

Community Dialogue Join International Delegation to NATO

David Holloway, Community Dialogue's Director, joined an international peacebuilding delegation to Brussels, 21st to 25th June, for meetings with NATO staff on the application of dialogue as a peacebuilding tool for military personnel.

The visit was organised by Serge Da Deppo, NATO Innovation Hub and Dr Sam Richards and Dr Laurie Mulvey of World in Conversation, Pennsylvania State University, with whom we have are working on international dialogue facilitation training.

The seven person team, from Belgium, Denmark, Jordan, Poland, UK, and USA, made a presentation to staff from several NATO departments on the interim results of a World In Conversation / NATO Innovation Hub pilot dialogue project. The three year project tested the applicability of dialogue as tool for conflict management with military personnel by facilitating multiple dialogues through video conferencing between pre-deployment NATO cadets, from USA and European military academies, and Afghan citizens.

The presentation, including a review of the role of dialogue in managing sectarian and political conflict in Northern Ireland, conclusively demonstrated that:

1. Facilitated dialogue increases the cultural sensitivity of both NATO cadets and Afghan citizens to each other both in pre-deployment and deployment phases.
2. A ripple effect of significant attitudinal change spreads from dialogue participants to their peers.
3. The methodology is a simple, cost effective tool for conflict management that meets NATO operational requirements, as long as skilled facilitators are used.

A series of on-going meetings are in progress to mainstream delivery of facilitated dialogue as a NATO pre-deployment learning tool. Community Dialogue hopes to continue its engagement with this contribution to international peacebuilding.