



Can you choose who you want to be?

Emancipation Pilot Project



Foreword

Around the world, there is often still much to be done to achieve equality for homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders.

EP-Nuffic's Holland Alumni network aims to change this situation by starting a discussion on these issues with international students and alumni. As part of this effort, a platform is being created to promote dialogue on issues such as gender equality, sexual diversity and gender diversity.

The resulting discussions have led to the formation of a group that we proudly call our Emancipation Ambassadors. These Emancipation Ambassadors have shared their views on Dutch emancipation policy both with us and with society more broadly.

The publication in front of you gives a good picture of these activities. But things certainly do not stop here. The Emancipation Ambassadors and the large group of international students who come to and leave our country each year play a key role in the further expansion of the discussion on equality. We are convinced that, through them, the knowledge and experience regarding these issues acquired by them in the Netherlands will continue to spread in their countries of origin.

Freddy Weima

Director-General of EP-Nuffic



Emancipation ambassadors



Anila Noor **PAKISTAN**
Brenda Rodriguez **MEXICO**
Dogan Cakir **TURKEY**
Egoyibo Okoro **NIGERIA**
Luana Antero de Melo **BRAZIL**
Madhuri Prabhakar **INDIA**
Marie Nitzgen **GERMANY**
Meltem Naz Kaso **TURKEY**
Rica Unico **PHILIPPINES**
Rosa Wevers **THE NETHERLANDS**
Umbreen Salim **PAKISTAN**
Xanthia Hargreaves **AUSTRALIA**

Emancipation project

On behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, EP-Nuffic launched an Emancipation Pilot Project in 2015. The intention behind this project was to raise international students' awareness of themes surrounding equality, emancipation, sexual diversity and gender diversity in the Netherlands, with the aim of achieving greater acceptance of lesbians, homosexuals, bisexuals and transgender people.

Results

As part of this project, twelve international students were selected and trained as Emancipation Ambassadors in October 2015. These are students from all around the world, who are currently studying in the Netherlands. Detailed information regarding emancipation topics in the Netherlands was published on the website of the Holland Alumni network, which has reached thousands of international students already, and thematic meetings and online platforms were used to stimulate further discussion among students and organisations working on emancipation-related topics in the Netherlands.

The emancipation project consists of three subthemes:

- Gender Equality
- Sexual Diversity
- Gender Diversity

Gender Equality – the Netherlands

Compared to other EU countries, the Netherlands earns high marks for gender equality. As progressive as the Netherlands may be, however, women's incomes are still eight per cent lower than men's. When it comes to work, care work and income, it still matters whether you are a man or a woman. Twice as many women as men look after the household and children. In spite of nearly equal education levels, there are clear differences between men and women on the labour market. Only 18% of senior positions are held by women and 65% of those unable or unwilling to do paid work in the Netherlands are women.¹

Emancipation ambassador Marie Nitzgen is studying at Leiden University. She grew up in Germany, Dubai and England, and volunteered for the ambassador position in this project because she finds it encouraging that, in her experience, people in the Netherlands are willing to talk openly about, for example, gender gaps in payment, whereas in other countries such topics are often ignored.

Marie: 'It was very interesting to talk to people with different backgrounds about their views on emancipation, and especially to hear their stories of how they became engaged in order to make a difference in this area.'

¹ Source: Emancipatiemonitor, SCP, 2014

Gender Equality – Worldwide

Anila: "I'm the fourth girl in my family. And when I was born, according to my mother, everyone in my neighbourhood started crying: a girl again! Five years after me, my brother was born. And I immediately felt that he and I were treated differently. Not by my parents, but by relatives and people from the neighbourhood. They would talk about a plan for the boys to get a quality education, but never for the girls. It didn't matter what kind of education they got. Because they would get married anyway."

Anila Noor

PAKISTAN

*International Institute
of Social Studies,
specialisation in Peace
and Conflict Studies.*



Luana: "In the Netherlands, people move away from home earlier, so even boys have to learn to take care of themselves at an earlier age. Men seem more engaged in household chores here. But still, if a man here is taking care of his child, for instance, he gets complimented for it. A woman would never be complimented for taking care of her kid."

Sexual Diversity – the Netherlands

The general acceptance of lesbians, gays and bisexuals (LGB) in the Netherlands is high, but the process of emancipation is not yet finished. Heterosexual couples can walk down the street hand-in-hand without a second look, whereas this is not always the case for gay couples.

Tolerance, openness and safety

The year 2001 was symbolic for tolerance of homosexuality in the Netherlands. In that year, the Mayor of Amsterdam conducted the first ever civil marriage ceremony for gay and lesbian couples in the world. Ninety-five per cent of the Dutch think that men and women should be able to choose when, how, and with whom they have sex, as long as their chosen partner is over the age of 16 and gives consent. However, tolerance, acceptance and respect for LGB people in the Netherlands is still not universal. To illustrate, nearly 40% of gay men feel unsafe. This figure is only 28.3% among straight men.²

² Source: Perceived discrimination in the Netherlands, SCP, 2014

Sexual Diversity – Worldwide

Anila: “My son is nine years old and goes to school in the Netherlands. He once told me: “Mom, my teacher is male, but his wife is also male.” He didn’t understand. And I explained to him that here a man can get married to another man. He will grow up knowing that this is normal.”

Rica: “In the Netherlands, it is very acceptable for homosexuals to have children. But Filipino queers still have the mindset from back home; when I’m gay, I cannot have children. Even though it isn’t true.”



Rica Unico

PHILIPPINES

*Utrecht University,
Research Master
Gender and Ethnicity*

Gender Diversity – the Netherlands

In recent years, great strides have been made in the Netherlands with regard to transgender emancipation. Transgender people are now more visible than ever before in public and equality for transgender people is a vital objective for emancipation policy in the Netherlands.

Limitless acceptance?

Dutch people's acceptance towards transgender people is high. Ninety-three per cent of Dutch people would remain friends with somebody who decided to undergo sexual reassignment. But however high the levels of acceptance may be, it still has its limits. For example, 37% of the Dutch population think that transgender people should pay the costs of the operation themselves. And one in five Dutch people have a problem with people not clearly being a man or a woman.³

Rica: “In Dutch mainstream media, when it comes to transgenderism, you either see the successful story, or you see the drag queen shows. When you look at the canal parade of Gay Pride, you see a lot of muscled, white, good-looking men and testosterone. Or you see transvestites. It seems like there is nothing else. The fact that transgender people can now choose their own gender on their passport, for instance, gets no attention at all.”

Gender Diversity – Worldwide

Anila: “Right now, there is a mayor in India who is transgender. That opened up the discussion about these topics in Pakistan as well. Transgender people are treated miserably there. They are seen as if they are only good for entertaining people with dancing and singing. And they get no respect. But now people from different NGO's are giving them respect. Before, they couldn't choose their gender on a ID-card. And now they can choose: male, female or transgender. And people have to respect it.”

Rica: “We define homosexuality and transgenderism differently in the Philippines. I noticed that homosexuality and transgenderism is almost the same there. If you're homosexual, you are expected to be very feminine. If you behave masculine, people simply don't believe that you're a homosexual. It was not until I came to the Netherlands that I realised that homosexuality and transgenderism are two entirely different things. Here you are actually expected to behave according to your biological gender, also as a homosexual.”

³ Source: A world of difference , Rutgers, 2013

Lessons learned after the pilot project

Rica: “It was a beautiful project. What surprised me was that even the representatives from the government who participated were very open about the problems that still exist in the Netherlands. They did not at all claim that everything is perfect here. We were allowed to discuss everything openly. To be invited to be part of that was an extraordinary experience.”

Luana: “What was most surprising to me here in the Netherlands was the interest from the government in this topic. I wouldn’t see a project like this happening in Brazil. The fact that they put money and effort into bringing a group of international students together to exchange experiences and ideas, and to see where we can build a bridge between different cultures and countries. I thought it was really interesting.”

Luana Antero de Melo

BRAZIL

*Utrecht University,
Gender Studies*



Anila: “During this project, we visited archives in the Netherlands where the history of feminist activists is saved. The fact that their history is actually saved in an archive was eye-opening to me. In Pakistan, we have no such archive.”

Hopes for the future

The process of emancipation is not yet complete. EP-Nuffic wants to keep the discussion with international students and alumni going.

Anila: “My hope for after this project is that events about emancipation topics will be organised. This way we can share experiences and stories, and then we can motivate other people to be more open about these issues. We need to discuss things instead of hide things. When we talk we listen to each other, and in the end we accept each other.”

Rica: “There is not enough media coverage in the Netherlands at the moment. I believe in visibility. Instead of leaving it up to the mainstream media to objectify subgroups, people should speak up for themselves. That is exactly what I am doing, and what I hope others will do as well. One thing I think would help is if transgender studies would be part of academia.”

Luana: “I would like to see changes in how children are raised. I believe in the power of community. To involve other people, besides the mother and father. When you care about each other and raise children together, it changes the way they deal with the world and how people relate to each other. It should be a bottom-up thing.”

Intrigued?

Visit www.hollandalumni.nl/emancipation for more information on gender equality, sexual diversity and gender diversity in the Netherlands.

COLOPHON

Text

Education Promotion Department, EP-Nuffic

Student interviews and Photography

Saskia Mulder

Design

Making Waves, Den Haag

With special thanks to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Directorate Emancipation and to our Emancipation Ambassadors.

www.hollandalumni.nl/emancipation

