Activities of the Netherlands Institute for Academic Studies in Damascus

By Taco van der Zwaag

In 2001, the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO) in Leiden established the Netherlands Institute for Academic Studies in Damascus (NIASD) which aims to enhance the relations between Syria and the Netherlands in the fields of science and education, culture and cooperation. NINO financed and ran the Institute until the end of 2005. Since then, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has been responsible for the Institute’s financing and Leiden University for its administration.

In March 2008, the NIASD sponsored a workshop on pottery for Syrian students interested in archeology. Photo courtesy of the author.

In terms of science and education, the NIASD encourages and facilitates Dutch research in Syria and Syrian research in the Netherlands; contacts between Syrian and Dutch researchers; student exchanges and study trips to Syria and the Netherlands; and the establishment of cooperation agreements between Syrian and Dutch universities. Other related activities include helping students who want to do an internship in Syria or the Netherlands; a yearly lecture series in Syria by Dutch researchers; and course delivery. As of 2009, the NIASD will offer two courses: a summer course in Arabic and a summer course on Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture. The Institute is also developing a third summer course on Intercultural Communication. During 2008-2009, the Institute cooperated with the Danish Institute in Damascus on a course on Project Development and Management. In Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, the NIASD promotes the more than 1,300 bachelor and master degree programs in Holland that are taught in English.
In the field of culture, the NIASD encourages contacts and joint art projects between Syrian and Dutch artists and Syrian and Dutch cultural organizations. It also screens Dutch movies and documentaries with Arabic subtitles at the institute.

In the field of cooperation, the Institute facilitates and provides information to Dutch civil servants or consultants involved in international or EU projects in which Syria is a partner.

For all further information regarding the NIASD, please refer to [www.niasd.org](http://www.niasd.org) which contains all our newsletters and annual reports. The NIASD is located in East-Mezzeh at Farabi Street no. 85, basement level.

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