

REPORT

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

REGIONAL OFFICE
GULF STATES

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Youth in Economic Development: Saudi Students in Berlin

A STUDY PROGRAMME ON THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

In an increasingly complex and globalised world, both Germany and Saudi Arabia face the challenge of educating and training future executives adequately in order to provide real perspectives for employment and thereby use economic potential effectively.

Against this background, the Regional Office Gulf States and the Domestic Programmes Team for the first time invited a delegation of Saudi students to Berlin. From 16-22 October 2016, this pilot project provided a forum to actively discuss economic issues and possibilities for young people to contribute to economic and social development with German experts and young professionals.

The extensive and varied programme comprised numerous lectures, table talks and visits in cooperation with different economic and political institutions. At the core was the dynamic exchange of ideas and mutual learning: Not only the young Saudis learned about political and economic institutions and economic processes in Germany, but also the German side gained a better understanding of Saudi Arabian society. In this respect, the lively conversation with Dr Gerhard Wahlers, Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Department European and International Cooperation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, was a successful start to an interesting and informative week.

A particular challenge for Saudi Arabia and Germany is the effective education and training of young professionals and prospective executives to provide them with valuable options of employment and to successfully promote economic potential. This, for instance, was an important topic when visiting the Baden-Wuerttemberg State Representation. In an engaging dia-

logue with representatives from the Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University (DHBW), the Saudi students learned about the dual education system in Germany and exchanged ideas, how visionary youths could be supported in the best possible way. With representatives from the active start-up scene in Berlin and the Junior Chamber International Germany, the curious Saudi students further discussed how young and ambitious people can foster social entrepreneurship and what makes a favourable environment for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Besides discussing socio-economic aspects, the programme aimed to give insights on legislation, regulation and decision-making processes as well as their effects for economic measures in Germany. Additionally, a guided tour in the German Bundestag and the Bundesrat and discussions with MP Dagmar Wöhrl, Parliamentary State Secretary (off duty) and Chair of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as the German Council on Foreign Relations and Deutsche Welle stimulated enriching talks and constructive exchanges on how youth can shape the future of their country and assist prosperity and economic stability.

The great mutual interest was also highlighted by visits to German institutions that are dealing with Middle Eastern affairs. The Saudi students were eager to discover the Museum for Islamic Art and to learn about the work of the German-Arab Friendship

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Association (DAFG). In subsequent engaging conversations with the representatives, the students elaborated their stances on development policies and cultural matters.

In this way, the extraordinary one-week dialogue programme not only presented a creative platform to learn about the other country's socio-political and economic conditions, but it also fostered mutual understanding and cooperation among the new generation in Saudi Arabia and Germany.