

YALLA FOUNDATION, Netherlands

<http://yallafoundation.nl> / <http://welcometonijmegen.nl/nl/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/refugeesNL/>

<https://www.facebook.com/WelcomeToNijmegen/>

[Hendrik-Jan Derksen]



The Yalla foundation started in the dawn of a large Refugee camp about to start in Nijmegen, Netherlands. We started as an online Facebook page to build a positive welcoming atmosphere in the region for the 3000 refugees. We soon found out there was much more necessary and that the system sustained in the Netherland for newcomers was outdated, non-connecting and oppositional towards an inclusive approach for newcomers. Therefore we started building on-offline receiving communities to connect newcomers 1 on 1 throughout the Netherlands.

Yalla Foundation now supports an inclusive society, decreases social (in)stability and stimulates 'gekanteld werken / bottom-up working' with refugees and encourages on- and offline an inclusive society with refugees / newcomers. Refugees are often isolated from the society during their stay within a COA refugee locations or when they obtain the temporary permit to stay, get a house and settle down. A big positive and divers network is essential to integrate well into society. For that reason, the Yalla Foundation exists!

On the Refugees in The Netherlands Facebook groups and in the other Yalla communities, refugees can take responsibility and directly get in touch with local Dutch citizens. In this way we encourage an inclusive society with refugees / newcomers.



photo credit [e] ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD

On these platforms and on the website, Yalla encourages integration and chases by:

- Supporting newcomers by help building a relevant social and professional diverse and local network,
- Increase the power and motivation of newcomers to build a significant life in The Netherlands and take part actively in society,
- Reducing the gap between newcomers and the receiving society (civilians, volunteers, activity organisers, municipalities) by providing information based on that which is needed to support mutual understanding,
- Stimulate an open and hospitable society and social cohesion, especially around reception centres.



Yalla Foundation therefore:

- Actively builds and moderates her online communities, such as the facebook groups 'Refugees in Netherlands Nijmegen #feelconnected" where thousands of group members can connect;
- Supports intercultural connection offline and cooperates with many organisations for that;
- Supplies the website www.yallafoundation.nl and www.welcometonijmegen.nl with relevant information, if possible in different languages;
- Lobbies for opportunities to take away integration obstacles for newcomers and supporters;
- Advises organisations which are working or going to work with the new generation of newcomers and on how to work towards an inclusive society and support connections.

The recent activities of the Yalla Foundation encompass: management and moderating all the Facebook groups of the Yalla Foundation, initiating and preparing content production of the website "Welcome to Nijmegen" and arranging translations in Arabic and Tigrinya in cooperation with the regional work organisation WBRN, Gemeente Nijmegen, STIP/Interlokaal, VrijwilligersCentrale, GGD; advise GGD on how to communicate



photo credit [©] VALERIE KUYPERS

better and connect with newcomers to increase health; cooperate with LUX and the movie makers of the movie "In Procedure" – initiate a meet and greet event after the movie; prepare a cooperation with the foundation My Syria which will produce an international tv-series with and about Syrian refugees; advise and connect local initiatives with each other and with newcomers; initiate a cooperation with Open Embassy to together advise municipalities; advise on municipal integration policy by attending meetings and by arranging focus group gatherings where newcomers directly provide feedback on municipal issues concerning integration; the Heumensoord emergency shelter reunion party in concert hall Doornroosje, Nijmegen.

