



EuroMed Youth III Programme



STUDIES ON YOUTH POLICIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNER COUNTRIES

JORDAN



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The third phase of the **Euromed Youth Programme*** (Euro-Med Youth III), funded by the European Commission (DG EuropeAid) and launched in October 2005, is a regional Programme set up within the framework of the third chapter of the Barcelona Process '*Partnership on Social, Cultural and Human Affairs*'. The overall objectives of the Euro-Med Youth Programme are to promote intercultural dialogue among young people within the Euro-Mediterranean region, motivate active citizenship as well as to contribute to the development of youth policy.

The overall aim of the studies undertaken in **Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey** on Youth Policies, was to be a reference tool which would give all stakeholders in the field of youth, as well as youth project organisers, an overview of the situation of young people and of provisions available for them in the 10 partner countries. The objectives were to identify whether there was a Youth Policy, legislation or any other national strategy addressing the needs of youth and what kind of provision was made through non-formal education and youth work in the relevant partner countries.

Research for the studies was carried out by 7 experts and involved gathering of information, during a 5-month period, on basis of available written materials and resources, and as a result of missions to the studied countries to interview relevant youth authorities, organisations and young people individually or through focus groups.

The outcomes of the studies, each produced in a report format following a common structure for all the ten studies, give an enlightening overview of the definition and situation of youth in the Mediterranean partner countries. The studies focused on young people's rights and entitlements as active citizens, such as opportunities to vote, get elected and contribute to the decision-making process; the challenges faced by youth such as unemployment, immigration, housing, marriage, generational and cultural conflict, young women's place in society; young people's reactions in response to such challenges and description of provision for leisure-time activities and non-formal education through governmental and/or non-governmental youth institutions and organisations.

A reading of all the studies shows that a national youth policy is not yet fully implemented in any of the partner countries. However, each of them has a number of national directives, legislations, policies and/or strategies to address youth issues, usually at cross-sector level, even if youth are not, in some cases, recognised as a priority. The definition of youth varies from country to country, sometimes even within the same country depending on the responsible national authority. Non-formal education has no, or limited, place in most of the studied countries, formal education being the main priority of national authorities. The Euromed Youth Programme is assessed positively and considered to be an essential tool for the promotion of youth work and non-formal education.

Each report, published individually, provides a factual background on youth issues on basis of information collated by the relevant researchers. In addition, one document bringing together the executive summaries from each of the ten studies has been also produced to highlight an overview on the situation of youth within the Mediterranean region.

* www.euromedyouth.net

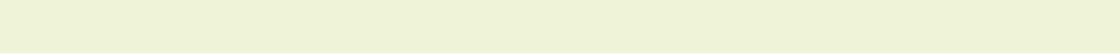


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jordanian youth sector is shaped by two factors: youth policy – its formulation and implementation – as well as role and projects of youth NGOs which often provide a backbone or supplement for state activities. Engagement and support of the Royal Family, sustainable and encouraging macro-environment for youth-related projects and activities and availability of funds (including international donors) result in a dynamic and blooming youth sector supported by a youth policy that is believed to be one of the most pro-active in the Arab countries of Middle East and North Africa. Key points crucial for understanding the youth policy in Jordan include: implementation of the existing plans and strategies; role of external actors in the development of youth policy; evolution and structure of the non-governmental youth sector, as well as a legal and socio-economic framework of the conditions of young people in Jordan.

The state of Jordan is vulnerable to external shocks and enjoys unfavourable natural conditions, which influence lives and pose challenges to young Jordanians. The most important socio-economic problem refers to the gap between educational attainment and the labour market resulting in huge unemployment among university graduates and at the same time reluctance to accept low-skilled jobs (which is additionally backed up with so called ‘culture of shame’). Other challenges include health-related issues (healthy lifestyles, reproductive health) and cultural confusion – which is to be attributed to social and economic changes that Jordan is experiencing.

The state of Jordan makes a continuous effort to meet the needs of young people. Jordanian legislation provides rules for social, political and economic participation of young people in the society with some of the laws being recently reformed, or in the process of modification – most for the advantage of the youth. The key document is the National Youth Strategy (NYS) for 2005-2009 prepared jointly by the Higher Council for Youth, UNDP and UNICEF. It regulates youth issues in Jordan and provides a framework for developing a youth policy that meets the needs of young people and promotes their development. The priorities identified in the NYS are: 1) participation, 2) civil rights and citizenship, 3) recreational activity and leisure time, 4) culture and information, 5) information technology and globalisation, 6) education and training, 7) employment, 8) health, 9) environment. Each one comprises a set of operational and strategic objectives.

The National Youth Strategy is implemented by the Higher Council for Youth which is in charge of the overall coordination as well as evaluation, monitoring and review of the policy. Even though the preparation stage of the National Youth Strategy is often quoted as a best practice, still efforts are needed in order to implement it at full swing. Youth policy itself is a cross-cutting issue, involving many actors aiming at increasing the opportunities of the young people as it became one of the nation’s top priorities. By collaboration with other ministries and relevant actors

the Higher Council for Youth is ensuring a multi-sectorial approach. On the other hand, it seems that the number of stakeholders responsible for the implementation of youth policy results in decentralisation of its delivery and fragmentation.

The rapid development of the NGO sector can be traced back to the early 90s and was caused by economic recession and political liberalisation. At that time NGOs started to overtake some of the state's responsibilities and complement them. Jordanian NGOs can be categorised into four groups, each having its particular strengths and problems: Royal NGOs – often with the best capacities; national, secular NGOs – smaller and often with insufficient funding and staffing; religious organisations – linked mostly to the charity sector; and international organisations – branches seated in Jordan that target youth. The non-profit youth sector includes a variety of actors and enjoys favourable structural conditions. The organisations are active in a wide range of fields including: performing basic services (e.g. delivery of non-formal education), organising the community (through community service or volunteering) and advocacy (to which promotion of active participation can be linked). There are many examples of best practices that can be named, which provide not only insights into the solutions, but also problems and challenges the NGOs are facing.

Jordan has a relatively long tradition of participation in the Euromed Youth Programme and through the work of the Euromed Youth Unit (media coverage, translation of relevant documents) it is spreading to relevant stakeholders. Still it seems to reach only those actors that are focused on Euro-Mediterranean activities and is associated predominantly with the Euromed Youth Exchanges component. However, other components are becoming more and more popular (especially the European Voluntary Service- EVS). The Euromed Youth Programme seemed to impact the youth policy in terms of introducing and promoting the non-formal education approach and also re-focused the attention of some NGOs to the Euro-Mediterranean field.

There are also other international actors which contribute to youth development in Jordan. Possible ways include provision of funding (state projects, but also grants for NGOs) and influencing the policy itself by collaborating with relevant state actors. Jordan relies heavily on foreign grants and international actors provide significant funding for major projects and contribute to their design and implementation (e.g. National Youth Strategy, Education Reform for Knowledge Economy). Many international donors provide channel funding opportunities directly to the applying organisations.

Two core themes related to the youth policy which provoked the most intense discussions: one related to the National Youth Strategy and the role of the Higher Council for Youth, the other tackled the role and challenges of youth NGOs. The National Youth Strategy is perceived ambivalently by many stakeholders, who appreciate the design and the vision behind, but point at its inefficient implementation.

In regard to the NGO sector several challenges were identified. Some of them can be related to their accessibility (increasing the availability of information on youth-related projects and

making youth NGO more inclusive), while others to their macro-environment and functioning (insufficient staffing, limited opportunities for youth work training, funding problems). On the other hand, many young people and youth leaders agreed that the development of the NGO youth sector has a significant impact both on personal (self-fulfilment) and on social level (contributing to a positive change).

Constant focus on youth and involvement of the Royal Family provided sustainable environment for the development of the non-governmental youth sector. On the institutional level, care about young people was framed into the NYS, developed using the examples of best practices. The biggest challenge for the existing youth policy is, however, the implementation of the NYS. The non-governmental youth sector seems to supplement the state in the delivery of basic services and capacity building. Moreover, both parties managed to develop a sound way of co-existence and/or collaboration for the best benefit of the youth.

1. INTRODUCTION

Jordanian youth sector provides many opportunities for research, as it is very complex and multi-faceted. The importance of youth for the future of the country is being emphasized by the Royal Family and reflected in governmental strategies. That leads to its visibility and ought to provide more opportunities for young people and actors working for their benefit. Such macro-conditions create an environment for great variety of actors active in the field: state authorities, International Governmental Organisations (IGOs), international organisations, RINGOs (Royal NGO), local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and informal groups. Due to its strategic location, Jordan is not only home to numerous IGOs, but also receiver of international funding. Linking of these two elements – favourable macro-conditions and funding opportunities – may result in a dynamic and blooming youth sector supported by an efficient youth policy. Are the existing plans and strategies being implemented? What is the role of external actors in the development of youth policy? How is the non-governmental youth sector evolving – does it use the available opportunities adequately, does it complement or rather substitute the state activity? These are just few research questions to be answered within this report.

1.1 Objectives

The research focused on the objectives specified in the Call and the Terms of Reference. However, the local part of the research has shifted the attention to specific problems and challenges that seem to provide the key to understanding how the youth sector in Jordan is working. Therefore, examining whether there is a specific national youth policy has been widened by the question of the role of other actors in its development. Identifying how and to what extent the national youth strategy addresses the needs of young people within the society was in a way an analysis on its implementation, especially since the research had been conducted by the end of the National Youth Strategy (*Istratijiyat al-Shabab al-Wataniya* - NYS), validity period. The last point, regarding the role of youth NGOs and non-governmental sector was in general expanded as it seems to complement and to supplement actions undertaken by the state. In this case it was essential to grasp the whole variety of actors involved in the youth sector, including both civic societies and local NGOs as well as much more influential RINGOs and international actors which often provide the backbone for development of the youth sector.

1.2. Methodology

The scope of the research and its objectives required a variety of research tools to be used. The data obtained from the literature overview served as background information providing the context for the tailoring of research questions for interviews and questionnaires.

The literature base for the report was very rich thanks to the involvement of international actors in country's development and youth affairs. The youth sector has been comprehensively investigated especially by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with one of the reports – *Jordanian Youth: their lives and views* (2002) – serving as a basis for designing the NYS. These resources provide hard data, statistics and briefs from other relevant documents and field visits. Jordan is also well represented in Middle Eastern and North African area studies and reports such as *Arab Human Development Reports* by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), various World Bank reports as well as in international databases (United Nations (UN), - World Values Survey). Some of the documents also elaborated on laws related to the youth and complemented legislative acts available online.

A significant part of the research was carried out using active research methods – questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. The questionnaires were sent out via email to organizations listed in the Euromed Youth Platform and to representatives of NGOs and civil societies registered in Facebook. The outcome was rather moderate but still it provided some insights into the work and challenges faced by youth organizations. Another source of information was a short questionnaire sent to the Jordanian European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteers found via an announcement placed in a Yahoo! Group for Euromed youth exchanges⁽¹⁾. Both tools were used prior to the local visit. The use of Internet was dictated by three factors: its relative popularity among young Jordanians, freedom of use of this medium⁽²⁾ and bigger outreach.

During the local research that took place between 15 and 20 June 2008, 23 representatives of 19 different institutions⁽³⁾ were interviewed. The selection process was designed by their significance in youth affairs and shaping the youth policy, but at the same time aimed at the inclusion of a great variety of different actors involved – local NGOs and civil societies, national actors such as ministries and other government agencies, RINGOs, other NGOs and institutions, as well as IGOs and international organisations operating in Jordan. Through this diversity it was possible to gather different – sometimes even opposite – perspectives, but also to cover a wide range of topics – reflecting the scope of interest of all the parties involved.

In order to grasp the opinions of young people four focus groups were formed: adolescents of Jordanian and Iraqi origin living in an underprivileged district of Amman, NGO workers (most of them involved in the Euromed Youth Programme – EMYP), young people affiliated with a civil society promoting Palestinian culture, and students from the Faculty of Education of the University of Jordan. The last group consisted only of females, while the others were mixed. Moreover, three youth-related activities were visited and observed: a workshop about active participation carried out by Save the Children (SC), a clubhouse managed by Princess Basma Youth Resource Center (Markaz al-Amira Basma lil-Shabab – PBYRC), in East Amman and a football workshop for adolescent boys organised by Play Football Make Peace. The projects varied in target groups, objectives and forms of implementation but provided an additional and real life experience of implementing projects for the benefit of young people.

(1) Both questionnaires are to be found in the Annex (8).

(2) According to the Arab Human Development Report 2005 Jordan ranks among the top three countries when it comes to the freedom of Internet use (UNDP 2005, 37).

(3) One of the interviewees asked not to be mentioned in the annex neither by his name, nor by the name of his organisation and therefore the numbers do not fit the number of interviewees in the Annex (7).

The field research was conducted in Amman only. Three factors made this choice optimal. First of all, more than every third Jordanian lives in Amman (including so called Greater Amman). The city encompasses citizens from all over the country, diversified in terms of economic, social and even legal status, as well as ethnicity and religion. The division of East and West Amman might become a symbolic one in terms of splitting the city between tradition and modernity – both of which are to be encountered in their most distinctive forms. Last but not least, many of the actors interviewed represented organisations and institutions that are active in the whole country. Therefore they were able to provide information on the youth sector in other cities as well as in rural areas.

1.3. Challenges of the study

Due to data and resource availability most of the challenges concerned the active part of the research. One of them was to pick out a representative and a diversified number of stakeholders, including not only visible and wide-ranging organisations linked to the state or an international donor, but also less known but still active smaller NGOs and civil societies – that often not even have an own webpage. The biggest challenge, however, was to combine the viewpoints of different stakeholders into a sound and solid narrative. On the other hand, this variety of inputs made the working process more interesting and was translated into a more complex and exhaustive approach.

The level of English of all interviewees was sufficient to carry out the conversation in this language. However, two out of four focus group discussions were held in Arabic and translated simultaneously by local research assistants. The fluency in Arabic and English of the research assistants and passive understanding of English of some of the participants of the two focus groups minimized the risk of missing some of the content due to translation. Still some group dynamics could have been lost.

2. SITUATION OF YOUTH

The situation of youth is a derivative of the situation of the society in general. In the case of Jordan the latter is to a big extent an outcome of external factors. Jordan is a small country located in a troubled spot of the Middle East. Scarcity of natural resources, desert terrain with barely 3% of arable land, and scant fresh water resources limit the possibilities of development and economic independence. In fact half of Jordan's exports and quarter of imports comes from trade with its neighbours – that shows the extent of dependence on the geopolitical situation in the region and vulnerability to external shocks (Hassan, Al-Saci 2004, xiii). Placed between Israel and Iraq, Jordan is affected by the crisis in these both countries. Turmoil in Palestine/Israel affects Jordanian tourism – key industry of the country with a significant share in GDP. War in Iraq forced Jordan to restructure its oil supply. The country received 700 million USD emergency assistance from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) thereafter referred to as USAID, just to recover from the negative impact of the war (USAID 2003, 41).

Jordan also has to cope with population growth. Between 1960 and 2005 the number of its inhabitants increased fivefold – more than in any other Arab country except for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states (UN 2007, 118). Even though the fertility rate fell from almost 8 births per women in 70s to 3,5 nowadays, it is still above the average for Middle Eastern and North African states and for developing countries. High population growth rate forces provision of new jobs, housing and services and even more prudent use of the scarce resources. It means investment and a long-term reform strategy. Jordanian population is predominantly urban (82%). The biggest city, Amman, is home to over 2 million inhabitants – over a third of the whole population. Poverty poses a significant problem as 7% of the population lives below the 2 USD a day poverty line, while 14% of the inhabitants live below the national poverty line.

2.1 Definition of Youth

Due to lack of other resources, Jordan has been investing strongly in its human capital since the last three decades, at the time of King Hussein. The main beneficiaries of these reforms have been young people, especially when it comes to education and health. In those times the state provided most opportunities for young people – either through the Ministry of Youth and Sports or through different RINGOs. However, it was King Abdallah II who stressed the particular role of young people and his trust and confidence in youth “creating the future” and being “the knights of change”⁽⁴⁾. This overlapped with the evolving NGO sector and international funding flowing into the country and resulted in introducing new actors in the youth policy sector. It also has to be stressed that the Jordanian focus on youth is unique comparing to many other Arab countries as it challenges in a way the traditional hierarchy that links age with decision-making. The King's

(4) *His Majesty King Abdallah II's Address to the Nation on the Occasion of Independence Day, Amman, 24.05.2007.*

References to young people can be found in many other speeches of King Abdallah II – see: http://www.kingabdullah.jo/main.php?main_page=0&lang_hmka1=1.

support and interest provided young people with many opportunities and favourable conditions for their actions and development.

Jordan adopted a wide definition of youth (12-30), similar to many other Middle Eastern countries as the Arabic word for 'youth' – *shabab* – might refer even to people aged 30 or above (Youth Policy – here and now! 2005, 13). However, for statistical purposes the UN definition of youth (referring to 'youth' as people between the ages of 15 and 24) is also frequently used.

2.2 General Statistics: Demography, young people's rights and conditions

Jordanian society is one of the youngest in the world – people under 30 constitute 74% of the population and median age is 23,9. According to the Ministry of Education (Wizarat al-Tarbiyya wa al-Ta'leem – MoE), youth (15-24) constitutes 23% which makes almost 1,5 million in Jordan's 6,2 million population.

Gross enrolment for primary education is 96%, for secondary education 88% and for higher education 39%. Most popular fields of study include: social sciences, business and law (25% of all students), arts and humanities, engineering and construction, education, health and welfare. There is no gender gap between males and females; in fact the proportion of female students is slightly higher at every level of education⁽⁶⁾. Most students choose their field of study out of personal interest. In higher education, however, good career prospects are equally important (UNICEF 2002).

One of the most striking conditions that young people have to face is the lack of employment opportunities. As in many other Arab countries unemployment affects predominantly two social categories – new entrants on the labour market and women. Jordan has the fourth highest unemployment rate among youth among Middle Eastern and North African countries reaching 30%, while the unemployment rate among the adults is 12%. That means that around 60% of all unemployed are below 25 years of age⁽⁶⁾. Lack of job prospects is reflected in the opinions of young unemployed – every fourth believes that there are no jobs, while a significant part of the unemployed does not find the right job. On the other hand many juveniles – mostly males – start working before they reach maturity. According to the UNICEF study every third young person started to work before reaching 15 years of age (for males 15, for females 19). Many of them work on a temporary basis and do not receive any pay for their work (UNICEF 2002).

Especially vulnerable to limited employment opportunities are young women. Their unemployment rate is even higher – exceeding 43%. Every third young Jordanian aged between 15-25 is employed, whereas females constitute only 10% of the workforce. Most of the economically non-active males are studying. In the case of females a significant reason are family responsibilities (UNICEF 2002). In fact, almost half of young women are neither at school nor employed on a paid basis (Almasraweh 2003, 3), and only 7% of married women are employed (World Bank 2005a, 17). In 2002 the mean age at marriage was 29 for males and 27 for females, which reflects current

(6) UNESCO Institute of Statistics Database, <http://www.uis.unesco.org>.

(7) UN Statistics Division's Database, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd>.

socio-economic changes. Over 70% of all brides got married between the age of 18 and 27. Still, 12% of girls aged 14-17 were married as for 2002 (UNIFEM 2005, 14 and 76). A positive sign might be the decrease in the proportion of adolescent marriages in all marriages – from 36% in 1997 to 30,9% in 2001 (NCFA 2004, 41-42)⁽⁷⁾.

Young Jordanians perceive themselves as healthy. According to the UNESCO study over 90% of respondents indicated that their health is either good or very good. Their most important health concern is respiratory tract diseases, some of respondents also indicated sight problems (2002). Many adolescent Jordanians have insufficient knowledge on puberty and maturation process, as well as on reproductive health issues. On the other hand almost all young married women know modern contraceptives (Almasraweh 2003, 8). Similarly to most other Arab countries HIV/AIDS does not pose a threat to the society, yet in December 2007 548 cases were reported – with majority being young people between 15 and 34. Every third HIV positive person is aged 20-29 and four in five are male (Qatamish & Jaradat 2008, 13). Two factors may particularly increase the risk among young people: low level of awareness and an increase in risky behaviours. According to the studies conducted in Jordan young people have insufficient and sometimes misguided knowledge on HIV/AIDS in regard to ways of becoming infected (World Bank 2005, 23).

Despite the fact that the age for joining a political party or for voting is relatively low, young people are less eager to take part in elections comparing to older people. According to a poll, 67% of Jordanians aged 18-29 declared that they would vote in the 2007 elections, comparing with 76% of people aged over 40; they were also slightly less confident on who they were going to vote for (59% comparing to 62%; Ipsos 2007, 32 and 38). Half of the young Jordanians believe that they have no influence on changing laws (UNICEF 2002) and many young people express lack of trust in parliamentary elections (IRI 2003). It does not mean, however, that young Jordanians have no political opinions. A survey carried out during the 4th North Forum⁽⁸⁾ indicates clearly that they know what qualities an ideal municipal and parliamentary candidate should have⁽⁹⁾.

There has been an increase in the number of young people who came in contact with the police and authorities responsible for juveniles; between 1999 and 2001 it was 30 thousand, while crimes involving juvenile offenders constituted 11% of all crimes (NCFA 2004; 9 and 21). On the other hand, it is believed that adolescents and youth are the main victims of domestic violence. Especially vulnerable are young females (Almasraweh 2003, 6).

(7) It is worth noting, that adolescent wives are exposed to social and health problems including: early pregnancy, dropping out of school, more domestic work, dominance of their husbands (World Bank 2005a, 35) and domestic violence. In 90's 26% wives under 18 were subjects of every fourth case of domestic violence (UNICEF 2001, 12).

(8) The Forum was organised by the National Forum for Youth and Culture (NFYC), the Civil Society Development Centre and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung; it aimed to promote active participation of young Jordanians. The programme included training on advocacy and media campaigns, workshops and discussions.

(9) From a parliamentary candidate one should demand education and training (decreasing tuition fees and providing market-oriented training), while from a municipality candidate – youth participation and youth facilities (forming a youth advisory council and taking care of youth centres; <http://www.kas.de>).

2.3. Youth culture and trends

Jordanian society experiences significant social changes related to economic and social development. This pattern is reflected especially in the lifestyle and attitudes of young people. Young Jordanians are less religious than older people. Albeit over a third attends religious service at least once a week, a significant minority does not practice religion at all⁽¹⁰⁾. The vast majority of young Jordanians are optimistic about their future, display a rather positive self-perception (although females to lesser extent) and look forward to advancing their education (UNICEF 2002).

Most of young Jordanians have a lot of spare time – every third even too much, especially males from northern and southern part of the country. They spend most of their leisure time watching TV, males do a lot of physical exercises, while females prefer to read. The structure of leisure time activities of females seems to be influenced by their reduced mobility and lack of access to youth facilities (UNICEF 2002). Jordanians are well exposed to mass media. Especially TV and Internet play an important role in their daily life. Every third young Jordanian spends more than 3 hours watching TV and over 80% watches it every day (Almasarweh 2003, 4⁽¹¹⁾). Every second young Jordanian uses Internet, but there are only 5,3 computers for every 100 persons and 11,2 Internet users per 10 thousand inhabitants⁽¹²⁾. It means that they get online not only through home connections, but also in Internet cafes or at school. Youth is the dominant user of Internet. On the other hand, about every fifth of young Jordanians lack the possibility of using this medium as frequently as they would like to (UNICEF 2002).

Smoking is widespread as in many other Arab countries – both among adults and adolescents. Every third student (grade 8-10) has once smoked cigarettes and 22% are currently smoking (27% for males and 8% for females). What is more, further 21% of respondents admit that they consider initiating smoking in the next year. Smoking seems to be fashionable among some of the young people, as every third believes that smokers have more friends and look more attractive⁽¹³⁾. Use of alcohol is less prevalent in Jordan, as only every tenth young Jordanian (10-25) knows a peer who consumed alcohol. In the highest age group (20-25) the prevalence is 23%. Drug abuse is marginal, so is sniffing gas or glue (UNICEF 2002).

In spite of globalization and diffusion of Western culture and values, attitudes of young Jordanians towards the West ought to be presented. The great majority (87%) perceives the cultural invasion of the West as very serious⁽¹⁴⁾. At the same time young Jordanians see much more advantages of their own Arab and Islamic heritage than of the Western culture. About the latter they like mostly access to information. In their own culture they praise human relations, Islam's religious teachings and practices as well as respect for women's rights (UNICEF 2002). Of all the age groups young people (16-24) show least favourable attitudes toward Western countries, even though they differentiate between them. Less than every fifth young Jordanian likes the United States and the United Kingdom, while almost half of them express positive attitude toward France.

(10) 64,5% of older people (50+) go to religious service while 24,3% does not; WVS database for Jordan, 2001, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>.

(11) See also WVS database for Jordan (2001), <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.

(12) International Telecommunication Union, database for 2006, <http://www.itu.int>.

(13) Global Youth Tobacco Survey database, <http://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/gyts/en>.

(14) WVS database for Jordan (2001), <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>.

At the same time the youth (comparing to other age groups) knows best Western non-political figures, however two in three are unable to name even one Frenchman or American and 80% – a Briton (CSS 2005, 18-19, 40). Many of the interviewees stressed that young Jordanians can find the right balance between their own culture and the foreign one, however others also pointed at identity confusion that some of the young Jordanians are brought into. Another interesting insight is the growing economic gap that also has a visible cultural dimension⁽¹⁵⁾.

2.4. Young people's needs and challenges

The vast majority of stakeholders and young people interviewed unanimously identified unemployment as the biggest problem affecting the conditions of young people in Jordan. Some of them linked it to the general economic situation of the country – increasing prices and inflation that impact living standards of the society – but most interviewees focused on employment opportunities and cultural factors. An additional dimension of the employability challenge was raised by female focus group participants, who highlighted the gender issue. They referred to male dominance in senior positions as well as limited job opportunities and mobility that many females face. That in turn invoked ambivalent attitudes of male participants who either turned a blind eye or expressed their disagreement.

In terms of opportunities, the interviewees – especially those from the non-governmental sector – referred to the lack of transferability of education into employment skills⁽¹⁶⁾. Opinions on the educational system itself varied, with some stakeholders pointing out that it ranks among the top ones in Arab countries and others reflecting on the low quality of education – even if it is provided efficiently in quantitative terms. Many interviewees mentioned also the 'culture of shame' as a factor hampering economic development and leading to the increased unemployment. The concept refers to the fact that many Jordanians refuse to take low-skilled jobs or as a hired employee. The tribal system and extended families allow them to stay at home rather than perform a non-respectful job. This phenomenon is claimed to be unique for Jordan and explains the influx of unskilled immigrant labour force to the country.

Education does not translate into work opportunities, as the unemployment rate among university graduates is relatively high (UN 2007, 121). At the same time two in three young people, especially those from the north and central part of the country, have limited opportunities for getting higher education due to its high cost and/or family poverty (UNICEF 2002). Moreover, the education system retains inherited social inequalities in terms of access to higher education, but at the same time a university diploma does not provide young graduates with job prospects. Therefore the state's efforts put into improving the quality of education are ineffective in a sense that the expenses incurred on education do not transpose into economic growth. At the same time increased level of education raises the expectations of the new entrants, leading to a longer job search and higher unemployment (Assad, Amer 2008, VIII).

(15) Gini index for Jordan is still relatively low comparing to other countries in the world, but one of the highest among non-GCC Arab countries. In 2007 it was 38.8 (0 indicates equal income distribution, while 100 the opposite; see UNDP 2008).

(16) According to the Executive Opinion Survey carried out by World Economic Forum the quality of education in Jordan is believed to be rather high and meeting employers' expectations. Jordan scores above the world average in the quality of educational system and math and science education and around the average on quality of management schools and local availability of specialised research and training institutions (World Economic Forum 2007, 236-237).

To a great extent Jordan is affected by brain drain – similarly to the Maghreb countries, which have been known traditionally for a huge emigration outflow (WEF 2007, 248). Every third Jordanian emigrant is a legislator, senior official or manager, which shows the impact of the brain drain on the country (Fargues 2005, 384). Many male participants of the focus group expressed a will to emigrate from the country after graduation. Female focus group participants would also like to travel abroad, but only for leisure. None of the interviewees perceived brain drain as a problem for Jordanian economy. The country maintains an open door policy for the emigrants and benefits from the remittances (around 20% of the GDP; World Bank 2003, 236).

Two interviewees representing international organisations pointed to health being a serious challenge to young Jordanians. It refers to both the promotion of healthy lifestyles and to reproductive health. Especially the latter needs to be approached very carefully in conservative communities and is channelled through non-formal education settings. Another challenge identified was youth participation in decision making. Participation is a key challenge that young people face and a very complex and far-reaching one, as it refers both to the private and public spheres. As two of the interviewees stated, Jordan is a patriarchal and hierarchical society and decisions are usually taken top-down by elders. There is no tradition of listening to young people and taking their opinions into consideration. Young people are aware both on limitations and benefits of the family-centred system⁽¹⁷⁾. There are many initiatives aimed at raising awareness and enhancing active participation, but – as one of international organisation representatives stated - “the challenge is to have a meaning of participation”. The same observation is quoted in the report of the 2nd North Youth Report – decision-making process should go beyond attendance, be sustainable and effective (Mobaideen 2005, 20).

Interestingly some of the interviewees mentioned “particular cultural habits” that pose a key challenge to Jordanian youth. Apart from the culture of shame they referred to certain features of the most conservative parts of the society, sometimes being related to in terms of “cultivation” and “being civilised”. One of the fiercest focus group discussions evolved around the key issue: is it the cultural determinism or rather structural deprivation? Adherents to both opinions took strong positions, which may indicate the struggle between tradition and modernity that takes place at different levels of Jordanian society. Confusion of young people in terms of their identity was also mentioned by one of the youth workers interviewed – upholding the tradition and following globalisation seem to be hard to combine.

(17) For further information see e.g. (UNICEF 2007: 2).

3. STRUCTURAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE ASPECTS OF YOUTH POLICY

3.1 Provisions

The role of youth is stated in the fifth chapter of *the National Charter*: “Youth constitute both the future of society and its renewable human wealth. The state must draw up policies and national programmes aimed at harnessing the resources of the country’s youth, qualifying them for responsibility, productive work, innovation and creativity, protecting them from delinquency and directing their creative energies towards constructive development”. Jordanian legislation provides rules for social, political and economic participation of young people in the society. Some of the *age-related laws and regulations* (e.g. Penal Law, Personal Status Law) have been recently reformed, or are in the process of modification – most for the advantage of the youth.

Article 6 of the Jordanian Constitution states that: “the Government shall ensure work and education within the limits of its possibilities (...) to all Jordanians”. Moreover, “elementary education shall be compulsory for Jordanians and free of charge in Government schools” (Article 20). Education is compulsory for 10 years – from the age of 5 and 8 months to 16 (10 grades of primary school) and regulated by the Education Act no. 3 of 1994 (UNESCO 2006). The pressure put on education has been rewarded by the almost universal enrolment in primary education for both sexes and full completion rate of 100,3%⁽¹⁸⁾. It is worth mentioning that Jordan also took care of Iraqi refugee children, which have been allowed to go to Jordanian schools (WCRWC 2007, 9).

According to the Jordanian Constitution “special conditions shall be made for the employment of women and juveniles” (Article 23d). In 2001, the minimum working age was set at 18 by ratifying the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention no. 138⁽¹⁹⁾. On the other hand, Labour Law no. 8 from 1996 defines the minimum working age as 16. The discrepancy has been solved by allowing young people aged 16-18 to work with the permission of their parents (NCFA 2004, 15 and 54). Young people under 17 cannot work in hazardous conditions. Special conditions concerning employing minors include: at least one hour break after four hours of work and not more than 6 hours of work daily, no work after 8 o'clock in the evening or on weekends and holidays (Bitar 2004).

A person who reached 19 years of age is eligible for electing members of the House of Deputies according to the Law of Election to the House of Deputies no. 22 of 1986 (Article 3). In order to become a candidate one has to reach 30 years of age (Article 18). The Political Parties Law states that a person who completed 25 years of age can be a founding member of a political party (Article 5). In order to join a political party one has to be at least 18 (Article 16).

The minimal age to get married for females and males has been set at 18 by a way of amendment to the Personal Status Law, making it one of the highest in the Arab world⁽²⁰⁾. Until 2001 it was possible

(18) UN Statistics Division's Database, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd>.

(19) D. Dajani, Report outlines need to speed up legislative process to protect children's rights, “Jordan Times”, from: Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the United States, <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/07192005001.htm>, 19.06.2005.

(20) Still exceptions are allowed. If the judge believes that the couple fits well together and the husband is financially secure he can allow an underage marriage (Husseini 2008).

to marry by the age of 15 for a girl and 16 for a boy (World Bank 2005a, 112). As the marriage requires being registered and blessed by the spouses' parents or guardians, *urfi* marriage⁽²¹⁾ is illegal – though practised among some students; another marriage practice is *katib al-kitab*⁽²²⁾ (Almasarweh 2003, 5; Shepard, deJong 2005, 25). According to the Social Security Law no. 30 of 1978 sons under 18 are eligible for survivors pension, as well as daughters that are unmarried (the pension ceases upon marriage; Hijab, 18).

Minors are prohibited from purchasing and consuming tobacco (including waterpipe), alcohol and drugs and are subjected to a fine of 20 Jordanian Dinars (JOD)⁽²³⁾ in case of breaking this rule. A person who sells such products to minors might be subjected to a fine of 500 JOD or a jail sentence (UNICEF 2004). The military age for males is 17 and military service is voluntary. Women can also volunteer for non-combat positions⁽²⁴⁾.

According to the Passport Law young people over 16 can obtain a separate passport – before they are included in the passport of their father or mother. Daughters can obtain passports without the consent of their guardians after they reach 18 (Hijab, 12). A person aged 18 can apply for a driving licence.

As for the judiciary system, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 7, although juveniles under 12 are in principle not arrested, but subjected to supervision (UNICEF 1998, 4). Juvenile offenders are dealt with in the Penal Law of 2002; there is no separate judiciary system for them. Still, they are recognized as a separate category and treated differently, e.g. police shall inform the parents of the arrested child, it is not allowed to detain the offender over 48 hours without charging, and their sentences are recommended to be a third of what an adult person would receive for the same crime (Heimann 2006). Juveniles do not have their own court – their cases are handled by the Conciliation Court⁽²⁵⁾.

In 2005 a programme of complex reform of the juvenile justice was launched by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Wizarat al-Takhtit wa al-Ta'awun al-Dawli – MoPIC) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Other parties engaged in the project are UNDP, Ministry of Social Development (Wizarat al-Tanmiah al-Ijtima'ia – MoSD), Ministry of Justice (Wizarat al-Adl) and the Public Security Department (Mudiratu al-Aman al-'Am). The programme consists of two parts – strengthening legislative and institutional capacity of the juvenile justice system and strengthening the capacity of juvenile courts⁽²⁶⁾. As for 2007 the new law was still a draft. If passed, the age of legal responsibility will increase to 12 and there will be special courts for juvenile offenders and alternatives to jail sentences provided, e.g. community work⁽²⁷⁾.

(21) Customary, unregistered marriage.

(22) Cohabitation after having signed the contract, but before the marriage ceremony took place.

(23) 1 JOD is approximately 0,9 EURO.

(24) CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.

(25) Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, <http://www.jordanembassy.nl/news/2007/MAR/id120307c7.htm>, 12.03.2007.

(26) MoPIC, http://www.mop.gov.jo/pages.php?menu=id=113&local_type=1&local_id=84&local_details=1&local_details=1, 7.12.2005.

(27) Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, <http://www.jordanembassy.nl/news/2007/MAR/id120307c7.htm>, 12.03.2007.

3.2 Institutional approach to the Youth Sector

The *definition of youth* is outlined in the NYS for Jordan and comprises males and females between 12 to 30 years of age. The definition of youth is wide in order to cover the whole process of moving from childhood to adulthood. The Strategy recognizes different subgroups within these age brackets in regard to age (12-15, 16-18, 19-22 and 23-30), education, rural/urban lifestyle, employment status and position in family (children or parents themselves; NYS 3.1).

The Higher Council for Youth (Al-Majlis al-A'la lil Shabab - HCY) is designated as an *organ responsible for formulating and developing youth policy* in Jordan. Established, in 2001, instead of the Ministry for Youth, it is regulated by a special law (no. 56).

A UNICEF report refers to the former Ministry's lack of strategic and long-term planning, which combined with poor implementation patterns led to inefficient and fragmented youth policy. Moreover, it had rather moderate position in the Jordanian government and faced difficulties in coordinating youth-related projects and activities (Adas 2001). HCY was designed to overcome these challenges.

In addition to formulation and development of youth policy, the HCY also licences youth clubs and organisations, establishes youth centres and provides for both talented and disadvantaged youth. HCY enjoys a status of a ministry and its President is directly answerable to the Prime Minister, although he is not a member of the Cabinet. The President is appointed on a contract base, which makes his position stable and unaffected by shifts in the government⁽²⁸⁾. In order to increase the independency from the Ministry of Finance (Wizarat al-Maliyya - MoF), a National Youth and Sports Fund (Al-Sanduq al-Watani li Da'm al-Riyada wa al-Shabab – NYSF) was established with the aim of providing funds for youth development (UNDP 2002a, 3).

The HCY is the *main institution in charge of youth policy* in Jordan, whose obligation is also to draw and implement the policy in coordination with other relevant ministries and institutions. Moreover, it also collaborates with other non-governmental actors to ensure a multi-sectorial approach. Some issues fall into the responsibilities of other relevant institutions, according to their profile: MoE, Ministry of Health (Wizarat al-Sihha), Vocational Training Corporation (Mu'asasat al-Tadrib al-Mihani – VTC), linked to the Ministry of Labour (Wizarat al-Amal). Some other regulation seems to be fragmented – e.g. except for the HCY four other ministries can register NGOs (see section 4), as the main criteria is the organisation's profile. Also the EYP is linked to the Ministry of Political Development (Wizarat at-Tanmiyya as-Siyasiya – MoPD), even though its focus is youth. Youth policy itself is a cross-cutting issue, involving many actors aiming at increasing the opportunities of the youth as it became one of the nation's top priorities. Designation of the HCY as the organ in charge of this process would indicate centralisation. On the other hand, some of the interviewees pointed at the autonomy of other institutions in pursuing their own agenda in terms of carrying out these aspects of youth policy that fall into their responsibilities (see section 7 and below in regard to the NYS), which could indicate decentralisation.

The key document regulating youth issues in Jordan is the *National Youth Strategy* for 2005-2009 prepared jointly by the HCY, UNDP and UNICEF. It was endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministries and came out as a response to the directives of King Abdallah II. It provides a framework for developing a youth policy that fits the needs of young people and promotes their development. The vision of the NYS is to “raise and develop Jordanian young men and women who are aware of themselves and their abilities, loyal to their country and proactively take part in its progress and development, able to deal with the variables and developments of this age in a confident, aware and steadfast manner, within a secure and supporting environment” (NYS, 9).

The priorities identified in the NYS are: 1) participation, 2) civil rights and citizenship, 3) recreational activity and leisure time, 4) culture and information, 5) information technology and globalisation, 6) education and training, 7) employment, 8) health, 9) environment. Each one comprises a set of operational and strategic objectives. The key priority is youth and participation with a total budget of 1,8 million JOD of almost 6,5 million JOD allotted for implementation of the NYS. The steering committee is headed by the president of the HCY and has also representatives from UNDP, MoPIC and NYSF. The NYS is implemented by the HCY which is in charge of the overall coordination as well as evaluation, monitoring and review of the policy. The HCY collaborates with other Ministries, civil societies and young people (NYS 8.2).

Drafting of the final document had been preceded by 1,5 years of planning and preparations. In the formulation and design stage, the stakeholders fulfilled most of the criteria desired by the International Council on National Youth Policy (ICNYP) and other international institutions for creating a model, sustainable, long-term, pro-active and consensus-based policy. The Jordanian NYS has most of the crucial elements to be an effective tool for developing the capacities of young people. These were identified by the national youth survey conducted by UNICEF in 2001 encompassing the voices of over 7400 young people aged 10-24 and over 3300 of their parents. The NYS indicates young people as the most precious resource of the country, clearly defines the youth age group and has a clear vision and goals. It was designed to be a coherent, cross-sectorial and inter-ministerial policy, involving also non-governmental actors, including young people themselves.

Youth participation in designing the NYS was ensured by the Youth Voice Campaign. It included over 90.000 people of all backgrounds – pupils, parents, students, youth centre members, employed and unemployed young people, disadvantaged and gifted young people as well as volunteers (NYS, annex III). The campaign aimed at spreading information about the youth policy – its meaning and implications – and grasping their opinions and suggestions through thematic discussions and focus groups. Young people became actively involved in the formulation stage as one of the stakeholders and not merely an objective – which is a good indicator for an effective youth policy (UNESCO 2004a, 15). For the youth participation component, Jordan is quoted as a model of the best practice in the world in the ICNYP report (ICNYP 2005, 13).

The adoption and implementation stage faced several challenges, mostly related to the ineffective coordination. The NYS is expected to influence the strategy plans of other ministries but seems not to achieve this objective. Youth policy needs to be anchored in other ministries as well.

The NYS seems to be implemented by partner ministries as projects channelled by the HCY, which are separate from their own strategies and priorities (UNICEF 2007, 31). However, it also resulted in increased activities of other ministries responsible for youth, though these are small projects rather than a long-term, comprehensive, joint action plan. There was so far no comprehensive evaluation of the NYS – as one of the relevant stakeholders noticed.

During the last three decades the government has been spending on human development 25% of the GDP, including 5% on education and 9% on health – much more than in comparative middle-income countries (UNESCO 2008, 6; World Bank 2005, xi). The investments bore fruit as Jordan has the highest Human Development Index of all non-GCC Arab countries except for Libya⁽²⁹⁾. It has achieved almost universal literacy, enrolment in primary education, access to improved sanitation and water source, and is going to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals. The role of human capital is often underlined by King Abdallah II and fits into his vision of Jordan becoming a role model for human development and knowledge-based economy for the Middle East.

Youth-related expenses constitute 6,3% of the expenses foreseen within the executive programme of the National Agenda for 2007-2009 in the Education, Higher Education and Scientific Pillar, which is 19 million JOD. Total expenditure on this pillar amounts to 285 million JOD which is 11% in the whole executive programme and the third most important category. Enhancing the infrastructure for youth activities (establishing and modernising youth centres and sport complexes) will cost over 11 million JOD, for bringing up and developing youth capable of responding to modern changes (including civic education, ICT, empowering youth to enter labour force) over 7 million JOD was allotted. All the activities will be implemented by the HCY (MoPIC 2005, 115-116). The main funding source of the NYSF – apart from the budgetary allocation of the MoF – is the governmental tax on tobacco and spirits (UNDP 2002a, 3). The budget of the NYSF amounted to 8 million JOD and of the HCY – 23 million JOD, approximately the same as the budget of Radio and Television Corporation or Amman Stock Exchange (GBD 2007). Comparing, the estimated public expenditure of the MoE and Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Wizarat al-Ta'leem al-'Ali wal-Bahath al-'Alami) is respectively 460 and 28 million JOD (GDB 2007a).

As IGOs are to a great extent involved in the youth sector in Jordan, it is sometimes hard to differentiate which of *the programmes and measures* fall under the state activity and which are to be attributed to other actors' initiatives. IGOs are also involved in the key reforms in the youth sector (Education Reform for Knowledge Economy (Mashru' al-Tatweer al-Tarbawi nahw al-Iqtisad al-Ma'rifi – ERfKE)). Still there are some initiatives for the sake of young people that to a significant extent involve state authorities⁽³⁰⁾.

In the field of education the most important long-term project is the ERfKE. It provides young people with opportunities of using IT at schools and prepares them for entering the labour market in terms of their skills⁽³¹⁾. Jordan is in a process of curricula reform that covers existing subjects (Arabic, English, math, science) and aims at introducing new IT-related ones such as Information Management in secondary schools. The new curricula ought to be more skills-oriented and fit for

(29) One has to bear in mind that this is an average value for the whole country, while regional differences may provide different sub-pictures for more see: (UNDP 2004, 27).

(30) Actions aiming at increasing participation of young people involving institutional actors are presented elsewhere (see: 3.3), so is the support and role of international actors (see: 6).

(31) ESP Jordan, <http://www.esp-jordan.org/Home/index.aspx>.

the needs of labour market. It puts emphasis on active rather than passive learning. A significant aspect of the reform is spreading IT by providing computers and Internet to schools (World Bank 2005a, 183). English lessons have been introduced to school curriculum from the first grade (UNDP 2003, 54). Education subsidies should also be mentioned. However, at the basic level they are pro-poor, but at the tertiary level pro-rich. This pattern reflects the assumption that poor students are more likely to drop out earlier, but at the same time it seems to support at the university those who would have afforded it anyway (Iqbal 2006, 40).

There are also measures aiming at raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and health in general. Jordanian government is committed to combating HIV/AIDS through a HIV/AIDS Action Framework and National AIDS Strategy. The budget for this action amounts to 2,7 million USD (Qatamish & Jaradat 2008, 9). With the help of UNESCO a great variety of activities aiming at raising awareness of reproductive and sexual health was conducted, including resource manuals, training workshops and youth peer-to-peer manual on reproductive health. Schools are coming across smoking habit among the adolescent. According to the Global Youth Tobacco Survey, two in five young Jordanians have been taught the effects of tobacco use, dangers of smoking and discussed the reasons why young people smoke⁽³²⁾.

Some of the programmes focus on young people who are not in the educational system. This in particular includes vocational training. The main institutional provider is the VTC. It has 47 vocational training centres, including 6 for trainees with special needs. The vocational education training system is centralised and communication with the private sector is limited (ETF 2006, 70), however the VTC is conducting yearly surveys, which identify the needs of the market (tourism and construction for the 2008)⁽³³⁾. Significant challenges to Jordanian vocational education – identified by international organisation representatives – include: improving the accessibility for female trainees (in terms of mobility)⁽³⁴⁾ and improving the image of the vocational education.

A significant provider of programmes and measures in support of young people are also Royal NGOs (so called RINGOs). Due to their nature these organisations cannot be easily classified either as state structures or NGOs, as they are a mixture of both. However, in relevant literature (e.g. Loewe 2004) they are referred to as organisations and put into the NGO sector. Also they tend to perceive themselves as organisations rather than state actors. Therefore, their activity will be presented in section 4.

3.3 Non-formal education and youth work

The role of non-formal education is acknowledged in two youth-related documents, but it seems that the non-governmental sector is the main provider. The reform of the Jordanian education system (ERfKE) focuses among others on informal education programmes and provision of lifelong learning opportunities. Informal education is to be implemented through development of informal education curricula and textbooks as well as staff training (UNDAF 2007, 8). Non-formal education is also mentioned in one of the NYS objectives, but is understood as community service, sports and hobbies (NYS 7.3).

(32) Global Youth Tobacco Survey database, <http://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/gyts/en/>.

(33) Information from relevant representatives.

(34) According to the 2006 Annual report (VTC 2006, 132) over 7,5 thousand trainees graduated, but females constituted barely 1,5. It might, however, also be attributed to lesser availability of vocational training programs, more limited opportunities for females to work in vocational professions.

The most important state resource for non-formal education activities are youth centres. First youth centres were established in the 60s and served as a significant leisure time activities provider. In late 90s there were around 20 thousand youth centre members, but they served a much larger number of young people – mostly older males and youth with no education or vocational training. The attendance rate is rather low – not even 2% of young people mention youth centres/clubs as their preferred way of spending free time (UNICEF 2002). According to a study conducted by UNICEF in 2001, there are several factors that might explain the low attendance, including the lack of training opportunities for the staff and its low quality, weak management, poor facilities and weak infrastructure. The last also refers to poor accessibility of many youth centres and poses a significant problem especially for females, whose mobility is limited comparing to their male counterparts. Youth centre members expressed the need to broaden the centre's offer, including more outdoor activities (for boys), music (for girls) and computers (Adas 2001).

There were 74 youth centres, 6 sport cities and 14 sport complexes in the whole country managed by the HCY in 2007. The number of youth centres is to be increased by 11 till 2009. Efforts are also put in qualitative terms by means of equipping them and computerising. There are also 50 Community Development Centres managed by Jordan Hashemite Fund for Development (Al-Sunduq al-Hashimi al-Urduni JOHUD) and Youth Committees in municipalities run by All Jordan Youth Commission (Hay'at Shabab Kullina al-Urdun – AJYC). The HCY is, therefore, not the sole provider of youth centres in the country, even though the two other institutions are also related to the state.

Several actions were undertaken in order to improve the conditions and facilities of the youth centres. In collaboration with UNICEF the HCY implemented a youth centres' pilot reform in 6 centres in the Kingdom. It included promotion of participation and team work, introduction of peer-to-peer approach, youth-led initiatives and alternative activities, training for staff members and providing suitable environment for the youth centres by working with the parents and directing the centres towards communities they serve (UNICEF 2006, 1). Also USAID is involved in establishing user-friendly youth centres and equipping them with facilities (25 youth centres so far). Despite these efforts still a lot of work has to be done in order to improve the access to the youth facilities, both in terms of transport (weak public transportation system) and membership fee (for some sports clubs). Jordanian cities often lack public areas like parks or playing fields and even if there are any, they do not provide safe environment for children and are far from their homes⁽³⁵⁾.

Youth work training is provided in different forms – as training for trainers, facilitators and peer educators. Some of the training activities are available within the ERfKE project. Even though most of the training targets teachers, ERfKE includes also training of trainers. Youth centres are also a provider of youth work training. The reform of youth centres introduced by the HCY and UNICEF encompasses training for trainers and peer educators. The topics range includes basic life skills, healthy lifestyle and participation (UNICEF 2006, 2)⁽³⁶⁾.

Some youth work training has been provided as a part of larger national strategies. One of the examples might be the National AIDS Strategy, part of which has been a series of peer education activities among university students and NGO workers – many of them introduced theatre-based techniques, training of

(35) Information and suggestions from focus group participants.

(36) On the other hand staff of youth centres often complained about the lack of training opportunities for themselves – especially pre-service training (Widad 2001).

trainers for youth workers and peer educators. Most of these activities were conducted with the support of USAID; other actors include HCY, VTC, UNICEF, Queen Zein Al-Sharaf Institute for Development (Ma'had al-Malika Zain Al-Sharaf al-Tamawi – ZENID), Child Protection Society, Community Development Committees and NGOs (Qatamish & Jaradat 2008, 24-25). Many of these activities are based on non-formal education methods. Sometimes it proves to be the best way to address certain issues which could be otherwise unacceptable or skipped in formal educational settings. This includes reproductive health, which is hard to tackle especially in the more conservative areas of Jordan.

Active participation of young Jordanians became one of the key priorities of the NYS. The first theme outlined in the NYS focuses on “creation of a safe and conducive environment for young women and men to participate fully in all the fields of national activities” (NYS, 7.1). Participation is meant broadly in regard to the economic, political and cultural sphere as well as to the community life. The need of increasing participation was raised by young people in the UNICEF background report for the NYS – around 85% of young people believed that youth should participate more actively in the decisions that affect them at home and at school, around 80% - at work and in the local community (2002). Young people also express a strong interest in youth issues (Mouwad 2007, 15).

There are also programmes and activities aimed at promoting active participation in the public sphere, especially in politics. Activities aimed at raising political awareness have a relative long history. In 1997 Children's Parliament was established with support of UNICEF⁽³⁷⁾; there is also a Children Municipal Council of Greater Amman, which has been initiated by the Executive Agency for a Child Friendly City⁽³⁸⁾. The Municipality is establishing and running community centres equipped with facilities such as library, IT lab and a sports field, as well as children centres (for multiple activities). It is responsible for the organisation of festivals and other events that target young people⁽³⁹⁾. One of the first national youth meetings, with over 100 participants from all over the country, was organised in 2000 by “New Jordan” centre and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), under the patronage of Queen Rania Al-Abdallah (Abandah & Abbadi 2004, 46). Young people participated also in the preparation of the NYS by means of the Youth Voice Campaign. There were also three attempts to establish youth parliaments, however most of the interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with this process in terms of selecting members, scheduling meetings and decision-making.

An important initiative fostering youth participation in parliamentary elections was the Sharik Campaign organised by MoPD, HCY and Jordan Youth Forum (Minbar al-Shabab al-Urduni – JYF) for the 2007 elections. The campaign was launched by the Minister of Political Development and reached all governorates⁽⁴⁰⁾. Other initiatives currently being adopted by the MoPD include Democratic Dialogue Forums encouraging youth in political parties, and establishing a Jordanian Democratic Institute, which builds the capabilities of youth as citizens⁽⁴¹⁾.

Young people consider student councils as a tool to make their voices heard and a way to communicate with the school bodies. At the same time they point that they need to be activated (UNICEF 2007, 3-4).

(37) D. Charkasi, Jordanian Children's Parliament seeks political support, financial independence, „Jordan Times”, 31/07/1999, <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/073199003.htm>.

(38) Amman shortlisted for world leadership award in town planning, „Albawaba”, 6/12/2007, <http://www.albawaba.com/en/countries/jordan/219697>.

(39) Information from the RCBS short-term expert.

(40) Information from relevant representatives and from an article Parliament watch, „Jordan Times” 16/11/2007 – <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/newsarchive/2007/11627002.htm>.

(41) Information from the ministry representative.

UNICEF is working with the MoE to increase their participation in the schooling system⁽⁴²⁾. According to the UNICEF youth survey, around 13% of 10-14 year-olds and 8% of 15-19 year-olds are members of student councils (2002). There is however an important point in the election process within some of the student councils – for instance at the University of Jordan half of the student councils are appointed, which casts doubts on the concept of democracy (Mouawad 2007, 11).

A lot of attention is given to the idea of *volunteering* in contemporary Jordan. Voluntary work is mentioned in the National Charter: “Voluntary work must be based on the concept of national commitment and social partnership. Attention must be paid to the establishment of voluntary societies and clubs and providing them with incentives conducive to effective participation, to strengthening the positive values of Jordanian society and to rejuvenating the Arab and Islamic traditions of partnership, amity and altruism” (chapter 5, point 10) and in the NYS. Volunteering has been stressed by the Royal Family. King Abdallah II highlighted the idea of strengthening the culture of volunteerism among young people during the closing ceremony of the first youth commission “We are All Jordan”⁽⁴³⁾. According to information obtained from two international organisations’ representatives, there is an idea to establish a Youth Volunteer Programme/Service and it is currently being drawn up by the government and other relevant parties. Once the programme is reinforced, it should provide a framework for the voluntary service. Moreover, some universities launched a compulsory community service programme, which is a part of graduation requirements .

The accessibility to information depends to a big extent on whether a young person is a beneficiary of a project or wants to contribute to a project or organisation. From the information obtained from the interviews and focus groups, it seems that being targeted is easier than becoming, for example, a NGO member. The most vulnerable groups are targeted by the organisations that provide them with necessary training and support. Governmental entities use the networks of schools, universities and youth centres in order to spread relevant information. Still, they can reach only those young people who are motivated to search for the opportunities on the spot or are informed about them by relevant authorities.

(42) Information obtained from the relevant IGO representative.

(43) Institutionalising youth work is a must – King, Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Hague – NL, <http://www.jordanembassy.nl/news/2007/SEP/id170907c1.htm>, 17/09/2007.

(44) Information obtained from the RCBS short-term expert, see also: (Farawati 1999).

4. THE YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS AND NGOs DEALING WITH YOUTH

Jordan has a relatively long history of civil societies. However, rapid development of the NGO sector can be traced back to the early 90s. It was caused by economic recession and political liberalisation. The combination of these two factors triggered off public discussion on the role of the state in social development, while NGOs started to overtake some of its responsibilities. On the other hand, the liberalisation succeeded in establishing cultural and social organisations, while exposure to global trends led to introducing NGOs focusing on public issues (human rights, gender equality) and using new methods and tools (Harmsen 2008, 158-159). Through grants and project proposals Jordanian NGOs could also apply for international funding, which does not have to be channelled only through the state.

According to the Constitution (Article 16), Jordanians have the right to hold meetings and establish societies and political parties within the limits of the law. *Establishment of societies* and political parties is regulated by law. Jordan has enacted Law no. 33 on Associations and Foundations in 1966, stating that Jordanians have the right to form civic organizations. However, they may not engage in religious, sectarian or political activities. The Ministry of Social Affairs (currently the MoSD) may monitor the meetings and activities of associations and has a right to dissolve them upon a reason (Harmsen 2008, 154). Despite these regulations, according to the UNDP's Programme on Governance in the Arab World (POGAR) civil societies in Jordan enjoy very favourable conditions⁽⁴⁵⁾. In the Freedom House survey of 2007 Jordan scored 5 points (out of 12) in associational and organisational rights. Only four Arab countries had higher scores, and none exceeded 8 points⁽⁴⁶⁾. Jordanian policy in terms of establishing youth organisations is believed to be one of the most progressive and proactive in the region (INJEP, 9)⁽⁴⁷⁾.

In 1992, there were 587 civil societies registered in Jordan (UNDP 2002, 161), 1500 in 2003 (UNDP 2003, 133) and currently around 3700. It is hard to estimate their number due to two main reasons⁽⁴⁸⁾: they are registered under different governmental bodies⁽⁴⁹⁾ and many are not registered but rather have a status of a civil society or non-profit companies. Moreover, many of the registered entities are not active. As for their profile, some of them are youth-focused, but the range varies depending on funding opportunities and on the definition adopted. Still, no relevant data is available, which was also confirmed by several interviewees.

(45) See: UNDP-POGAR, <http://www.undp-pogar.org/countries/country.asp?cid=7>.

(46) Freedom in the World 2007, Subscores, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=372@year=2007>.

(47) Some challenges however still persist – see (Harmsen 2008, 163).

(48) Information obtained from the RCBS short-term expert.

(49) These include: MoSD, Ministry of Culture (Wizarat al-Thaqafa - MoC) thereafter referred to as MoC, Ministry of Interior (Wizarat al-Dakhliyah), Ministry of Trade and Industry (Wizara al-Sina'a wa-l-Tijara; for non-profit companies) and the HCY. Current law (Societies and Social Institutions Act No. 33 from 1966) is being modified so that all NGOs will be organized under the MoSD only (Information obtained from: ibidem).

What can be done in order to have a better overview on the youth NGO sector in Jordan is to classify them. Similar to other Arab countries there are five main types of NGOs⁽⁵⁰⁾, which to bigger or lesser extent can be regarded as youth NGOs:

- RINGOs are the biggest and best known organisations established by a royal decree, but not directly linked to the government, as they have separate institutions and budget. RINGOs are to some extent dependent on the Royal Family and often headed or established by its the members e.g. Jordan River Foundation (Mu'asasat Nahr al-Urdun – JRF) headed by Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, JOHUD headed by Princess Basma bint Talal, Queen Noor al-Husein Foundation, El-Hassan Youth Award (Ja'izat al-Hasan lil-shabab) established by Prince Hassan bin Talal⁽⁵¹⁾. Many of them are solid, have good management skills and are good partners for international and national donors.
- Secular, national NGOs – usually smaller, often with limited resources (both human and financial), grass-roots initiatives, focusing on youth or including it as one of the target groups. Many of these organisations are active in the EMYP (e.g. Friends of Culture Jordanian Forum, Youth Spirit Centre, Jordan Youth Exchange Group). There are also a number of civil societies and non-formal groups, which are not registered, but still active - e.g. Hannouneh Society for Popular Culture (Jami'at al-Hannunah li-al-Thaqafa al-Sha'abiya), Free Thought Forum (Muntada al-Fikr al-Hurr – FTF).
- International organisations – this category is comprised of two types: one are the branches of international NGOs focused on providing children and young people with support (e.g. SC, Questscope) – even if they are not youth NGOs, they are often managed by young people. The second category includes Jordanian branches of international youth organisations or regional ones such as Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) or Arab Education Forum (Al-Multaqa al-Tarbawi al-Arabi – AEF).
- Religious, charitable organisations – they are usually community-based and active on local level, providing most vulnerable social groups. Even if they target and involve young people (e.g. by running youth centres or out-of-school activities) they do not classify as youth organisations. There is, however, an increased interest in Muslim youth movements (Sparre & Petersen 2007, 14). Some of these organisations are also involved in defending students' rights (Mouwad 2007, 12).

Youth NGOs in Jordan are active in a wide range of fields, which can be grouped into three categories⁽⁵²⁾:

- Performing basic services – this group is the biggest, comprising mostly non-formal education programmes for most vulnerable children and young people (e.g. Questscope, SC, PBYRC) and their capacity building,
- Organising the community – through fostering the idea of volunteering and community service (e.g. El Hassan Youth Award, AJYC),

(50) This classification is based on the one of (Loewe 2004, 231).

(51) For a critical approach to the RINGOs see: A. Abdalla 2000.

(52) Classification after: (Milani 2005, 31).

- Lobbying and advocacy – which is relatively limited as the Law no. 33 of 1966 that regulates associations reduces their possibilities of engaging in any politics-related action (Denoeux 2005, 78). However, advocacy can also be understood in a wider way as promotion of active participation and raising awareness among citizens and then some youth NGOs can also be qualified (e.g. AYJC, FTF).

Selected examples of best practices from each category will follow.

Non-profit youth sector is supported in several ways. First of all, it enjoys the attention of the King and the Royal Family, who not only give a push for a better understanding and promotion of activities that benefit young people, but also motivate people who provide them. The vast majority of NGO workers indicated the Royal support of their work. This positive attention translates into readiness of governmental entities to consider and support youth initiatives. As a ministry official declared: “the ministry maintains an open-door policy and has never turned down an offer from youth”. The youth sector can also benefit from international funds available in Jordan. Making youth one of the key priorities has channelled donors’ attention to youth projects. Some funding is available on a call of proposals’ basis (e.g. EMYP, Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF), while other donors rather await project initiatives (e.g. KAS, UNICEF). These developments provide people involved in the youth sector with opportunities, but there are also challenges they have to face. At the same time many youth NGOs have to cope with challenges – depending on their size, scope and field of interest (see section 7).

There are no federations of NGOs *sensu stricto*, but rather networks of NGOs. One is JYF, founded with the support of KAS, which is an umbrella organisation comprising about 40 associations and over 300 volunteers from Jordan. In 2004, it evolved into the National Forum for Youth and Culture (Al-Muntada al-Watani li-Shabab wa-Thaqafa) which was registered with MoC. The Forum offers to the associations a possibility of networking, provides information on local and international conferences, training courses, sport and cultural activities and youth exchanges – both at national and international level⁽⁵³⁾. Another one is the AJYC, which also is not a federation of organisations itself, but through its local offices and number of members (over dozen hundred) it may be regarded as quasi-network.

As the NGOs youth sector is flourishing there are many *examples of good practice* to be named. They will provide insights not only into solutions and applications that the organisations came up with, but also into the problems that they deal with and try to get across. Three core areas have been identified: non-formal education, volunteering and community service, and promotion of active participation.

Non-formal education⁽⁵⁴⁾ is an important tool for the benefit of the most vulnerable social categories

(53) JYF website – <http://www.jordanyouth.org>.

(54) The list of Jordanian NGOs using non-formal education methods is long (see e.g. Arab Youth Directory, <http://www.escwa.un.org/ayd/>) and only one of the organisations which participated in the questionnaire stated that it does not use non-formal education (due to structural reasons). This might indicate that the delivery of the non-formal education is fragmented and includes too many players and providers (UNESCO 2008, 6). Worth further investigation is also the question of whether non-formal education is just a trendy concept, or is also applied properly in terms of methodology used and types of activities.

like young refugees, children from dysfunctional families, and working children⁽⁵⁵⁾. Even though most of the programmes focus on children, many have also a youth section. Questscope for Social Development in the Middle East launched in 2005 a non-formal education project for education drop-outs. It provides young people (13-20) not only with education but also life skills and personal development. As most of the targeted young people work, classes and courses take place at set times, so that they do not intervene with their duties. After 24 months of education participants are allowed to enrol in a vocational training. Currently the programme targets around 1000 participants yearly⁽⁵⁶⁾.

SC, an international NGO, launched in 2007 a Ta'leem Emergency Education Program that benefits Iraqi children and young people. It supports Iraqi children in school education and when it is not possible, provides them with a non-formal equivalent. Part of the programme is designed for Iraqi youth and aims at developing practical skills such as foreign language, physical education and informational technology courses – also often using non-formal methods⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Another significant non-formal education provider is PBYRC, which aims in particular at enhancing young people's participation. Some of their projects include basic life skills programme (communication skills, dealing with diversity, problem solving, stress management, healthy lifestyles, facilitation skills), youth-led initiatives component, Netcorps (focused on IT skills) and Creative Realities: A'lami (photography training)⁽⁵⁸⁾. In East Amman PBYRC developed an Intel Computer Clubhouse which provides underprivileged youth with access to technology and ability to learn IT skills and use it in artwork.

NGOs, therefore, focus their non-formal education activities on capacity building and personal development (active participation, decision-making, communication, etc.). This way young participants may become more self-aware and self-confident, knowing how to express their views and opinions. This was one of the observations from the active participation workshop carried out by SC for adolescents from one of disadvantaged districts of Amman. Most of the participants had clear set goals for their future, knew what they were going to be in the future and spent their time in an active way.

The tradition of voluntarism is long-standing, reaching back to the 1920s⁽⁵⁹⁾. There are several programmes that enhance the idea of voluntarism among young people. One of the interesting and pioneering examples is the El-Hassan Youth Award, which provides young people with skills, physical exercise, but also possibilities of community work and carrying out residential projects. This way they contribute to a positive change in their communities and learn the importance of team and voluntary work. Last year 3500 young people took part in the programme⁽⁶⁰⁾. Community service and youth service is also a part of Rotaract Club activities – many focusing on orphans, children and disadvantaged people⁽⁶¹⁾.

(55) The success of these initiatives also depends on parents' involvement. Most of the organisations managed to engage parents in their activities or invite them to pass by and see. In some cases the parents were sceptical about the project, but most of their doubts vanished as soon as they got to know the program and the organisers. It refers in particular to young females whose participation is often hindered by limited mobility and social rules.

(56) Information from the Questscope website - <http://www.questscope.org> – and relevant representative.

(57) Information from SC website – <http://www.savethechildren.org/countries/middle-east-eurasia/jordan.html> - and observation.

Many NGOs foster active participation of young people at the community level, but also in politics and economy. Civic participation programmes are run among others by the PBYRC and AJYC. Both organisations support local initiatives of young people and help them to get in touch with relevant decision-makers. One of the results was establishing a factory in order to provide employment for 300 women from Ma'an. The project idea was developed by the young people themselves, while AJYC helped them in its conceptualisation and linked to the private sector and relevant decision-makers. Moreover, PBYRC launched a project called the Community Youth Mapping. Young people from all over the country identify and document youth-friendly facilities and services. This way they are engaged in delivering information and at the same time they can benefit from it⁽⁶²⁾. A similar project is carried out by the AJYC – they have engaged 100 teams that study their local environment and prepare an info-base⁽⁶³⁾.

Some organisations focus on increasing participation of young people in economic life. Interesting programmes targeting students and recent graduates provide two NGOs: Injaz and Business Development Center (Markaz Tatweer al-A'mal – BDC) . Both launch internship programmes (summer camps or enriched by training courses) and job fairs. Moreover, Injaz offers a 'Career Month' for 9-10th grade school students and a job-shadowing programme, while BDC developed a Pioneers project for recent graduates, equipping them with new skills (HR, consumer relations, PR) responding to market needs⁽⁶⁴⁾. Other organisations focus on unprivileged people – Questscope on school drop-outs and JRF on women through an income-generating handicraft project.

AJYC developed some programmes, such as the 'shadowing' programme for young people, who can observe the work of the parliament, municipalities and private sector companies, and a Debate Club Initiative aimed at learning how to discuss and debate on very sensitive topics⁽⁶⁵⁾. In order to foster political participation AJYC launched a *Sajel* campaign aimed at increasing the registration for municipality elections among young people. Still, despite some relative success, the turnout in the elections was below the national average (34% for parliamentary and 39% for municipal elections; JCSR 2008, 16).

(58) Information from the website - <http://www.zenid.org.jo/pbyrc.htm> - and RINGO representative.

(59) The first voluntary association was established in the times of the Ottoman Empire in 1912 by the Greek Orthodox community. At that time voluntary associations were exclusively limited to ethnic and religious minorities willing to provide their communities. By the end of the 40s the voluntary welfare service had increased by the influx of Palestinian refugees to the country, which resulted in establishing a Ministry of Social Affairs in order to supervise and regulate voluntary work (Harmsen 2008, 151).

(60) Information obtained from the program booklet and organisation's representative.

(61) A overview of their activities is available at Rotary International webpage: <http://www.rotaract2450.org/DistrictCountries/Jordan/tabid/78/Default.aspx>.

(62) PBYRC website <http://www.zenid.org.jo/pbyrc.htm> and information from the relevant representative.

(63) Information from the relevant representative.

(64) Information from BDC representative and from the Injaz website: <http://www.injaz.org.jo>.

(65) Information from relevant representative.

5. THE EUROMED YOUTH PROGRAMME

Jordan has a relatively long tradition of participation in the EMYP. Previously the EMYP was managed by the HCY, but currently it is implemented by the MoPD. During the current phase III of the Programme, two calls for proposals were launched (both in 2007) resulting in 17 and 9 projects submitted, out of which 3 from each call were funded. The EMYP added a new dimension in the debates on the youth policy in Jordan (EC 2001, 44). *It influenced the regulations on establishing youth organisations and the methodology of working with young people in terms of introducing non-formal education. Some of the new-established NGOs were a direct result of the EMYP, as their mission fit the objectives of the Programme*⁽⁶⁶⁾.

During the previous phases of the Programme, a great deal of effort was put by the former Jordanian National Coordinator into facilitating the access to funding, e.g. by translating the application form and guide into Arabic, enhancing the quality of projects submitted and promotion of the Programme itself (EC 2001, 21 and 26). The EMYP had also wide media coverage and around 500 organisations were contacted. Despite these efforts the visibility of the EMYP seems to be low and limited to actors who are focused on the Euro-Mediterranean region. Many of the stakeholders interviewed and young people themselves were not aware of its existence, or just had heard the name. The best known feature of the EMYP is youth exchanges – other types of actions were barely mentioned both by people interviewed and in the questionnaires. However, according to the mid-term assessment of the EMYP for 2001-2003, Jordan was one of the most active actors in youth exchanges and support measures among the Mediterranean countries (EC 2004, 50)⁽⁶⁷⁾.

The idea of EVS is becoming more popular, even though the concept is relatively new. There were, and are, Jordanian volunteers going to hosting organisations in the EU countries such as Greece, Germany, Bulgaria, Lithuania and France. EVS provides young people not only with a possibility to live and work in a different country, but also with capacity building. For instance, one of the volunteers is involved in a water project as it is one of the most important issues in her home country.

An important issue raised by many NGO members actively involved in the EMYP is visa requirements. Complicated and prolonged procedures for obtaining visas to the EU countries sometimes limit their opportunities to participate in training seminars; they also might discourage the EU NGOs from inviting them for a youth exchange or EVS.

An important issue arose from juxtaposing the actual situation of the Euromed Youth Unit (EMYU) and the way it is perceived by some of the NGO members involved in the EMYP. Often the EMYU in Jordan is not informed by National Agencies about the fact that Jordanian participants were selected for an EVS, training or seminar. Therefore, it is often not able to meet them, support and help them in preparations – unless contacted directly. At the same time some of the participants considered it strange and seemed to attribute it to the lack of will or interest to get in touch with them rather than lack of information.

(66) Interview with a NGO representative, well-exposed to the EMYP.

(67) An Inter-religious Dialogue Training Seminar took place in Amman in summer 2008 as a joint initiative of the SALTO EuroMed Resource Centre and the Jordanian Euromed Youth Unit – see: <http://www.salto-youth.net/eminterreligiousdialogue>.

6. OTHER YOUTH SUPPORT MECHANISMS

There are two ways in which international organisations can contribute to youth development in Jordan. One is through funding projects and providing grant opportunities, and the other – through influencing the policy. In many cases international stakeholders combine these two methods.

The first one is much more visible, as Jordan heavily relies on foreign assistance, which for the last few years has been exceeding 600 million USD. In 2007 foreign assistance committed by donors and financing institutions amounted to 680 million USD, of which 470 million were grants and 210 million soft loans. The biggest donor is the USA, which contributed 38% of the whole amount, the second biggest the European Union and individual European states (together 31%). Over a tenth of the assistance was directed into education and vocational training (MoPIC 2008, 2-3). In the Jordanian budget for 2008 foreign grants constitute around 10% of total public revenues (GBD 2007b).

International actors provide significant funding for major projects and contribute to their design and implementation. In the case of the NYS, it was the UN agencies and UNICEF contributing to the reproductive health programme and sports. The major donors for another major youth-oriented project – ERfKE – include the World Bank, international banks and USAID. The latter supports the reform by applying additional components focused on employability skills of young Jordanians⁽⁶⁸⁾. Other youth-oriented projects supported by international donors include: 6,63 million USD received in 2003-2007 from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria – 5,55 million for AIDS/HIV and 1,01 million for tuberculosis⁽⁶⁹⁾; reform of the juvenile justice system for which UNICEF and the Swedish International Development Agency provided 120 thousand USD⁽⁷⁰⁾.

Sometimes the impact on the policy level is more visible and telling than the financial input. For instance, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and UNICEF agreed to provide 129 million USD to enable access to education for 50 thousand refugee children in Jordan (and 1000 in Syria), but the government needed to allow these children to enrol in Jordanian schools (WCRWC 2007, 9). Another result of a policy dialogue between UNICEF and MoE was including life skills based education into the school curricula. In regard to the HCY and the NYS, UNICEF ensured that young people participate in the designing process and prepare the core background to the youth survey. Another international actor, Questscope, agreed with the MoE and VTC on enrolling its participants in vocational education after just 24 months of education (which equals the 10th grade). At the same time the government maintains the leading role in setting the priorities. Training is also provided in collaboration with international organisations – including US-based Interfaith Youth Core (training for faith leaders for interfaith youth service and interreligious dialogue⁽⁷¹⁾), or SALTO EuroMed Resource Centre (e.g. Training of Jordanian Multipliers⁽⁷²⁾).

(68) ESP Jordan, <http://www.esp-jordan.org>.

(69) The Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, <http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/>.

(70) MoPIC, http://www.mop.gov.jo/pages.php?menu=id=113&local_type=1&local_id=84&local_details=1&local_details=1, 7.12.2005

(71) IFYC website - <http://www.ifyc.org/>.

(72) SALTO - Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the European YOUTH programme. SALTO EuroMed Resource Centre is one of 8 resource centers and supports cooperation between European and Mediterranean countries – see: <http://www.salto-youth.net/euromed/>.

There are also other international actors which provide funding opportunities, but they channel it directly to the applying organisations. One of them is Community Youth Development Initiative – Naseej – which provides grants for youth groups and local NGOs working with youth. Last year it received around 200 proposals from Jordan (and further 500 from other 4 countries targeted by the programme). Moreover, it provides the guarantees with support they need in order to implement the project according to the Community Youth Development programme objectives as well as orientation sessions. It is managed by SC and funded by the Ford Foundation⁽⁷³⁾. Another one is the ALF whose local network in Jordan comprises 30 organisations. Jordanian members took part in 17 projects funded by ALF – some of them, like “Rainbow of Music” (2006), were led by Jordanian NGOs.

7. PERCEPTION OF THE ACTORS

During the field visit the most intense discussions evolved around two issues. One of them referred to the youth policy and the institutional approach, with the role of HCY and the NYS being in the core. As most young people were not familiar with youth policy, their views are presented below through the views of decision-makers and of some of the youth leaders, who had enough interest and experience to follow youth issues also at the policy level. The second issue tackled the role and challenges of the NGO sector, the views on which are presented below not only through the insights of youth leaders and NGO workers, but also of young people themselves, who often find the NGO environment not inclusive enough.

As mentioned, *the level of awareness about the NYS and youth policy* as such among focus groups' participants and organisations, not particularly targeting youth, is relatively low. It does not have to put the youth policy in a bad light, as long as it is managed efficiently and for the benefit of its addressees. What is more, politicising civil engagement may only restrict the involvement of young people – as one of the NGO representatives put it. Those who work in the youth sector, perceive the NYS ambivalently – they appreciate the design itself, but point at its inefficient implementation. Most of the interviewees agree that the document was prepared based on best practices and serves as a knowledge base for understanding the lives, views and needs of Jordanian youth. Through the personal involvement and dedication of King Abdallah II, who often stresses in his speeches the role and value of young people in the country, the youth policy got a push and became more easily accepted by society. It also helped to mobilise assets and resources for the benefit of young people and also supported their capacity building by introducing youth participation.

The interviewees expressed, however, reservations regarding the way the strategy is being implemented. As one of them concluded, “the document is there but nobody is enforcing it”. Some of them attribute it to insufficient resources in general, but most of them point at the HCY. The stakeholders interviewed differ in terms of identifying the core obstacle for implementation of the NYS. Some of them mention the structural context and a weak position of the HCY among other ministries (which translated into the way the NYS is treated), other believe that the problem lies within the HCY itself and is related to the bureaucracy and capacity of the staff as well as inefficient coordination. One of the interviewees compared the NYS to the National Poverty Alleviation Strategy, pointing that in the case of the latter every ministry was obliged by the Prime Minister to provide a plan that shows its contribution to the National Poverty Alleviation Strategy and thus their involvement was insured. The same could be enforced in the case of the NYS, which is also a cross-cutting one, and so provide the HCY with a broader supervision and integration of efforts undertaken.

In regard to *youth NGOs*, it seems to be particularly hard for a young person, who has not been exposed to youth work, to get involved in an organisation. Several young people, who learned about the aim of the research, asked for information on how to apply to become a NGO member and engage in youth-related activities. The big organisations seemed to them too exclusive and *wasta*⁽⁷⁴⁾-based just to go and make them an offer, while the local ones recruit their members through the word of mouth. Therefore, if a young person is not enough go-getting, active and motivated, his/her possibilities of entering the world of youth and NGO workers are very limited.

However, the impact of the NGO youth sector both on personal and at social level cannot be underestimated. Asked about the motivations for joining a NGO, focus group members and youth workers pointed at the benefits that the organisation might bring for an individual such as the freedom to express opinions, to create, to share ideas and to get support, personal development, self-esteem and ability to articulate one's needs and opinions. Through a NGO, one can contribute to a positive change within the local community or society, put one's efforts at what is important and what one believes in. NGOs also offer the possibilities of designing and implementing projects. Many members of small, local NGOs mentioned the opportunity of learning about other cultures (among others through EMYP), establishing youth exchanges and through that mean promoting a better and more accurate image of Arabs and Muslims abroad.

At the social level, as one of the NGO members noticed, many of the organisations contribute to the social development of the country more than the governmental agencies. These include charitable associations, which have a long history in Jordan and still execute a great impact especially on the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups. Programmes offered mostly by the Royal NGOs and international ones serve children and young people in different ways, but most of all they build their capacities. As one of the youth workers concluded: "Jordan can be home to any kind of youth projects" meaning that all types of groups can be targeted – rich and poor, younger and older, urban and rural, citizens and refugees. Each of these groups needs attention as they are all advantaged or disadvantaged in one way or another – as another NGO representative added. However, one has to bear in mind that the scope of contribution depends on many factors – related not only to the capabilities of the NGO but also to its aims and objectives. Next to the youth organisations with a great outreach, personal involvement and tremendous programmes there are the NGOs that benefit predominantly their members.

The interviewees addressed also several problems and challenges that youth NGOs have to face such as: lack of information on relevant youth-related activities, training, funding and staffing. Some of them referred also to the way NGOs are established and purposes they serve.

The vast majority of the focus group participants said that they lack information on youth initiatives and even those who are members of a NGO have often limited awareness of what other organisations are doing. Some of the participants attributed it to the sense of exclusiveness of the bigger and better equipped organisations that tend to keep the information for themselves, while others believed that the outreach is generally low. Several interviewees proposed the HCY

or EMYU to become an information hub for youth initiatives. An initiative of this kind has been undertaken by AEF⁽⁷⁵⁾. However, as expressed by young people and some of the NGOs, a need remains for establishing a hub for information on youth-related projects and activities

According to many youth leaders, youth work training opportunities are in general limited. There seems to be no institutional capacity for providing youth work training. Some of the bigger organisations rely on their own capabilities and train their youth workers themselves. As several focus group participants indicated, young people who are not linked to a big NGO and would like to become youth workers face severe difficulties in obtaining relevant training and experience. An interesting initiative is the Siraj programme of SC – even though it is far from graduating capable and professional youth workers – according to one of the interviewees.

Staffing is another problem. Volunteers are the core of many active NGOs, especially till they became sustainable. Behind even the major, long-term projects crucial for many communities, as well as small individual initiatives, there are volunteers supported by few staff. Interestingly the concept of volunteering seems to be understood in two ways. Some of the interviewees link it predominantly to tradition of charity and local societies, believing that due to globalisation processes voluntary work is being eradicated. Others refer to volunteering in relation to youth work and consider it being encouraged and increasing at local and national level.

Despite the existing funding opportunities, many of the NGO and civil societies' members mentioned problems in obtaining funds for their initiatives. They refer to difficulties in getting through, and making oneself known and reliable to, international donors who are very particular when it comes to project funding. Another issue is a very strong emphasis on being outcomes oriented (hard data rather than real impact oriented). As one of the youth workers put it: "we encourage young people to be creative and once they are creative we cannot fit their creativity into the project anymore (...) while creativity demands a flexible budget". Then there is also the period of time from writing the proposal to obtaining the funds, which – if too long – may result in losing volunteers on the way. Having a core funding rather than being project-funded would solve this problem. However, there are many successful organisations able to obtain funding from international donors, private sector and calls for proposals.

Some of the focus group participants and organisation members believed that it is very difficult to establish a NGO in Jordan due to the expenses and registration procedures. On the other hand, representatives of bigger organisations – both national and international – claimed that the number of NGOs in Jordan exceeds the country's needs. They believe that some of these NGOs were established solely in order to apply for foreign funding without any special motivation. This in turn may result in copy-pasting projects and put the donor's interests first. Moreover, it might lead to an actual or alleged influence of the donor on the NGO agenda

(75) Information from the questionnaire.

8. CONCLUSION

During the last years Jordan has become increasingly involved in creating opportunities for its young generation – often called the precious resource of the country. The efforts came into effect by a set of core reports and documents that helped to understand the needs, opinions and challenges of young people, and *provided a strategy to meet them*. Essential in this regard is the NYS of 2004, the design of which was based on the best practices and recommendations of relevant international institutions. For the preparatory stage and actions undertaken, Jordanian youth policy might serve as an example of best practice in the region, being progressive, pro-active and inclusive – in terms of involving young people in the process.

It is worth stressing that, due to the involvement of the Royal Family and especially of the King, the youth sector became the Jordanian government's most important model project – the best possible motivation for state authorities and for young people themselves. Interest and engagement in their problems and concerns made them believe that their voices can be not only heard but also listened to. It is more significant as the level of youth participation, in patriarchal and rather traditional societies, is generally low. Moreover, it acted as an impetus to re-orient the priorities both of the state and of international actors.

Jordan relies strongly on international funds, due to its geopolitical location and the fact that it has been affected by two major conflicts that took place in the region (Israeli-Palestinian and the war in Iraq). Many international organisations are very active in Jordan, providing it with financial and strategic support. So is the case of developing youth policies, which function to a significant extent thanks to the involvement of IGOs (especially UN agencies) cooperating with Jordanian ministries. They provide necessary funding, but they also have some impact on the content and may contribute to its implementation, even though the government has the decisive and leading role.

Constant focus on youth provided a safe and sustainable macro-environment for development of non-governmental youth sector, which – though internally fragmented – became a significant actor in addressing the needs of young people, equipping them with necessary skills and opportunities. Its role is of great importance, as the NYS seems not to be implemented and adopted as efficiently as it was prepared. One of the reasons might be the decentralisation of *youth policy implementation* despite the coordination efforts of the HCY. Definitely certain actions are undertaken and projects are being implemented by state authorities, but many of them are small scale and seem to lack this overall, complex planning that would involve all relevant actors and fit the objectives outlined in the NYS. Some exceptions need to be mentioned – one of them being to improve the capacities of youth centres through the efforts of HCY.

The non-governmental sector seems to supplement, and in some cases even substitute, the state by providing non-formal education, opportunities for basic life skills, voluntary work, improving

employability skills, and reaching the most vulnerable groups. It has to be stressed though that some of these actions also involve state authorities. What is even more important, due to the favourable macro-environment, the non-governmental actors are not being limited and sometimes even encouraged to carry out their activities.

Non-governmental players in the youth sector are numerous and rather fragmented. Next to the significant, in terms of capacities and capabilities, RINGOs and international organisations, there are the local NGOs and civic societies that are only locally visible. The latter often strive against severe staffing and funding problems and have difficulties in getting through. Many of these small organizations are unable to benefit from the existing funds and opportunities due to the lack of sufficient human capacities (e.g. knowing how to write a proposal, foreign language) or even of relevant information. This might be balanced to some extent, as there are more experienced organisations which reach out and provide young people with opportunities to fulfil their own project ideas. Still, the structural gap does exist.

The most important challenge for the existing youth policy in Jordan concerns the implementation process of the NYS so that the priorities outlined are actually met and benefit young people. The document design and the background material which provided the backbone for its preparation, makes for a good framework and guideline for the actors in charge. By providing the non-governmental actors with sound environment for their activities and collaborating with them, more needs and concerns of young people were addressed and responded to. Most importantly, also the disadvantaged young people have their place in the programmes and initiatives directed to the youth – especially school drop-outs, the poor and refugees. Also the problem of lower mobility of girls is addressed – even if not explicit, favourable conditions are provided in order to increase their participation. Another challenge is related to the non-governmental youth sector: on the one hand it should support the empowerment of small NGOs and civil societies as well as their inclusion in the support structures; on the other, it should continue to adhere to its own priorities and values rather than lose them in order to adjust to the donors' priorities.

Civil society started to bloom in Jordan barely a decade ago. During this time the generation of pioneers produced many multipliers and managed to motivate and activate numerous young people willing to contribute to a positive change in their society, but also to reach out to those in need. Not without significance are the positive role models and encouragement from the Kingdom of Jordan. They can only accelerate the efforts undertaken, so that they complement the youth policy and make it truly wide-ranging, coherent and inclusive.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Acknowledgements

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Annex 2: Country profile (part 1)

Full name of the Country	Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (arab. Al-Mamlakah al-Urduniyah al-Hashimiyah)
Government Type	constitutional monarchy
Area	92300 sq km
Capital City	Amman
Other main cities	Az-Zarka, Irbid
Population	6,2 million
Gender Ratio (F/M)	1,10
Ethnic composition	over 90% Arab, also Circissian, Armenian, Turkish, Kurdish
Age Structure	
0-14	32%
15-24	23%
25-30	19%
Median age	23,9

Annex 2: Country profile (part 2)

Educational background (F/M ratio)		
Primary	F: 98%	M: 96%
Preparatory	F: 90%	M: 88%
Tertiary	F: 41%	M: 37%
Literacy rate	Youth: 99%	Adult: 91%
Unemployment rate		
	Youth: 30%	Adult: 12%
Summary of age related regulations and rights		
Compulsory education (up to.....)	16 years of age (for 10 years)	
Compulsory military service	–	
Legally employable (from...)	18 (juveniles aged 16 may work with the permission of their parents)	
Marriage without parental consent	18	
Minimum voting age	19	
Minimum age to be elected	30	
Driving licence	18	
Purchase of alcohol and drinkink*	18	
Purchase of tobacco products and smoking*	18	
Local Currency/ Exchange rate (Euro)		1 € = 0,9595 JOD

*Note : the data refers to the last available year.

Sources: DVDL 2008, Moe 2004, UNICEF 2002, UNDP 2008, UN Statistics Division - <http://unstats.un.org>, WHO 2004.

Annex 3: List of Abbreviations (part 1)

AEF	Arab Education Forum
AJYC	All Jordan Youth Commission
ALF	Anna Lindh Foundation
BDC	Business Development Center
CSS	Center for Strategic Studies (Jordan University)
DVLD	Driver & Vehicle License Department
EMYP	Euro-Med Youth Programme
EMYU	Euro-Med Youth Unit
ERfKE	Education Reform for Knowledge Economy
ETF	European Training Foundation

Annex 3: List of Abbreviations (part 2)

EVS	European Voluntary Service
FTF	Free Thought Forum
GBD	General Budget Department
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HCY	Higher Council for Youth
IGO	International Governmental Organisation
ICNYP	International Council on National Youth Policy
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IRI	International Republican Institute
JCSR	Jordan Center for Social Research
JOHUD	Jordan Hashemite Fund for Development
JRF	Jordan River Foundation
JYF	Jordan Youth Forum
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoC	Ministry of Culture
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoPD	Ministry of Political Development
MoPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NCFA	National Council for Family Affairs
NFE	Non-formal education
NFYC	National Forum for Youth and Culture
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NYS	National Youth Strategy
NYSF	National Youth and Sport Fund
PBYRC	Princess Basma Youth Resource Center
RINGO	Royal Non-Governmental Organisation
SC	Save the Children
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Annex 3: List of Abbreviations (part 3)

UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VTC	Vocational Training Corporation
WCRWC	Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organisation
WVS	World Values Survey
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
ZENID	Queen Zein Al-Sharaf Institute for Development

Annex 4: Glossary

ErfKE: Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy – wide and complex reform of the education system in Jordan. Four main components include: lifelong learning; linking the educational system to the economy; development of IT; increasing quality of learning.

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council (actually Council for the Arab States of the Gulf) – established in 1981 in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) comprises 6 member states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates). The main objectives include: creating a common market, joint research, legal convergence and strengthening social ties.

Katib al-kitab: Marriage without a proper wedding ceremony. After having signed the marriage contract the spouses start to live together, before the official marriage ceremony. If the couple has low knowledge on reproductive health and the time to the actual marriage ceremony is long enough it might lead to an unexpected pregnancy and affect both parties involved and even their families.

Shabab: Arabic word for “youth”. However, in many Arab countries the word might refer to people aged 30 or beyond.

Urfi: Marriage that is not registered nor publicly announced and kept in secret by both spouses. It serves engaging in sexual relations, but has no legal consequences (e.g. husband being financially responsible for his wife or child). In many Arab countries it is illegal.

Wasta: Arabic word originating from waseet which means ‘mediator’ refers to influences or connections one can use to get certain things (e.g. avoid a traffic fine, get a job). It can be found in Middle Eastern countries, mostly in those with well-founded tribal structure.

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