

## Network Meeting – Anna Lindh Foundation Netherlands

### Report

**Date:** 29/03/2017

**Location:** Simon Carmiggelt-zaal (sixth floor), Centrale Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA), Oosterdokskaade 143, 1011 DL Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

#### **13:00 - 13:15 Welcome and introduction**

This network meeting, which aimed to enable the members of the Anna Lindh Foundation network to be informed about each other's activities and approaches to current challenges in their work for intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Med region, took place in Amsterdam on 29 March 2017. The meeting started with an informal round of introductions – all attending members of the Dutch Anna Lindh Foundation network introduced themselves and briefly explained what their organization's work is about.

#### **13:15 - 13:30 Updates from the Anna Lindh Foundation Headquarters**

Following, Jaco Stoop (EUROCLIO – Head of Network) provided updates of the developments and activities of the Anna Lindh Foundation, starting with a short introduction of the entire Foundation and how it is structured and governed. The Anna Lindh Foundation currently tries to reassess its relationship with the individual national networks, because they are the most important asset of the entire Foundation. Interaction between the ALF Secretariat and the Networks, funding opportunities, and the question of how the networks can benefit from each other were among the issues discussed during the latest Heads of Network meeting in October 2016 in Valetta, Malta.

Following this update, several comments were made by the present members. The overall response was that it is good for the Dutch network to take action and to be more engaged with each other, and the network was even described as “one big family”. The attending members were thus optimistic about the Dutch network and saw possibilities to connect more. It was agreed that the mission of the Anna Lindh Foundation can even be seen as more relevant and urgent than ever.

#### **13:30 - 15:00 Updates from the network**

Sander Francken gave a presentation about a project he is currently developing with support of the Anna Lindh Foundation. This project is the development of a film within his organization Sander Francken Film. The film project is about (the conflicts between different) cultural identities. While it aims to reach a broader public, it is mostly aimed at people who are formed by two separate cultures (of which one is often Western, while the other is non-Western). The film project thus wants to address issues of different, conflicting cultural identities and an unbridgeable culture gap, to reach a target audience that experiences similar struggles. Radicalization is also a theme that Sander Francken would like to address with this film. He sees that radicalization is often a result of such an unbridgeable culture gap – following an internal identity struggle, a person can destroy one of their two identities. “Radicalization, to me, is radically distancing yourself from everything Western.” 42 per cent of the film project is now funded by the Anna Lindh Foundation. The idea is to start the shooting of the film in 2018, and to release it in 2019.

Subsequently, Elsi Rizvanolli gave a presentation about his organization, Abraham Path Initiative. He introduced himself and his background, and presented Abraham Path as an NGO that initiates walking trails in the Middle East, based on the concepts of walking, storytelling and hospitality. As a non-religious organization, Abraham Path sees Abraham as a cultural interlocutor, common to all religions in the region where the Anna Lindh Foundation is active, who is associated with values such as being kind to strangers and hospitality. The trails that the organization sets out are all built with the help of local partners. The local partners eventually manage the entire walking trail and logistics.

Elsi Rizvanolli subsequently showed a video of the most successful project of Abraham Path: a walking trail in Palestine. The video demonstrates how the trails are focused on the nature and culture of the regions, even if they cross “difficult” countries. Abraham Path Initiative was founded during the Iraq War, in 2003, as a counter message to the image of violence of the Middle East. “We want to show a different face of the Middle East,” Elsi Rizvanolli stressed.

### **15:15 - 16:00 Governance**

After a short coffee break, the meeting continued with a governance session in which the Head of Network proposed to make two changes to the internal rules. Firstly, the introduction of a member council, and secondly, an addition to the internal rules that states the responsibilities of Anna Lindh network members. The Head of Network can, according to these changes to the internal rules, exclude members from the network if they do not act upon these responsibilities.

The main aims and tasks of a member council will be advising on priority setting, supporting the Head of Network, and sometimes acting as representatives of the Head of Networks. The member council moreover aims to meet twice a year to discuss the general strategy and priorities of the network, as well as risks for the network. They could also, for instance, come up with a recruitment strategy for an organization that they would like to include in the network. They could furthermore oversee some of the decisions by the Head of Network, such as the accepting of membership applications, so that they function as an extra control mechanism, making these decisions more democratic. However, input from the member council itself – if installed – on its own tasks and mission is also welcome.

The overall reactions to the installment of a member council were positive. To allow more members to vote, however, it was decided that the voting will take place through an online survey.

In line with the responsibilities of members, the question as raised whether members should include the Anna Lindh Foundation logo on their website. This is not necessary, although it is a good way to advocate the Dutch network. However, it should always be indicated that the particular organization is a member of the (Dutch) Anna Lindh network, to avoid confusion that the Anna Lindh Foundation was involved in (organizing) an event, project, et cetera.

Another topic that was discussed was the newsletter for the Dutch Anna Lindh network. The Head of Network has not sent out this newsletter in a while, for various reasons. As several members expressed that they really enjoyed receiving this newsletter, the Head of Network will revive the newsletter as soon as possible.



### **16:00 - 18:00 Human Library Workshop**

In the last, interactive, part of the afternoon meeting, Martijn Bergsma, from Youth for Exchange and Understanding (JUB), gave a workshop on the Human Library methodology. He started his workshop with introducing himself and his background, and explaining the concept of a Human Library, which he started in Groningen. A Human Library is, in short, an event where people can come to have dialogues to (hopefully) overcome prejudices and stereotypes.

This introduction was followed by a “game” called two truths, one lie. All present members wrote down three things about themselves, of which two things were true and one was not. In conversations with the others, the participants then tried to find out which of the written statements was a lie. This interactive exercise was a good way to get to know each other better, and to see if any stereotypes were present.

Subsequently, Martijn Bergsma read out a short story, and asked the present members what images they then created in their minds. Were there any people of color, people with disabilities, or people who are gay in the story, as imagined in their minds? This practice made the present members aware of their own way of viewing things. A discussion on the definition of the terms “stereotype” and “prejudice” followed.

The concept of the Human Library was then explained in more detail, including a short introduction video. The concept of the Human Library started in Denmark, in 2000 and provides people with the opportunity to “read” a human book in the form of a one-on-one dialogue. Each human book is connected to a certain stereotype, about which the “reader” can ask questions.

To show what the Human Library methodology is really like, Martijn Bergsma brought a human book with him: Robert Katende. His “cover title” was “Ugandan Homosexual Refugee”. Sander

Francken volunteered to have a dialogue with this human book, and asked him questions about his background and current environment.

After this dialogue, a few other members asked questions to Robert Katende. The general response to the Human Library concept was very positive. The workshop was ended with an evaluation session, in which all participants chose a card with a picture that represented their mood.

The entire network meeting then finished with everyone filling in an evaluation form on the entire meeting. After this, there was the opportunity for the members to enjoy drinks and talk some more with each other.

## Evaluation

Overall, the results of the evaluation of this network meeting were positive. Members were especially enthusiastic about the Human Library Workshop, which they found “useful”, “insightful”, “enjoyable”, “interactive” and a “mind opening experience”. The Human Library Workshop, as well as the presentations by members, made the shared work of the members more tangible.

About the updates from the network session, members said it was informing and useful to have the bigger picture, but it could have been more concise.

The governance session was also considered useful, but the feedback was that it could also have been shorter, and more practical, in for example asking the network what they can do to improve the network. The meeting could also improve by a greater variety in presentations, in the sense that more different media forms (images/films) could be used.

In general, however, members evaluated the event as very useful, especially because it offered the opportunity to meet other members of the network and to interact with like-minded people. A suggestion that was made was to introduce a “dating system” during the next meeting, in which the members could briefly explore what they could do to work together. Other positive reactions were that the overall meeting was clear and well organized.

