



European Citizenship Awards

Mohammed Alsaud

Description of the nominee:

Mohammed is a Syrian activist who has been working for the last 8 years for democracy and human rights both in the Middle East and Europe. He has been living as a political refugee in Sweden for the last year where he founded a non-governmental organisation: The Young Republic which aims to empower young Syrians to foster their democratic participation, civic engagement and inclusion in their host communities, and, in the long run, prepare them to build a new democratic republic in post-war Syria.

Despite the difficulties implied by the process of asylum, Mohammed was full time involved in building this initiative, mobilizing young people from different backgrounds (migrants, refugees, locals, etc.) and working for building an inclusive society where people build a more diverse and stronger democracy."

Impact achieved:

Mohammed has been working in breaking the stereotypes related to 'the other'; through The Young Republic he worked on gathering young people living in Stockholm, from very different backgrounds, around common objectives: a democratic society where everyone participate fully and contribute to the respect of Human Rights of all. democracy is strong and sustainable when all people involved participate fully. There is currently a diverse growing core of young people (Highly educated young professionals, NEET, refugees, international students..) who met thanks to The young Republic and are currently working on exploring the realities of civic engagement, democratic participation and Human Rights in the society. This core itself is very unique, as those people would not have met nor worked together in 'regular' settings. Mohammed is using creative methods and tools in his work specially non-formal education and gaming techniques to create real social bridges for a stronger democracy.

What makes the initiative innovative?

In my view, the main innovative asset of The Young Republic and of Mohammed Alsaud as an activist is the shift of paradigms. Young refugees and migrants are not only people who are needing help and waiting for the host communities to include them and work for their rights. They are taking the lead working for their active participation and inclusion, for their rights and for building stronger diverse

democracies that will benefit everyone. Young Refugees are inviting and mobilizing host communities and other migrants to join them and work for inclusion, they initiated the discussion about the problems that are facing democracy and the ideal of inclusive society and mobilized people to work collaboratively with them. This is a total shift of paradigms mainly when the mainstream media is illustrating refugees as a threat to democracy and stability: through the Young Republic they are proving the contrary, they are leading the process of strengthening democracy in their host communities and at the same time they are willing to learn more about the democratic system in order to be prepared to build a democracy in Syria after the conflict.

Mohammed is, from this perspective, a very innovative young leader: once arrived to Sweden and applying for asylum, he founded an organization 'The Young Republic', mobilized other youth, and started putting into practice his leadership and expertise in the civil society work for democracy in his new host community: he shifted the paradigms: young refugees are taking the lead to work for a strengthened democracy and an inclusive society. Also, the way he uses tools and techniques at The Young Republic from non-formal education and experimental learning are also part of his creativity and innovation. Mohammed is planning now to extend his work through The Young Republic through-out Europe.

Contribution to European values:

"Through his work on gathering young people from different backgrounds including migrants, refugees, minorities and 'more privileged' youth to work together on reaching a common objective of an inclusive peaceful society, Mohammed is promoting pluralism, non-discrimination and equality. In fact when these young people get to know each other and work collaboratively they overcome the stereotypes and prejudices that can be anchored in the society.

The work of The Young Republic has Democracy as its principal aim. Young people tackle democracy-related thematic, promote active

Participation and citizenship among all parts of the society.

The whole initiative is working towards the respect of human rights of all, including the migrants, the minorities and the more vulnerable. All the programs and projects of The Young Republic are using a human Rights Based approach and are aligned with the values of the Human Rights conventions."

Website or promotional materials:

<https://www.facebook.com/the.young.republic.syria/>