

Winning proposals inspiring and achievable

The winning proposal did not come as a surprise. Mariska Westdijk had made a huge impression with her well-founded presentation on a scholarship system for teachers. Next to that she also won with her activity We are all world citizens. The lobby prize went to two proposals: the motion on sustainable tourism by Elise Allart and the motion on tourist guides by Abdulmalik Azzan.

Mariska targeted Millennium goal number two: education for every child in 2015. Worldwide there are 80 million children not going to school. A scholarship system could contribute to this. And so Mariska asks the ministry of Foreign Affairs to spend money from development aid to scholarships for teachers. This would mean that the shortage of teachers will be cut back and the quality of education will improve. The audience was already convinced by the quality of this proposal and expected this proposal to win. Also because of the argumentation and presentation. Mariska, however, was taken by surprise when she heard she won from chairman of the jury Henk de Haan. Mariska: 'It is really a huge surprise; I certainly did not expect my proposal to win. But of course, I am very happy.'

Shortage of teachers unacceptable

Member of the jury Hilke Jansen of the BBO (Advice, policy influencing and training on international cooperation) especially took notice of the practical side. 'The proposal on scholarships was one of the few concrete proposals. And education was a less noticed subject for a long period. What I also saw as a good point of her proposal is that Mariska wants to execute her proposal on a multilateral basis. That is something that fits perfectly in the policy of Koenders.' Mariska will start lobbying for her motion very soon, to convince Koenders of this vision too. Mariska: 'I will apply myself the coming time to get more attention to the lack of teachers. Next to that, I want to do more research on the topic. And after that my proposal should be put into practice.'

Project of all members

When Mariska sat again for a second, she had to come forward again to receive the prize for the project We are all world citizens. Together with Marianne Schouten she accepted congratulations and flowers, but they both made it very clear that the prize really went to all members. Marianne: 'This project can only be a success because of all the people who contributed to it.' But of course, Marianne and Mariska have done most of the work as initiators. Mariska: 'I have met Marianne at the beginning of the year. We both wanted to organize an activity on education. Marianne was familiar with teaching because of her work, and I had experience with developing teaching material because of my work. So we both had our own task within the project.'

From Pilot to practice

On the website you can see that children from the Netherlands and countries like Bolivia already have made assignments. Elizabeth Kameo, Jantine Peters, Poppy Astrini and Abdulmalik Azziz among others, have already taken care of several guest lessons on schools in the Netherlands. Elvira Mendoza had done the same in her home country Colombia. The first results are very good. Marianne: 'The children are very enthusiastic and interested, that is of course the main thing.' Therefore, the guest lessons will continue the coming time. Marianne has a significant amount of lessons in her agenda and together with her many other members. Also in other countries, the lessons will continue. In Bolivia, for example, a computer center for children from slums will also take part in the project.

Other members have found schools in Colombia, Costa Rica, Burkina Faso, Benin, the Philippines, Rwanda and Gambia to take part in the project. Mariska: 'Yes this project is a pilot, but I am quite sure it can me more than that. That is why the support of the NCDO is so valuable, this means we can continue. I really hope I can work further on this project. This is really one project, that makes me very enthusiastic.'

Tourism against poverty

The jury also awarded the proposals of Elise Allart and Abdulmalik Azzan from Yemen. Elise Allart held a convincing plea for sustainable tourism as a tool in the battle against poverty. Abdulmalik Azzan made a flesh out with his proposal on young guides who work on the preservation of their cultural heritage. Hilke Jansen: 'The best situation you can have is when a motion is named in the strategy, but is not mentioned in the policy, then you have a strong point for your lobby. That is exactly the case in the proposals on tourism.' Elise: 'Tourism is a fantastic tool to reduce poverty. But in order to do so, all sectors need to cooperate, not only the touroperators, but also the government. Small scaled sustainable tourism is just not an option with 1 billion tourists every year. You have to use the existing networks.'

Inspiring proposals

The proposal of Abdulmalik specifically mentioned young people. 'By enhancing tourism, you support the youngsters. They can play a big role in this sector and in preserving the cultural heritage.' Abdulmalik and Elise are both fine with sharing the award. Abdulmalik: 'Our proposals are a good addition to each other.'

Writing the motions and the plenary session were both intensive and exciting. But now the real work starts: Lobbying and bringing the proposals into reality. And with these proposals this seems to work. Chairman of the jury Henk de Haan: 'The proposals of this year are not only inspiring, but are also achievable.' If that turns out to be the case, the better world that The Third Chamber advocates, has been brought nearer again.