

BRIEF EVENT REPORT

BÖLL WORKSHOP FOR THE FUTURE

(R)EVOLUTIONS IN THE ARAB WORLD: THE ROLE OF THE EU AND THE ARAB LEAGUE – WHAT COULD THE FUTURE BRING?

A SCENARIO WORKSHOP

During the last months the Arab world has been hit by a wave of (r)evolutions. What is now urgently needed are innovative solutions and strategies for a smooth and peaceful transition to democratic structures and economic prosperity. So far, neither the European Union nor the Arab League have come up with convincing proposals. This simulation workshop aims at encouraging participants to develop potential outcomes for this year's popular uprisings that have swept across Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and other North African and Middle Eastern countries.

Participants will develop innovative ideas in two groups representing the EU and the Arab League. The group exercises will be followed by the result presentation, a discussion and the development of potential solutions and strategies to set the scene for a better EuroArab future. Two board members of the Brussels-based EuroArab Forum (www.euroarab-forum.eu) will have the pleasure to moderate and steer this workshop and to draft a report with the proposed solutions which shall be published shortly after the workshop.

Date	Wednesday, 25 May 2011, 17.00 – 19.00
Venue Brussels	Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union - 15, Rue d'Arlon - B-1050
Moderators	Eleni Dima , Member, EuroArab Forum Olaf Deussen , President, EuroArab Forum

The EuroArab Forum is going to suggest several steering questions and the idea is that the two groups have a brainstorming session on their pre-defined mandate.

The participants' motivations to participate in this workshop were plural, amongst them academic or professional reasons (political think-tanks, organisation, NGOs) or just because of a genuine interest in European-Arab relationships.

1) On the high level working policy level, what regional cooperation should be implemented between EU and the Arab world? What would you do?

On the Arab League side

Currently, the Arab League should not be the front runner as it is representing the past in its way of working. There is a great need for reform, but primarily there is a need to set of a common vision for the Arab world, which the Arab League is lacking. In fact, the Arab world has difficulties to unite around common values.

On the other hand, the European Union could help in support the democratisation process, for example by setting an electoral assistance mission.

On the EU side

The EU could offer a real increase in dialogue, two high level dialogues with one specific in relation to Israel Palestinian. The necessity to have an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue stems from the fact that it blocks all negotiation with the Arab world on a global level.

Consistency and neutrality are two very important concepts which conduct the EU's foreign policy. Yet, it was mentioned that the EU should support the Arab countries which are taking steps towards democratisation and respect of human rights. Hence, the EU should not be neutral in all

cases. Under certain conditions it is important to take clear position.

The tools to foster the relationship EU-Arab world already exist, for example the EU-Arab League office function (in Malta) or the European Neighborhood Policy, but they are not very efficient. It was emphasized that the ENP process is more a unilateral process that a partnership, e.g. there is no political backing.

The question of aid has been raised. How to provide it? Should the EU ask countries what they need or should it only support human rights projects?

2) On the medium level (NGOs), what can NGOs in Europe do to improve the situation in the Arab world?

They could work more closely with the EU, focusing more on what is happening in the region. The civil society could help certain NGOs/think tanks to identify local stakeholders who have expertise to improve work on the local level. The diaspora of Arab intellectuals could play a significant role in this aspect.

On the other side, it would be important to have more people on the ground, to empower the civil society to get platforms and be able to discuss between countries and the Arab world. For example, the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung mentions that it will soon open an office in Cairo and possibly also in Rabat.

3) On the local level of people working together, what can the civil society's actors do to support the Arab world? The EU could empower different NGOs and use the existing framework we mentioned earlier to widen the support. It could be very important to use these NGOs' expertise on the ground to collaborate more efficiently. The collaboration should be more bilateral as multilateral, as countries are not evolving at the same speed towards democratisation.

Finally, on the Euro Arab Forum level. How can the EAF be made a tool for implementing ideas? By organising conferences, debates and by provide space for forums and social space for input of civil society.

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