EUROPEAN
POLICYBRIEF

UNDERSTANDING AND OVERCOMING YOUTH MARGINALISATION IN THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

This is the summary brief of SAHWA and POWER2YOUTH projects, which sought to understand the processes of exclusion of young people in the Arab world. The findings contained in this brief will focus on the joint findings between both projects and the implications for policy-makers.

March 2017

INTRODUCTION

POWER2YOUTH & SAHWA are both EU projects funded by the European Commission under Seventh Framework Programme. Running from 2014 to 2017, both examining the youth conditions and perceptions in the South and East Mediterranean (SEM) region with a cross-national comparative design. P2Y and SAHWA combined nation-wide surveys, interviews and in-depth analysis of the socio-economic, political and cultural life spheres to understand the dynamics that adversely affect the lives of young people in the region. A combined 17,000 young people were surveyed between the projects along with over 300 in-depth interviews conducted.

This summary will focus on related findings of both projects, highlighting the weight of evidence that indicates direction which the EU should direct policy. This brief does not encompass the rich findings and of each project methodologies used to conduct the research. It is encouraged to read the Final Briefings of each project and the data produced at: http://www.power2youth.eu and http://www.sahwa.eu.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

Multiple-marginalisations of youth

P2Y and SAHWA projects found that youth face a multiple-marginalisation through a number of different processes (mainly economic, political but also social) and as a result of those issues

experience a delayed transition into adulthood (marriage, home ownership). Furthermore these exclusion drivers are interconnected between them, affecting in a higher proportion to young women. These process affect youth to a greater or lesser degree depending on the young person's location, gender, education, political orientation and social background. The following will briefly outline the areas in which young people feel most marginalised.

The established discourse: Youth as 'problem' or 'hope of nation'

Prevailing policy discourses in SEM countries characterise youth as either 'good' or 'bad', as the 'Hope of the Nation' or as a 'Problem' to be solved. Young people showed an overwhelming amount of discontent with the characterisation and as a result believed that governments use the narrative to control young people and to ensure their submission to authoritarian political systems, failing economic policies and patriarchal social structures. Young people do not current have a space to voice their concerns and demands at the current structures of government. As a result, young people tend to reject traditional economic and political institutions and engage in innovative strategies and informal networks avoiding interactions with their state.

The access to job: mismatch between education and the labour market

Both projects found that the economic situation was particularly worrying as the youth in the SEM countries have some of the highest rates of youth unemployment and underemployment in the world. The poor standards of living, the economic situation, the lack of jobs or the education system are identified for young people as main problems in their countries. In this regards, poor educational provision is identified as a root cause of the mismatch between supply of and demand for labour. In fact, most of young people in the region perceive that education does not prepare them for the labour market. Young people embrace opportunities for training and qualification enhancement, but find access not just direly limited but also inequitable and very unlikely to result in the pay and conditions enjoyed by previous generations. The labour market is increasingly characterised by precarious forms of work, a reliance on the growing informal economy and a lack of opportunity for material self-sufficiency or security.

Wasta, the procure system

Many aspects of young people's daily lives are shaped and limited by corruption in official institutions and the culture of *wasta* (influence/having connections, nepotism) in society as whole. Without *wasta* the ability to access jobs, services and opportunities is limited, undermining young people's trust in institutions while at the same time forcing them to engage in the system if they want to progress. As example, accordingly with the data emerged from the data 72% of jobs are found through *wasta* practices. Therefore, those without *wasta* are particularly vulnerable, although even those who use it become yet more subordinated to older people already in positions of power.

Lack of confidence: an arbitrary State

Formal state institutions in SEM countries fail to protect the rule of law and are themselves arbitrary and often violent. Young people in SEM countries do not trust officials or national institutions (almost 60% of young people have low or very low confidence on institutions such a parliament, political parties or politicians). They experience the arbitrary and unpredictable imposition of law, are excluded from meaningful participation in formal politics, and often experience the denial of their civil and human rights by the agents of the state. Their political insecurity as citizens is frequently compounded by a very real sense of physical insecurity and vulnerability.

Lack of political engagement and new forms of activism

Young people are not participating in the political arena, coupled with extremely low rates of trust in state institutions young people are making an active choice not to participate in their states as they are current organised. They do not only feel represented by them, also they perceive these institutions only respond to elites needs. Nevertheless, young people in SEM countries are trying to positively change their surroundings through engagement in a wide range of activities, including social entrepreneurship, political activism, cultural engagement and social media. However, their

efforts to challenge the constraints on their lives are all too often countered by robust authoritarian security apparatuses that limit their effectiveness and disincentivise engagement in formal politics, further eroding the opportunity to change their lives.

Stalled transitions and fear for the future: informality as survival mode

The combination of severely limited economic opportunities and political marginalisation has forced young people to fall back on the resources of families and social networks. These in turn exert patriarchal control over young people, especially over young women who are subject to conservative concepts of family honour and shame. Unable to achieve either material or social independence, young people experience extended or stalled transitions to full adulthood. Their lives are frequently marked by a complex set of economic, political, social, and physical insecurities which express themselves as a sense of the lack of a future, fear of the future, or embrace of alternative and potentially more 'risky' futures such as migration or enrolment with radical groups. As a result most young people respond to these multiple exclusion in an informal manner (economical, social or political) where the established institutions are not involved.

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POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Although young people exhibit remarkable adaptive capabilities in how they navigate the difficulties of their daily lives, policies will should address the multiple-marginalisations that young people is suffering. Effective policies are likely to be those which a) do not compound the structural sources of their marginalisation, b) empower young people to be the authors of their own futures, building their trust and engagement and c) circumventing the deleterious influences of authoritarianism, corruption and patriarchy. Specifically, policy-makers should:

- Not reproduce or reinforce narratives of 'Youth as problem or threat' or 'Youth as hope of the nation', or indeed narratives which homogenise youth and segregate them from wider populations.
- Do not create youth-only policies. Policies should try to address issues in societies as a whole and should be wide in their scope, dealing with education, employment, health, and political engagement.
- Create and support meaningful educational engagements that address the poor education systems, particular emphasis should be placed on vocational and exchange, programmes which focus on developing critical thinking functions.
- Ensure that any aid or programmes granted in the SEM have strong monitoring and evaluation conditionality. This will help rebuild trust through accountability and transparency.
- Support equal access to capacity-building programmes to address the urban/rural divide.
- Develop processes to incorporate informal sectors of labour progressively into the formal to avoid precariousness and uncertainty.
- Assist enhanced mobility of young people in both local and international contexts, and enlarge the spaces where young people can safely develop their capacities. This can include a range of projects to safeguard young people's well-being such as: affordable public transport, leisure facilities, and affordable housing in safe, clean locations with appropriate utility provision.
- Help create safe environments where young people can securely participate in the political development of their state, without fear of state violence. Our projects noted that programmes initiated at the local, often municipal level, in which young people were actively engaged in the design and implementation stages, were most likely to result in positive outcomes.

- Recognise the importance of safeguarding the political, material, social and physical security of young people. Providing small measures of security will allow them to align their adaptive capabilities with realistic prospects for positive futures.
- Create work dynamics where full cooperation between national and international spheres is possible. Tools and spaces where the different actors (governmental and non-governmental) can work together on the main problems facing young people should be created.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

POWER2YOUTH aimed to advance theory and extend knowledge on the root causes and dynamics of youth marginalisation as well as on the variety of collective responses provided by young people to deal with existing political economy constraints.

POWER2YOUTH adopted an interdisciplinary and gender-sensitive approach to analyse the macro, meso and micro levels of marginalisation of young people in the SEM. The data was captured by combining qualitative and quantitative methods:

- Intense in depth analysis of several types of sources for each case study (e.g. quantitative and quantitative sources such as statistics, various kinds of public documents, academic studies and interviews with relevant stakeholders and key informants) to investigate the macro institutional/policy factors of youth marginalisation (Work package 2)
- Interviews and focus groups with young people to analyse the meso-level organizational factors of youth marginalization and their collective efforts to deal with the structural constraints on their life (30 semi-structured interviews and five focus groups with organized young people aged 18-30 for each case study) (Work package 3)
- Nation-wide surveys on young people conducted in the six countries to analyse the micro-level factors of youth marginalisation (from a sample of 1,000 young people in Lebanon to 1,804 young people in Turkey) (Work package 4)

P2Y provides a critical understanding of the different political, socio-economic and cultural structures that contribute to the *multiple-marginalisations* of young people as well as of the variety of collective responses provided by them to cope with such structural constraints. This briefing presents the key findings from the research and the implications for European policy making. It draws on the entirety of the research project but highlights the key results of the large-scale survey-based study. Power2Youth welcomes opportunities to work with interested policy makers, please contact: Professor Emma C. Murphy, Durham University (emma.murphy@durham.ac.uk)

Building on the existing academic and policy-oriented research on Arab and global youth, the **SAHWA Project** aims at addressing a variety of issues related to the youth in Arab Mediterranean countries with four broad objectives:
- Conceptualising transition in Arab Mediterranean countries with a focus on youth, from an interdisciplinary perspective.
- Mapping political, socio-economic and cultural change in the Arab Mediterranean world in a context of multiple transitions
- Comparing transition processes in other historical contexts and between the countries of study to inform the management of political and economic transformations in the Arab Mediterranean region.
- Informing policy-makers with a range of tools and original frameworks of analysis to achieve a better understanding of the role of youth and contribute to a better design of national public policies and EU cooperation to support change in the region.

SAHWA is an empirical research project that relies on two main pillars: on the quantitative level, the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016 is a multi-country survey carried out amongst 10.000 young people in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia in order to provide an accurate portrait of Arab youth views, situation and prospects with a special focus on SAHWA research themes (education, employment and social inclusion; political mobilisation and participation; culture and values; international migration and mobility; gender; and public policies and international cooperation). On the other hand, at the qualitative level, an Ethnographic Fieldwork research was carried out to offer an in-depth analysis of youth conditions, values and practices in different contexts within each country and across countries. Therefore, SAHWA's methodology is a mixed one that blends quantitative (survey) with qualitative (ethnographic fieldwork) analysis, while analysing at both the macro (five Arab Mediterranean countries in their specific regional context) and the micro levels (their respective local and national contexts).

SAHWA welcomes opportunities to work with interested policy makers, please contact: Elena Sánchez-Montijano, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (esanchez@cidob.org)

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECTS NAME

POWER2YOUTH: A Comprehensive Approach to the Understanding of Youth Exclusion and the Prospects for Youth-led Change in the South and East Mediterranean
SAHWA: Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract

COORDINATOR

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CONSORTIUM

POWER2YOUTH:
- Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Italy
- University of Durham (UDUR), United Kingdom
- Institut Francais du Proche Orient (IFPO), Beirut – Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Enjeux Sociaux (IRIS), France
- School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, United Kingdom
- Birzeit University (BZU), Occupied Palestinian Territories
- FAFO Institute for Applied International Studies (Fafo-AIS), Oslo, Norway
- Universite de Geneve (UNIGE), Switzerland
- Istanbul Bilgi Universitesi (BILGI), Istanbul, Turkey
- American University in Cairo (AUC), Egypt
- American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanon
- Universite Mohammed V-Souissi (UM5S), Morocco
- Observatoire National de la Jeunesse (ONJ), Tunis, Tunisia
- Leicester University (ULEIC), United Kingdom

SAHWA:
- Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, Spain
- ANIMA Investment Network, France
- Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research, Tunisia

- Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée au Développement, Algeria
- Education for Employment Europe, Spain
- Institut de Hautes Etudes de Management, Morocco
- Finnish Youth Research Network, Finland
- Middle East Technical University, Turkey
- Lebanse American University, Lebanon
- American University in Cairo, Egypt
- University of Liverpool, United Kingdom
- University of Lleida, Spain
- University of Milano-Biccoca, Italy
- University of Bremen, Germany
- University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria

FUNDING SCHEME

POWER2YOUTH: FP7 Framework Programme for Research of the European Union – Collaborative Project / Small or medium-scale focused research project (SSH-2013.4.1-2) – Facing transition in the South and East Mediterranean area: empowering the young generation
SAHWA: FP7 Framework Programme for Research of the European Union – Collaborative project Activity 3 – Major trends in society and their implications.

DURATION

POWER2YOUTH: March 2014 – May 2017 (39 months).
SAHWA: January 2014 - March 2017 (39 months).

BUDGET

POWER2YOUTH: EU contribution - 2,499,975 €.
SAHWA: EU contribution - 2,498,526.98 €.

WEBSITE

POWER2YOUTH: http://www.Power2Youth.eu
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FURTHER READING

Bourekba, Moussa and Elena Sánchez-Montijano, "Overcoming Youth exclusion in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries", *SAHWA Policy Brief*, 2017.

Mikhael, Drew and Emma Murphy, "Towards Youth-Inclusive Policies in the Mediterranean", Power2Youth *Policy Brief*, 2017.

The full set of reports and publications from P2Y can be obtained from: http://www.power2youth.eu

The full set of reports and publications from SAHWA can be o