



## New-Med Research Network

### Youth Call for Papers

#### **Realising Youth Potential in the Mediterranean: Unlocking Opportunities, Overcoming Challenges**

Security concerns have returned to dominate contemporary debates on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This call for papers will seek to go beyond a narrow focus on hard security issues, particularly pronounced among Western audiences, to encourage local perspectives on some of the most pressing socio-economic and political challenges impacting societies in the region, “youth” first and foremost.

Young people between the ages of 15 and 29 are the single largest and fastest expanding demographic group in the MENA. High unemployment rates, lack of affordable housing, a mismatch between educational attainment and job prospects and unequal opportunities for migration and mobility are among the most pressing challenges hampering the self-development of youth in the Mediterranean and broader MENA region. Women are particularly exposed to many of these challenges. At the same time, youth are actively pushing back and demanding increased freedoms and opportunities, engaging in innovative forms of civic activism often at great personal risk. Youth in the MENA are in a number of cases challenging the states' and the elites' dominance over traditional sources of information, contributing to a more open, inclusive and diversified media environment while exploring new tools and resources to magnify their voices and concerns.

While many studies have focused on the category of “youth” in the Arab world, it is rare to hear how young people themselves view and interpret developments unfolding in their societies. Understanding the hopes, challenges and aspirations affecting new generations in the MENA region will be key to develop shared and inclusive modes of cooperation and help the MENA progress towards a more stable and sustainable future. Yet, the role of international power dynamics and the positioning of MENA states within the international neo-liberal order cannot be overlooked when examining past, present and future trajectories in the region. The involvement of large international companies in the extraction of natural resources, often in cooperation with corrupt local elites, is depriving new generations of the means to promote sustainable and more inclusive developmental models. In a similar fashion, while threat perceptions have skyrocketed as a result of the many conflicts and civil wars taking place across the MENA, few have examined the role of foreign exports in weapons and surveillance technologies in exacerbating these conflicts while strengthening the capabilities of authoritarian regimes. In this context, there is a growing risk of losing sight of the underlining causes of the 2010 Arab uprisings, moving back to old paradigms that prioritize stability and economic gain over the goal of sustainable development, inclusive growth and political representation.

With these considerations in mind, the New-Med Research Network will give voice to youth themselves, providing a platform for **8 young professionals** to present their ideas and perspectives on the major socio-economic and political challenges impacting states and societies in the region and the future prospects of youth in particular. Candidates should be **under the age of 32**, hold an internationally **valid passport** from, or **permanent residency** in, **one of the**

**countries of the MENA region<sup>1</sup>**, and should be preferably based at a **university, NGO or local media outlet**.

Candidates who fit the above profile are invited to submit applications to **write an English-language policy paper**, between **2,500-3,000 words in length** (complete with footnotes and bibliography).

Policy papers should critically address how youth in the region are impacted by these challenges, while identifying concrete examples of youth-led initiatives that seek to address and overcome them. Proposals that provide innovative bottom-up perspectives are particularly welcome, as are analyses that adopt a micro-level approach to understanding these social, economic and political challenges rather than a top-down emphasis on states, geopolitics and hard security concerns. Analyses incorporating critical approaches to macro-concepts that are very often used to frame issue areas in the region, including “change” and “continuity”, “stability” and “chaos”, but also “youth resilience”, and the concept “youth” itself, are highly encouraged. Candidates should outline a number of concrete and constructive policy recommendations directed at relevant stakeholders in a given state, sub-state or regional context.

Candidates can choose to focus on one of the following sub-themes but are encouraged to propose research topics that go beyond these specific examples.

- Unemployment and Labour Market Reform
- Educational Attainment and Skills Mismatch
- Intra- and inter-regional Migration and Mobility Challenges
- Civic Activism on Gender Issues
- Conventional and Alternative Media as Drivers for Change
- International Involvement in the Extraction of Natural Resources and the Future of Sustainable Development
- The Impact of International Arms Sales and Surveillance Technologies on the Region
- Roll-back of post-2010 Political Transformation Processes and the Return of the stability-driven Paradigm

### **Application**

Candidates should submit applications to Ms. Nathalie Champion (n.champion@iai.it) no later than **30 November 2017**.

Applications should include:

- A Cover Letter (max 500 words) in English outlining the candidate’s experiences, innovative ideas/approaches and motivations for applying
- CV in English (max 2 pages)
- A 400 word abstract in English of the policy paper that includes a statement about the focus of the paper or the precise research questions and a motivation for the significance and novelty of the analysis and approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Israel, Lebanon, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Tunisia. Applicants from Turkey are also eligible.

## **Selection**

Successful candidates will be selected by the **New-Med Steering Committee** on the basis of their **innovative research proposals, CV** and **cover letter**. Final decisions will be made by the Steering Committee, which will pursue an adequate gender, age and nationality balance among the selected candidates. Successful candidates will be contacted individually by mid-January 2018.

Selected authors will receive a **remuneration of 400 euros for the policy paper** upon its final submission and after approval by the New-Med Steering Committee. Selected authors will also be invited to present their papers at a **one-day international conference** scheduled for June 2018 in Rome, Italy.

The New-Med network will cover travel costs, accommodation (two nights) and a welcoming reception followed by an informal networking dinner before the conference. This will allow participants to get to know each other and engage in network building.

Following the conference, authors will be given the opportunity to revise and update their papers and these will be considered for publication as an IAI Research Paper within the framework of the New-Med Research Network.

## **About New-Med**

Established in 2014, New-Med is a research network of Mediterranean experts and policy analysts with a special interest in the complex social, political, cultural and security-related dynamics that are unfolding in the Mediterranean region. The network is developed by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), in cooperation with the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, the Compagnia di San Paolo of Turin, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and the German Marshall Fund (GMF) of the United States.

A priority of the network is to promote a non-Eurocentric vision of the region, featuring as much as possible views from the South and other areas of the Mediterranean. The network also seeks to provide a platform where emerging researchers can put forward new perspectives about regional cooperation. By undertaking research and outreach activities, this “track II” initiative aims to foster the scholarly reflection on the changing scenarios in and around the Mediterranean and provide key input to the political dialogue taking place in international fora, including in the context of the OSCE Mediterranean Dialogue. Since its inception, the New-Med Research Network has organised nine international conferences and published thirty-nine research papers on various themes tied to Euro-Mediterranean relations.

A complete description of the New-Med Research Network, including access to past publications, is available from [IAI's website](#).

More information on the New-Med Research Network's previous call for papers targeting MENA youth can be found [here](#).