



WoMen of Orange Network (WOO)

How it started:

In an era where we slowly lose physical contact with each other, what we miss the most is connection. This has become even more relevant since Covid-19. While we live in big cities and are surrounded by many people all the time, reaching out to the right person may be overwhelming. It is this very notion that pushed the Consulate General of the Netherlands in Istanbul, to start the network 'WoMen of Orange' (WOO). *Women* because they are natural connectors, *Men* because the world needs active men that act together with women and *Orange* because it represents the Netherlands and the importance it attaches to equal rights and opportunities for men and women.

Although our story began in Istanbul, the aim is to imitate nature by letting the network grow organically and create cobwebs all around the world.

On International Women's Day 2018, we launched WOO by bringing together various women from different backgrounds. Through interactive sessions we identified the needs of this mixed group: the creation and facilitation of a sincere network, where real connection, friendship and support are the guiding principles.

WOO has grown ever since and we are very proud to say that as of today more than 250 beautiful, inspiring, powerful and empowering women (and men) have joined.

What is WOO and why is it different from other networks?

WOO is an interactive platform that supports gender equality by empowering woMen from various areas of society and different professional, social, and religious backgrounds to connect with each other. It represents a broad range of businesswomen, artists, students, civil servants and civil society representatives, etc.

One of WOO's trademarks is that it connects these different networks with each other. Members extend invitations for WOO activities to their respective networks and vice versa.

It is our shared belief that empowered women empower women and that the synergy of a network enables true connection by sharing our stories - our dignity, our hopes and joys - and by really inviting each other in.

We should not be defined by gender stereotypes or any kind of stereotypes, but by our individual actions. And at the end of the day, regardless of who we are, each and every one of us deserves the opportunity to reach her - and his full potential.

What have we done:

Since 2018 we have been organising a variety of events, on special days like Women's Rights Day and Human Rights Day. Next to that we had regular networking events with discussions and performances on gender equality. Always including a 'speed-dating' session, the sine qua non of the WOO events, which makes it possible to meet a great number of other members and guests in a very short but effective period of time.

We organized and hosted a range of different events such as the inspirational talk and workshop by Dutch Tunesian speaker and dancer Kaouthar Darmoni, who taught us to discover everyone's feminine power with more than 200 WoMen actively dancing! But also a webinar "Empowering woMen in the workplace" on understanding and acting against mobbing at work. Furthermore we organized a joint event with the Dutch Business Association with a performance 'Barbershop talk' by male members of the Yanındayiz Association, with the aim to encourage men to fight for gender equality. And finally film screenings, artist talks and a guided tour through an exhibition on sustainability and using waste material.

The structure:

The idea behind the network is that it is driven and operated by the network itself in order to make it self-sustainable. There is a WOO core-team consisting of colleagues of the consulate, but the main driving force is the board, consisting of 5 members. Each year there is a call to apply for the position of board-member. The board is selected for one year in which they act as ambassadors for the network, set a theme for the year to come and work on expanding the WOO-network by also integrating their own network and its activities in those of the WOO.

Meet the board of 2021:

Our WOO board consists of a diverse group of inspiring women from different backgrounds and fields of expertise:

Burcu Özdemir: Director of Smart City Department of the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul. Dr. Özdemir is also an academic and giving postgraduate lectures in Applied Informatics Dept. at Istanbul Technical University. She believes that women have a critical role in the development of a nation and need to occupy leadership positions to serve as role models for other women. Women have to have equal rights and opportunities. The idea that a particular job is 'men's work' is being abandoned. Most importantly, our children, the next generation, need to see that a women can wear many hats. Therefore she finds it valuable to be part of WOO that aims to empower, inspire and connect women with different stories to tell.

Eline Morsink: Dutch student and cultural anthropologist, currently doing her second Master's degree in international relations, with a focus on Middle East, Turkey and Europe, at Bosphorus University. It is her mission to build bridges between people by encouraging to have conversations about social constructs and to ensure that concepts on e.g. what it means to be a woman, are not limiting but instead empowering individuals and their communities.

Rümeysa Çamdereli : Musician, Muslim feminist activist, civil society professional and mother. Working as the research director of YADA Foundation and one of the founders of Havle Women's Association, she's trying to contribute to the civil space in Turkey through providing new knowledge and perspectives to different issues.

Çiğdem Çımrın: Being a strong believer in the inherent dignity of all human beings, advocate of corporate responsibility to respect human rights, Dr. Çımrın is working on activities that directly

benefit society in a sustainable fashion, supporting women empowerment and diversity. She is the founder of CCLegalCo, Turkey Country Lead of The Centre for Child Rights and Business."

Özlem Yalım: Industrial designer, head of brand strategy at Tepta Lighting, creative industries columnist at Gazete Pencere, T24, Design Thinking professional. Her skills of networking and organizational capabilities brings people together. Her philosophy of life is about ideation, creation and implementation. She is focused on the new and the unique. Her approach on 'things' is often with curiosity and this helps to bring an authenticity to her actions and projects. She is the mother of an activist women (21) who lives and works in Canada. Her greatest aim is to work, share and produce for a better world for her generation.

What's next?

An overarching theme for 2021 has already been selected: **Women & Sustainable Future**, connecting important issues such as next generations & climate change, liveable, open & diverse cities and equal opportunities.

One of the activities for 2021 is a podcast training for our members in cooperation with AÇIK Radyo. In this way the voices and inspiring stories of WoMen of Orange will be heard even better!

If you want to become a member please email: ist-events@minbuza.nl