

Information Tour

“Strengthening cross-border approaches of cooperation in civil society”

at the invitation of the Federal Foreign Office

17th – 21st November 2019

The Information Tour to Berlin for members of the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) from France, Germany, Israel, Jordan, Palestine and Poland aimed at fostering exchange among the members, connecting them to civil society actors as well as to state actors and private foundations in Germany. During their Information Tour, the guests have become acquainted with German experts and relevant discussion partners. Diverse encounters and interactions on the subjects “Cross-border Cooperation in Civil Society“ and “Digital Civil Society“ did not only promote knowledge and mutual understanding – the tour also enabled networking to take place among the guests from civil society organisations, and members of the MENA-AG of the Federal Foreign Office, to develop long-term cross-border cooperation.

Initiated on the invitation of the Federal Foreign Office and organised in close cooperation with the members of the MENA-AG, the Goethe Institut e.V. (German HoN for ALF) and ZAK I Centre for Cultural and General Studies at KIT (German ALF-coordinator), the tour took place from 17th to 21st November 2019.

Two leading topics were elementary for the creation of the tour: The first topic „**Cross-border Cooperation in Civil Society**“ dealt with the assumption that one reason why CSOs are gaining influence as political change makers is the strength of their internationally connectedness. Cross-border cooperation can be used as means of empowerment. What challenges do CSOs face in international collaboration? What advantages, what risks go along with international

collaboration? Is cross-cultural collaboration a new phenomenon? Which role does a cross-cultural heritage, the critical reflection of common history play? Regarding the subject of shrinking spaces: In which cases is collaboration with CSOs from abroad fundamentally needed to continue civil society work, in which cases does it put at risk the local work? These were some of the questions along which the discussions evolved.

The second leading topic concentrated on the „**Digital Civil Society**“: How to use the potential of digitisation for overcoming social disadvantages, for more civic engagement and for social cohesion? Talking about digitisation, it is important to not only focus on the technologies but especially on their effects on society. Showcasing examples for digital actors of civil society and discussing opportunities and risks of digitisation for CSOs in international cooperation, were the main focus in this topic.



Visit to
Hackesche Höfe
in Berlin



ALF-members
from France,
Israel, Jordan,
Palestine and
Poland joined the
Information Tour
to Berlin

During the visit at ALF-member organisation IMPACT - [Civil Society Research and Development e.V.](#), the participants gained an overview of the organisation and its programs. The organisation serves as a catalyst for cooperation and exchange of experiences and information between Syrian civil society actors and civil society organisations from around the world.

Discussions after the presentation of IMPACT's team revolved around the role and space available for Syrian civil society and the challenges facing Syrian CSOs in Syria and abroad.



Listening, learning, discussing and planning future projects



Vivid discussions during the visit at IMPACT e.V.

The visit at [Kreisau Initiative Berlin e.V.](#) showed that cross-border cooperation is not a new phenomenon. The ALF-member-organisation has been working in close collaboration with its partner „Kryzowa Foundation For Mutual Understanding in Europe” for the last 30 years. Moral courage, social and political engagement, commitment to democracy and human rights are the main focus of their work.

The talk by Bassant Helmi of **Global Project Partners** focused on



Inspiring insights to the work of Kreisau Initiative Berlin e.V.

examples how digitization can be used for the common good by civil society actors. She presented the initiative [Digital Arabia Network \(#DAN\)](#) for connecting the digital community in the Arab world and further projects that specifically gear towards supporting Arab businesswomen, vocational and educational training in developing countries, and knowledge transfer in the field of renewable energies. The **lunch at the invitation of the Directorate-General for Culture**



(l.) Inspiring talk by Bassant Helmi #DAN



(r.) Charting Expectations, Challenges and Solutions of Crossborder Cooperation for CSOs

and Communication of the Federal Foreign Office was a good opportunity for exchange and networking with Ms. Barbara Voss, Deputy Head of Division of Cultural Relations Maghreb, Near and Middle East, Mr. Ulrich Ernst, Head of Near East Division and Mr. Christian-Peter Hanelt, Senior Expert of Europe and the Middle East of Bertelsmann Foundation.

The workshop **“Connect to Change: Using the ALF-Network to Create More Impact”** was held and hosted by Amin Pialek, Senior Project Manager at [iac \(International Alumni Center\)](#), founded by the Robert Bosch Foundation.

The international guests of the visiting tour and German network members of the Anna Lindh Foundation came together to focus on the question how the network can unfold its potential through each of its members. The session combined theoretical and practical interactive elements on network analysis, roles of members within different types of network and a demonstration on Virtual Community Hosting.



ALF-members meeting German private and political foundations, invited by the working group MENA



International ALF-guests and German ALF-members discussing means to create more impact in iac Berlin



Visualising diverse types of collaboration during the iac-workshop



Meeting in the BMW Foundation at the invitation of the working group MENA

“Exchange of experience on cross-border civil society cooperation” was the main topic of **the meeting and discussion with representatives of the working group “Middle East North Africa (MENA)”**, hosted by the BMW Foundation.

The guest’s short inputs showcased the variety of work done by the CSOs in their respective countries. Working conditions, difficulties and successes of CSOs working in their societies and abroad were discussed. The meeting offered a great opportunity to exchange experiences with representatives of the Federal Foreign Office, private and political foundations as well as further organisations that are active in international affairs, especially in the MENA-region, such as: Bertelsmann Foundation, BMW Foundation, Candid

Foundation, Euro-Mediterran-Arabischer Länderverein (EMA) e.V., Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Körber Foundation, Martin Roth Initiative, Robert Bosch Foundation, zivik-Programm of the Insitut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa), and more.

The working group “Middle East North Africa (MENA)” is one of the bodies of the Strategic Dialogue between foundations and the Federal Foreign Office, aiming at supporting a “foreign policy of societies”. Members are representatives of the Federal Foreign Office and of foundations active in international affairs, especially in the MENA-region, such as: Berghof Foundation, Bertelsmann Foundation, BMW Foundation, Candid Foundation, Körber Foundation, Robert Bosch Foundation, Westerwelle Foundation and the network of the Anna Lindh Foundation in Germany.

We are very grateful for the active participation of our international guests representing the following organisations:

[Les Têtes de L'Art](#) (France),

[Oranim Academic College of Education, Department of Civil Action](#) (Israel),

[The Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies \(RIIFS\)](#) (Jordan),

[Jerusalem Center for Women](#) (Palestine),

[Roles for Social Change Association - ADWAR](#) (Palestine),

[Krzyżowa Foundation for Mutual Understanding in Europe](#) (Poland).

[The Baltic Sea Cultural Centre Gdańsk](#) (Poland)

These members of the Anna Lindh Foundation made the four days a fruitful exchange of knowledge, opinions, ideas, inspirations and concrete projects to be developed in cross-border cooperation in the nearer future – we are looking forward to it!

*Prof. Dr. Caroline Y. Robertson-von Trotha & Swenja Zaremba,
coordinators of the German network of the Anna Lindh Foundation
Karlsruhe, 30th January 2020*

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