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Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union  
Directorate for Democracy Support

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## Concept note on the establishment a new EP Young Political Leaders Programme

### SUMMARY

Over recent years, the European Parliament has been developing its relations with Young Leaders in regional settings. The most developed examples are the *Annual fora for Young Leaders from the European neighbourhood* (Maghreb, Middle East, and Eastern Partnership), as well as more recently a *Young Political Leaders initiative for the Sudan* in cooperation with the EU Delegation. These initiatives reflect the ambition and values of the European Parliament in reaching future leaders outside the EU and are complementary to other high level external activities such as the Sakharov Prize.

Building on the existing successful *Annual fora for Young Leaders from the European neighbourhood* and the ad hoc initiatives, a new global *Young Political Leaders Programme* would lead to a more coherent and harmonised EP approach and to enhanced visibility under a common conceptual umbrella.

The Young Political Leaders Programme falls under the budgetary oversight of the DEG and as such shall be developed and organised under the political guidance of DEG, notwithstanding the usual practice of close working cooperation with other relevant bodies, particularly AFET, DEVE and relevant Inter-parliamentary Delegations. On this basis an *Annual Young Political Leaders programme* will be presented and adopted by DEG. It will include the established regional fora, initiatives under CDSA priority countries, *ad hoc* cases to support parliamentary conflict prevention and democracy support.

On 30 April 2015, the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) endorsed this new concept and instrument for dialogue in the form of a comprehensive *Young Political Leaders programme*.

## 1. Background

Over recent years, the European Parliament has been developing its relations with Young Leaders in regional settings. The most developed examples are the *Annual fora for Young Leaders from the European neighbourhood* (Maghreb, Middle East, and Eastern Partnership), as well as more recently a *Young Political Leaders initiative for the Sudan* in cooperation with the EU Delegation (the last scheduled event took place in mid-April 2015, under the political guidance of the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group's (DEG) Co-Chair Linda McAvan and with the participation of a number of DEG members.

These initiatives reflect the ambition and values of the European Parliament in reaching future leaders outside the EU and are complementary to other high level external activities such as the Sakharov Prize. Such values and role of the EU have also been recognised internationally with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In many respects a focus on reaching out to *Young Political Leaders* comes at an important moment in a changing geopolitical context where the EU is faced with instability to the east and south as well as further afield. In some cases formal EU relations with third countries are in reverse, such as with Russia, or under constant strain and disruption due to instability and conflict in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Now more than ever a *Young Political Leaders* programme would send an important signal that, even in such a difficult geopolitical context, the European Parliament wants to uphold the values of the EU including by investing in dialogue with future leaders under a new *Young Political Leaders* programme. The objective of the EP programme would be distinct from existing initiatives (eg EUVP) by focusing on deepening peaceful dialogue and trust with young leaders in third countries, contributing to long-term confidence building and reconciliation and to the overall reinforcement of the EU's image and values in the world as a supporter of peace and democracy. This approach can equip future leaders with new perspectives and prepare the ground for longer-term political dialogue and cooperation. At the same time, the European Parliament will also benefit from inter-action with the Young Political Leaders including potential policy input to parliamentary activities (e.g. interlocutors in Delegation meetings and contributing to the programme of visits to third countries).

## 2. A global concept

Building on the existing successful *Annual fora for Young Leaders from the European neighbourhood* and the ad hoc initiatives (namely for the Sudan), a new global *Young Political Leaders* Programme would lead to a more coherent and harmonised EP approach and to enhanced visibility under a common conceptual umbrella.

The programme would target young *political* activists, including political party representatives, civil society actors and young business leaders. The added value of the programme heavily depends on the quality of the participants, therefore the selection procedure will be revised and could include input from previous YPL participants, EU Political Parties, closer cooperation with other actors such as relevant EU Delegations or/and other organisations working with young leaders around the world (e.g. European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) and their affiliates).

A primacy will be given to enhancing political ownership and interaction between MEPs and the *Young Political Leaders*, for instance a DEG member(s) could establish a cross-party EP "friendship" group of young MEPs to specialise in meeting the *Young Political Leaders* groups.

Finally, adequate resources should be ensured from the budget for Democracy Support for the additional activities in the new Programme. Currently, DEG has a budget of 125,000 euros which

funds one meeting per year for the three regional Young Leaders Forum (i.e one meeting for Maghreb and Middle East region and one meeting for the Eastern Neighbourhood).

### 3. Specific activities

- offer three different types of programmes – a) country programmes, facilitating dialogue in selected individual countries (e.g. CDSA countries, or ad hoc initiatives such as Sudan and Russia); b) country-to-country dialogue and facilitating programmes (e.g. Israel and Palestine, Sudan and South Sudan, Russia and Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan); c) regional dialogue and awareness raising programmes including through the continuation of the existing three regional fora focused on the Neighbourhood.
- develop specific modules/trainings – to be applied on a case by case basis – which would enhance capacity and ensure coherence of EP messages to all *Young Political Leaders* participating in the EP programmes.
- organise a global alumni and networking opportunities for *Young Political Leaders* that have undertaken the EP programme, possibly leading to a *Global Forum* once every legislature gathering participants from different regions (incl. participants from other networks).

### 4. Annual procedure and oversight

The Young Political Leaders Programme falls under the budgetary oversight of the DEG and as such shall be developed and organised under the political guidance of DEG, notwithstanding the usual practice of close working cooperation with other relevant bodies, particularly AFET, DEVE and relevant Inter-parliamentary Delegations. In addition, the implementation of a successful YPL programme requires close cooperation with the EEAS and EU Delegations and other international and non-governmental organisations and actors. On this basis the following procedure could be established for the YPL:

- an *Annual Young Political Leaders programme* will be presented and adopted by DEG. The programme will include the established three regional fora, initiatives under CDSA priority countries, *ad hoc* cases to support parliamentary conflict prevention, mediation or democracy support initiatives (etc) and a draft budget for all activities.
- possibly, a *Global YPL Forum* could be organised once a legislature based on a proposal submitted to and adopted by DEG in close cooperation with all relevant political bodies.

During the transition period from now to the presentation to DEG of the first annual programme, requests for *YPL Programmes* will be submitted to DEG on a case by case basis and accompanied by a draft budget.