# **Young Med Voices Regional 'Virtual' Forum: Harnessing youth-led efforts for a Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the framework of the 2030 Agenda**

Over 40 Young Mediterranean Voices alumni from 18 different countries in the Euro-Mediterranean region, participated in the ‘Virtual’ Euro-Med Debate and Policy Forum that took place from 30 September to 5 October, 2020. Policy dialogue sessions involved EU High-Level representatives including Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement, Oliver Rentschler, Director at the European External Action Service (Directorate for Interinstitutional Relations, Policy Coordination and Public Diplomacy) and Fernando Gentilini, Managing Director for MENA at the European External Action Service.

Madame Elisabeth Guigou and Dr. Nabil Al Sharif, respectively President and Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Foundation, together with Sir Ciarán Devane, Chief Executive of the British Council and Dr. Blanca Moreno-Dodson, Manager of the Center for Mediterranean Integration, also joined the High-Level policy dialogue discussions. Young Mediterranean Voices alumni put forward policy recommendations emerged from debate sessions organised in previous days, connected to key SDGs, in particular linked to education and digitalisation, climate action, economic growth and employment.

*“The Young Mediterranean Voices discussions are important and timely as we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration, a good moment to relaunch the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation”* highlighted Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement in his address to the Young Mediterranean Voices alumni. He also underlined the European Union’s commitment to invest in youth.

Held for the second year, the ‘Virtual’ Forum was organised by the Anna Lindh Foundation in partnership with the Center for Mediterranean Integration and the British Council, with the support of the European Union. It showcased a unique methodology of intercultural youth-led debates, used to draw out key issues and proposals to accelerate the implementation and increase the reach of the 2030 Agenda. Interactive networking sessions and youth consultations also took place, to reflect on the role of youth to promote Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration,

*“We need such forums and consultations with young people to inform our 2021-2027 programming cycle”,* expressedFernando Gentilini, Managing Director for MENA at the European External Action Service. Oliver Rentschler, Director at the European External Action Service (Directorate for Interinstitutional Relations, Policy Coordination and Public Diplomacy), highlighted that due to the COVID19 effects, initiatives such as the Young Mediterranean Voices are more important than ever to “*bridge gaps*” and create *“common perspectives”* towards a *“global collaborative effort”*.

Young Mediterranean Voices from Morocco, highlighted the need to encourage internationalisation of higher education in the MENA region by adopting new and innovative models such as Virtual Exchange, a silver lining to the current situation. She referred to a recent [report](https://www.cmimarseille.org/knowledge-library/internationalization-tertiary-education-middle-east-and-north-africa) by the World Bank and the Center for Mediterranean Integration on the “Internationalization of tertiary education in MENA” as a reference in research in this regard. On climate action, Giorgos, Young Mediterranean Voices from Greece, mentioned the creation of an international body of environmental experts to provide authoritative, independent, interdisciplinary advice to organisations on the economic gains that eco-friendly policies could bring.

The Young Mediterranean Voices programme will follow upon these recommendations and will continue to provide opportunities for intercultural dialogue among young people from Europe and the Southern Mediterranean region, aiming to amplify youth voice in policy-making as global actors of change.

**For more information:**

#YoungMedVoices2030

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