

Springeneration

Overview of Survey Results

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Ville Tapio and John Lageson

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Overview of the Project

What should Europeans do to build positive partnerships with Arab countries?

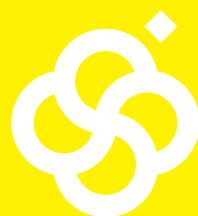
At the European People's Party (EPP) Congress in Marseille, France in December 2011, the Centre for European Studies (CES), the official think tank of the EPP, launched its latest public opinion initiative, the 'Springeneration' survey (www.springeneration.eu).

This interactive, online brainstorming site served as a forum for gathering ideas and feedback from people in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) about how to forge a new partnership with Europe, especially in light of the 'Arab Spring' developments of the past year. Participants had the opportunity to describe how they envision their future, what is important to them and how Europeans can show solidarity with, and support the aspirations of, people in the MENA region. The survey was available in English, French and Arabic.



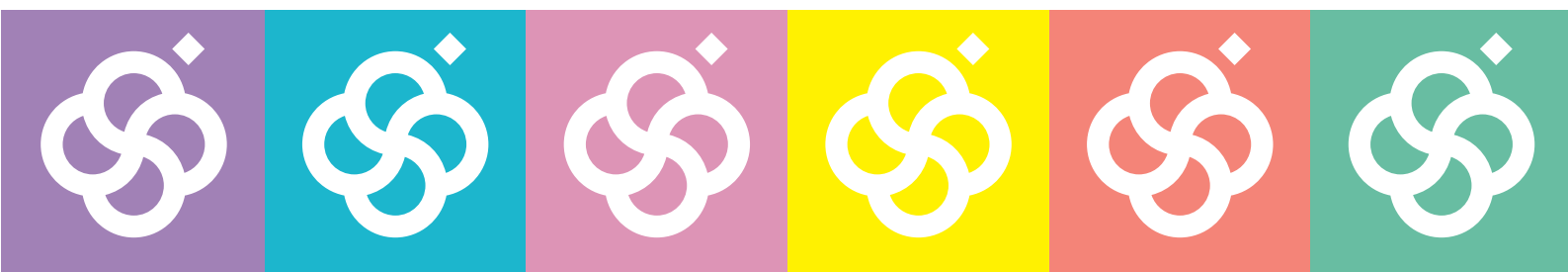
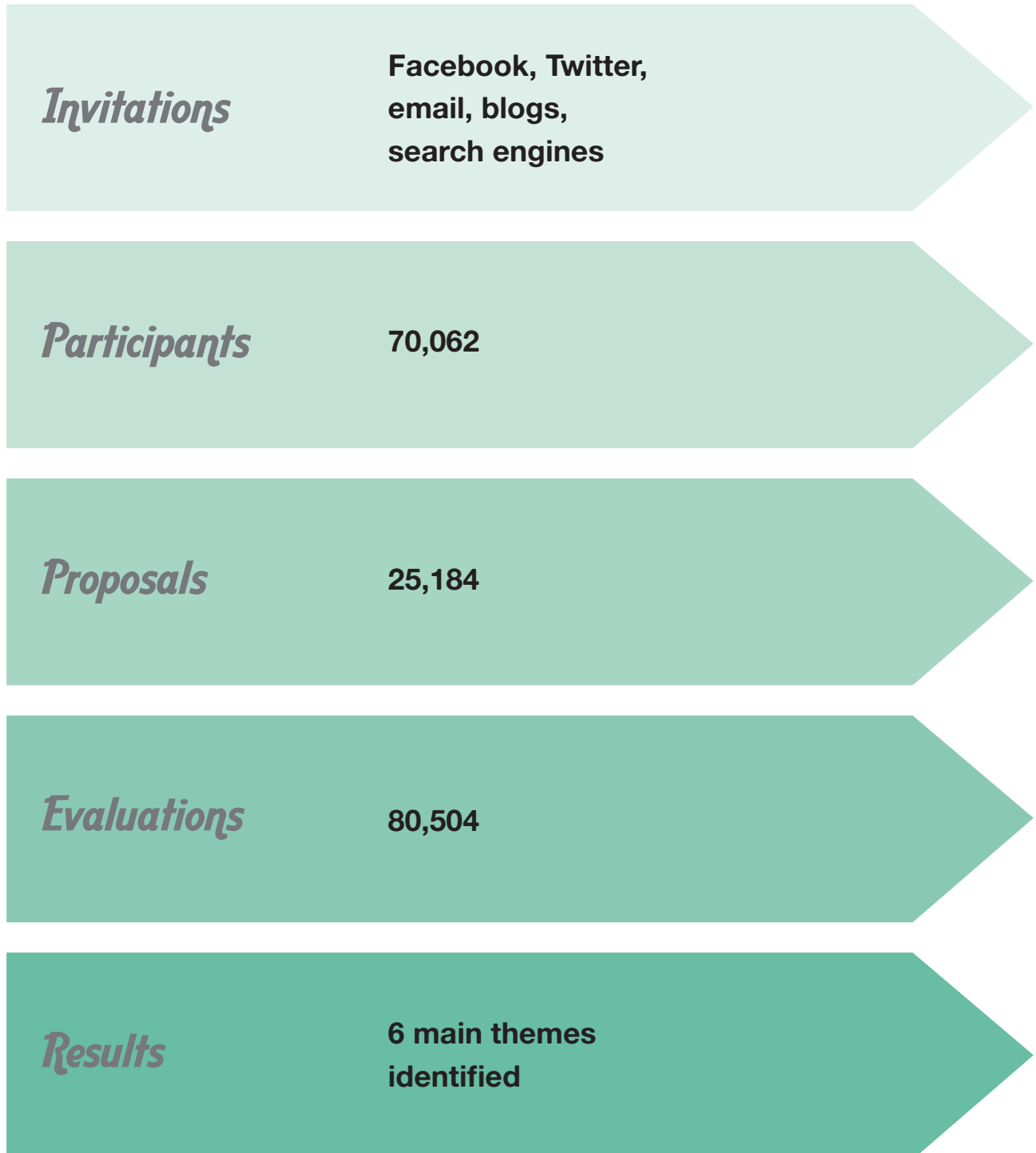
How the Survey Works

Participants were given the opportunity to identify the topics most important to them and explain their relevance. They were also able to see themes specified by other participants and to compare and evaluate those issues according to their own priorities. Using a target diagram they were also able to give more or less importance to the topics proposed by others. Participants were also invited to register for the chance to travel to Europe and discuss ideas for Europe-Arab cooperation with EU policymakers.



Participation Statistics

The survey was open from December 2011 until June 2012.

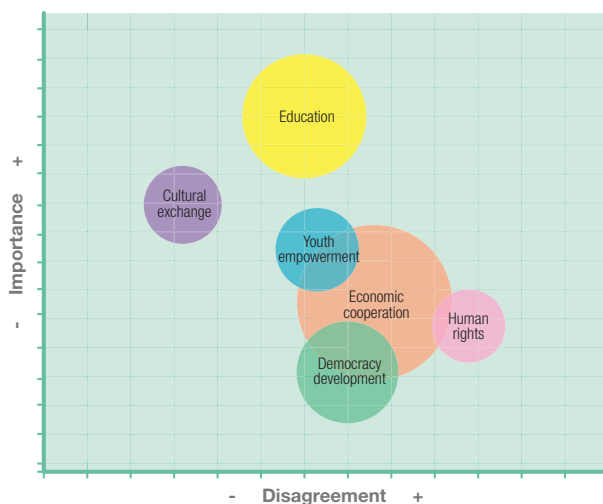


Summary of Top Proposal Themes

The six main themes proposed by participants include education, cultural exchange, youth empowerment, economic cooperation, human rights and democracy development. Participants made the most proposals about economic cooperation. However, the proposals concerning education were deemed the most important during the evaluation stage. Cultural exchange caused the least amount of disagreement among respondents, but overall it was not seen as important as education. Proposals related to human rights caused the most disagreement among the participants. Moreover, while many proposals referred to democracy development, many of them also expressed concerns about Western interference in Arab countries' internal affairs.

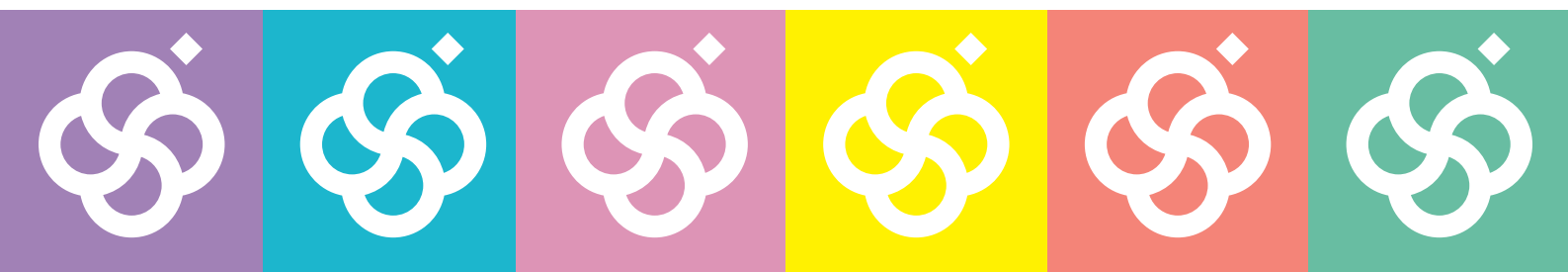
Key findings

- There is a very high demand for the improvement of education systems in MENA countries
- Youth are very open to cultural exchange with the aim of enhancing mutual understanding and building future channels of cooperation
- The biggest problem for youth is the lack of job opportunities, which can lead to further social exclusion
- Economic cooperation between Europe and the MENA region which could lead to new jobs was seen as very desirable. However, there is doubt in MENA countries about Europe's motivations and desire to achieve a truly equal partnership
- When addressing democracy development and human rights issues, Europe should be very careful not to be seen as interfering in the internal affairs, cultural and religious aspects of MENA countries



NOTES:

1. The size of the bubble represents the number of proposals related to that theme.
2. The higher the theme is positioned on the graph, the more important it was to the participants.
3. The further right the theme is positioned on the graph, the more the views of the participants differed.



Theme 1: Education

Almost all respondent groups, excluding the older population, agreed that the most important theme was the need for education reform in MENA countries, which participants linked closely to economic cooperation and democracy development. There was a strong consensus that Europeans should advise MENA countries on these issues. However, it was clear they should do so while respecting cultural and religious differences, as well as national sovereignties. Moreover, the link between current education systems and economic and labour market development in MENA countries is seen to be badly broken. Finally, opportunities for international exchange are seen as available only to a small portion of youth in the upper class.

Most common proposals

- Improve weak and outdated education systems in MENA countries
- Improve the availability of education with an emphasis on girls, women and lower classes
- Make student exchange programmes at European universities affordable for middle-class youth from MENA countries
- Gear education systems towards creating a new generation of entrepreneurs
- Link education reform to development in other areas such as democracy and human rights
- Establish European schools in MENA countries
- Improve awareness of Arab culture, history and language in European countries

“ Unfortunately, education hasn't been given a lot of importance in the Arab world lately, resulting in lack of understanding towards the other. However, by helping in the educational field, I do not mean that Europe should show the Arab world what to teach, but rather, HOW to teach! This is by giving courses to teachers, to head masters, to all employees in the education sector about how to develop the character of the students.”

MALE ORIGINALLY FROM LIBYA, LIVING IN MALTA (18-24 YEARS)

“ They [students in MENA countries] need a good education to learn how to communicate, how to listen to others, how to collect information correctly, how to analyze data and finally get out with the result.”

MALE FROM EGYPT (35-44 YEARS)

“ Internship schemes should be introduced in government institutions and private companies whereby every company or institution should employ a certain percentage of the revolutionaries from different brigades where they can learn on the job skills that will help them in their careers.”

MALE FROM LIBYA (25-34 YEARS)



Theme 2: Cultural Exchange

Cultural exchange between Europe and MENA countries dates back many centuries and the two regions have shared cultural influences and knowledge in all fields of the humanities and sciences. However, more recent events and short-sighted religious and political groups have distanced the people of the two regions and contributed to increased fear and suspicion. According to the respondents more knowledge and a better understanding of each other is needed in the areas of religion, politics and culture. Dialogue needs to be interactive and open for wide audiences on both sides. Cultural exchange will help to usher in a more positive climate for dialogue between Europeans and people in MENA countries.

Most common proposals

- According to the respondents more cultural projects are needed to bridge the gap between the two cultures and create a base for other forms of cooperation in the future
- Use the media to educate European people about Arab culture and customs
- Connect children and youth from both sides to prevent prejudices starting from an early age
- Show the positive aspects of life in MENA countries
- Counter the idea that Europe is perceived by many Arabs as a follower of American geopolitics without its own clear vision
- Improve the image of Arabs in European media, which many in the Arab world feel has been distorted
- Learn from Europe's history in terms of civil rights and worker rights

“Improve the image of Arabs in the European media, and view the positive side to improve the image that had been distorted over a long period.”

MALE FROM EGYPT (18-24 YEARS)

“Maybe to understand this world more, you should invest in its media and arts: films, music, theater and other forms of art that tell stories of the indigenous people in order to hear their stories from their perspective.”

MALE FROM LEBANON (18-24 YEARS)

“It is necessary for Europe to show a clear desire to differentiate itself from US geopolitics by showing a willingness to share culture and values. Without respect for culture and values, we can not achieve a true win-win in economic exchange either.”

MALE FROM TUNISIA (35-44 YEARS)



Theme 3: Youth Empowerment

Participants viewed youth as potential bridge builders between MENA countries and Europe. That does not mean that young Arabs want to become more 'European' and lose their religious or cultural traditions, but rather that young people from both sides should communicate with one another. To this end, there should be projects that bring youth together to learn how to cooperate and resolve conflicts. What also emerged was the message that youth represent the untapped potential of Arab countries. Unemployment and social and political exclusion of young people are therefore serious problems which affect both MENA countries and Europe. Europeans should work with people in the MENA region to seek opportunities for youth from both sides to interact.

Most common proposals

- Address the exclusion of poor and middle-class youth who lack the opportunities enjoyed by the richer class
- Create job opportunities for educated youth who are unemployed
- Support the inclusion of youth in political processes
- Provide education and micro grants for young people to establish new businesses, create new jobs and drive societal change
- Organise multicultural, environmental or societal projects to bring youth from different cultures to learn how to resolve conflicts together
- Allow better access to Arab youth for purposes of studying or working in Europe
- Support the teaching of language and media skills
- Engage European youth in development programmes in Arab countries to show that Europeans are eager to learn about and contribute to the MENA region

"I believe that the youth in Arab countries are key [in areas of] development as well as innovation. Unfortunately, no one listens to them and the fact of being from Arab countries means their ideas are not promoted outside."

25-34 YEARS, FEMALE FROM OMAN

"Educate Arab youth for open communication with the outside world using the internet, television and radio."

25-34 YEARS, MALE FROM IRAQ

"Establish forums of dialogue between young leaders of Europe and the Arab world in order to build relationships and ideas for projects that will integrate the Europe and the Arab world. Good examples are building trade relations between young entrepreneurs and cooperative initiatives for protecting the Mediterranean environment."

18-24 YEARS, MALE FROM LIBYA



Theme 4: Economic Cooperation

Respondents viewed economic cooperation as desirable, especially if it leads to more jobs in MENA countries. However, Europe should take care to avoid contributing to the stereotype among some in the MENA region that its only motivation for economic cooperation is to access natural resources and create markets for European goods. Moreover, Arab governments are often seen, even by their own citizens, as unreliable partners. Therefore, Europeans should seek to improve economic ties directly with citizens, private companies and NGOs.

Most common proposals

- Focus on economic cooperation that leads to job creation
- Use European technology and know-how to develop solar and other renewable energy production in MENA countries
- Increase European foreign direct investment in the Arab world
- Find ways to boost technology and knowledge exchanges
- Create cooperative research programmes between European and MENA universities
- Reduce tariffs and other barriers of trade to move towards freer trade and a common regulatory environment
- Reduce corruption and the ineffective use of foreign aid
- Invest in and promote tourism in MENA countries
- Offer internships to MENA citizens in European institutions and private companies in Europe

“ Don’t provide aid to the governments or financial institutions, they take your loans at 1% interest and they give it to us at 18% with no grace. Create possibilities for the people directly. Establish an EU sponsored private property developer to create new examples for proper residential and industrial zones.”

MALE FROM EGYPT (35-44 YEARS)

“ Perform competitive advantage analysis and find the key factors for successful Euro-Arab partnership for each of the Arab countries separately. For example countries with desert areas may produce solar energy, some countries have good circumstances for farming or agriculture and some countries can provide workforce to manufacture products at a lower cost.”

FEMALE FROM TUNISIA (25-34 YEARS)

“ Support positive developments through economic development and through the export the technology related to clean energy, such as solar energy, which would be a future source of energy for Europe and the economies of the Arab world.”

MALE FROM LIBYA (25-34 YEARS)



Theme 5: Human Rights

Human rights was a sensitive theme among respondents. On issues such as gender equality, it is clear that cultural and religious differences between Europeans and people in MENA countries do not necessarily lead to the same conclusions. Moreover, Europe should be aware that its reputation in the region is affected by what many people view as Europe's previous support of the dictators and regimes in MENA countries. There is also a perception that Europe has not been just in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that it has also failed to integrate Muslim minorities into European society.

Most common proposals

- Europe should stop supporting undemocratic regimes which do not respect human rights
- Build dialogue with people in MENA countries to better understand both sides' perspectives on issues of women's rights and gender equality
- Promote religious and political tolerance
- Development aimed at bridging the gap between poorer and richer classes of society
- Support for minorities facing discrimination
- European leaders should have a clear position about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to strengthen their credibility on humanitarian issues

"The main purpose behind the revolutions of the Arab world is the search for equality between poor and rich, strong and weak but especially between main cities and marginalised ones. Yet, discrimination based on gender could not be solved only through these reforms. Civil society should be involved and law should be developed because gender discrimination is an accumulation of misunderstanding of religion, law, and social issues. There should be another mind revolution to solve this issue."

MALE ORIGINALLY FROM TUNISIA, LIVING IN KUWAIT (25-34 YEARS)

"During last decades the EU built relationship with the Arab countries regardless their respect for human rights, individual liberties and democracy. This partnership empowered authoritarian regimes in their brutal fight against advocates for democracy and human rights."

MALE ORIGINALLY FROM MOROCCO, LIVING IN CANADA (45-54 YEARS)

"I am still confused why all EU countries have not signed the U.N. convention on the rights of migrant workers and their families. It is extremely important that European politicians be accessed and be open with the Arab media when discussing matters of migration and integration. It looks like they only care about public opinion in their own countries not realizing that public opinion in the Southern Mediterranean is extremely important for Europe's security."

FEMALE FROM EGYPT (35-44 YEARS)



- Help establish media which provides transparency on human rights issues
- Support NGOs and human rights activists
- Europe should focus on better integrating its Muslim minorities
- Ensure freedom of movement and easier visa procedures to Arabs to visit Europe

Theme 6: Democracy Development

Similar to the theme of education reform, there was a strong desire among respondents for Europe to share advice and best practices in order to help people in MENA countries establish democracies. However, Europe should do so without telling Arabs for whom to vote or which parties should govern. Europe should position itself to stand by the people of MENA countries who share common values based on human rights, peace and democracy.

Most common proposals

- Help the people of the MENA region to stand up to dictatorships and undemocratic regimes
- Advocate peace and democracy instead of empowering one particular political group over another
- Share advice and best practices for good governance
- Help to integrate the revolutionaries into society and safeguard against the formation of militant groups
- Sponsor free, independent and diversified media and social media activism
- Empower NGOs and people, not regimes or political parties
- Promote the democratic transition of Eastern European countries as a potential example for Arab countries
- Demand more transparency from ruling regimes
- Use young Arabs who have studied and worked in Europe as ‘ambassadors of cooperation’
- Europe must be aware of the constant changes and rapid developments in the MENA region.



“ Europeans should help the establishment of the new democracies and not be fear from the willing of the people. I know that Islamic parties are going to emerge but this is what the people want and I don't think that this will be an obstacle to help democracies here since these Islamic parties, as I know from Tunisian experience, are moderate and they are ready to have strong ties with European countries.”

MALE FROM TUNISIA (18-24 years)

“ Supporting Democracy in the Arab world must proceed in a serious and honest way. Development must be in favour of the poor people not a tool of economic European domination of the Arab markets.”

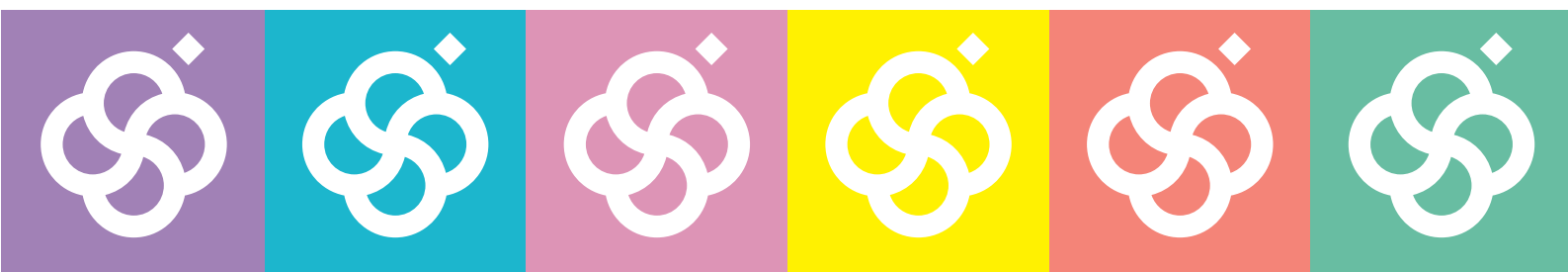
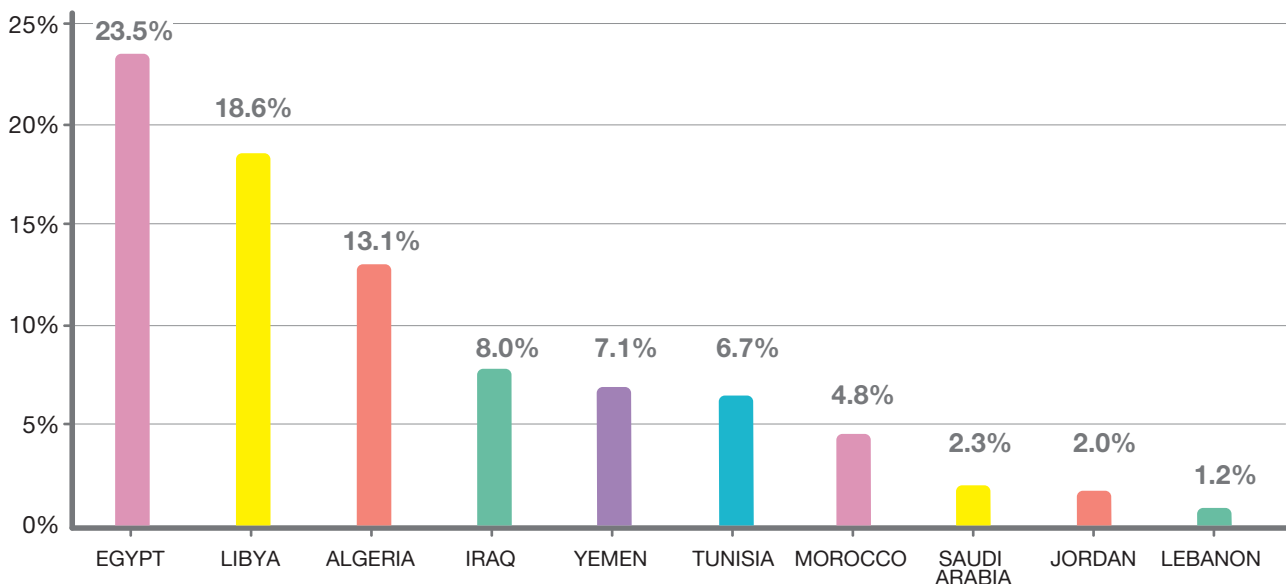
FEMALE FROM EGYPT (25-34 years)

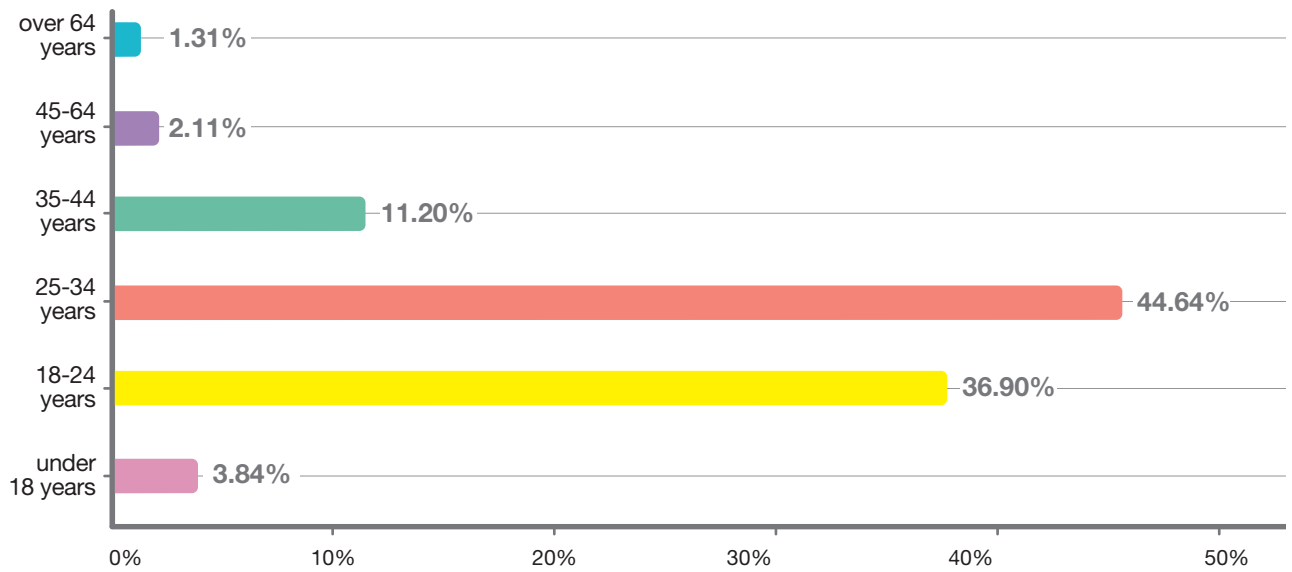
“ Social networks are a treasure pit of proposals and ideas that should be considered by the politicians and policymakers short of ideas and lacking imagination!”

MALE FROM TUNISIA (45-54 years)

Summary of Participant Groups

People living in Egypt, Libya and Algeria were the most active participant groups. 85 % of participants were under 35 years old. However, just 17 % were women.

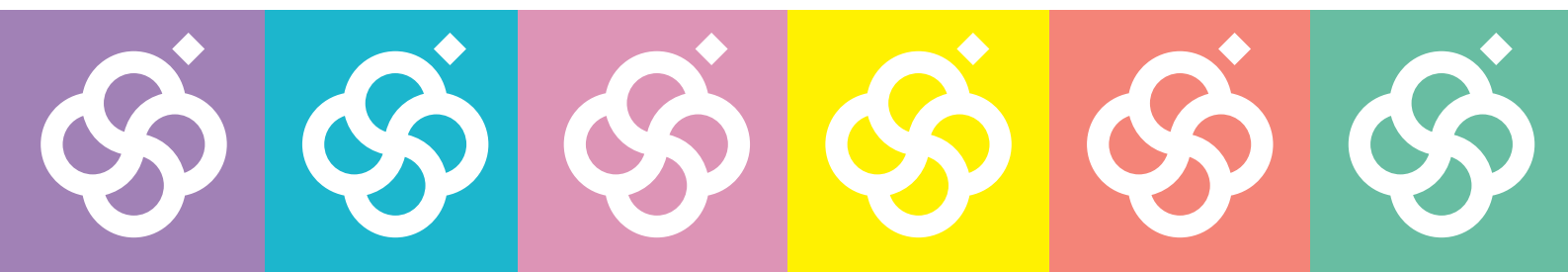
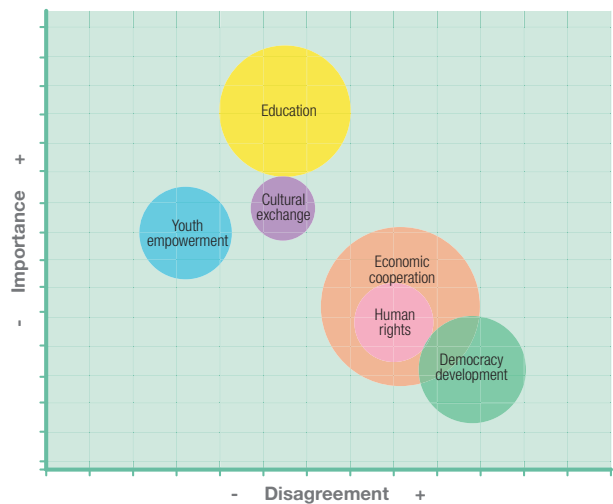
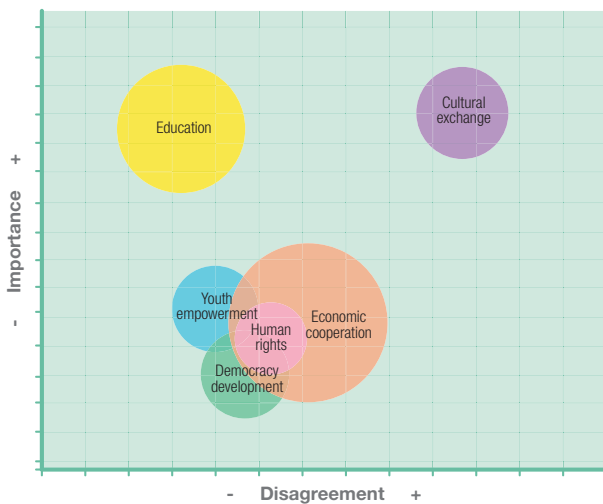




Responses by Gender

Women agreed that education is an important theme. While cultural exchange was also seen as important, there was more disagreement among women than among men.

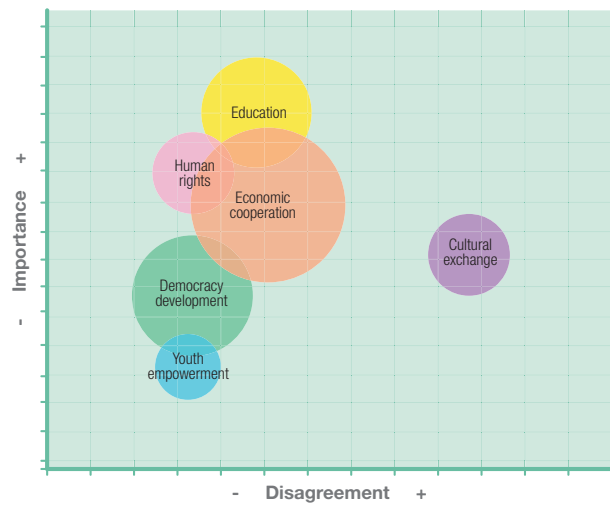
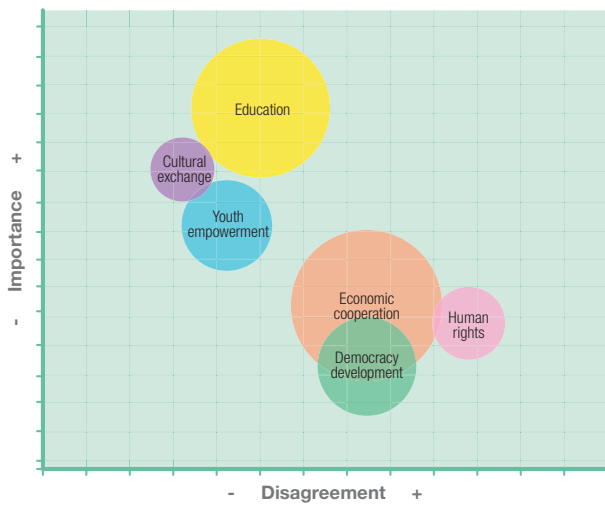
Men tended to consider economic cooperation somewhat more important than women did. Men also indicated less disagreement over the theme of cultural exchange.



Age Differences: +/- 35 Years

Young people (under 35) demonstrated much more interest in cultural exchange and other direct relations between Arab and European people. Young people tended to give less importance to human rights than the older age category. There was also a greater divergence in their views on the topic.

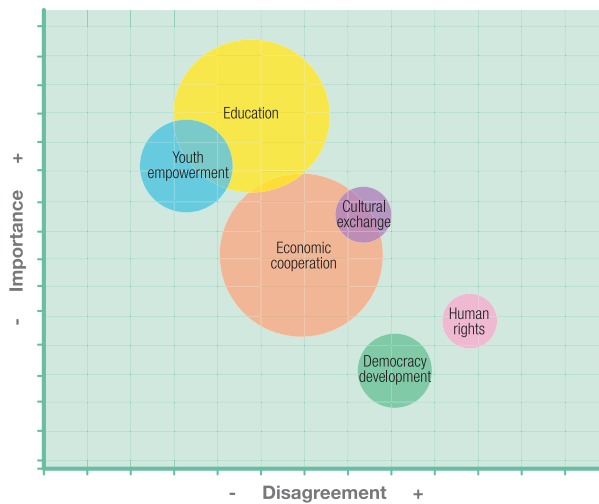
Respondents over the age of 35 tended to be more interested in human rights and democracy development. They also displayed the most disagreement regarding the issue of cultural exchange. On all topics, apart from cultural exchange, there was much broader agreement among the older respondents' views.



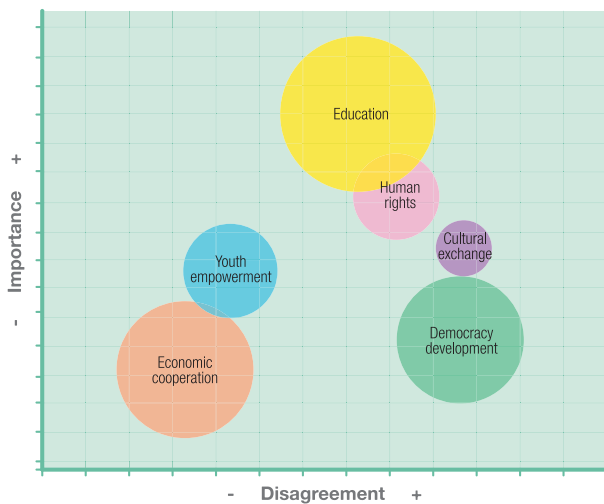
Egyptians, Libyans and Algerians

As Egypt, Libya and Algeria were the countries where the most responses were collected, it is useful to look at the different themes and their importance in each of these countries. Education and cultural exchange proposals were important to people in all three nations, but there is high country-specific variation in the acceptance of proposals related to democracy and human rights development.

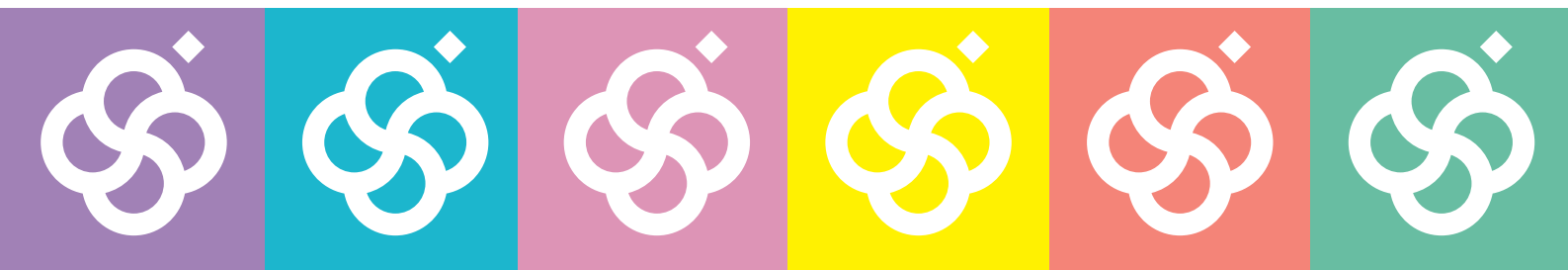
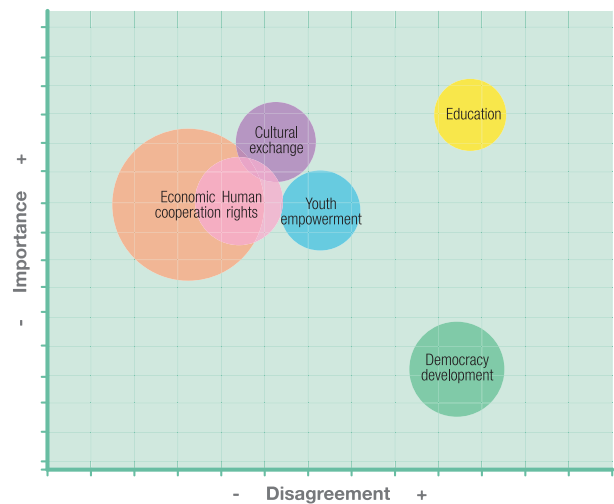
Egypt



Libya



Algeria



Conclusion

The participants of the Springeneration initiative identified numerous potential areas in which cooperation should occur, as well as a series of challenges of which European policymakers should be aware. Based on the number of responses related to each of the six themes, policymakers can form a better understanding of which issues are most prevalent in MENA countries today. Building on this data, they can also begin to consider potential actions that could be taken which reflect the themes and issues identified by the participants of the Springeneration survey.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Economic cooperation
2528 proposals
- Education
2072 proposals
- Democracy development
1696 proposals
- Youth empowerment
1411 proposals
- Human rights
1277 proposals
- Cultural exchange
1106 proposals

EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- **Economic cooperation:** Provide start-up business coaching and financing programmes to teams of young European and Arab entrepreneurs
- **Education:** Promote the transfer of knowledge from Europe to MENA countries in the areas of education, communications, media and renewable energy technology
- **Democracy development:** Support democratic transformations by drafting a common mission statement, value base, vision and country-specific plans for future cooperation between European and Arab countries
- **Youth empowerment:** Promote student exchange, visiting study and internship programmes to European countries for Arab students
- **Human rights:** Boost Europe's credibility as a partner in human rights by clarifying its position towards authoritarian regimes
- **Cultural exchange:** Promote the teaching of Arabic language and culture in European countries

POTENTIAL OBSTACLES

- Perception in MENA countries that Europe has abandoned its values in the past by supporting authoritarian regimes
- European colonialist history
- Governmental corruption in MENA countries
- Cultural stereotypes and prejudices on both sides
- Europe's difficulties in integrating Muslim minorities
- Cultural and lingual barriers between Europeans and Arabs

To view more results and proposals, please visit the open database at
www.springeneration.eu.





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Centre for European Studies
Rue du Commerce 20 Brussels, B-1000
Tel: +32-2-3008004
Fax: +32-2-3008011
www.thinkingeurope.eu

Fountain Park Ltd
Hämeentie 153 B 00560 Helsinki
Tel: +358-10-4243000
Fax: +358-10-4243001
www.fountainpark.com

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