

GLEN Internship Report 2013

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Création et soutien d'un réseau associatif local

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AMEDD

The internship *Création et soutien d'un réseau associatif local* took place in Médenine, Tunisia as well as in other regions of the Tunisian South. Political situation in the area was stable and the participants encountered no security problems, however considerable area of south regions are (respectively were at the time of our residence there) considered by both German and Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a "red zone". Some cities show certain level of air/water pollution however the participants believe they were not affected by it. Médenine is a quiet town with no major tourist attractions.

Host organizastiom AMEDD (Association maghrébo-européenne de dialogue démocratique) was created in 2011 as a co-project of young people from Douz, Tunisia and Germany with the goal of enhancement of the civil society activities in the area and human rights support. Its main task has been to form a network of local civil associations in order to enable them to cooperate effectively.

The initial goal of the internship was to assist in creating the very network mentioned above. However due to the change of venue of the internship, the contents had to be changed too. The task of the internship then became to promote active participation of young people in their local communities and their participation in civil society activities generally. The participants successfully carried out six workshops together with local youth and youth activists that will be described further below.

Stáž s názvem *Création et soutien d'un réseau associatif local* (Tvorba a podpora místní asociativní sítě) probíhala ve městě Médenine v Tunisku a v dalších městech tuniského jihu. Politická situace v regionu byla stabilní a účastníci stáže se nesečkali s žádnými bezpečnostními problémy, na druhou stranu byla v době konání stáže značná část jižních oblastí považována německým i českým ministerstvem zahraničí za takzvaně „červenou zónu“. V některých městech byla zaznamenána zvýšená hladina znečištění vzduchu nebo vody, účastníci se ale domnívají, že tím nebyli nijak výrazně ovlivněni.

Přijímací organizace AMEDD (Magrebo-evropská asociace pro demokratický dialog) vznikla v roce 2011 jakožto společný projekt mladých lidí z Douzu (Tunisko) a z Německa s cílem posílit aktivity občanské společnosti v regionu a podporu lidských práv. Jejím hlavním úkolem bylo vytvořit síť místních občanských sdružení a organizací tak, aby spolu mohly efektivně spolupracovat.

Původním cílem stáže bylo podílet se na vytváření této sítě. Vzhledem ke změně místa konání stáže ale musela být změněna i samotná náplň. Novým úkolem se tak stala podpora aktivní participace mládeže na veřejném životě v jejich komunitách a podpora zapojení mladých lidí do občanských aktivit obecně. Účastníce stáže úspěšně vykonaly šest workshopů spolu s mládeží a mladými aktivisty v daném regionu, což je dále popsáno níže.

Original contents of the internship called *Création et soutien d'un réseau associatif local (Creation and support for the local associative network)* were meant to consist in creating, strengthening or supporting a network of local (that is in regions of the Tunisian South) NGOs active in civil society issues or human rights. After the 2011 Revolution many new associations sprouted up however there has been a significant lack of coordination and effective cooperation among them. For these reasons, the director of AMEDD association proposed the above mentioned topic.

Due to the reportedly unstable political situation in Douz according to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the place of internship had to be changed. As a new venue, the city of Médenine (South-East Tunisia) was chosen. Along with this, the main topic of the internship was changed too. Together with the director and other members of the AMEDD organization, we as the participants outlined new contents and goals of our internship.

The main goal that we set out was to participate in endorsing involvement of youngsters in the civil society activities. We outlined workshops in several cities of the south regions which would be carried out in cooperation with local activist groups or associations. The workshops consisted both in sharing our strategies and ways of facilitating a non-formal learning workshop with activists and in realization of a specific workshop for local youth, always within the frame of active participation in the public life. The outcome of each workshop was a specific project on a topic chosen by the youth participants - a topic that they consider important in their local community – and carried out by the youngsters themselves (e.g. migration, environment pollution, infrastructure, violence, bureaucracy, graduate unemployment etc.) Thus the students were encouraged to carry out their own projects which would surpass the workshop and would continue and multiply in their local communities. We successfully carried out six three day-long workshops (in Médenine, Gabes, Gafsa, Kebili - Noueil and Zarzis). We were also planning to implement the so called League of Young Human Rights Supporters however we did not due to the lack of time. A closing festival where all groups involved in the workshops could present the projects was also on the agenda, however we did not manage to fundraise enough financial resources to put the it into realization.

Despite some unimplemented projects, we consider our work very successful. During the activities we established solid partnerships with the local associations, especially in Médenine, Gafsa and Mansoura, Kebili. We are especially happy that participants of our workshops created very interesting and elaborate projects while some of them were implemented successfully in their communities. Amongst the projects there were for example youth clubs at school, ecological workshop, box for ideas how to improve the municipality placed at the town hall, video report about pollution in the area, drafts of new recycling bins, graffiti bringing attention to domestic violence, theatre about gender discrimination etc.

As for methodology, we were applying both participatory and creative methods during our workshops. We put stress on horizontal learning process as well as tried to make sure that the activities combined different approaches of expression – drawing, theatre, discussions etc. We were paying lot of attention to the group dynamics – if the participants were more or less opened, how they got absorbed in the

topic, how they interacted together and with us, how they were getting along in the structure of the activities etc. Naturally, we integrated energizers, reflections and evaluations. We wanted to stimulate the participants rather than to instruct them. However, we also received critics that we don't provide enough "hard" knowledge – something we were deliberately avoiding in the beginning. So later on we introduced some theoretical materials, however we were not satisfied with how it worked within the frame of the workshop and we rather continued with non-formal learning attitude mostly. We didn't speak Arabic however most of the participants were fluent in French so we didn't encounter any major problems regarding language barrier. If a problem arose, our local colleague provided translation. We organized and led the workshop together with my tandem partner while the director of AMEDD became our colleague and assistance.

Our partner organization provided all the necessary support for us. From the beginning we received all important information, the director of AMEDD found us an apartment to live in and helped to deal with all the administration from contracts to visa prolongation etc. Some other members of the host organization that we met with gave us a great insight into the culture, our work and people in the field and continued being our support throughout the whole experience. Concerning the work planning and implementing it, me and my tandem partner got the possibility to outline the contents and structure of our internship, we had final word while decision-making and we outlined and carried out all the workshops, all of course with support, guidance and help if needed of our colleague, the director of AMEDD. Besides the workshops as the main content of the internship, we could freely engage ourselves in other activities – e.g. planning international youth exchange.

However we don't consider the decision to move the internship into a city where the organization had not enough background as a good one. Due to the lack of facilities, we met difficulties in organization of our work, we experienced certain lack of support - we would appreciate contact with more members of the organization regularly - and, especially in the beginning, we had to deal with roles distribution in our team together with my tandem partner and the AMEDD director, that we later on managed to get through via feedbacks, evaluations etc., as we lacked more stable ground for our team work. Also, the very contents of our work had to change significantly due to the change of venue of the internship.

Nevertheless, we believe that we managed to deal with the above mentioned obstacles successfully. As I have written above, we tried to solve every difficulty that showed up as soon as possible. We used the methods of evaluation and feedbacks frequently to evaluate and improve our functioning as a team. We adapted to the new situation which emerged from moving the place of the internship – we were provided by AMEDD with a space to come up with our own ideas about in which should be the core of the internship and we did outline and implement it.

As for (not only work-related) challenges, the biggest challenge was to deal with intercultural differences, in both working and non-working activities, even though we thought that we were richly equipped with both intercultural theory and practice. We gained yet again deeper insight into interculturality and I believe that we managed to build stronger bridges between our cultures.

I also deepened and developed skills of cooperation and work in different situations and conditions, dealing with interpersonal conflicts, learning from my colleagues and participants of our workshops or sorting out unexpected situations. From the expertise point of view I gained useful experience and knowledge about how to structure and lead workshops, how to tutor different activities, how to facilitate communication and work with people of different experience and competences and how to attain given goals. I enriched my experience with Youth in Action programme planning as well.

What I brought back to my community and my life is more balanced vision about interculturality – both from the positive and the negative side. Because only if we take into account both sides, if we don't see things black and white, if we don't close eyes, only then our mutual relations become truly equal. Besides, I am able to deal better with conflicts and stand up for myself and the others. At the same time I am more humble, more and more aware. I believe that I became more professional.

Together with my German tandem and our Tunisian partner (coming from partnership in Mansoura, Kebili that was established during our stay there or from AMEDD organization) we have been planning to carry out an international youth exchange under the Youth in Action programme. The 10-day long project will take place in the Czech Republic and will bring together 25 young people from Tunisia, Morocco, Germany and the Czech Republic. The main topic is active citizenship, the role of youth in the civil society and their participation in the public life and transition to democracy. Thus the project in a way continues with the issues tackled during the internship workshops however its main aim is to bring together young people from different cultural backgrounds and give them space to share opinions and ideas, exchange experience, get inspired, find out new tools and methods how to become active in their local communities and how to realize their own projects, get more engaged, establish networks together and implement projects in their local communities.

Apart from our GEA we would like to continue with the cooperation built up with our partners in Tunisia and enable more networking on both Tunisia – Germany/Czech Republic level as well as Czech Republic – Germany level. We want to cooperate and establish more two-way projects together and shift the process on more equal level. We want to exchange global visions and implement them in our local communities. We believe that our internship put basis on which we can all build on and attain bigger goals.