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NIASD NEWSLETTER WINTER 2010

We are happy to inform you about the activities which have recently taken place at the Netherlands Institute for Academic Studies in Damascus (NIASD).

1. Science and Education

Preparations and promotion of three NIASD summer courses 2011: 1. Intercultural Communication, 2. Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture, and 3. Arabic (December 2010)

The promotion posters, information documents, application forms, information about accomodation and the terms and conditions for the NIASD summer courses 2011 have been produced and distributed. The promotion materials are published on the website and distributed among the Dutch Higher Education institutions, Syrian Higher Education institutions, students and other contacts.

Students can apply (see www.niasd.org for more information) for the following 3 summer courses untill 1 March 2011:

- Summer course Arabic: 14 July-10 August 2011;
- Summer course Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture: 19 June-10 July 2011, third edition;
- Summer course Intercultural Communication: 26 June-7 July 2011, second edition.

Preparations and promotion of the "Training Course in Project Development and Management for Women 2011" (December 2010)

The institute together with the Danish Institute in Damascus (DID) will offer the 'Training Course in Project Development and Management for Women 2011'. The course promotion materials have been jointly designed and distributed among potential target groups.

The course is aimed at people who are working in or (who have been working) with small to medium size Syrian organizations, who engage or want to engage in project based activities with a special focus on women and gender issues and who wish to acquire, or

improve, their project development and management skills. Both women and men can apply for this course. The course is aimed at acquiring a thorough insight in all the phases of the project cycle, as well as the technical and personal skills which are necessary for successful project development and management.

The course is designed and will be delivered by the Maastricht School of Management and is sponsored by Dutch NGO HIVOS, The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus and the Danish NGO KVINFO. The course consists of four three-to-four day sessions, to be held in the period February - October 2011. This course is a follow up of the earlier succesful training course “Project Development and Management” (PDM) which was delivered in 2008-2009.

Marketing the MENA Scholarship Programme (December 2010)

Upon the request of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus, the institute assisted with the promotion of the MENA Scholarship Programme during the month of December 2010 and will assist with the application processing for the MENA Scholarship Programme 2011.

This programme is an initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is administrated by the Dutch organization NUFFIC. It provides scholarships for short courses in the Netherlands for Syrian mid-career professionals employed by organizations in the fields of Water Management, Environmental Sciences, Business Administration and Management, Agriculture and Geology and Earth Sciences. The four Dutch education institutions that participate are: the International Institute for Geo-information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), Maastricht School of Management (MSM), UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, and Wageningen International. There are two application deadlines for the MENA Scholarship Programme, depending on the course for which candidates wish to apply, the deadline to submit the applications is either 1 March 2011 or 1 July 2011. In 2010, a total of 34 persons received a MENA scholarship.

Training course “From The Source: Environmental Media Training” (22–26 September 2010)



From The Source, a multimedia initiative for water and environmental issues in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the Netherlands Institute for Academic Studies in Damascus and the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus have jointly organized a 5 days' environmental media training for Syrian print journalists, photographers and film makers. The course took place daily from 09h00 to 17h00 at the institute and was given by Dutch trainers Joshka Wessels, eco-documentary filmmaker and geographer (PhD) who produced several documentaries on water issues, and Francesca de Chatel, former managing editor and editor-in-chief of *Syria Today*, the country's first English-language magazine and writer of the book: *'Water Sheikhs and Dam Builders, Stories of People and Water in the Middle East'*.

The training aimed at improving the participants' reporting skills and understanding of environmental issues. It therefore featured lectures, practical exercises and debates on the topic of the environment and water in Syria. In total, 12 Syrian print journalists, photographers and film makers participated.

Expert meeting "Importance and challenges of intercultural communication education in East and West" at the NIASD (4-5 December 2010)

In the beginning of December 2010 an expert meeting on intercultural communication education in East and West took place at the institute in Damascus. The aim of this expert meeting was to exchange information between experts from Holland, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon about the intercultural communication education in their respective countries. Secondly, the expert meeting gave the participants the opportunity to discuss and share insights on the importance and challenges of intercultural communication education.



The participants in the expert meeting were: Dr. Marie-Christine Kok-Escalle: Associate Professor in French Culture and Intercultural Communication at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands; Mr. Jelle Alkema: Consultant, entrepreneur, trainer and lecturer in Master programs at HES International MBA, Pro Education ICT & Management, The Netherlands; Mr. Fadi al-Shalabi: Former director of international and cultural relations at Damascus University and presently director of a Tempus Project at Damascus University, Syria; Dr. Deema Ammari: Assistant Professor at the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Jordan; and Dr.

Khaled Nasser: teacher in Interpersonal Communication and Media Research Methods at the Lebanese American University and teacher in Analysis of Social Data at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon.

Expert meeting “Internationalization of higher education in Holland, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan” (18-19 December 2010)

Unfortunately, this expert meeting had to be cancelled due to bad weather conditions in Holland. We found all experts willing to postpone this meeting to a suitable date in 2011. The lectures of one of the experts, Dr. Hans de Wit, could however take place as scheduled in Damascus, Amman, Zarqa and Beirut.

Rotating lecture series 2010 in Damascus, Beirut and Amman (November-December 2010)

Since the registration procedure of the Netherlands Institute in Beirut and Amman is currently still pending, these two institutes can not yet organize events. Therefore, the 5 rotating lectures mentioned below were organized in Lebanon and Jordan in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute in Damascus. The lectures were organized in cooperation with local hostpartners and with assistance of the directors of the to be established Netherlands institutes in Beirut and Amman.

1- Lecture by Dr. Rob van Dorland *“The Human Factor in Climate Change”*.

Rob van Dorland is a senior scientist at the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI) and was involved as a lead author in the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) working group I. The lecture of Dr.



Rob van Dorland took place at the NIASD on 9 November 2010, in Beirut at the American University of Technology on 10 November 2010 and in Amman at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature on 8 November 2010. Arabic translation of the lecture was prepared by the institute in Damascus. In total, 250 people from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan attended the lecture.

2- Lecture by Dr. Luit Mols *“East meets west: The story of a Mamluk brass basin with Latin inscriptions”*.

Dr. Luit Mols works as a researcher, lecturer and guest-curator in the field of Islamic Art and Culture. She is based in The Hague with her own research-company. The lecture took place at the NIASD on 24 November 2010, in Beirut at the American University of Beirut on 1 December 2010 and in Amman at the British Institute on 22 November 2010. The NIASD produced an Arabic summary for the lecture and assisted Dr. Luit Mols with obtaining approvals to visit a number of places (Islamic Buildings, Museums, Mosques and Cemeteries) and take photographs for her research.

3- Lecture by Dr. Marie-Christine Kok-Escalé *“Becoming an Intercultural Speaker, Acting as a Mediator: A Challenge for Now & for the Future”*.

As Associate Professor in French Culture at the Utrecht University, Dr. Marie-Christine Kok-Escalante developed an MA programme on Intercultural Communication for students of Modern Languages. For the past ten years she has participated in European programmes, doing research on Intercultural Mediation, Multilingual and Multicultural Education. This lecture can be seen as a concluding activity of the expert meeting on Intercultural Communication that took place in Damascus on 4 and 5 December 2010. The lecture took place at the NIASD on 5 December 2010, in Beirut at the Lebanese American University on 8 December and in Amman at the University of Jordan on 6 December 2010.

4- Lecture by Dr. Robbert A.F.L. Woltering “*When will you finally forget that I am a woman? Zenobia in Literary History*”.

Dr. Robbert Woltering is Assistant Professor in the Department of Arabic Language and Culture at the University of Amsterdam. Among other topics, he lectures in Arab cultural history, Arabic literature and the study of Orientalism/Occidentalism. The lecture took place at the NIASD on 16 December 2010, in Beirut at the American University of Beirut on 17 December and in Amman at the University of Jordan on 19 December. Arabic translation of the lecture was made by the Netherlands Institute in Damascus.

5- Lecture by dr. Hans de Wit: “*Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe and around the world: trends, challenges and opportunities*”.

Dr. Hans de Wit is Professor (lector) of Internationalization of Higher Education at the School of Economics and Management of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam, University of Applied Sciences. He is the Co-Editor of the ‘*Journal of Studies in International Education*’ (Association for Studies in International Education/SAGE publishers). The lecture took place at the NIASD on 19 December 2010, at the University of Jordan on 20 December 2010, at the Hashemite University in Zarqa on 21 December and at the AUB in Beirut on 22 November 2010.

Educational Fairs (1-3 December 2010)



For the 4th time we represented Study in Holland at the Jordanian Educational and Training Exhibition, JETE. During this education fair many people were informed about the different possibilities to study in Holland. A presentation on ‘Study in Holland’ was given by Martijn Leeftink during the fair.

Study in Holland presentations (October-December 2010)

Several presentations about the study and research opportunities in the Netherlands were provided by Martijn Leeftink of the Netherlands Institute in Damascus. The presentations took place in cooperation with the directors of the to-be-established Netherlands Institutes in Beirut and Amman. The following activities were organized:

- Together with the director of the to be established Netherlands Institute in Amman, Erik Marinus (on the right), Martijn Leeftink visited the Hashemite University, located just outside the town of Zarqa, Jordan. A presentation on Study in Holland was given to the deans of the different faculties and information was provided on the goals of the Netherlands Institutes. At the same university, a meeting took place with the deans of the faculty of Environment and National Resources, during which a plan was made to do a target presentation at this faculty in the beginning of next year.
- A target presentation was given at the American University in Beirut on 14 October 2010. The presentation on Sustainable Energy, study opportunities in Holland, was held at the Faculty of Engineering. About 30 people attended this presentation.
- Another target presentation was held in Damascus about Performing Arts, Music and Dance at 4 October 2010. About 10 people attended this presentation.
- A target presentation on Political Science & International relations was scheduled for 12 December at the University of Kalamoon, but had to be cancelled due to bad weather circumstances. This presentation will probably be held in January or February 2011.

Study in Holland Event at the NIASD (20 October 2010)

Last year the NIASD organized for the first time a 'study in Holland event', providing information and a general presentation about the possibilities to study in the Netherlands. Because it was successful in 2009, a second edition was organized at the NIASD this year. This time it was an even bigger success, which exceeded all our expectations. After the event, 150 people registered their email addresses!

We also try to promote ourselves in Holland. Therefore the institute was represented at the Study Abroad fair in Amsterdam, organized by the Hogeschool van Amsterdam and the University of Amsterdam. Former freelancer Salima Bouchtaoui answered many questions on behalf of our institutes.



Many students in the past few months have found their way to the institute to ask information on Study in Holland. Some of them are actually now in the process of applying to Dutch universities.

Dutch courses (26 September – 14 December 2010)

A beginners course Dutch language, taught by Mrs. Trees 't Hooft, took place. In total, 12 students participated in the course. Besides the group lessons Dutch language, several private lessons were organized as well.



And furthermore...

Dr. Iman Al Ghafari, with whom the institute in Damascus frequently works, obtained a Erasmus Mundus visiting scholarship at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Utrecht. During the month of November she met with colleagues in the field of gender studies, did research in several libraries and was guest lecturer in the post-graduate course



"Politics of Representation: Gender and Ethnicity in Contemporary Cultural Practice" at Utrecht University <> Library: the institute has purchased a number of new books for the library in Damascus in the fields of art (with a focus on Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture) and dialogue (with a focus on intercultural communication) <> Former participant of the training course Project Development and Management 2008-2009 Maya Alkateb published

her first book: "Syrian Silk: portrait of a living cultural heritage" <> The institute provided private Arabic language lessons for Dutch visitor Loti Kits van Waveren between 20 October and 3 November 2010.

2. Culture

NIASD Film Program October 2010 (26-28 October 2010)

From 26 until 28 October, the third block of the Film Program took place at the institute. The program was given the title: "*The consequence of war*". One short film was screened: Den Helder, one documentary: Contractpensions – Jangan Loepah and two feature films: Oorlogswinter (Winter in Wartime) & Wit Licht (The Silent Army). All the films were screened with Arabic subtitles made by the institute. The Film Program 2010 is sponsored by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus and by Eye Film Institute Netherlands in Amsterdam. Unfortunately Dutch film director Jean van de Velde (Wit Licht, The Silent Army) had to cancel his visit to Damascus to introduce his feature film to the public. The room in which the films were screened, showed pictures that were made during the filming of Wit Licht.

NIASD Film Program December 2010 and visit of Dutch film director Joost van Ginkel (13-15 December 2010)

From 13 until 15 December, the fourth block of the Film Program, with the title 'Love & Death; movies that trigger your sense of reality', took place. Two short films were screened: 'Zand' (Sand) and 'Success', one documentary: El Olvido (Oblivion), one semi-improvised drama: Calimucho and one feature film: De Laatste Dagen van Emma Blank (The last Days of Emma Blank).

For the occasion, Dutch film director Joost van Ginkel, came to visit the institute. His short film 'Zand' was screened twice, on 13 and 14 December. With every screening, Joost van Ginkel gave a short introduction to his film and a Q&A afterwards. Approximately 75 visitors visited his performance. Before and after the film program Joost spoke with a number of interested people. The institute decorated the film room with pictures that were made during the recording of 'Zand'.



Visit of Adelheid Roosen en Merel de Groot to Syria (12 October-17 October 2010)

On 15 and 16 October 2010 Dutch artists Adelheid Roosen en Merel de Groot provided a workshop on 'Personal Development' at the Shibani School in Aleppo as part of the Aleppo 8th International Women Art Festival. In total, 20 students in art, drama and dance participated in the workshop. Before and after the workshop in Aleppo, Merel and Adelheid made preparations for their project "*The other*", in cooperation with the institute in Damascus.

Activities in the context of the EU funded project "Cultural Participation for Heritage Regeneration" (October 2010)

Under the Local and Regional Cultural Activities scheme of the Delegation of the European Union to Syria, the project "Cultural Participation for Heritage Regeneration" is jointly funded by the Delegation and by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Syria. The project is implemented and coordinated by the Institut Français du Proche-Orient (IFPO), in partnership with the Syrian NGO Art Renaissance Association, the Danish Institute in Damascus (DID) and the Netherlands Institute in Damascus. In the context of this project several activities have taken place in the last part of 2010, among which the activity 'Together in Sarouja' on 31 October and 6 November 2010. Two events were part of this activity: the 'open traditional house day' with a projection of documentary films and guest speaker Syrian writer Dr. Nadia Khost on 31 October; and the 'guided tour in Sarouja' on 6 November. Another activity that took place from 7 until 16 December was the photo exhibition "Sarouja inside out".



Assistance in producing Arabic subtitles (November 2010)

On the request of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the institute revised the existing Arabic subtitles for the English version films of the promotion film “A Close Look at the Netherlands” of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and produced a new version of the DVD.

And furthermore...

The staff of the institute participated in two meetings of the EU Film Festival steering committee, organized by the Delegation of the European Union to Syria. The film festival will take place in Syria from 12 May until 28 May 2011.

4. Institutional

Registration requests of to-be-established Netherlands Institute in Beirut and Netherlands Institute in Amman filed with Lebanese and Jordanian authorities (August-September 2010)

The registration request of the Netherlands Institute in Beirut was officially submitted to the Lebanese authorities on 16 August 2010. The registration request of the institute in Amman was officially submitted to the Jordanian authorities on 24 September 2010. The registration procedures of both institutes are currently pending.

Regional visit by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to the Levant (3-8 October 2010)

Susanne Feiertag of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science paid a visit to the three Netherlands Institutes. The goals of her visit were to inform herself about the registration procedures of the to-be-established Netherlands institutes in Beirut and Amman, explore the alignment with the Dutch higher education sector and the local higher education sector in all three countries, explore the positioning of each institute among other (competing) institutes abroad and last, to closely exemplify the overall core business of the three institutes.

Susanne Feiertag started her visit in Beirut on 3 and 4 October 2010. She met with the director of NI-Beirut Taco van der Zwaag, the director of NI-Amman Erik Marinus, the regional coordinator and director of NI-Damascus Astrid Rijbroek, deputy director of NI-Damascus Kathelijne Smits and management assistant of NI-Beirut Michael Huijers. Furthermore, visits were paid to the American University of Beirut and to Mr. de Boer, Ambassador of the Netherlands in Lebanon.

On 5 and 6 October 2010 Susanne continued her visit in Damascus with a meeting with education advisor Martijn Leeftink. She also paid a visit to Damascus University and had a meeting with Deputy Head of Mission Mr. Kruishoop of the Netherlands Embassy in Damascus.

On 7 and 8 October Susanne Feiertag visited the Netherlands Institute in Amman, where she met director Erik Marinus, paid a visit to the University of Jordan and met with the Deputy Head of Mission Mrs. Heleen Saaf-van Beek of the Netherlands Embassy in Amman.



Appointment of new deputy director Kathelijne Smits at the institute in Damascus (October 2011)

As from 1 October 2011, Kathelijne Smits works at the Netherlands Institute in Damascus in the position of deputy director. Kathelijne has worked at the institute as an intern in the summer of 2008. She graduated in Political Sciences at the University of Amsterdam and obtained a post-master in International Relations at the Clingendael Institute in The Hague.

Meeting between the directors of the Dutch institutes abroad at the Free University in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (18-19 November 2010)

On behalf of the three institutes in the Levant, Astrid Rijbroek attended the annual meeting of the directors of Dutch institutes abroad. This year the meeting was hosted by the Free University in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Two meetings between the directors of the Netherlands institutes in Damacus and the to be established institutes in Beirut and Amman (October 2010 and December 2010).

On 3-4 October 2010 and on 20 December 2010 the directors of the institutes met in Beirut, respectively in Amman for regional coordination meetings. During both meetings, the policies and activities of the three institutes were discussed and streamlined.

We wish you nice holidays and a happy new year!

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