

WIHWI 2013: LAUNCHING A GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR SYRIAN YOUTH

WIHWI 4 SY





BACKGROUND

Between 1946 and 1948 over the darkest period of the European history, thousands of Austrian children were sent to Portugal and lived with host families around the country. These children escaping from the war were offered a normal time, enjoying a family life and being welcomed as siblings. This unique initiative was a kind of humanitarian action *avant la lettre* led by what today we would call the civil society of both countries who really built bridges across divides and engaged in intercultural learning.

WIHW 4 SY

Inspired by this successful example, the initiative now launched aims at reaching out to SYRIAN YOUTHS whose lives are being destroyed by the war and their studies disrupted. It aims at establishing an International Youth Exchange Program open to SYRIAN students ages 17–21 that offers them a fully-funded academic year abroad. The program may include a vocational element.

This Program is called WIHWI 4 SY - World Interfaith Harmony Week Initiative for Syrian Youth.

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It gets inspiration from the World Interfaith Harmony Week celebration and is to be launched on the occasion of its 2013 edition. The World Interfaith Week Harmony between all religions, faiths and beliefs aims at uniting all interfaith groups and faith communities but also at bringing together all the world's citizens of good will, bringing together efforts between East and West, North and South.

Against this backdrop, the WIHWI 4 SY is an initiative that aims at contributing in a very concrete way to alleviate the burden of the war in Syria on youth, particularly

as there appears to be no end in sight to the fighting which, on the contrary, is escalating in different parts of Syria, as well as a humanitarian situation that keeps deteriorating. WIHWY 4 SY aims at helping to respond to the needs of students and therefore contribute in the long run to rebuilding trust and hope for a better future.

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GOALS

- Implement an International Exchange Program for Syrian students to the academic year 2013–2014 (students ages 17–21);
- Create a network of up to 1000 Host Families for 1000 Syrian Youth;
- Use the network of Dialogue Cafés to enhance ties and bridges between the participants in the Exchange Program;
- Create a platform of up to 500 partners: governments, Government donor agencies, international and regional organizations, cities, universities, NGOs of different cultural backgrounds and faith based organizations, corporations.

WAYS YOU CAN JOIN

There are lots of ways that you can join – directly and indirectly.

One obvious way is to make a donation, which will go straight to help cover the financial needs of this Program. It's an easy process and you can give whatever amount you want – it all helps.

For those who want to play a more direct role, there are several ways in which you can get involved:

- Become a Host Family;
- Become a member of the national or regional committee for WIHWI 4 SY and provide field support;
- Become a volunteer for the WIHWI 4 SY team in charge of coordination, reporting and monitoring;
- Become a partner by endorsing WIHWI 4 SY or offer your support through in kind assistance.

What to do next? YOU ARE DEFINITELY ON BOARD.

Express your interest in being part of this initiative by sending an e-mail to Helena Barroco, Special Adviser to President Jorge Sampaio hbarroco@netcabo.pt

PARTNERS

This initiative has been developed by the Dialogue Café association and has the personal support of President Jorge Sampaio, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. It is in the process of seeking support from a wide range of potential stakeholders, namely some UN agencies and organizations. So far, it has already been endorsed by a cluster of universities and:

JOINING!

