



## **Social Audit Report 2013 – 2014**

Asfar is a dynamic CIC, designed to inspire, provide a platform and offer a support network to young people, students and graduates specialising in and interested by the Middle East.

Through a quarterly e-Journal and Youth projects, Asfar works with the next generation of the Middle East's writers, thinkers and photographers to exhibit their abilities to a wide audience, as well as Young People aged 18 to 30, to support them to develop their Life, Personal and Professional skills, while also gaining wider exposure to different cultures, and promoting social responsibility through Citizenship workshops and Volunteering.

### **e-Journal 2013-2014**

Between 2013 to 2014, Asfar's e-Journal focused on the history, society, culture, development and politics of the Middle East. Asfar's e-Journal introduced new ideas, innovative articles and magnificent images of the region through it's' e-Journal platform.

Remaining politically neutral and non-partisan, Asfar's e-Journal covers a full range of topics: from geography to art, languages to society and from history to cookery. Asfar reviews the past and considers the Middle East's future from a regional, state and local perspective.

The e-Journal is managed by over 10 young Volunteers, who act as Regional Editors, working with 35-40 voluntary Contributors per year. The majority of Volunteers are 18 to 30 years of age and seeking to develop their skills as writers, photographers, thinkers, editors, while also gaining essential Work Experience. Each Contributor is matched to their own Editor, and working together as a team, they develop publishable submissions. The e-Journal is published on a quarterly basis.

Furthermore, all Volunteers, whether Regional Editors or Contributors, receive ongoing support, incorporating Information, Advice and Guidance; CV building; Interview advice; and a guaranteed Reference representing their contribution to the Asfar e-Journal. All participants benefit from other events and activities, including free places at conferences, Career talks, Training and Networking opportunities. Through these activities, Asfar, is not only supporting young people to gain publication, but to also develop wider skills, work experience and increase their readiness for employment.



## Youth Projects 2013-2014

From January 2013, Asfar started to deliver its' first EU/British Council Youth in Action programme entitled Inspire-Develop-Create or more commonly known as the Asfar University Programme. This programme was delivered from January 2013 to March 2014.

The Asfar University Programme, encouraged the inclusion of young people, students and graduates from a range of different backgrounds - educational, cultural and socio-economic - with the objective to develop their key creative and entrepreneurial skills in research, writing, publishing, social media and education, through active participation in investigating Democracy, their EU Citizenship and key themes in relation to the Middle East.

Over 30 young people took part in a number of workshops delivered by Asfar, at key UK Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and Youth Centres in order to develop inter-cultural understanding; skills; develop and explore citizenship; and youth in politics, promoting the development of participants' own volunteering or social change projects.

Participants explored:

- **Political/Civic responsibilities and EU Citizenship**
- **Cross-cultures and Cultural awareness**
- **Comparative Middle Eastern cultures**

Skills development will include:

- **Communication and Inter-personal skills**
- **Project management**
- **CV building and Interview techniques**
- **Social change and Volunteering project design**
- **Proposal writing and Fundraising skills**

The key emphasis focused on developing young peoples' existing skills and learning new skills in a non-formal learning environment and included Cultural awareness; Political and Civic responsibilities; Fundraising and Project management, the Asfar University programme improved Young People's employability, confidence in society and interaction with wider communities and cultures.



Workshops focused on:

- **Europe vs. the Middle East**
- **Skills development and Employability**
- **Volunteering and Social action**

The most popular workshop was 'How to Get into the Media' with guest speaker BBC Arabic journalist Abubakr Al-Shamahi, who provided a range of essential information for young people interested in working in the Media sector, with specialist focus on international affairs.

Key programme achievements included:

- **10 Young People entered employment**
- **Over 30 Young People achieved their EU Youthpass**
- **Peer-to-peer Mentoring**
- **Increased participation in Volunteering**
- **Development of Young Peoples' Skills and awareness of their EU Citizenship**

### **Development Consultancy Services**

A key development of Asfar's work in December 2013, involved the implementation of Development Consultancy Services for NGOs; Charities; and other Voluntary and Community sector organisations. Asfar's key objective in offering Development Consultancy Services is to support the capacity building of new community-focused organization, while also to support established organisations with a social mission.

Development Consultancy Services has ensured a small income for Asfar, allowing it to be re-distributed both to the Asfar University Programme and e-Journal. And although it is not an immense funding stream, it has the capacity to be sustainable if enough focus is given to this area.



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## Objectives for 2014-2015

Asfar is committed to both its' development as an organisation, to avoid reliance on charitable grants, as well as providing real opportunities for Young People aged 18 to 24 and Young Adults aged 25 to 30.

Key objectives for the forthcoming year include:

- 1. Re-development of the Asfar e-Journal site;**
- 2. Launch of Erasmus+ Transnational programmes;**
- 3. International Partnership Development;**
- 4. Founding of an Asfar Trust funded solely by Asfar CIC to benefit all Young People in need;**
- 5. Wider Development Consultancy projects to offer paid work experience to Young People;**
- 6. Development of more diverse and inclusive programmes.**