

APPLICATION FORM

18th New Faces Conference

“Education and Democracy in North Africa – Current Challenges and Visions for the Future”

Tunis, 13-16 June 2013

Personal Information

Family Name	
Given Name	
Recommended by	
DGAP Alumni?	Yes/No: Year:
Gender	
Citizenship	
Date of Birth	Day: Month: Year:
Place of Birth	
Current Address	
Permanent Address (if differing)	
Phone	
Mobile	
Email	

Contribution

Prior to the conference: input statement

My input statement is titled:

Each selected participant will present an input statement (approx. 2000 words) at the conference. For the purpose of applying, it is sufficient to attach a one-page outline (in narrative form!) of your intended input statement to your application. The complete input statements are due on 12 May 2013 and will be circulated among participants prior to the conference.

Application procedure:

Please send this **application form**, your **CV**, a **1-page outline** of your input statement and a short **email** outlining your motivation to participate in the 18th New Faces Conference to eumef1@dgap.org

Application Deadline is 7 April 2013

18th New Faces Conference

**Education and Democracy in North Africa –
Current Challenges and Visions for the Future**

13 – 16 June 2013

Tunis, Tunisia

In Cooperation with:

Robert Bosch **Stiftung**

i f a  Institut für Auslands-
beziehungen e. V.



Dear Candidate,

We kindly invite you to apply for the upcoming 18th New Faces Conference on **“Education and Democracy in North Africa – Current Challenges and Visions for the Future”**. The conference is a project of the EU-Middle East Forum, a program for the advancement of Young Professionals at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). It is carried out in close cooperation with the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the German Federal Foreign Office, the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa), the Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center (KADEM), and the Freie Universität Berlin Cairo Office. Once you have participated in one of EUMEF’s events, you become part of a network that receives information on professional activities of other alumni, grants, scholarships, and other similar programs. Every two years, all alumni of EUMEF meet in Berlin for a reunion.

The main protagonists and hence target group of the conference are **Young Professionals** with approximately two to four years of professional work experience (aged around 27-35) in **academia, politics, the private sector, and civil society organizations** such as research centers, NGOs or the media, who deal with political issues related to the topic of the conference. Participants should come from **Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, Germany, the UK, France, Spain, Italy, and Greece**. The working language during the conference is English.

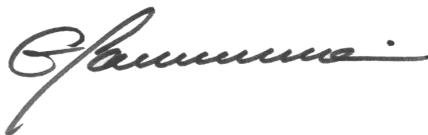
To apply, please submit the attached application form and a one-page outline of your intended contribution to the conference. Please read the Call for Applications as well as the Application Form carefully as they explain the details of the application procedure and the conference. The **application deadline is 7 April 2013**.

The organizers will cover accommodation and provide for travel subsidies based on the country of residence (maximum: 550€ for participants from the EU, 400€ for participants from Turkey, Morocco or Egypt).

Please do not hesitate to contact us at eumef1@dgap.org in case you have any further questions.

We look forward to receiving your application.

Sincerely,



Prof. Dr. Eberhard Sandschneider
Otto Wolff-Director of the Research Institute



Sarah Hartmann
Head of the EU-Middle East Forum

Concept Note

I. General Outline

Given the demographics of the North African countries, a successful and far-reaching reform of the region's education systems is a crucial task ahead in order to achieve sustainable democratic transitions, as well as economic growth and social peace. While public and media attention are currently focusing on elections, constitutions, power struggles and immediate reforms of the political systems, building functioning and truly democratic institutions in the field of education (as well as in other fields) is a more long term process, but no less critical for the political, social and economic development of the region. There has been no lack of educational reform initiatives throughout the past decades, albeit with limited success regarding implementation and outcomes. In light of the current political dynamics and transformations, education sectors have once again become important battlefields for debates about cultural values, national identities and citizenship ideals, while questions of equity and the distribution of educational opportunities remain central to the well-being and stability of North African societies.

This three-day conference aims to explore current problems and challenges in North African education, with a focus on Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, and to develop ideas for possible ways ahead. It will enable cross-country comparisons and an exchange of experiences, also with other countries of the wider region such as Turkey, and bring together academics, practitioners and activists working in the field.

II. Topics

Contributions may address, but are not restricted to, the following topics and questions:

1. Religion, citizenship and national identity

Education has always been an important arena for identity and value struggles. Governments all over the world have tried to use public education as a tool for defining legitimate knowledge and instilling specific norms, values, and identities in generations of future citizens. Some observers suggest, however, that young people in the Arab countries have recently developed and embraced concepts of citizenship and democratic participation not through but rather despite their experiences within formal education systems. This calls for renewed attention to the relationship between statehood, citizenship and education.

Debates about the role of religion in public education sectors and the inclusion or exclusion of religious minorities have gained new urgency and intensity as Egypt and Tunisia, especially, are facing increased polarization and confrontation between Islamist movements and governing parties on one hand and liberal and secular forces on the other hand. In Morocco, issues of identity and citizenship are often linked to the question of language. Graduates of the Arabized school system are faced with institutions of higher education which are still, in large parts, francophone. Since the constitutional reform of 2011, Tamazight has been recognized alongside Arabic as an official language of the state that is eventually to be taught in all schools.

What are the agendas of the new and emerging political actors in the region with regard to education policies, and in how far do they differ from the agendas and policies of the old regimes? Have the Islamist parties actually changed the course of education policies since their rise to power? Are educational approaches with regard to gender roles and gender equality, as well as to ethnic and religious minorities, or marginalized groups, changing? What are the debates currently taking place about the contents of textbooks and curricula, and what is the relationship between these texts and actual classroom practices in schools (teaching methods, classroom culture)?

2. Education as a public or private good: the privatization and marketization of education

Widespread frustration about the low quality of state-provided services, a sense of increasing social injustice and a widening gap between the rich and poor were among the concerns that drove people into the streets of Tunisia and Egypt in 2011. Since the mid 20th century, the provision of free public education had been an important pillar of the authoritarian social contract and a source of legitimacy for the ruling postcolonial regimes. Indeed, widened access to education opened up new opportunities, especially for the poor, lead to increased social mobility and the growth of the middle classes. During the last decades, however, the quality of public education has suffered from overcrowding and a lack of adequate funding, while governments have encouraged the establishment of private institutions. Across the region, high and middle-income families are increasingly opting out of the public systems and resorting to private schools and universities. In addition, the pressure to participate in private after-school tutoring is placing a huge financial burden on families across all social classes and leaving poorer students at a disadvantage.

What have been the effects of privatization and marketization tendencies in education in the different countries of the region? What can be done to improve the quality of publicly provided education and to reduce the disparities between private and public offers? Are reforms and improvements actually reaching the poor, especially those living in rural areas? How has the role of Arabic versus foreign language education developed in different North African countries? And more generally: what is and should be the role of the state, civil society, grassroots initiatives and the private sector when it comes to the provision of education?

3. Academic freedom and university politics: building democratic institutions, enabling freedom of research

Institutions of higher education have traditionally been fertile grounds for critical thought and political dissent. Authoritarian regimes have reacted to this threat by limiting universities' institutional autonomy and curtailing academic freedom. For a long time, higher education systems in the Arab countries have, thus, evolved in the shadow of political constraints. Bureaucratic hurdles, interference of state security and direct and indirect censorship have hindered scientific development. Various reports, such as the Arab Human Development Report

of 2003, have linked the comparatively poor performance of academic systems in the region to the authoritarian settings in which they operated. Not surprisingly, thus, university students and professors played an important role in the Arab uprisings. Their demands focused not only on the overthrow of the ruling regimes, but also more specifically on academic freedom and a reform of university structures and governance. The following questions will, therefore, be of great interest and relevance:

How have the ongoing transformation processes in Egypt and Tunisia and the political reforms in Morocco affected the higher education systems of these countries so far? How have they affected the development of research agendas, especially in the social sciences? Has there been any progress regarding democratization and participation within educational institutions? What has been the role of student movements and organizations both in the uprisings and in institutional reform processes?

4. The role of international actors in education reforms

International actors have played a significant role in the development of education in the Middle East and North Africa ever since the establishment of foreign missionary schools and private universities in the region during the colonial period. Today, international institutions and development agencies play an important role by formulating standards and framing policy discourses that have a strong impact on domestic agendas of education reform. While these organizations might serve as positive catalysts for reform, there are also strong fears of foreign interference, especially when it comes to the content of national curricula.

What is and what should be the role of foreign donors and NGOs in supporting educational reforms? What is expected of the EU in this regard? How can the mobility of students and educators across the Mediterranean be increased and how can it enhance the level of teaching and research in the participating countries?

5. Education and the labor market

Alarmingly high rates of youth unemployment and underemployment, especially among secondary school and university graduates, and the ensuing discontent are often cited as important factors behind the Arab uprisings that started in 2011. The issue is of high urgency, not only in North Africa, but also on the northern shores of the Mediterranean. A much-discussed problem is the apparent mismatch between graduate skills and the needs of the labor market; employers frequently bemoan a lack of “graduate employability”. To what extent can this problem be attributed to shortcomings of the education systems as opposed to economic and labor market policies? What are the expectations and needs of the graduates themselves? And what is the state and status of vocational training in the region?

We welcome contributions addressing these and other current challenges and issues in North African education.

III. Objectives

The key objectives of the conference are to:

- analyze the current challenges in the field of education in North Africa, with a focus on Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco
- bridge academic and non-academic discourses by bringing together researchers, practitioners, policy makers and civil society representatives
- support the young generation of practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers to discuss their visions and findings with senior experts as well as peers
- develop effective policy recommendations for national actors as well as external ones such as the EU
- establish a network between young professionals and initiate new partnerships by bringing together participants from North Africa, the EU, and Turkey.

IV. Methodology

The conference is composed of 1) three to four senior experts' inputs in the plenary and 2) various working group sessions. There will be 2-3 working groups. In each group, every participant presents a brief input statement (around 2000 words) related to one or more of the indicated subject areas. These papers are commented by one expert assigned to each working group, who will also act as facilitator of the working groups' discussions. Whenever suitable, a plenary session will be called in with all participants to give an overview of the status and collective findings of the debate in each working group and to allow for a broader, more interactive exchange among everyone.

The tasks for each participant will hence include:

- Preparation and presentation of a concise written input statement in the form of a commentary addressing one specific aspect within the scope of the above-mentioned topics (around 2000 words; the complete paper is due on **12 May 2013**)
- Active participation during working groups and plenary sessions

V. Application Process

Kindly fill out the attached application form and send it back together with a CV, a one-page outline of your intended contribution and a short email outlining your motivation to participate in the 18th New Faces Conference to cumef1@dgap.org no later than **7 April 2013**.