
MEM Summer Summit

12 projects for the future of the Middle East Mediterranean

Lugano, August 25, 2018



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Lugano, August 25, 2018 – The “Lugano Initiative” was presented this morning at the Lugano Congress Centre during the first Middle East Mediterranean (MEM) Summer Summit Forum to an audience of 400 participants. The document contains 12 tangible proposals for dialogue and growth in the MEM region, ideas that have been developed by the 150 young change makers from over 30 countries who during the eight-day MEM Summer Summit Seminar at Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) have worked together regardless of all cultural differences and national identities. The proposals contained in the document, here summarised, also reflects the problems experienced by young people in a vast and significant area ranging from Morocco to Iran. In several cases, these are proposals for new networks and technology platforms designed across political borders, whose players will be the same participants at the MEM Summer Summit thanks to their diverse geographical origin.

1. Independent information

With the contribution of independent bloggers and journalists, the goal is to create an online platform organized as a network, through which to share surveys, stories, interviews from across the MEM region, going beyond individual national dimensions and ideological views.

2. Fight against corruption

The creation of an online platform to collect information and data on corruption cases in different countries, providing users with a 'map' indicating the extent, place and type of corruption, fuelling debate and pressure to move towards policies to combat the phenomenon. An objective way of working in synergy with the legal system, which is not ideologically against or in favour of the different governments.

3. Youth and politics

To encourage young people to be more active in politics and more aware of its value and potential, the proposal aims to create an online and offline platform, dedicated to young people aged 16 to 26 years, defining also physical spaces expressly intended to empowering local communities to solve common problems in a collaborative way, fostering a practical and concrete dialogue between citizens and institutions.

4. Integrating refugees

To enable refugees in the MEM region to gain access to rights and services, it is proposed to set up a platform involving a large number of actors – public and private sector organisations, non-governmental associations, trade unions, etc. – who will collaborate in tangible ways in the context of the labour market. For example, the situation in Greece has been analysed in detail and the proposal is to establish a non-governmental organisation aimed at enhancing the professional skills of refugees and thus improve their the living conditions.

5. New shared values

Through the creation of locally-managed informal communities, the goal is to implement various activities aimed at proposing to new generations values that go beyond those traditionally offered in politics or conveyed through ideology, with activities such as team sports or the arts.

6. New narratives

To address gender discrimination and other negative impacts on society caused by political and religious ideologies, the proposal is to stimulate new narratives, ranging from school to media, from family to the legal systems. In particular, an online platform could be set up as a neutral venue to convey new stories, exploiting technologies on the one hand and the power of artistic expression on the other.

7. Supporting broad views

To encourage the creation of a civil identity capable of transcending borders as well as cultural and social divisions, it is proposed that a network be set up to support the many actors involved, who in the MEM region countries are working to foster peace and dialogue.

8. An ecosystem for economic growth

To enable the development of a civil identity capable of overcoming the many obstacles experienced today in the business sector, an ecosystem model is devised consisting of three categories of partners in the fields of knowledge, finance, and communication. The ecosystem is based on partnerships and is created like a start-up enterprise.

9. Academic networks and synergies

Supporting economic development means guaranteeing access to quality education, overcoming the stereotypes related to the universities in the MEM region. In order to achieve these objectives, the proposal is to create a strong network for collaborations (both North-South and South-South) and exchange between universities and research institutes, with, for example, inter-university mobility programmes that encourage the development of new synergies and thus foster an image of openness and excellence.

10. Encouraging research and innovation

Firmly believing that growth – both economic and social – is enabled through investments in research and innovation, the idea is to create a lobby capable of dialogue with the governments of different countries in the MEM region to encourage the implementation of policies focused on the requirements of the academic and scientific world.

11. Education means employment

Employment is one of the key factors of social cohesion, and it is based on proper education and training. With an approach focusing on young people, families and the labour market, a policy is proposed to increase funding for training and apprenticeship opportunities, as well as the organization of events where young people can learn about professions and trades, and by directly involving their parents in the overall process.

12. Increasing awareness on climate change, through water

Using the many existing information platforms and a bottom-up approach, the proposal is to raise public awareness in the MEM region about the risks of climate change, encouraging the sharing of stories related to communities and the implementation of tangible and useful actions.

The MEM Summer Summit was organised by USI with the joint support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and with the generous contribution of several private supporters and foundations.

Today and tomorrow, the Summit will host numerous meetings open to the public, where the geopolitical topics related to the MEM region will be explored in depth, where scenarios for material reconstruction and the development of cultural policies will be outlined, where the relationship between water, peace and borders will be discussed, where new models of citizenship, energy transition and education as a driving force for change will be discussed. The Summit will address topics related to infrastructure, how to rethink the economy, but also success stories in the field, how to foster new and positive narratives through art and literature.

The intention is to make the Summit a venue for periodic meeting and discussion on the MEM region, highlighting the role of USI and the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland as a bridge between continental Europe and the Mediterranean. The next edition of the MEM Summer Summit is scheduled from 15 to 25 August 2019.

For information: www.mem-summer summit.ch

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