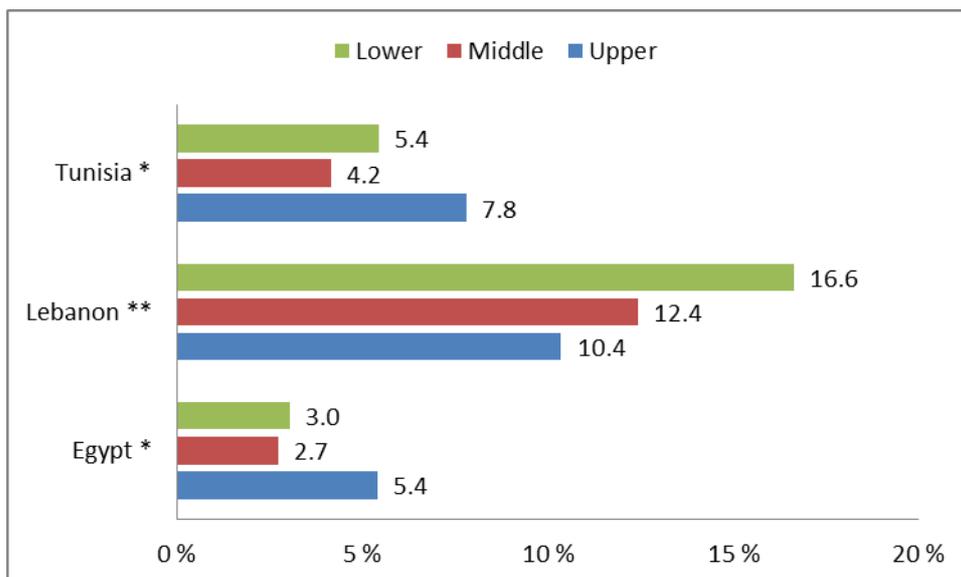
might be the deeper distrust of “the system” (see Figures 1 and 2), which may in some cases lead to political activities.

In the second sum variable we again had two groups: “Active” who participate at least in two activities, and “Passive” who participate in one or none of the activities. Here, the active youth in Tunisia were 5%, in Lebanon 13% and in Egypt 3%. In all three countries the number of males who are more active is larger than the number of females. The only country where this difference is statistically highly significant is Lebanon: with 17% of men and 9% of women in these groups. In Tunisia and in Egypt these differences are not statistically significant. In addition, there is a statistically significant difference between the age groups in Lebanon: the most active age group is the 20–24-year-olds (18% of the age group), the second most active age group is the 25–29-year-olds (13.7%), while the youngest, 15–19-year-olds, participate the least actively (9.9%).⁸

As Figure 5 shows, those defining themselves in the upper social class in both Tunisia and Egypt are more likely to be participative than those defining themselves in middle or lower classes. In Lebanon the case is the opposite: the relative share of participative persons is the largest in the lower social class. One reason why in Lebanon the upper class is not as active may be their mental stress and exhaustion:

Although [she, having a higher education diploma] worked full time only during the week, she felt that by the time the weekend arrived she was too exhausted to travel around the country. She explained that it wasn’t just about the stress of work but also the regular stresses of everyday life, which included the time-consuming daily onslaught of heavy traffic, the precarious hours of electricity and water shortage (LB_FE_1, p. 15).

Figure 5. The share of participative persons in each social class (%)⁹



Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

The situation of youth political exclusion is not inevitable. In Lebanon, many campaigns have, for example, proposed lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 since the 1990s (see, for example: Karam, 2006). However, they have always been obstructed by political and religious institutions alike amid fear of introducing sectarian unbalance. In Tunisia and Egypt, the generational “unbalance” of the representatives was negotiated after the 2011 revolts. The youth now benefit from a 25% quota in local councils, which will come into effect with the next county elections (see also: SAHWA Policy Report 2016: 31). In addition to the quotas young representatives would also benefit from training for their work. Since 2011, the issue of foreign funding has become highly contested in AMC countries and direct funding for political workshops is either prevented, discouraged or treated with great suspicion. State initiatives have emerged to address this issue locally. For example in Egypt, the Presidential Leadership Programme (PLP) was launched in 2014, aiming to train future generations of youth leaders in political, social, and managerial skills, though its impact remains to be seen (see also: SAHWA Policy Report 2016: 32–33).

Development cooperation and other cooperation with the EU

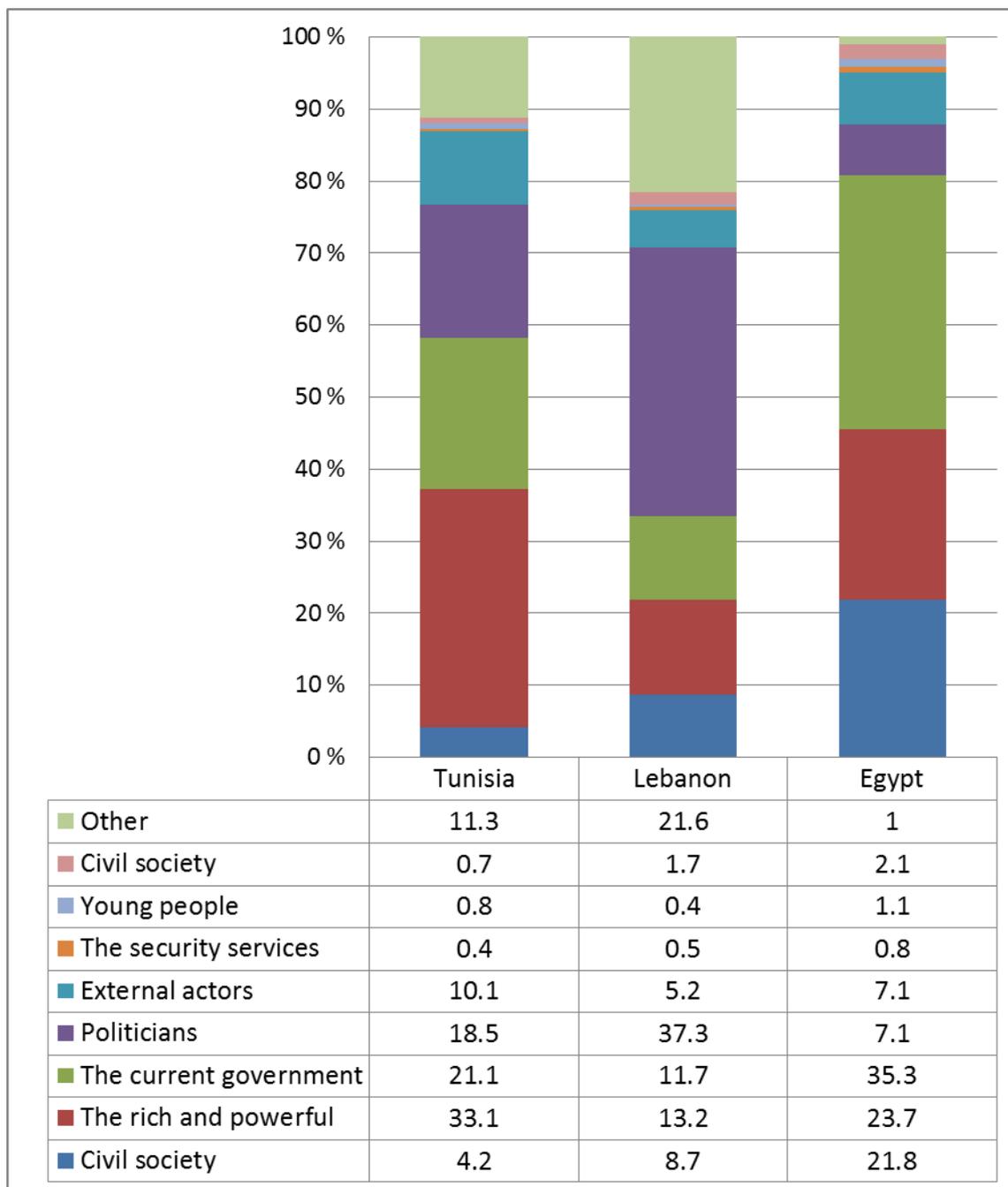
In Tunisia, as the data from the Youth and Political Engagement in Contemporary Africa (YoPo) project shows, young party members can apply for political training at the Tunisian School of Politics (TSoP), funded partly by the Council of Europe's South Programme II. In operation since 2012, the TSoP brings together and educates around 100 young people annually from different political parties on the basics of multi-party democracy. TSoP also holds talks that are open to the public and the third sector. In addition to the South Programmes, the school is funded by the Tunisian Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI), partnering with Demo Finland, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and the Bulgarian School of Politics (BSoP). Not all the students at the school are aware of the foreign founders. When asked about this, it becomes evident that the young people are critical of foreign funding for their country's democratisation process:

Interviewer (Int): What is your opinion about this kind of development cooperation [TSoP] that Finland and Netherlands and Bulgaria funds?

Student from TSoP: Why foreign people are funding our democracy? Until now I don't have the right answer. But maybe they [think that Tunisia] have to be democratized in a rush, because it will be best against terrorism. So I don't know but I don't think they give money for our blue eyes ... I do excuse for saying this, but it's like that. It's ok, it's cooperation, we get something, I don't know what they are getting from us, Tunisians ... Maybe having data. Yeah, little data for research.

The above quotation – as well as Figure 6 at a more general level – shows that the identity of who benefits from the cooperation between the EU and the AMCs is much of the time very unclear for young people. In order to be fruitful, there needs to be confidence among the Arab Mediterranean youth towards European and Arab Mediterranean youth policy and co-operation schemes.

Figure 6: Opinion on "Who benefits most from the cooperation with the EU" (%)



Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

As Figure 6 shows, in Tunisia 73% of respondents think that “the rich and powerful”, “the current government” and “politicians” benefit most from cooperation with the EU. In Lebanon these make up 62% and in Egypt 66% of the answers. What is important to keep in mind is that the young people mainly do not associate with these actors; they think that the

current government and the politicians have side-lined them. In the words of one young Tunisian male:

I believe that politicians serve their personal interests and ambitions only. Also, I think there is foreign intervention in political life in Tunisia, so a simple citizen like us, even if he participates in politics, his participation would have no impact ... (TN_FG_4, p. 6).

As mentioned already, in Tunisia 33%, in Lebanon 47% and in Egypt 73% of the young people do not trust the EU at all. From here, we analysed confidence in the EU by social class in Tunisia, Lebanon and Egypt. In all these countries it seems that the higher the perceived social class, the higher the confidence in the EU. This increase in trust as the perceived social class rises is stronger in Lebanon and Egypt than in Tunisia. If the European and Arab Mediterranean youth policy and co-operation schemes want to target lower social class youth, much more needs to be done, especially in Lebanon and Egypt, to build young people's confidence. In Egypt, 25% of young people think that the "people in general", "civil society" and "young people" benefit from the cooperation most, but in Lebanon this opinion was held by only 11% of the respondents and in Tunisia the amount was even less, at only 6%. The "youth" and "civil society" are hardly mentioned as the most benefitting beneficiaries by these young people – together they make up 2% (Tunisia and Lebanon) and 3% (Egypt).

Some of the interviewees in the qualitative research in Tunisia participated as observers in the elections of 2011 or 2014, or prepared campaigns as members of political parties. Still these engaged young people remain aware of the disaffection of the youth towards political parties. Consequently the civil society organisations are often perceived as playing important roles in society, including service delivery and philanthropic activities. They also offer work experience and personal contacts that may be needed in society later in life. Not everyone, however, is uncritical towards the effectiveness of civil society organisations. For example, young respondents in Algeria expressed this kind of reservation in the following way:

Even in the context of civil society, it is difficult as youth to create change. There is fear of change regarding the latest events related with the Arab spring, and geopolitical conflicts resulted from the riots and revolutions. Exactly one is afraid of change, we have seen too many bad things, it is preferred that it stays like this (ALG_FG_1, p. 13).

Furthermore, SAHWA's ethnographic data on the young workers in agriculture from Morocco (MO_FE_1) clearly indicates that these young people have aspirations and want to change their current situation but at the same time they seem to be politically amorphous. Many have lost confidence in formal political institutions, and enjoy only limited chances to perform collective action in order to improve their living conditions. Laws regulating associational life and public dissent, coupled with dire socioeconomic resources and national anti-terrorism campaigns, allow little room for autonomous youth-led initiatives to emerge.

In Lebanon, where the recent years of political turmoil, the vacant presidency, and the deadlock in the action of an impotent government have led to a complete loss of confidence in these institutions, young people have mobilised in social movements – for example supporting a secular regime in 2011 and the “You Stink!” movement in summer 2015. However, these have not lead to any tangible transformation until now. Active disengagement from institutional politics can take even more alternative forms:

Int: And how is your situation?

Wajdi: I haven't worked for almost 6 months now ... I get my pocket money from home, from my father. I spend my time in the streets, at the cafe and at the youth club. That's it.

Int: And what do you do during the day?

Wajdi: During the day, I stay in my neighbourhood or I go to rap at the youth club ... or I go with my friends in my home or at theirs ... or I play football.

Int: When you rap, what topics do you speak about? Which are your lyrics, your message, if there is?

Wajdi: We talk about the social situation, the society, about the government. Things like that.

This is how Wajdi explains his everyday life in Tunisia in the Life Stories video recording.¹⁰ This part of the interview clearly shows one example of youth engagement through arts and

culture. Wajdi is very sceptical of the current political situation in Tunisia, but at the same time actively engages in alternative spaces and has an aspiration to produce engaged rap music at the local youth house. Here rap that criticises the current societal situation is seen as “artivism”, that is, cultural work using the democratic right to free speech outside institutions and in public spaces to create forms of disorder or artistic actions directed towards social change (Dufour, 2002). Social movements and “artivism” can be understood as radical democratic interventions, as acts of reclaiming and revitalising the political through the creation of autonomous and/or horizontal spaces (Grimm and Pilkington, 2015: 209).

In some of the AMCs, youth houses or centres could provide one alternative institutional framework for the government to reach out to young people. According to an OECD report, in Morocco around 500 youth houses exist to support the capacities of registered youth organisations and encourage the social inclusion and participation of young people in local sport, cultural and leisure activities. “With an annual budget of less than EUR 300 the youth houses suffer from inadequate capacities to provide the kind of services and activities that young people hope to have access to” the report explains (OECD, 2015: 38).

Youth houses as well as youth and culture clubs are spaces that could provide meaningful participation for young people, especially for those who are outside formal education or employment. Meaningful participation through volunteerism in associations or social movements may also “calm” young people – as a 21-year-old male reflects on the Moroccan events during the revolts in spring 2011:

During the revolts on spring 2011 I was trying to get as much information as possible from the media. At first it was interesting, but after a couple of months it did not seem spontaneous anymore ... they have no alternative. Whereas young Moroccans found a way in associations and volunteer work. They are thousands of young people involved in volunteer work in schools, universities. They do great work, get experience and help others. They do small changes every day. I believe this is what kept the Moroccans ‘calm’ during the Arab spring (MA_LS_1: 15).

What European and Arab Mediterranean youth policy and co-operation schemes should

carefully think about is how to build trust between the government, political institutions and young people. An additional point to address is the low confidence among the Arab Mediterranean youth in the EU. More societal discussion and transparency is needed on the role of foreign funding for civil society organisations as well as the state control over associational life in general. How to address this Herculean task remains an important practical question, and we suggest that more research into it should be conducted among young people themselves. The public confidence in the EU is also linked to its incoherent foreign policies whereby public calls for human rights and the rule of law by some member states and EU institutions are often overridden by state-level efforts to safeguard trade relations and financial cooperation.

Youth engagement for education and employment

Regretfully I am not working in the domain that I studied ... i.e. teaching. I am working as an assistant in a factory (LB_LF_3: 13).

As reflected in this quote from a young Lebanese person, the labour markets in Arab Mediterranean countries are not fit to incorporate the cohorts of young graduates in a satisfactory way. Employers often require skills and qualifications that are not offered in formal schooling. For example, in the focus group discussion in Lebanon, the young people highlighted the difficulties of study planning and guidance (LB_FG_1: 10). These limitations thwart their intellectual aspirations and desires to pursue their own professional dreams as well as the hopes of achieving a better society, as this female from Lebanon describes:

If someone is studying a speciality they love, there might be work they want afterwards. So you go into studying something keeping in mind whether or not you will get a job with it (your degree is for that). Other than that, forget it. So for example I am doing French literature but ... you know maybe I end up working as an accountant. I would like to work as a translator, but of course there is no future in this sort of work in translation (LB_FG_1: 10–11).

AMC youth have ideas on how to improve the educational system. An Egyptian 28-year-old male upholds the importance of being educated but, at the same time, wishes that the entire

educational system was reformed. In his mind, the educational curriculum should address contemporary lives better and keep an eye on the future:

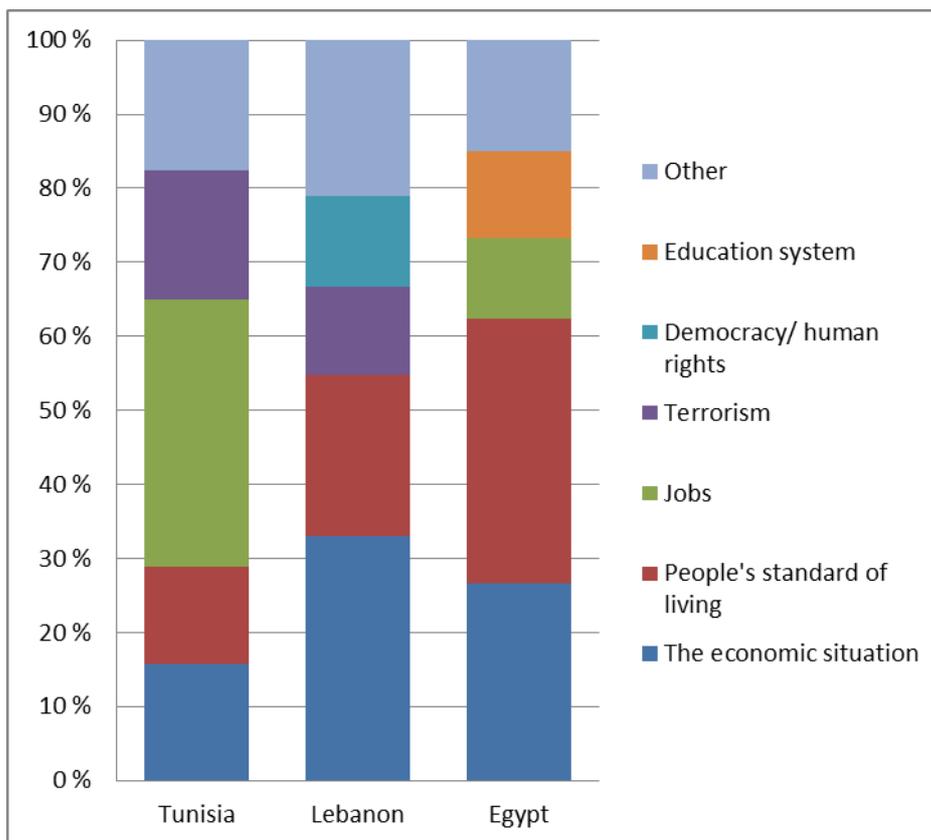
When it comes to education, I wish that they would change the education process and introduced some monitoring on schools, teachers and students. The government should try and fix the relationship between the student and the teacher (EG_NI_4: 2).

Some respondents also provide concrete proposals on how to reform the educational system. Another young Egyptian 22-year-old male proposes that new scholarship programmes should be established for high achievers at the universities and that the students should be better informed about the different course and specialisation options at their disposal:

There has to be some type of pre-college awareness that can actually guide these graduates who will join college, and what to do when they are done with college and what extra courses (if any) do they need so they can compete in the job market (EG_LS_1: 12).

Figure 7 below illustrates young people’s answers to the survey question “the most important problem in my country”. The four most commonly named problems are illustrated in the graph, but in the original survey the list of different alternatives was longer, including the education system, the health system, corruption, the increasing influence of religion over the government, morals in society, housing, criminality and drugs as the most important problems.

Figure 7: “The biggest problem in my country” (%)



Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

In all three countries the four most selected options included “the economic situation” and “people’s standard of living”.¹¹ In Tunisia “jobs” was the biggest problem and it was also one of the four chosen in Egypt. “Terrorism” was the third most selected option in both Tunisia and Lebanon. In Lebanon “democracy/ human rights” was the fourth most selected option and in Egypt “the education system” was the third most commonly answered problem. Jobs, the economic situation and people’s standard of living are closely intertwined. More than half of those in Lebanon, more than 60% of those in Tunisia and more than 70% of the young respondents in Egypt selected one of these alternatives as the main problem in their country. Terrorism, democracy/ human rights situation in the country as well as education system are all intertwined with the economic situation, people’s

standard of living and jobs. In the qualitative data from Egypt the intertwining problems of the education system, jobs and the economic situation is described by a 22-year-old female:

The job is not related very much to my field of study. I think in general there is a progress in the job market, but there is also a problem of irrelevance between what we study and what we do at work. It is as if the school does not prepare you to the job market (EG_LS_1: 3).

In Tunisia terrorism as a societal problem may also be combined with the employment scenarios, as two informants in a focus group explain:

Facing the future, our young people openly express their ambitions, and even their dreams. [She 19-years-old] hopes to do the military service as much as the scenes of the soldiers killed due to terrorist acts outrage her. The same patriotic motivation motivates [him 17-years-old] and increases his intention to engage in the police (TN_FG_1: 7).

Although corruption was not mentioned many times as the biggest problem in the country, the labour market remains challenged by the different forms of corruption, nepotism or other types of *wasta*, a concept that refers to using one's connections and/or influence to get things done, including government transactions and getting hired for or promoted in a job. In Egypt, for instance, survey data indicates that 48% of respondents gained their current job through personal contacts, and 36% through family contacts (National Case Study 2016, Egypt).

The future aspired to may change when society changes radically. For example, in the qualitative data from Tunisia, the young people aspired to contribute to the democratic building process of the post-revolutionary society by choosing a career to fight against terrorism:

To [him 15-years-old] while “all seems obvious”, he dreams of engaging later in the army, he would engage “for life”, he said, to come to the aid of the soldiers who fight against terrorism in Kasserine (TN_FR_4: 9).

In Egypt, young people generally prefer a public, governmental job over being employed in the private sector (see also: Barsoum, 2014). Despite lower income levels, public sector jobs are stable and come with medical and social insurance and annual vacations. These individual and practical benefits are the main reasons for this aspiration, not societal causes:

Now that they are unmarried, they do not feel the need of a safe stable job that pays a constant amount every month, but they believe that maybe when they get married and have children, their priority will be to have stable job which is available in the public sector and very rare to find in the private sector (EGY_FG_1: 7).

For example, as showed by the SAHWA National Case Study on Algeria, male presence in the labour market is more dominant than female; exclusion from school has a clear negative impact and leads men into the informal market (56% of the labour of juvenile work) but women into inactivity. Women are even more excluded in the rural areas than the cities. A 28-year-old female respondent from a rural area explained her reality as a young woman who is excluded and inactive in the countryside. However, another young woman from a rural area illustrated a different example while strengthening certain predominant societal structures:

I love my job very much, but women working in the field of sports suffer from a kind of pressure, the society where I live is patriarchal, it believes that some of the posts are reserved for men, people don't have culture of women's sports outfit and I go out to the street, I could see in the looks of other questions: are you a boy or a girl? People are not accustomed to see liberal girl different from the other girls, walking with confidence in the street, especially that I don't wear hijab (DZ_LS_7: 6).

Because the labour market places a very limited number of options before the youth in these Arab Mediterranean countries, many young people start to aspire to emigrating to find decent work. At the same time, for others, the situation creates many anxieties, in particular the fear of having to leave their environment:

I love my country and I don't want to leave but there is a 50% chance that I will have to leave Lebanon. (...) People are not safe...politics and economics in

Lebanon are not good. More and more people are emigrating and I am scared of emigration to move abroad to another country (LB_FG_1: 13).

The youth in the AMCs have a very common basic aspiration regarding their future, as a male from Algeria explains:

My dream is to build a big family and a big house and bring everyone together.
I'd like to educate my brother and sisters and my children that I don't yet have.
I will develop the farm (DZ_LS_2: 5).

The economic constraints complicate or even prevent the youth from achieving their aspirations. From the perspective of Euro-Med youth cooperation, there are many needs and possibilities for fruitful collaborations in terms of education and training. For example the EU project Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean (GEMM) aims at enhancing the quality and relevance of vocational education and training, and thereby the employability of young people (Schäfer, 2016: 69). Another project The New Chance Mediterranean (MedNC), established by the Tunisian Manouba University (Institut Supérieur de Comptabilité et d'Administration des Entreprises) and developed by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and partly funded by the EU, targets school dropouts and unemployed graduates (in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria) for training in business and social activities, inspired by the training model of Second Chance Schools (E2C) (Schäfer, 2016: 69).

In addition to these programmes, the data from the five Arab Mediterranean countries encourages us to recommend new types of ITC and language training where Arab Mediterranean young people would be employed as teachers of their European counterparts. Another new labour horizon could be opened up through utilising the rich cultural heritage (locations, arts, handicrafts, food) of the Arab Mediterranean, where the young actors could create new sustainable and innovative means for their own employment that would shed light on the past and present of their cultural heritage.

Conclusions and recommendations

The young people are not heard. Nobody tries to listen what he or she have to say, or find out what his or her needs are. When strategies are being drawn, 50 or 60 years old individuals try to think for young people. But this does not work... When I attend events about young people, I am almost all the time the only “young” person. I believe that young people should be listened to, implicated in public affairs decisions. They have ideas, but they never get a chance to voice them (MA_LS_1: 16; 21-year-old male).

Young people in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon see an ageing political class presiding over the destiny of their country. There is a gap in the youth’s representation and they are excluded from the sphere of decision-making (National Case Study Algeria, 2016). SAHWA data shows that young people communicate more among themselves on the national political agenda than with the older generations.

As The Revolutionary Promise report (2013) has already described, the instability of the socio-political environment in Arab Mediterranean societies is a challenge. In light of the continued state efforts to impose public order, the majority of political and social actors are likely to remain reactive rather than proactive. In this kind of environment, it is crucial to continually “revisit and restructure the machinery responsible for the marginalisation of youth from the public sphere”, as the report proposes (ibid.: 116).

In the perspective of “learning from the South”, we conclude this paper with recommendations that share the aims of Scott Atran (2015), in envisioning a more “inclusive and enabling environment in which youth actors, including youth from different backgrounds, are recognised and provided with adequate support to implement violence prevention activities and support social cohesion”. Alternatively, we want to stress “the importance of creating policies for youth that would positively contribute to peacebuilding efforts, including social and economic development, supporting projects designed to grow local economies, and provide youth employment opportunities and vocational training, fostering their education, and promoting youth entrepreneurship and constructive political engagement” (Atran 2015).

These needs and aspirations are clearly expressed in the SAHWA research project data. In this way they also correspond with the global policy processes on better youth inclusion, as expressed in the recent UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security in which Atran's recommendations were incorporated in December 2015. For the first time the Security Council agreed on a resolution that focuses entirely on the role of young men and women in peacebuilding, emphasising their engagement as the main source of countering extremism and youth radicalisation. The resolution represents an urgent need to engage in youth and youth-led initiatives as important partners at all levels of decision-making in the political, economic, and social processes that affect their lives. The resolution especially encourages the development of:

- a. evidence-based and gender-sensitive youth employment opportunities, inclusive labour policies, national youth employment action plans in partnership with the private sector, developed in partnership with youth and recognising the interrelated role of education, employment and training in preventing the marginalisation of youth;
- b. investment in building young persons' capabilities and skills to meet labour demands through relevant education opportunities designed in a manner which promotes a culture of peace;
- c. support for youth-led and peacebuilding organisations as partners in youth employment and entrepreneurship programmes.

The SAHWA research project data clearly shows that these elements highlighted by the UN resolution are also highly important to develop in the AMCs. To conclude our analysis of the young people's aspirations of engaging in society, the most important element to highlight is the impact of the marginalisation of the young: the absence of political tools to influence the management of state affairs and resources and the grave challenges to the attainment of aspired life chances due to structural obstacles to the labour market. There is also a need to open new horizons of non-violent civic engagement for young people and to facilitate confidence-building measures by offering meaningful roles in public debates and decision-making processes without the risk/fear of negative repercussions. This can only be

achieved in the more inclusive societies that the Arab Mediterranean youth aspire to build. Euro-Med Youth Cooperation can play a role in achieving this ambitious goal. Doing so, however, necessitates a profound reshaping of these cooperation policies in the near future. Although the EU is in the process of implementing its Youth Strategy (2010-2018) and mainstreaming cross-sector initiatives in this regard, the youth dimension remains to be mainstreamed in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which affects its cooperation with countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

Therefore, we recommend that:

1. Youth centres should be better supported in the future and different forms of youth exchange programmes could be coordinated through Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation schemes. For example, in Tunisia many youth and cultural centres are educational entities that offer young people opportunities to access a wide variety of leisure training and awareness raising activities, allowing them to express themselves and develop their imagination. These youth spaces could involve youth-led management and also bring together local employers and jobseekers.
2. Adaptation of the national youth policies and national civic councils of youth organisations, namely, national youth councils, should be encouraged and, if needed, facilitated through Euro-Med youth co-operation. For example, in March 2016, NET-MED Youth and several youth organisations gathered in Tunis in order to engage a common reflection on the implementation of a national youth council. This consultation mechanism aims to become an appropriate framework through which young people contribute to analysing public policies, elaborating strategies and formulating recommendations related to youth. This experiment from Tunisia and the work of the National Youth Forum in Lebanon could be used as examples, supported via Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation schemes, to carry out similar processes in other southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. The process should be inclusive, meaning that different youth-led initiatives and actors should play integral roles at all stages, including agenda setting, design and implementation. More societal discussion and transparency is needed on the role of foreign funding

for civil society organisations as well as state control over associational life in general.

3. Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation schemes could involve a wider range of youth-led initiatives and civil society organisations. These organisations could create and develop new and less formal political engagement practices that allow young people to acquire their autonomy and independence in society (National Case Study Algeria, 2016). The role of different civil society organisations in developing new forms of applied training or vocational schools that aims to bridge the gap between jobs and the youth should be actively elaborated alongside local partners.
4. A cross-Mediterranean network of youth researchers could be established in order to follow and evaluate youth policy processes and to acknowledge the changing social, political, and economic realities that shape the lives of the Arab Mediterranean youth. This youth research body could be supported by Euro-Med Youth cooperation and have members from the EU, Council of Europe, and Arab Mediterranean states. It could organise thematic and annual seminars, knowledge exchange and work jointly on research projects, aiming to support youth engagement locally, nationally and transnationally as a necessity.
5. Last but not least, we want to highlight the principle of “learning with the South” that we introduced at the beginning of this paper. We claim that in order to analyse and struggle against the cultural, political and material inequalities between Europe and the Arab Mediterranean, there is a need to revise and deconstruct the pedagogical roles beyond the developing/developed dichotomy. The young people living in Arab Mediterranean societies can teach Europeans important lessons about the future. We agree with Teivainen that “once we achieve this change in attitudes, we have better possibilities to advance global democratic transformations” (2002: 60).

Endnotes

1. The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013 under grant agreement no. 613174 for the SAHWA Project (www.sahwa.eu). This research project brought together researchers from both shores of Mediterranean, belonging to 15 research institutions.
2. In quotations from the qualitative data we use the codes: DZ = Algeria, TN = Tunisia, MA = Morocco, EG = Egypt, LB = Lebanon, FG = Focus Group summaries, FE = Focused Ethnographies, LS = Life Story summaries and NI = Narrative Interviews summaries.
3. It is important to note that though we present the country data from three different countries in combined pictures the data has not been scaled. Therefore statistical differences between different countries cannot be analysed. In other words, the significance of differences can only be counted inside each country with different variables. Numbers of respondents: Tunisia N=2000; Lebanon N=2000; Egypt N=1988 (if no additional information is given). Background variables used are gender, age and social class. Gender: 50% female and 50% male in each country. Age groups: Tunisia 15-19 (32%), 20-24 (33%), 25-29 (35%); and Lebanon 15-19 (40%), 20-24 (24%), 25-29 (35%) (young people who were born 1986-2000). In Egypt the age variable has not been analysed in this report because the year the data was collected is unclear (born 1985-1999). For social class we have used the young people's answers of their experience of their own social class. The question was: "Compared to people your age, how would you class yourself? Scale: 0 = the poorest 10 = the richest". From here we formulated three categories 0-4 = Lower, 5 = Middle and 6-10 = Upper. This resulted in: Tunisia: lower 30%, middle 48%, upper 22%; Lebanon: lower 37%, middle 28%, upper 35%; and Egypt: lower 37%, middle 42%, upper 21%. These data corpuses are not weighted.
4. Consortium project Youth and political engagement in contemporary Africa (YoPo), funded by the Academy of Finland [258235].
5. For the question on the Arab Maghreb Union, no data was available for Egypt.
6. The question: "Using this card, how often have you participated in the following activities in the past 12 months?" Scale: "Every day", "More than once a week", "About once a week", "About once a month", "A few times a year" "Never". Classification 0 = Never, 1 = Once or more. Full description of each question (According to Tunisia data codebook): "Participated in party political meeting or activities", "Donation to a party or an association", "Collect signatures or sign a petition", "Participate in night watches to protect your neighbourhood", "Participate, attend or help demonstrations", "Join a strike", "Use forms of violent action for social or political ends", "Participate in electoral campaigns", "Political participation via the internet".
7. Sum Variable: 0 = no kind of participation, 1-6 = at least one kind of participation. Cronbach's alpha: Tunisia 0.773 Lebanon 0.714, Egypt 0.628. The sum variable included variables: "Political participation via the internet", "Participate in electoral campaigns", "Collect signatures or signed a petition", "Participated in party political meeting or activities" at least once in the last 12 months; "Belong to political party", "Belong to a political movement" at any level (as a sympathiser, as a participant, as a donor or performing voluntary work).
8. In Tunisia and Egypt there are no statistically significant differences between age groups and gender.
9. Tunisia (N=1995), Lebanon (N=2000) and Egypt (N=1988). Statistical significance according to X²-test: *: p<0.5; **: p<0.01; ***: p<0.001.
10. This video is accessible through the SAHWA Project's YouTube page: SAHWA Life Stories- N°2: Wajdi (Tunisia).
11. For this part of the analysis we use the unverified version of the survey for Tunisia as we do not have the verified version yet.

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Researching
Arab Mediterranean Youth:
Towards a New Social Contract



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The SAHWA Project (“Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract”) is a FP-7 interdisciplinary cooperative research project led by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and funded by the European Commission. It brings together fifteen partners from Europe and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple social, economic and political transitions in five Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon). The project expands over 2014-2016 and has a total budget of €3.1 million. The thematic axes around which the project will revolve are education, employment and social inclusion, political mobilisation and participation, culture and values, international migration and mobility, gender, comparative experiences in other transition contexts and public policies and international cooperation.

