The Parliamentary Assembly
of the Union for the Mediterranean

المملكة المغربية
البرلمان

Meeting of the Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges Between Civil Societies and Culture

Draft Recommendation

The PA-UfM's Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges Between Civil Societies and Culture met on February 1st, 2019, at the Moroccan House of Representatives in Rabat, the capital of the Kingdom of Morocco.

The meeting was held around the theme of "Youth in the Euro-Mediterranean Area: The Issue of Community Engagement and Virtual Space Interactions".

In this regard, the Committee:

- Reiterates the tremendous relevance of the topic of youth community engagement in the Euro-Mediterranean Area, both in terms of restoring political and social participation and overcoming joint challenges faced by the peoples of the region, the goal being to ensure continued economic, social, cultural and sportive development, to further stability and counter-violence, counter-terrorism action, and to consolidate regional and international peace ;

- Recalls the importance of the remarkable development that humanity is achieving in the ICT sector, and the benefits of such development for information and data sharing, for the entrenchment of transparency in governance, and for making knowledge available to all ;

- Insists on the correlation between youth awareness and the quality of the contents made available in the wake of the ICT revolution, and the resulting impact on the level of community engagement of this segment of the population – a segment that has always been at the heart of humanity's historic events and societal transformations ;

- Insists that, in view of all of these aspects, there are unmistakably high stakes going forward, stakes that would largely define the common lifestyle in – and the joint responsibilities towards – the future of the region and the world.

1- Recalls that digital skills go well beyond the requirements of the labour market, offering people better opportunities to participate in the life of society and in community engagement, both today and in the future, facilitating the share of information and the cultural exchange and giving people access to information regarding political decision-making;

2- Recalls that it is essential that educational institutions prepare students for rapid economic and social changes brought about by rapid technological development, giving them adequate skills to be able to adapt to the challenges of the digital era, such as occupational literacy and media literacy;

3- Reiterates the crucial role of youth work for fostering a political participation which is based on the values of diversity, human rights, democracy and on critical thinking; considers that this role should be strengthened and socially and politically recognised by EU and the Member States of the UfM;

4- Emphasizes the urgent need to have educational systems and curricula devoid of any content that praises or appeals to violence, extremism or intolerance. Rather, such programs and curricula should promote the values of diversity, inclusion, human rights, democracy and critical thinking.

5- Stresses that new technologies change the relationship between teachers and learners and that an innovative approach can place digital technologies and connectivity at the heart of a holistic and humanist education which focuses on students;

6- Highlights that basic education in cyber safety and media literacy is necessary from an early age to help children become active citizens, make informed decisions and be aware of risks associated with the Internet, such as fake news, intimidation and online harassment;

7- Calls upon governments and executive institutions to provide more platforms and mechanisms for guiding youth socially and culturally, and for raising their awareness as to the importance of their engagement and to the role that young people have played historically in the progress of humanity and in initiating watershed transformations in the lives of societies ;

8- Calls for education systems to act as levers for training, learning, and **qualification** , and as tools for awareness, openness, and learning about the virtues of responsibility, living together, tolerance, moderation, participation, and for the consolidation of values of freedom, justice, equal opportunity and citizenship values that are heedful of the other ;

9- Calls upon private and public organisations to involve young people in the development, implementation and monitoring of online tools for youth political participation. Underlines that to ensure recognition of young people's participation and sustain their involvement in political processes, online tools should be complemented by offline methods and have a follow-up phase in which decision-makers reflect on how young people's contributions were taken into account;

10- Calls for action to restore the value of political engagement and to pave the way for young people to become involved in partisan, political and social activities, to mobilise them based on the higher principles and end-goals of political activism and social service and volunteering , away from chauvinism, introversion, hatred, and extremist discourse, whatever its source or orientation might be ;

11- Calls upon civil-society organisations and the Euro-Mediterranean region to mobilise young people and to impress upon them the virtues of civic action, public

participation, positive influence on public decision-making, monitoring of shortcomings in the management of public affairs at the local, regional, and national levels ;

12- Calls upon governments and organisations to increase opportunities for young people to be a part of decision making processes, particularly around youth policy and programming. Supports the setting up of a National Youth Council as a framework through which youth contribute to analyze public policies, elaborate strategies and formulate recommendations related to youth main issues.

13- Calls upon influential organisations in cyberspace to broadcast positive, informational, and beneficial content, as well as quality data, knowledge, and role models tailored for youth, as well as to Call on these bodies to ban the spread of speeches and messages that fuel terrorism, hatred, racism, withdrawal, extremism and violence. Those organisations are also called upon to take whatever technical measures necessary to combat criminal networks that endeavour to recruit impressionable young people, luring them into organised-crime circles, from terrorism to sex crimes and human trafficking ;

14- Affirms the commitment of its members, through their respective national parliaments and the European Parliament, to work towards adopting national legislation that aims to achieve the objectives stated above ;

15- Reaffirms the crucial role of schools, particularly public schools, in the eradication of illiteracy, the participation of children (girls and boys) in school and extracurricular activities, in reinvigorating the practice of reading and restoring the value of books among children, teenagers, and youth, with the aim of cultivating their knowledge and building their positive awareness, while offering them training materials and food for thought, thus helping to usher in the next generation of intellectuals and to polish individual and collective consciousness ;

16- Encourages public libraries to participate in the common effort of familiarizing citizens with digital skills, by providing open services for digital support in a social and helpful environment;

17- Underlines the importance of ensuring digital literacy and the participation of women and girls in ICT education and training; encourages the governments and executive institutions to introduce age-appropriate ICT education in the early stages of school, with a particular focus on inspiring girls to develop an interest and talent in the digital field, given that girls move away from STEAM disciplines earlier in their educational careers due to the gender stereotypes surrounding these subjects and the lack of female role models;

18- Underlines that digital skills acquisition requires a lifelong-learning approach anchored in formal and non-formal education settings, with a policy response and targeted interventions appropriate to the needs of different age groups and learners;

19- Highlights that inclusiveness and innovation should be the leading principles for education and training in the digital age; believes that digital technologies should not be reinforcing existing inequalities, but instead be used in order to close the digital divide;

20- Recalls that schools need to support all students and respond to their specific needs, in particular with regard to gender differences, students with disabilities, minorities or migrants and that such support can be facilitated through the use of new technologies;

21- Reiterates the importance of education as a priority for all refugees and migrants, especially children and young people. It therefore stresses the social benefit to the EUROMED region of the adequate reception of refugee and migrant children and young people, enabling them to have access to education, to integrate education systems and to access scholarships on an equal footing with young people of each country.

22- Believes that educational institutions cannot neglect the integral training of their students, fostering the development of a critical and holistic view that enables them to assert themselves as active citizens and understanding that critical thinking cannot be strengthened only by teaching digital skills; that a comprehensive education is also needed;

23- Stresses that, in order to achieve better learning experiences and outcomes, digital tools must be adapted to the needs of students, that this is a way for students to become active citizens and not merely passive consumers of technology;

24- Points out that education and training institutions require assistance from the governments and executive institutions, as well as from stakeholders, industry, local and regional authorities, communities and civil society, to make the difficult transition to a more digitalised learning environment; Recalls that the development of regions is closely linked to the qualification of their citizens;

25- Stresses that teachers and trainers should be at the core of the digital transformation and are among the professions that will retain their central role for society in the future and therefore require adequate preparation and training themselves; insists that this training requires time and should not come as an extra task on top of their daily activities; highlights that, even more than the teaching of other basic skills, such as numeracy and literacy, digital skills teaching requires teachers to update their knowledge and skills on a continuous basis; argues, therefore, that teachers need proper and ongoing support;

26- Stresses the importance of a neutral and open internet, ensuring in the same time protection of personal data and freedom of expression for each citizen and as well as media plurality. Emphasizes that it is vital for governments to promote and defend freedom of expression by all means, including through new digital technologies, allowing for the exchange of ideas and debate, essential elements for the training of critical and active citizens in their community engagement; Calls on the private and public sectors of the media to play a positive role in the pursuit of tolerance and cultural diversity, respecting the right to difference and confronting different points of view.

27- Stresses the tremendous importance of the role of the media and the press in promoting the culture of participation, tolerance, equality between people regardless of gender, age, religious belief, politics, and in encouraging interest in – and engagement with – public affairs, and deepening involvement in current and impending community matters and challenges, both in the region and the world.