

■ A LANDMARK FOR ARAB-GERMAN RESEARCH COOPERATION

AGYA receives the enormous funding of 4 million Euros for the next 4 years from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

The massive funding for research projects marks the beginning of a new chapter for AGYA:

“In the light of the present developments, as the world is moving closer together, academic platforms for dialogue and cooperation are more relevant than ever. AGYA offers an excellent opportunity for Arab and German scholars to intensify their contacts and to explore new forms of research collaboration”, explains the AGYA Co-President, Prof. Dr. Verena Lepper.

■ MIGRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

AGYA brings together Arab and German decision-makers in higher education

Currently, many young people from the Arab world are trying to start a new life in Europe. Migration and refugee movements induce major challenges to societies both in the Arab countries and Europe. AGYA wants to play a key role and contribute substantially to the analysis of challenges and potentials related to migration. The first project is a conference on “Migration and Transnational Cooperation in Education, Research and Innovation” in cooperation with DLR Project Management Agency that will take place in Berlin, 2-3 May 2016. “The conference aims at identifying best-practice and mutual benefits of migration in the framework of higher education cooperation. Therefore, we

AGYA in numbers



AGYA members will expand and intensify their research activities through three different types of scientific cooperation: Tandem Projects, Working Group Projects, and Idea Competitions. A Tandem consists of one Arab and one German member of AGYA. In such a close collaborative partnership the members will intensively learn from and with each other beyond disciplinary boundaries. In a Working Group Project several Arab and German AGYA members are invited to jointly tackle questions of common concern. These projects particularly enhance north-south-south-cooperation.

Currently, the AGYA members carry out a variety of interdisciplinary research projects on topics such as Migration and Higher Education, Controversial Technologies, Cultural and Ecological Transfer Processes and a High School Math and Science Outreach project. Protection and preservation of cultural sites is another main focus area of AGYA. Dr. Ammar Abdulrahman (Archeology) is committed to the protection of archeological heritage in Syria. With the new project funding, his fellow member Prof. Dr. Abdalla Elbashir (Chemistry) plans a comprehensive analysis of artwork and archeological material from sites in Sudan. The thematic diversity will increase significantly with more than 30 research projects that can be realized each year.

will provide new impetus to the public discussion on migration related to education across borders”, says Dr. Vanessa Lux. She is a member of the Working Group “Arab and German Education” and the main organizer of the conference. In five thematic workshops, renowned scientists and experts will discuss on blended learning initiatives, knowledge transfer, Arab-German exchange programs, teacher education, and migration research. Furthermore, the event offers a dialogue platform for Arab and German university presidents to enhance the mutual understanding of conditions and requirements in the respective higher education systems and to facilitate circular migration of students and scientists. The conference will be festively opened by Dr. Georg Schütte, State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

■ CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| AGYA insight highlights new research opportunities and one major focus of AGYA: Migration and Higher Education | 1 |
| AGYA in action presents you one of the recent AGYA activities: Hot Encounters – A workshop and lecture evening on glass art | 2 |
| AGYA in discussion features the exchange of two AGYA members on Young migrants and the internationalization of universities | 3 |
| AGYA in progress News & Contact | 4 |



Hot Encounters: Mold-blown glass as a Mediterranean success story

It was a ground-breaking innovation of the first century AD: The use of the blowpipe and closed molds revolutionized the early glass industry in the Roman Empire. Compared to the time-consuming technique of free-glassblowing, this invention has accelerated and refined the manufacturing of glassware. Ennion, a renowned and prominent glassworker from Sidon, now in Lebanon, had the most skillful hands at that time. He produced multi-panel mold-blown glass vessels that were known for their complexity of shapes and decorative motifs. The thin-walled glassware was not only highly sophisticated, but also resulted in substantial cost savings in materials. Ennion's vessels and techniques were rapidly exported to the Western parts of the Roman Empire. Complete and fragmented examples have been found in France, Spain and Germany. Glass production can be considered as a shared intangible cultural heritage between Europe and the Arab world. The AGYA Working Group Common Heritage & Common Challenges decided to bring attention to the cross-cultural elements of this fragile material. Dr. Kirill Dmitriev

by the beauty of the reproduced glass vessels and their ability to meet contemporary design standards", says Dr. Fatima Kastner describing her experience of the workshop.

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON GLASS ART

Mediterranean glass production was not only the priority of the event's practical part, but also the main focus of the lecture program. The hall of the Pergamon Museum that displays the sophisticatedly decorated facade of an 8th century Arab desert castle was the perfect venue to travel back into the history of the Middle East. Dr. Andrea Becker followed this path into the past: she and her team had excavated in the imperial residence city of Raqqa (Syria). The findings are a most revealing and comprehensive evidence of early Islamic glass art. Dr. Dedo von Kerssenbrock-Krosigk, head of the collection "Glas" at Glasmuseum Hentrich, took the audience even further back into the past to Pharaonic Egypt, Mesopotamia and Ancient Rome. He presented different uses and meanings of glass in those early civilizations. Art historian, Nadania Idriss, focused on the original place of mold-glassblowing in Sidon (Lebanon). She offered new approaches to safeguard manual techniques of glass production



invited AGYA members and guests to the lecture program "Hot Encounters: Glass Blowing and Glass Art in the Middle East and Europe". Moreover, the Working Group met for an internal hands-on glass workshop at Berlin Glas e.V., a manufacturing site for international glass artists.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ANCIENT GLASSWORKER ENNION

Nowadays, the techniques and motifs of Ennion still continue to attract attention. The German glassblower Torsten Röttsch works with reconstructed molds like the ones in Ennion's glass workshop. In a glass blowing demonstration, using ancient techniques to produce authentic replications of Ennion's glassware, he inspired the AGYA members to experience the delicate characteristics of the material at first-hand. In a glass painting and fusing workshop, the scholars trained their skills of craftsmanship. "Working with glass made me realize the extraordinary cultural achievement of glassware for past and modern societies. I was deeply impressed

as an intangible heritage in the Middle East. The closing lecture was dedicated to contemporary glass art. The Syrian artist Ali Kaaf presented his art work in which he translates the characteristics of glass materials into artistic manifestation.



The event was realized in cooperation with Berlin Glas e.V. with the kind support of the Museum für Islamische Kunst - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.



Young Migrants - A Driving Force for Internationalization of Higher Education?

Dr. Ammar Abdulrahman, Syrian archeologist based in Germany, discusses with political scientist Dr. Florian Kohstall about the integration of migrants into the German higher education system.

According to conservative estimates, between 30.000-50.000 young Syrians who came to Germany are qualified for university studies.

HOW CAN THE YOUNG MIGRANTS BE INTEGRATED INTO THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM?

Florian:

Freie Universität Berlin is one of the German universities that prepares refugees to apply for regular study programs. Welcome@FUBerlin provides language courses, preparatory courses, special counseling and access to courses in different fields. Many ask about the economic rationale behind the program. We certainly believe that young migrants have a high potential to contribute to the economy in Germany and in their home countries. Our priority is to familiarize them with university life. Universities are among the most vibrant and diverse social institutions to facilitate integration and a start of a new life.

Ammar:

I think that Syrian students can be quickly integrated into university life in Germany, because they do not need to pass a preparatory college. The Syrian higher education system is considered one of the best in the Arab countries, especially in life sciences and humanities. In Germany, the general level of qualification of Syrian students was classified as "high". However, German university programs are in all disciplines much more differentiated than in Syria. Therefore, next to acquiring language proficiency, refugee students need guidance through the study programs of German universities.

ARE THE NEWLY ARRIVING STUDENTS REINFORCING INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS?

Florian:

Internationalization efforts of German universities focus on reaching

out to the world, by bilateral study programs and collaborative research projects tailored for graduate students, PhD candidates and researchers. Now we are welcoming many students who interrupted their studies due to armed conflicts or economic crises. Before all, they will contribute to what we call "internationalization at home": the improvement of counselling services, study programs in English, and high standard university education.

Ammar:

The regional circulation of students within the Arab world is high. However, the main challenge is to raise the level of international exchange and the competitiveness of Arab students and academics. We need highly qualified scientists who will be able to join international teams, which tackle global challenges such as climate change and pandemic diseases.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE NEXT STEPS OF INTEGRATION?

Ammar:

The challenges that we are facing at present are also an extraordinary opportunity to bring the academia in both countries closer together. The established links should result in the implementation of innovative bilateral study programs and collaborative post-doc research projects. At the same time, the circulation of knowledge and skills will be an essential part of rebuilding processes in Syria in the coming years.

Florian:

Our next steps will be to refine the existing programs. Regarding this issue I benefit tremendously from my fellow Arab AGYA members. We need to learn more about the study and research systems in the students' home countries. We need to increase our efforts to guide them through the German educational system and to respond more flexibly to the demands of the newcomers. While many will stay, however, many will also return one day to rebuild their home countries. To cater for the needs of both groups is the real challenge and chance at the same time.



Florian Kohstall is a political scientist. He is the head of the Cairo Office of Freie Universität Berlin. Since October 2015 he also coordinates the program Welcome@FUBerlin, which facilitates access to the university for students who had to flee their home countries.



Ammar Abdulrahman is archeologist by training and former lecturer at the University of Damascus. His research activities include projects on restoration and preservation of cultural heritage in Syria and other Arab countries.

First AGYA event at the American University (AUB) in Lebanon

Insatiable Appetite: Food as a Cultural Signifier, Beirut, 12-14 May 2016

As the world's population increases disproportionately to the natural resources on the globe, exacerbated by patterns of consumption in affluent countries, media and scholars alike have discovered food and foodways as topics of crucial importance. Like no other item of daily life, food intimately connects the world's population to the process of globalization - a process that is by no means a recent development as shown by the history of food. Particularly Europe and the Mediterranean have been connected by alimentary exchange since antiquity. Yet, while food serves to build bridges, it is also a potential marker of social, religious, gendered, political, and ethnic differences. This conference aims at exploring cultural as well as scientific ramifications of food and foodways in Europe and the Mediterranean in a *longue durée* and interdisciplinary perspective.

Latest news

- **Samir Lounis** has recently received a Consolidator Grant of 2 million Euros from the European Research Council to work on "Dynamical magnetic excitations with spin-orbit interaction in realistic nanostructures" (DYNASORE).
- In February 2016, **Jens Scheiner** became a fully tenured professor of Islamic Studies at Göttingen University.
- **Samar Azab** has been promoted to Acting Head of the Pharmacology and Toxicology Department at Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt.
- In summer 2016, **Sarhan Dhouib** will join the Institute for Philosophy of the University of Bremen. He will teach as visiting professor intercultural philosophy and in particular Arab-Islamic philosophy.
- In the framework of the German-Arab Transformation Partnership, **Ahmed Debez** has been granted the funding for a joint project with Hans-Peter Braun, University of Hannover. The project "Proteomics and Halophyte Stress Tolerance-PHAST 16" is realized in cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).
- In April 2016, **Norman Domeier** will join the Simon Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies and the Department for Contemporary History of the University of

Vienna for two years as Lise-Meitner Fellow.

- The University of Khartoum has granted **Abdalla Ahmed Elbashir** an Academic Excellence Award in the field of basic and engineering sciences.
- **Assem Abu Hatab** has been elected as a member of the Consultative Board of the Arab Federation for Wildlife Protection (AFWP). AFWP is one of the specialized organizations of the Arab Council for Economic Unity of the Arab League.
- **Khalid Talahma** was elected Board Member of the Palestinian Judicial Institute and appointed as Legal Expert of the Belgian Development Agency BTC. In the Enhancing Capacities for Institution Building Programme (ECIB) he will be developing a new legal framework for the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- **Bilal Orfali** recently published three books: The Book of Noble Character (Brill, 2015), The Anthologist's Art (Brill, 2016), and AUB One Hundred and Fifty (AUB Press, 2016).
- In January 2016, **Younis Baqi** has been appointed as editorial board member for the international journal "Mini-Reviews in Medicinal Chemistry".
- **Julia Hauser** received a Gerald D. Feldman travel grant from the Max Weber Foundation allowing her to pursue archival

research in India, the United States, and Great Britain in 2016 for her second book on the entangled history of vegetarianism.

- In January 2016, **Hanan Badr** has joined the Institute for Media and Communication Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. There she became a member of the research team of the DFG-project on "Media Functions in Transition: Eastern Europe 2011 and North Africa 2011".

Upcoming events

18-21 March 2016

Doha, Qatar

Annual AGYA Conference in Qatar in conjunction with the Annual Research Conference of Qatar Foundation (ARC'16)

02-03 May 2016

Berlin, Germany

International Conference "Migration and Transnational Cooperation in Education, Research and Innovation: An Arab-German Dialogue" of the AGYA Working Group "Arab and German Education"

12-14 May 2016

Beirut, Lebanon

International Conference "Insatiable Appetite: Food as a Cultural Signifier" of the AGYA Working Group "Common Heritage and Common Challenges"

October 2016

Halle, Germany

Annual AGYA Conference in Germany

About us

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) has been established in 2013 as the first bilateral young academy worldwide with the aim to promote Arab-German exchange based on the idea of scientific excellence and societal commitment of early career scholars (3-10 years after PhD). In the light of the present international challenges this mission is more relevant than ever: Arab and German researchers must intensify their cooperation to actively engage in today's interconnected world. The current 50 AGYA members are distinguished researchers from a variety of disciplines working in 15 Arab countries and Germany. AGYA effectively supports their interdisciplinary projects in different areas of scientific research, science policy and education. Moreover, AGYA fosters the intercultural experiences of its members and promotes them as ambassadors of sciences and culture.

AGYA

at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities

Jägerstr. 22-23
10117 Berlin/Germany
+49 30 20 370 281
agya@bbaw.de

at the American University of Beirut

P.O. Box 11-0236 / Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Languages
Riad El-Solh / Beirut 1107 2020 / Lebanon
+ 961 350000/ ext 3860
aei01@mail.aub.edu

www.agya.info

Follow us on Twitter: @AGYA_events

Imprint:

Responsible: AGYA | Editorial Work: AGYA Office in Berlin | Photos: page 2 - David Ausserhofer | Art work and layout: Amr El-Geddawy, www.upfrontdesign.net

SPONSORED BY THE

