

Strengthening Arab-German Cooperation at the global crossroads in Abu Dhabi

From 23-25 October 2015, the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) held the international conference “Arab-German Research Cooperation: New Chances and Challenges in International Academia” in Abu Dhabi. The conference was hosted by H.H. Sheikh Nahyan ibn Mubarak Al Nahyan.

Excellent Arab and German young scientists (AGYA members) and international high-ranking senior experts discussed at Zayed University on 24 October topics such as innovation as a key driver for the future industry; new emerging and controversially viewed technologies; involvement of youth in competitive science and math activities; challenges in museology to translate cultural heritage transculturally; and common issues in higher education. All these topics were tackled by a collaborative interdisciplinary approach within the framework of the conference and beyond. Abu Dhabi with its knowledge-based society and innovation-based economy was chosen as venue for the conference.

The AGYA Conference in Abu Dhabi was festively opened by His Highness Sheikh Nahyan ibn Mubarak Al Nahyan (Minister of Culture, Youth and Social Development, UAE) and His Excellency Dr Eckhard Wilhelm Lübke (Ambassador of Germany to the UAE) on 23 October. After the Welcome Addresses of the AGYA Co-Presidents and some musical delights, Mr Ziad Mikati (Representative of the Mikati Foundation, Lebanon) delivered a Keynote Lecture “Effective Philanthropy and the Power of Networking”. The conference is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBWF). The opening ceremony was realized with the kind support of the German Embassy in Abu Dhabi.

His Highness Sheikh Nahyan invited the AGYA members to discover the cosmopolitan city of Abu Dhabi in a country dedicated to peace, diversity, and prosperity. In his welcome address he explained: “We owe much of our success to the willingness to welcome smart, skilled, and experienced people, like yourselves, to our country. When our young people learn that people all over the world can cooperate in seeking the same truth and knowledge, they will understand the essence of the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities.”

Both Sheikh Nahyan and Mr Ziad Mikati agreed upon that youth unemployment is one of the major challenges of the Arab world today. This challenge needs to be tackled by inspiring more young people to study and to persist in their study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. “I am especially attracted to the idea of international competition because it demystified the subjects and creates a global community mirroring the actual world of science”, says Sheikh Nahyan.

In his concluding remarks he conveyed his appreciation of the concept of AGYA, stating “I am confident that the effort of AGYA to promote Arab-German Research Cooperation will succeed. The AGYA conference will help to make that cooperation a model for our global society. Thank you for gathering in Abu Dhabi to accomplish such important work.”

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) has been established in 2013 as the first bilateral young academy worldwide. The AGYA aims to establish a community of distinguished Arab and German researchers who are at an early stage in their academic careers (3-10 years after PhD). The academy effectively supports their innovative interdisciplinary projects and collaborative initiatives from different areas of scientific research, science policy and education. Moreover, the AGYA fosters the intercultural experience of its 50 members from the Arab world and Germany and promotes them as ambassadors of sciences and culture.

Topics of the Panel Discussion on 24 October 2015

Innovation and Young Talents

Innovation is a key driver for the future industry. Startups and spinoffs from universities are one promising way to transfer the world-leading research and education to novel solutions and ideas that might initiate long lasting industrial development. Thus it is a key question how countries and universities support the development of ideas, the transfer of knowledge from university to industry and the founding of new startups.

Disputed Technologies: Ethical Perspectives

In the past four decades technologies have significantly changed our lives. Many of the new emerging technologies raise controversies, and many spark intense debates that polarize in the scientific point of view. The panel will open the floor to Arab and German perspectives on disputed technologies. A special focus will be on the assessment of individual country perspectives.

Math and Science Outreach Program

How can we involve Arab and German youth in up-to-date scientific knowledge and empower them to embark on the road of scientific research? We will discuss new approaches to build “vertical” networks between students, school teachers and scientists, as well as “horizontal” networks across disciplines, institutes and countries. One specific focus will lie on international competitions such as the International Math Olympiad and the benefits it provides to its participants, schools and universities.

“Translating” Heritage in Contemporary Transnational Contexts

If we interpret the notion of “translation” as explaining one’s own cultural heritage to members of other cultural backgrounds understanding and shared knowledge is produced. In this panel we will tackle characteristics and problems of such “translations” in museology with a focus on antique heritage and sports as a global medium.

Issues and Challenges in Higher Education

Higher education institutions are expected to operate, compete, be creative and innovative, and provide intellectual leadership in a rapidly changing world. Has higher education succeeded in fulfilling such aspirations? In this panel discussion, we will address questions such as: What is the role of higher education in the 21st century? What are the major issues and challenges now and in the future? Where are we placing teaching and learning in higher education compared to research?