Report
Mutual Mentorship Program (MMP)
- *Between Europe and the MENA region and across generations*

25th November 2025

On Tuesday, November 25th, the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa held the final MMP meeting, bringing together 28 mentors in person at the Institute's Residence, while additional participants joined online for the check-in session.

The program combined interactive sessions, including presentations, discussions, and a workshop using a Pecha Kucha- style presentation format. It also included evaluation, discussions and reflections on the possible continuation of the Mutual Mentorship Program. The program was developed in close collaboration with the mentors (see program attached).

During the expectations session, participants shared what they would bring to the discussion, ranging from curiosity, openness, and critical thinking to practical skills, creative feedback, personal experiences, energy, and diverse youth perspectives. They also expressed what they hoped to gain, including insights from peacebuilding in Syria and fragile contexts, opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange, updates on ongoing projects, a deeper understanding of EU–MENA dynamics, exposure to new ideas, and stronger relationships to support sustained dialogue.

During the presentations of MMPs ongoing projects, Adan Anwar, Victoria Smith Lind, and Youness Lasfar presented an AI Transformation Green Transition initiative along with a website they developed together, while Charles Petrie and Ahmad Kahttoub discussed Syria, dealing with the past, and moving forward. MMPs expressed appreciation for the opportunity to stay connected, highlighting how the exchange of advice and ideas advanced their expertise and complemented each other's work.

The presentations were followed by a workshop using a Pecha Kucha -style presentation format. The session was led by Saja Othman, who supported the design of the workshop and presented on creating infectious action. Felicia Fazzi focused on loneliness and the gap between the relationships we have and those we aspire to and how to design actionable change. Heather Burke presented on cycling as a nice and practical ways to reduce carbon footprint and increase gender equality, while Ahmed Owda explored the limitations and opportunities of AI in health. The day also featured fun energizers by Giulia Ferraro and Edgar Mannheimer.

Three pairs delivered pre-conference teasers, representing the groups involved in preparing sessions for SDI´s Annual Interactive Conference. Salma Badda spoke on EU–MENA relations in light of the new Pact of the Mediterranean, Mattias Goldmann and Kareem Nour presented on climate change and green transition, and Manal Ataya and Hadeer Dahab discussed intercultural dialogue through the lens of museums and architecture. Each pair presented their passion for the theme, how their work developed throughout the mentorship program, and how it led to proposed panel and side discussions during the conference.

In the last session, mentors reflected on the value of SDI´s MMP and shared their assessment of main take-aways and proposed amendments should the program continue in 2026. In general, the feedback was positive, and mentors encouraged SDI to continue with a cross-regional Mutual Mentorship Program 2026 while refining the methodology and make the connection to SDI´s other activities clearer.

Participants emphasized several key positive elements:

- **Rich group dynamics**: a diverse group across ages, backgrounds, and perspectives; intergenerational dialogue; a respectful and safe environment; friendships; openness; and learning from each other.

- **Program design strengths**: relevant and diverse themes; exposure to new subjects; a co-creation process; open call; successful pairing; administrative support; and recognition of diverse country cultures.

- **Learning and networking opportunities:** opportunities to meet in person; strong interpersonal value; gaining new perspectives; learning more about each other´s regions; and strengthening the ability to positively influence others.

Recommendations for Designing Future Mutual Mentorship Program

Participants proposed various ideas related to the program, including:

- Starting the program with a physical meeting and integrating it more closely with the larger SDI conference.
- Going deeper into selected topics and improving clarity on how themes are linked.
- Keeping talks short, as this format works better.
- Ensuring clear, concrete outputs and purpose.
- Creating backup plans in case a mentor withdraws.
- Increasing in-person sessions and visits, including meetings in both Jordan and Sweden.
- Conducting field visits.
- Starting earlier on with more clarity about the collaboration projects.
- Making online components more interactive, especially through breakout rooms.
- Allowing pairs more agency to choose each other.
- Enabling participants to group themselves by thematic areas or fields of work.
- Ensuring SDI communicates insights to policymakers and stakeholders.
- Providing a space for political and difficult conversations.

Recommendations for maintaining connections with and among mentors in the MMP 2025

- Building an alumni structure and maintaining a growing network and database.
- Involving past participants in designing future programs.
- Involving past participants to participate in SDI´s activities where applicable.

The day concluded with a reception during which the mentors engaged with the panelists and speakers of the SDI´s Annual Interactive Conference taking place the following day. The Conference also featured the graduation ceremony, where mentors received their certificates of participation.