



# Arab-German Dialogue on Migration

Policy Report of the International AGYA Conference on Migration  
and Transnational Cooperation in Education, Research and Innovation

**Berlin, 2-3 May 2016**

**agya**  
ARAB-GERMAN  
YOUNG ACADEMY  
OF SCIENCES AND  
HUMANITIES



## Contents

<b>Words of Welcome</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Arab-German Dialogue on Migration</b>	
Policy Brief	8
Core Concepts	10
Recommendations	12
Best Practice Examples of Exchange	18
AGYA Project Adopt an Academic	19
<b>Migration and Transnational Cooperation in Education, Research and Innovation</b>	
Conference Report	20
AGYA Award	23
University Presidents' Meeting and Thematic Workshops	24
<b>About AGYA</b>	<b>36</b>

*'It is our duty to intensify the scientific dialogue between Germany and the Arab world, given the current political developments and challenges in North Africa and the Middle East, which have a direct impact on Germany and Europe.'*

German Federal Minister of Education and Research Prof. Dr. Johanna Wanka in the BMBF press release about the conference

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## Words of Welcome

Migration is a timely topic, one which has virtually exploded on the global level and has become a worldwide concern. Europe is experiencing a massive wave of migration. However, 90% of all Arab migrants currently live in the Arab world itself, in countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, or Tunisia. Only a small percentage of migrants arrive in Europe or Germany. On the one hand, the German *Willkommenskultur* (welcoming culture) offers grand opportunities for Germany and Europe, and is a major enrichment for their societies, in addition to being a humanitarian duty. On the other hand, the number of migrants arriving from Syria, Iraq, and other countries of the Middle East presents a major challenge at the moment for German society and its educational system. This is not only a major task for primary and secondary schools, but also for the German university system. Among those arriving are an unprecedentedly high number of university students and young scholars.

In May 2016, the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) brought together 200 high-ranking Arab and German scholars and leading university representatives from nineteen countries for an international conference in Berlin. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) for the generous support of the event. The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) was founded as the first bilateral young academy worldwide to unleash the potential of early career scholars who combine academic excellence with social commitment. So who would be more entitled and truly called to discuss, from an Arab-German perspective, migration and transnational cooperation in education, research and innovation.

This conference on 'Migration and Transnational Cooperation in Education, Research & Innovation' provided its prominent participants with a forum and an opportunity to examine the current situation, as well as to take a deep look at all aspects of the topic of migration. At the core of the conference was an understanding of migrants as people who have moved to a new country in which they can find promise and hope.

While host countries generally perceive this as a challenge, it is evident that migrants always bring with them to their host countries traditions, experiences, ideas, and knowledge.

The current situation also presents a significant opportunity for intensified Arab-Arab-German cooperation in higher education, research, and innovation. The conference offered a platform from which to learn from the Arab countries, their various initiatives, and their experience with migrant education, since Arab countries have been dealing with these issues for years and have already developed best practices. At the conference, the participants identified current needs and obstacles for different integration strategies and measures. They discussed what solutions might be provided by such measures as online and blended learning initiatives and tools, and how volunteer work could be linked with formal programmes. Further questions were raised in the areas of: How can we strengthen and make use of currently existing collaboration in the current situation? What funding initiatives and programmes exist or are needed in order to harvest these possibilities?

The policy recommendations developed with regard to these questions and presented in this report were the result of keynotes, panel discussions, and presentations that took place in five thematic workshops, as well as the result of a closed meeting between German and Arab university presidents. The policy recommendations were based on the concept of making migrants fit for universities, and universities fit for migrants' – seizing upon the opportunities presented by migration. In conclusion, we hope that these recommendations will help in improving the situation for migrants and will strengthen Arab-German cooperation. We wish you an inspiring read.

Prof. Dr. Verena Lepper, Personal Investigator (PI), Co-President of AGYA and Curator for Egyptian and Oriental Papyri, Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection, National Museums Berlin, and Honorary Professor, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany

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**Dr. Maha Al-Hendawi**, Co-President of AGYA



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# Policy Brief

## Arab-German Dialogue on Migration

### Outline

These policy recommendations are the result of discussions and presentations that took place in May 2016, at the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) conference on 'Migration and Transnational Cooperation in Education, Research & Innovation', held in Berlin. The conference featured 200 prominent Arab and German scholars from nineteen countries who, along with leading university representatives, discussed issues regarding education, research, and innovation, as they relate to migrants.

This section aims to contextualize the recommendations made at the conference in such a way as to make them valuable for policy and academic policy decision-makers in both the Arab world and in Germany. To this end, this chapter first provides an introduction to the general situation and to the role of the conference. It then describes the Core Concepts upon which the recommendations are based, before it elaborates on the 26 recommendations, which have been divided into six categories. At the conclusion, some of the best practices, which were not only presented at the conference, but which also provided opportunities for further collaboration and mutual learning through the different settings of the conference, will be presented.

### New Perspectives on Arab-German and Arab-Arab Cooperation

In 2015 and 2016, Germany was confronted with a large influx of refugees from Syria, Iraq, and other countries from the Middle East, as well as from Africa. According to the UNHCR, more than four million Syrians currently live outside their home country, while around seven million have been displaced within Syria due to the consequences of military interventions. The majority of Syrians who have fled their home country, however, live in other countries in the region, such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. Conservative projections estimate that in these countries there are currently 100,000 Syrians who aspire to pursue higher education. According to estimates from 2015, there are about 50,000 potential students among the refugees in Germany. The enormous number of migrants coming to Germany is a significant challenge to the country's educational system. At the same time, it is a unique opportunity to create new prospects for Arab-German and Arab-Arab academic cooperation. Such cooperation aims to support the educational systems in the Arab world, as well as in Germany, through mutual learning from best practices and experiences in the areas of education and migrant integration.

The current wave of migration opens up new perspectives for transnational cooperation, along with new learning opportunities. Countries in the Middle East and North Africa already have lengthy experience with migration and the integration of migrants into institutions of higher education. Searching for joint solutions requires an exchange as to how programmes

that have been implemented in the educational systems of the various host countries have succeeded in catering to the needs of migrants. Knowledge exchange between German and Arab stakeholders and experts is indispensable.

Migration also implies knowledge transfer for the benefit of all societies concerned. Multilingual professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds add value to the societies they live in through a positive 'knowledge spillover'. By offering new perspectives on problems within the host societies, refugees can innovate and engage in creative problem-solving processes, starting at a grassroots level and moving onto a higher level at the local, regional, national or international level. Taking a long-term view, migration can only be a multiple gain situation: for personal development, for receiving institutions in the host country, and, due to life-long networks, for institutions and persons in the countries of origin. To enable and to support the circulation of knowledge and skills, international cooperation is more crucial than ever. Knowledge transfer is not a one-way street. Appropriate structures must be created to harvest these gains and facilitate circular migration.

Sustainable and long-term potential in the areas of education, research, and innovation can only be nurtured through academic cooperation, taking into account the different categories and groups of migrants. As stated by Prof. Dr. Johanna Wanka, the German Federal Minister of Education and Research, in the press release about the conference from the BMBF: 'It is our duty to intensify the scientific dialogue between Germany and the Arab world, given the current political developments and challenges in North Africa and the Middle East, which have a direct impact on Germany and Europe.' AGYA has reached out to provide new impetus for scholarly dialogue on migration between Germany and the Arab world: For Arab and German university representatives and academic experts, the AGYA conference provided a unique opportunity to learn from each other about good practices of transnational scientific cooperation, education across borders using online learning platforms, and community integration programmes.

### A Question of Definition

In the discourse on migration and education, the terms 'refugees', 'migrants', 'students/scholars at risk', as well as the term 'heterogeneous student groups' are used. These terms imply different categories and groups with specific needs, as well as different symbolic and legal frameworks. While the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' imply a homogeneous group with common needs, more precise terms like 'student/scholar at risk' aim at identifying the specific needs of these groups. A clearly-defined terminology must therefore precede any discussion of programmes and integration strategies!

## Definitions of refugees, migrants & scholars/students at risk

### Refugees

The definition of refugees was established in the 1951 United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, a key legal document that forms the basis for the activities of the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR. According to this definition, refugees are persons who are living outside their country of citizenship because they have 'well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion'.

### Migrants

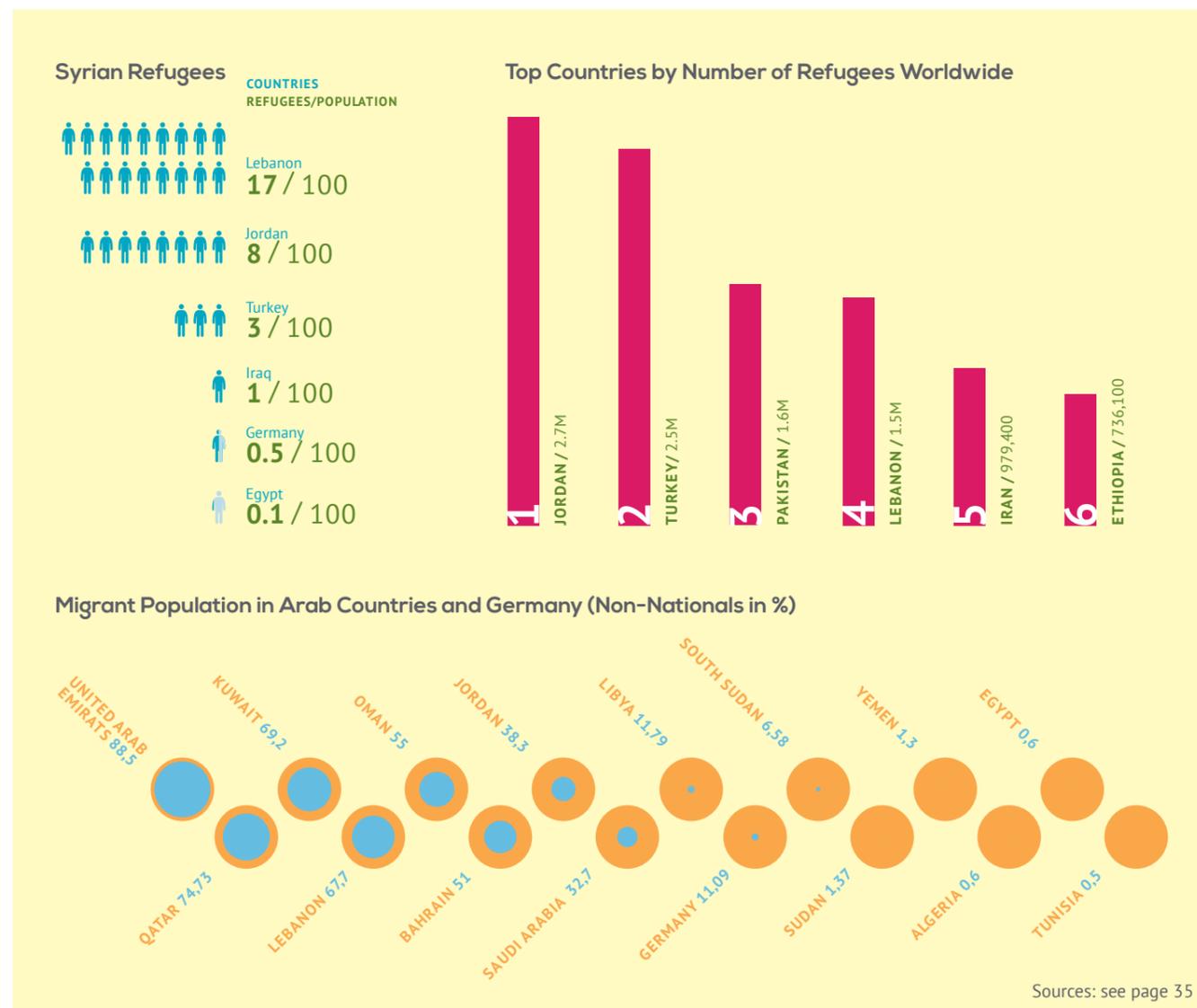
The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany, in its 2011 migration report, describes migration as follows: Migration occurs when a person relocates his or her life centre.

When this happens across national borders, it is referred to as international migration. In popular discourse, migrants (as opposed to refugees) tend to be pictured as having made a free choice, voluntarily leaving their home countries in search of a better life.

### Scholars/students at risk

Scholars/students at risk are people who are threatened in their home countries or who currently cannot pursue their work due to migration or restrictions on academic freedom.

Sources: see page 35



## Core Concepts

Within the framework of the international conference on migration and transnational cooperation held by the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) in Berlin from 2-3 May 2016, 200 high-ranking Arab and German scholars from nineteen countries, along with leading university representatives, discussed issues regarding education, research, and innovation as they relate to this current wave of migration. In thematic workshops, 26 recommendations were developed. These recommendations were based on the following core concepts:

### Make migrants fit for universities and universities fit for migrants

The primary core concept behind the recommendations is based on the principle: 'Make Migrants Fit for Universities and Universities Fit for Migrants'. This was a unanimously recommended by the 200 Arab and German experts at the AGYA conference, i.e. to improve the educational systems in all of the countries concerned. Through this approach, integration methods could better be documented and translated into action – to the benefit of all groups within the respective societies. Reforms and integration programmes are, from this point of view, a win-win situation for both the local population and the migrants.

### Involve migrants and refugees

It is crucial to understand the target audience in order to ensure that their needs are met. Therefore, migrants and refugees should be involved in the design, development, and implementation of educational programmes and courses in the Arab world and in Germany.

### Promote programmes that are based on inclusion of migrants and refugees

Education based on inclusion helps both local and migrant students, since it will not only shape their biographies and values, but also their academic work and, in the end, their chosen disciplines. A higher education culture that recognizes the benefits of diversity also creates added value for the society at large. Preparatory courses for all students and additional transitional programmes for students at risk help all students to smoothly integrate into the higher education system. Transitional programmes, organized as one to two year programmes, combining a reduced curriculum of regular classes together with all other students and an additional tailored curriculum for students at risk, enhance consistent social integration.

### Further internationalise the higher education system in Germany to the benefit of the entire population

The further internationalisation of the higher education system in Germany will facilitate participation in the global exchange of talent and will enhance the global profile of German universities in general. At the same time, individual students will benefit from the internationalisation of study programmes and their degrees, as they become more equivalent and students become prepared to work in an international environment.

### Keep in mind that the integration of refugees into institutions of higher education will be a long-term process

The integration process does not end with the admission of refugees to the study programmes, but continues until graduation and beyond.

## Key Clusters of Recommendations

The recommendations are the result of the discussions and presentations that took place during the university presidents' meeting and the five workshops that were held at the conference. They are addressed to policy and academic policy decision-makers in both the Arab world and in Germany. They aim to improve the integration of migrant researchers and to foster academic cooperation and knowledge transfer between the Arab world and Germany, as well as between the Arab countries.

The 26 recommendations were divided into the following six key clusters:

### Academic Cooperation to the Benefit of Migrant Researchers

Recommendations are primarily based on the 'University Presidents' Meeting'

### Improving the Integration of International Students in University Systems

Recommendations are primarily based on the workshop 'Integrating Migrants into the University'

### Harvesting the Potential for North-South-South Innovation and Knowledge Transfer

Recommendations are primarily based on the workshop 'Innovation and Knowledge Transfer'

### Expanding Bilateral Exchange Programmes

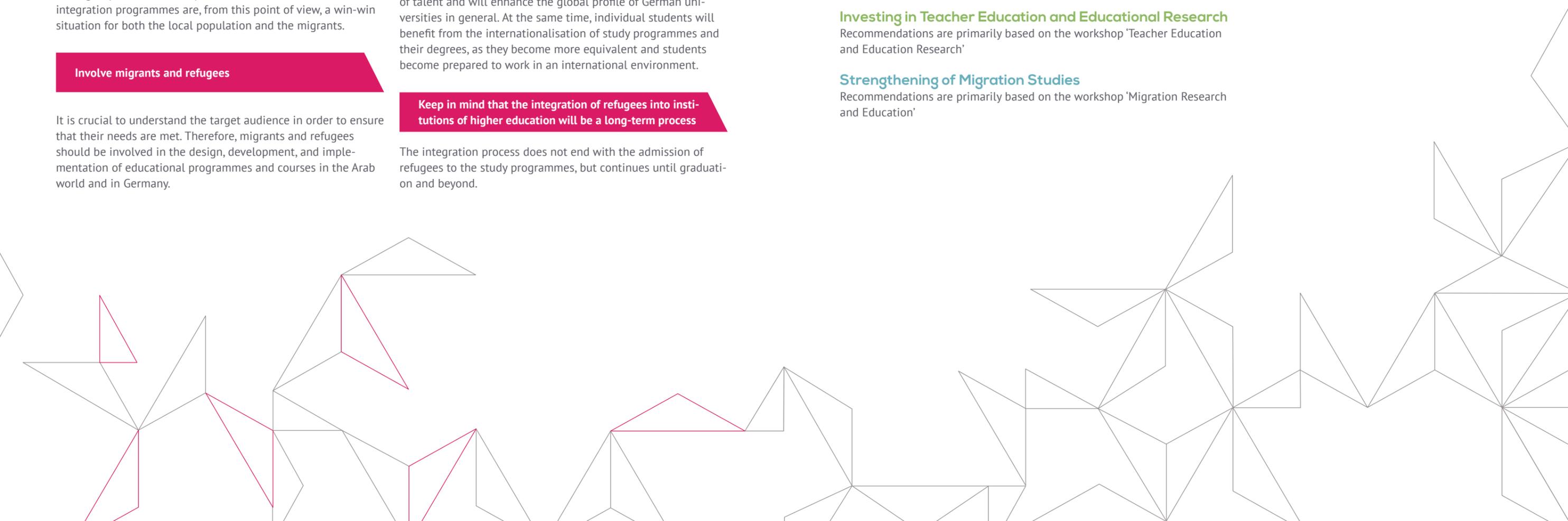
Recommendations are primarily based on the workshop 'Higher Education Across Borders'

### Investing in Teacher Education and Educational Research

Recommendations are primarily based on the workshop 'Teacher Education and Education Research'

### Strengthening of Migration Studies

Recommendations are primarily based on the workshop 'Migration Research and Education'



## Recommendations

### Academic Cooperation to the Benefit of Migrant Researchers

#### 1 Facilitate and promote circular migration

Scholars and students, in particular, are more dependent on mobility than other groups, in order to develop their careers in an international environment. Circular migration is a gain for all parties involved, i.e. for personal development, as well as for institutions in the host countries and in the countries of origin. International cooperation must enable and facilitate the circulation of knowledge and skills.

#### 2 Establish Arab-German centres of excellence

Enhance academic cooperation through the establishment of centres of excellence: Funding bodies should invest in research centres and bilateral academies that can act as catalysts for research and development by bringing together outstanding scholars and supporting their interdisciplinary research projects and initiatives. Existing structures, such as AGYA, can initiate and facilitate such activities.

#### 3 Implement peer-to-peer mentoring programmes

Peer-to-peer mentoring programmes for migrant researchers should be implemented to facilitate integration in the host countries, as well as to build and support sustainable networks. Services provided by the mentor could include administrative support, introduction to a new educational and academic environment, as well as the identification of suitable funding opportunities.

#### 4 Build an Arab-German coordination platform for research and education

A sustainable coordination platform for the different Arab and German stakeholders should be established: Consistent exchange between researchers, university representatives, and political decision-makers is essential for the integration of migrants into higher education systems to succeed. The platform could be set up both online and offline, with regular network meetings every one to two years to establish dialogue between university presidents, policy makers, funding institutions, and scholars.

### Improving the Integration of International Students in University Systems

#### 5 Integrate general preparatory courses in existing programmes

Implement general preparatory courses that are compulsory for both migrant and non-migrant students, to prepare them for the demands of German universities. These courses should provide aspiring students with the necessary skills for university studies (e.g. language, maths, critical thinking, etc.) so as to facilitate their integration into higher education in Germany.

#### 6 Implement blended and online learning modules

Blended and online learning courses increase flexibility in the areas of time and location, enable collaboration between individuals in different locations, and ensure the continuation of education during migration. Arabic, German, and English courses should be offered as mobile education across borders.

#### 7 Offer intensive language courses

Potential students are 'turbo-learners'. They require intensive courses to prepare them as quickly as possible for university programmes. Further, special language classes, focusing on technical terminology, should be offered.

#### 8 Establish education hubs

For potential students, educational hubs should be established in the primary host countries in the region, since this is effective and also financially sustainable. These hubs should apply the one-stop-shop principle, offering multiple services and information in local educational facilities and exchange programmes, advice on educational planning, and language courses, as well as propaedeutic courses.

#### 9 Expand job and career services

The integration process should ensure that migrants and refugees will be equipped with the necessary skills for success in the job market. Expanded job and career services should provide information on both higher education and vocational education, as well as general counselling regarding study programmes, combined with information on job and career prospects.

#### 10 Promote social sciences and humanities

The societal appreciation of the humanities and social sciences must be enhanced, so as to attract more migrant students, as a means of capacity building. Knowledge production in these academic fields is highly relevant for intercultural understanding and social development in the host countries, as well as for the future rebuilding process in the countries affected by crises.



## Harvesting the Potential of North-South-South Innovation and Knowledge Transfer

### 11 Support the innovative potential of migrants

Cultural diversity can serve as an incubator for innovation: The innovative potential of migrants should be supported by enabling them to establish transnational networks. The perspectives of migrants on host societies may generate innovative ideas and empower them to contribute to the social, economic, and cultural lives of not only their host countries, but also of their transnational networks.

### 12 Implement a North-South-South research & innovation platform

To foster technology and knowledge transfer between the Arab world and Germany, as well as among Arab countries, a research & innovation platform must be launched to facilitate North-South-South cooperation. This platform should stimulate knowledge production at the interface between research facilities and industry (including small businesses) and provide access to internationally available knowledge.

### 13 Increase Arab-German technology and innovation transfer at the grassroots level

Arab-German technology and innovation transfer at the grassroots level should be increased through the promotion of National Innovation Systems, transfer agencies, funding programmes, and mentorship programmes.

## Expanding Bilateral Exchange Programmes

### 14 Create and maintain perspectives for scholars and students in the Arab world

Establish study programmes in the region to support North-South-South cooperation within the EU framework: Arab students should have the opportunity to study in other Arab countries with German/EU funding. Propaedeutic courses to enhance soft skills among students and researchers should be offered.

### 15 Implement new bilateral B.A. and M.A. programmes

Transnational Education (TNE) is experiencing increasing demand. New bilateral B.A. and M.A. programmes between Germany and the Arab world should therefore be implemented. Both sides will profit from equivalent degree programme and improved internationalisation.

### 16 Expand flying faculty programmes

To enhance the exchange of expertise, flying faculty programmes should be expanded. These programmes aim to attract international lecturers to spend a short period of time at a host university to teach the students and to provide them with new research perspectives.

### 17 Promote German-Arab universities

Promote German-Arab universities by supporting those that already exist. These are the ideal platforms for offering study programmes for refugees in the region. Additional bilateral institutions of higher education in North Africa and the Gulf region and, as soon as the security situation permits, in Syria and Iraq should be established.

### 18 Implement teacher exchange programmes

Teacher exchange programmes between Arab countries and Germany should be implemented. As a part of the programme, preparatory courses, including intercultural training, along with follow-up courses following re-entry to the home country, should be provided.

### 19 Strategically support exchange programmes within the EU framework

Establish EU-funded exchange programmes (such as Erasmus) with the Arab countries to foster North-South cooperation. Currently existing exchange programmes must be expanded and additional programmes must be implemented to foster circular migration.

## Investing in Teacher Education and Educational Research

### 20 Incorporate intercultural training courses into teacher education curricula at universities

Enhanced cultural awareness, knowledge, and practical skills aid in proactively managing intercultural issues. Intercultural and language training should be provided for students in teacher education programmes and, in the form of continuing education programmes, for current teachers and school counsellors.

### 21 Establish additional research programmes on education

Additional educational research programmes, combining interdisciplinary and intercultural perspectives, must be established. Developing practical approaches that address students at risk, language training, and intercultural competencies should be combined with research on cognition and learning in the field of psychology.

### 22 Foster language skills

The language skills of school children, students, teachers, and university staff need to be enhanced. For the future of the Arab-German dialogue, language courses in Arabic should be offered in both schools and universities in Germany. At the same time, in Arab countries, German language programmes should be more strongly promoted.

### 23 Integrate conflict and peace studies in school curricula

Peace studies can provide an educational platform to help school children understand the causes of armed conflict, as well as alternative approaches to conflict management and global justice. Therefore, teachers should be trained to offer conflict and peace studies to educate school children to become competent and responsible global citizens.

## Strengthening of Migration Studies

### 24 Increase funding for academic research on migration

Since South-South migration is an important factor in the economic and social development of these countries, it is important to obtain more information on this, in order to help policy makers create effective policies. The funding of research at universities and supra-university research institutions, especially in the area of South-South migration and comparative migration, should therefore be increased on an international level.

### 25 Support both fundamental and comparative migration research

Fundamental, as well as comparative migration research, in highly internationalised teams should be supported: Social sciences must place emphasis on migration and flight, and conduct research on the migration continuum. This should include comparative research on the socio-cultural dimension of migration patterns.

### 26 Establish new professorships for migration studies

New professorships for migration studies must be established to educate highly qualified young researchers. These professors can act as strong voices within the public debate, representing an academic point of view in the discourse on migration.



## Best Practice Examples of Exchange at the AGYA Conference

The AGYA conference provided a unique opportunity to learn from the best practice examples of integration programmes in the Arab countries and in Germany. The following three examples illustrate how the conference brought together leading experts from the Arab world and Germany to develop new strategies regarding the integration of migrants in the educational system.

The conference represents a step forward for Arab-German academic dialogue: For German university representatives and academic experts, the AGYA conference provided a unique opportunity to carry out an intensive exchange of experiences with integration programmes in the Arab countries and vice versa.

### Online & Blended Learning Cooperation across Borders

In Germany and in Arab countries, several initiatives aimed at higher and continuing education for migrants and refugees utilise online and blended learning programmes. At the AGYA conference, representatives from Kiron Open Higher Education (Germany) and Edraak (Jordan) shared their experiences and discussed new programmes based on online education.

Kiron Open Higher Education is an internationally operational social start-up based in Berlin, which provides refugees with free higher education courses online. Edraak is an initiative of the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF) and offers Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) in Arabic.

Kiron Open Higher Education has a more formal concept of education, combining online with offline education, within the framework of the German university system. Edraak follows a more informal approach, offering MOOCs for Arab communities, including courses on health, nutrition, and career-management, and issues certificates for each individual completed course.

Those complementary initiatives in Arab countries and in Germany will profit from future collaboration. Moreover, they provide practical experience for 'education across borders', which has the potential to innovate higher education on a global level.

The conference not only provided a platform upon which to present these two best practice examples, but it also succeeded in creating a dialogue between both organisations. This was the beginning of a new potential collaboration.

### Community Integration through Interconnected Incentives

The Mikati Foundation, founded in 2000, operates in the areas of culture, youth, academic research, and education. With the influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the foundation has implemented special educational programmes for Syrian refugees. During the AGYA conference, Ziad Mikati, Head of the Beirut Office of the Mikati Foundation and member of the AGYA Advisory Board, presented these educational programmes and planned measures of the foundation with regard to primary school education, vocational training, and secondary school education of Syrian refugees.

Mikati emphasised that it is important to understand the integration of Syrian refugees as part of community integration in general. He further stressed the importance of interlinking the education of parents and their children by creating an interconnected incentive system designed to strengthen the education of both parents and children. The Mikati Foundation has, for example, established a vocational training programme targeted to refugee women and their children. Refugee women may participate in this programme and earn a living in various vocations, as long as their children do not drop out of school. Through this interconnected incentive system, the Foundation was able to integrate children who normally would not have attended school programmes.

The conference participants discussed how these experiences could enhance measures and programmes for the integration of refugees in Germany. The long-term experience of the Mikati Foundation was of great interest to the German organisations, who would like to benefit from the lessons learnt and the achievements within their own work with refugees.

## AGYA Project Adopt an Academic

AGYA has launched a mentoring programme that seeks to re-integrate refugee scholars into the academic landscape of their host countries. Designed as a peer-to-peer mentoring programme, Adopt an Academic gives excellent scholars the opportunity to effectively support refugee scholars through academic counselling, network building and administrative assistance. At the initiative of AGYA member Dr. Florian Kohstall and with the support of AGYA and the Freie Universität Berlin, the project intends to create an Arab-German network of solidarity that not only opens up new perspectives to the mentoring programme's mentees but also strengthens the value of cross-cultural research cooperation.

Adopt an Academic is run on a voluntary basis and is open to scholars from all disciplines. Depending upon the current location of the mentor and mentee, the mentoring process may take place on-site or on a distance basis. In any case, mentoring needs to proceed on a regular basis. Ideally, mentors will equip their mentees with work space, integrate them into ongoing research projects, and provide administrative support. Besides introducing their mentees into a new academic surrounding and serving as on-going dialogue partners, mentors may also help identify suitable funding opportunities for long-term research projects.

All mentors in the Adopt an Academic programme will receive special training and support both prior to and throughout the mentoring process. Furthermore, they will be provided the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with other mentors at annual network meetings. In this way, mentors will not only contribute to the exploration of new forms of cooperation between Arab and German scholars but will also become part of a larger network of solidarity among international scholars.

Adopt an Academic aims to support refugee scholars who had to leave their home countries because of ongoing military conflicts and/or profound limitations to their academic freedom. Applicants should preferably be researchers at the postdoc level. Since the mentoring programme is intended to function as a first step towards permanent re-integration into scholarly life, it also involves new networking opportunities and advice on funding options.

In order to guarantee the safety of potential and current mentees, the application and mentoring process will be conducted anonymously. Adopt an Academic also ensures that programme administrators may be contacted on a strictly confidential basis.

### Contact and further information

#### Adopt an Academic

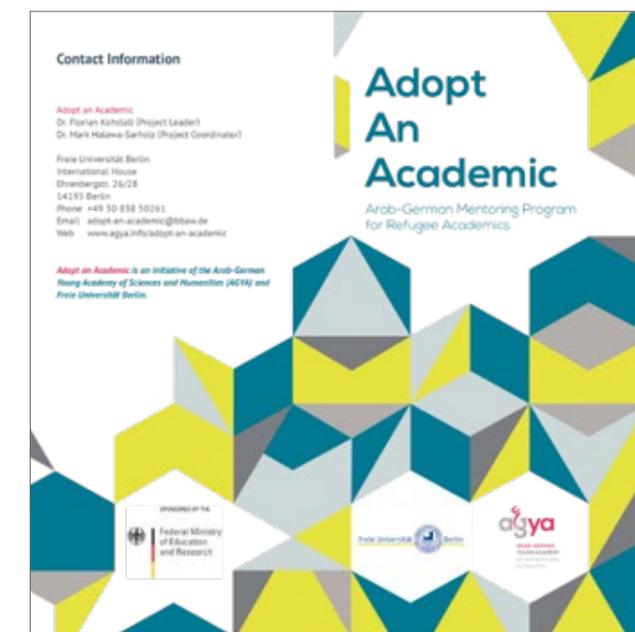
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# Migration and Transnational Cooperation in Education, Research and Innovation

## Conference Report

### *Seeking Mutual Solutions to Mutual Problems*

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) provides new impetus for scholarly dialogue between Germany and the Arab world on migration.

Within the framework of the international conference on migration and transnational cooperation held by the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) from 2-3 May 2016 in Berlin, 200 high-ranking Arab and German scholars and leading university representatives from nineteen countries discussed issues of education, research, and innovation related to the current wave of migration. 'From an Arab perspective, migration in the region is nothing new. Syrians have been migrating to Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt for years. In these countries, the issue of how to include displaced persons from the Arab countries into their educational systems has been being dealt with for a long time. We want to learn from their experience so that we can improve our own integration programmes', explained AGYA member Dr. Vanessa Lux, in describing the aim of the conference. Together with her colleagues from the AGYA Working Group on Arab and German Education, Lux initiated the conference.

In his welcome address, MinR Frithjof A. Maennel, Deputy Director General of International Cooperation in Education and Research, BMBF, Bonn, Germany stressed the importance of the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) in the area of Arab-German research and knowledge exchange: 'Since its foundation in 2013, AGYA has been playing a major role in the cooperation between German and Arab researchers. Through AGYA, we are witnessing exchange between people with common scholarly interests, which is carrying on the centuries-old fruitful dialogue between Orient and Occident that has

enriched our societies in Europe', stated Maennel. The BMBF is supporting AGYA's endeavours to intensify and expand research activities between Germany and the Arab world with 4.7 million euros in funding during the period from 2013 to 2020.

Along with the keynote speeches and panel discussions, during five workshops, the conference participants exchanged experiences and best practice examples, and identified areas of potential Arab-German research collaboration. 'Today, we have the opportunity to broaden our perspectives and to discuss the topic of migration and education with some 18 leading Arab and German university representatives, 50 Arab and German high-ranking expert-speakers, and more than 100 distinguished invited guests. Furthermore, sixteen initiatives that support the integration of migrants in their respective countries, in particular, with regard to education, will present their work in poster sessions during the conference', stated Personal Investigator (PI) and Co-President of AGYA Prof. Dr. Verena Lepper to the participants and guests in her welcome speech.

In this unique conference setting, AGYA members were able to work together with Arab and German scholars to develop common positions and recommendations in the areas of migration and transnational cooperation. The focus was on strategies for integrating migrants and refugees into German and Arab universities. In his keynote speech, Prof. Dr. Sascha Spoun, President of Leuphana University in Lüneburg, Germany, highlighted the importance of exchange in higher education. 'From its very beginning, higher education has stood in close relation to migration', he stated, recalling the long common history of migration and higher education. Spoun recalled how important scholars from around the world once came together at the House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma) in Baghdad for translation, reading, writing, and scribing, in order to expand and preserve knowledge through dialogue and exchange. Founded by Caliph Harun al-Rashid (reigned 786–809) the Bayt al-Hikma was a major intellectual centre and experienced its apex under his son, al-Ma'mun.

### *Migrants as 'Bridges of Trust'*

During the first panel discussion, RD Julie Klein, Deputy Head of Division, Cooperation with Developing and Emerging Countries, Africa and the Middle East, BMBF, Berlin, Germany expanded upon this concept of educational exchange: 'Dialogue between Arab and German academia, academic policy makers, and society is of utmost importance', she explained. In this first panel, entitled 'Migration and Higher Education: Experiences, Challenges, and Long-term Potential', the panellists discussed their experiences with the integration of refugees, migrants, and scholars at risk at their respective universities, as well as with academic exchange in general.

AGYA Member Dr. Florian Kohstall introduced the 'Welcome to Freie Universität Berlin Program', which he coordinates in Berlin. This programme contains an extensive package of academic offerings and services aimed at making it easier for people who have had to leave their home countries to gain access to study programmes. Prof. Dr. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry, President of the Euro-Mediterranean University in Portorož, Slovenia, stressed the long-term opportunities presented by migration. As 'bridges of trust', migrants play an indispensable role in cooperation between countries north and south of the Mediterranean.

### *Language Barriers As One of the Key Challenges of Integration*

Several panellists identified language barriers as one of the key challenges of integration in study programmes. 'Language is a prominent issue', stated Prof. Dr. Steffen Mau of the Department of Social Sciences at the Humboldt University Berlin. Only very few of the highly qualified refugees and immigrants who came to Germany in 2015 possessed sufficient German language skills prior to their arrival. Mau discussed different approaches to overcoming this challenge. Some universities have introduced study programmes that are taught in English. These programmes do not constitute even 10% of all courses of study in Germany, and they also lead to the following problem: Study programmes that are completely taught in English do not prepare students for the German labour market, as German language skills may not sufficiently be supported as part of the curriculum.

Mau presented an inclusive educational model, where courses are only taught in English at the beginning, and gradually transition to German during the course of study. 'It is important to avoid specific tracks for refugees', Mau said. 'They should be integrated into the normal study programmes.' This warning about the development of parallel structures was also expressed by Dr. Maha Shuayb, Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies, Beirut, Lebanon. In Lebanon, morning shifts for mostly Lebanese pupils and afternoon shifts for Syrian refugees often form an additional barrier to integration.

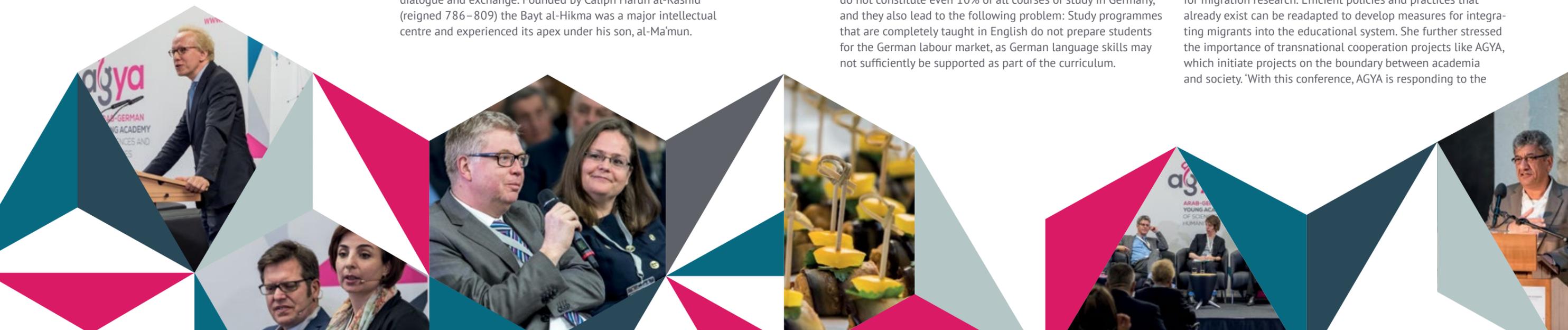
Prof. Dr. Ammar Abdulrahman, AGYA member and former Director of the Archaeological Department, Damascus, who is currently teaching at the University of Tübingen, Germany, added a personal perspective from his own migration experience.

### *Building Bridges for the Future*

The second day of the conference was opened by Prof. Dr. Christian Kaunert from the University of Dundee with a morning lecture on the long-term potential of migration for the internationalisation of research and education.

A panel discussion offered the opportunity to share best practice examples with regard to existing infrastructures and organisations. Academic experts, as well as practitioners from Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Germany contributed to the discussion and identified forms of transnational cooperation that could be used to harvest the long-term potential of the ongoing migration movement.

Dr. Maha Al-Hendawi, Co-President of AGYA and Director, Core Curriculum Program & the Foundation Program, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar, recommended making use of currently existing literature and knowledge about students at risk and risk factors for migration research. Efficient policies and practices that already exist can be readapted to develop measures for integrating migrants into the educational system. She further stressed the importance of transnational cooperation projects like AGYA, which initiate projects on the boundary between academia and society. 'With this conference, AGYA is responding to the



major issues and challenges in education in the Arab world and Germany by mapping the current situation in different regions, creating a network for knowledge exchange, debating regional differences and common challenges in a globalised world, and discussing challenges to higher education with local representatives in the Arab world and Germany', Dr. Al-Hendawi explained. Prof. Dr. Anies Al-Hroub, Chairperson of the Department of Education at the American University of Beirut pointed out the various challenges Lebanon faces with regard to refugees from Syria. The country hosts more than one million Syrian refugees, which amounts to around one in every five people in the country.

Therefore, international and domestic measures, as well as private initiatives, along with those from the government and the public, are important in meeting the needs of the refugees. Practitioners from Germany and Lebanon shared best practice examples from their organisations. Dr. Michael Harms, Director of Communications for the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), in Bonn, Germany presented successful projects from the DAAD between Germany and the Arab world. The German Academic Exchange Service DAAD has a long history of supporting international academic cooperation and academic migration.

The current programme on 'Higher and Further Educational Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians' (HOPES) from DAAD and its partners aim at empowering young people from Syria to build their own career paths by directly addressing their educational needs. The project provides various educational opportunities for Syrian refugees in countries in the region (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq).

The Mikati Foundation is active worldwide in the areas of culture, education, youth, and scientific research. Ziad Mikati, Head of the Beirut Office of the Mikati Foundation and member of the AGYA Advisory Board, presented existing educational

programmes and planned measures for Syrian refugees from the Mikati Foundation in Lebanon. He emphasised the importance of understanding the integration of Syrian refugees as a part of community integration in general.

Perspectives from Saudi Arabia (Dr. Abdulrahman H. Alhamedhi, Cultural Attaché of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Berlin, Germany) and Tunisia (Prof. Dr. Mohamed Ellouze, President of Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation Maghreb Alumni-Network/ Department of Physics, University of Sfax, Tunisia) broadened the discussion to include the perspective of their own countries.

#### **AGYA has Succeeded in Taking on a Leadership Role in the Discourse on Migration and Transnational Cooperation**

In five different workshops, the participants discussed the results of the latest research on migration and migrant education, as well as the role of migration in innovation and knowledge transfer. The central role of online and blended learning for improved integration programmes was another key area of debate. According to Prof. Dr. Mahmoud Sakr, President of the Academy of Scientific Research & Technology, Cairo/Egypt and AGYA Advisory Board Member, 'With this conference, AGYA has succeeded in taking on a leadership role in the discourse on migration and transnational cooperation. The conference was a unique opportunity for Arab and German key players to come together and to formulate recommendations for joint measures in the areas of higher education, research, and innovation.'

#### **Contact and further information**

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## AGYA Award



The AGYA Award is devoted to outstanding projects that support migrants and refugees in the area of education. It was granted for the first time at the international AGYA conference on migration and transnational cooperation. Sixteen selected initiatives and projects from Egypt, Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, and Austria submitted a poster featuring their projects. The initiatives were selected by an international Award Committee, made up of members of the AGYA Advisory Board and AGYA members. The posters of the initiatives were displayed during the conference. The selected initiatives were then given the opportunity to present their work at the conference to a broad international audience, featuring high-ranking representatives from academia and politics in Germany and the Arab world.

**Jusoor (Philadelphia, USA)**, an initiative made up of Syrian expatriates supporting the career development of young Syrians, was honoured with the first prize (2,500 €). Jusoor aims to help Syrian youth realise their potential through programmes in the areas of education and career development. Currently, Jusoor runs five different programmes: a refugee education programme, the Jusoor scholarship programme, and the academic mentorship programme, as well as a career development and an entrepreneurship programme.

The second prize (1,500 €) was won by **NaTakallam (New York City, USA)**, an online platform that pairs students learning Arabic with displaced Syrians in Lebanon and beyond. NaTakallam was started by graduates of the Columbia School of International and Public Affairs, who already had extensive experience in language learning and teaching. They developed a platform that brings together Arabic learners around the world with displaced Syrians for language practice in conversation-focused sessions over the internet. Thus, NaTakallam also provides a source of income to refugees, and supports intercultural exchange.

Third prize (1,000 € each) was awarded to two projects: **Conquer Babel from Germany** and **StARS from Egypt**. Conquer Babel is an organisation that was founded by students to assist refugees in the city of Göttingen. With the aim of helping refugees to overcome language barriers and isolation, they provide free German classes and translation services, housing support services, and

support for university guest students. Additionally, the organisation arranges social events, such as the weekly Café International, where refugees and citizens of Göttingen are able to come in contact with one other.

StARS is a refugee service created by St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo, which was first established in 1979. As one of Egypt's first organisations dedicated to the improvement of the quality of life for refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, StARS not only provides educational services for children and adults, but also offers psychological services and legal assistance. The Children's Education Program (CEP), in particular, supports students from Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Burundi, and Uganda, who have no access to state schools.

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#### **The winner is:**



*Jusoor supports Syrian youth to realise their potential through programmes in the fields of education and career development worldwide.*



## University Presidents' Meeting

The question of how to improve opportunities for and participation of refugees in higher education was the primary issue discussed by the 18 presidents of leading universities in Germany and the Arab countries. In a closed meeting, they came together to share their experiences within their institutions regarding the process of integration, as well as what they expected from an Arab-Arab-German exchange. The University Presidents' Meeting was chaired by Dr. Sabine Behrenbeck, Head of Project Excellence Initiative, German Council of Science and Humanities.

The Arab and German university presidents shared their best practices with programmes at their home universities and jointly identified new key areas for immediate action in Arab-German and Arab-Arab cooperation. During the meeting, currently existing collaboration structures, such as Arab-German bilateral universities and student exchange programmes were reviewed. These existing structures were identified as successful tools for exchanging knowledge and skills, especially at the level of university teaching. They also underscored the importance of education hubs as effective and financially sustainable tools for

offering training and education in the region. Challenges, such as language barriers or the accreditation of diplomas, were also tackled in a solution-oriented discussion.

### Key Recommendation

#### Implement peer-to-peer mentoring programmes

Peer-to-peer mentoring programmes for migrant researchers should be implemented to facilitate integration in the host countries, as well as to build and support sustainable networks. Services provided by the mentor could include administrative support, introduction to a new educational and academic environment, as well as the identification of suitable funding opportunities.

The presidents also recommended the building of Centres of Excellence to support interdisciplinary research projects of outstanding Arab and German scholars. Furthermore, joint doctoral programmes, flying faculty programmes, as well as the expansion of bilateral study programmes should constitute additional measures.

### Chair

Dr. Sabine Behrenbeck, Wissenschaftsrat, Cologne, Germany

### Rapporteur

Prof. Dr. Verena Lepper, Personal Investigator (PI), Co-President of AGYA and Curator for Egyptian and Oriental Papyri, Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection, National Museums Berlin, and Honorary Professor, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany

### Participants

Prof. Dr. Reda Abu Hatab, Former Vice-President of Suez Canal University and Dean of the Higher Institute of Tourism, Language and Management Studies in Egypt, Ismailia, Egypt

Dr. Abdul Latif Abu Hijleh, President of Birzeit University, West Bank, Palestinian Autonomous Territories

Prof. Dr. Natheer Abu-Obeid, President of the German Jordanian University, Amman, Jordan

Prof. Dr. Pierre Al-Khoury, Vice-President for Development, Lebanese German University, Sahel Aalma, Lebanon

Dr. Riad Chedid, President of Rafik Hariri University, Meshref, Lebanon

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Hassan Fahal, Academic Secretary for the University of Khartoum and Professor of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum, Sudan

Prof. Dr. Imad Khatib, President of Palestinian Polytechnic University, Hebron, Palestinian Autonomous Territories

Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Abdul Ghani Maa Bared, Former President of Damascus University and Vice-President for International University, Damascus Coordination Center – Europe, Berlin, Germany

Prof. Dr. Abbas M. Mansour, President of the South Valley University, Qena, Egypt

Prof. Dr. Yasser Sakr, President of Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt

Dr. Fairouz Sarkis, Director of the Arab Open University, Beirut, Lebanon

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Smaili, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Rafik Hariri University, Meshref, Lebanon  
Prof. Dr. Hans van Ess, Vice-President for International Affairs of Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, Germany

Prof. Dr. Reiner Finkeldey, President of the University of Kassel, Germany

Prof. Dr. Michael Kämper-van den Boogaart, Vice-President for Academic and International Affairs of Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany

Prof. Dr. Anne Lequy, Rector of Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences, Magdeburg-Stendal, Germany

Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Christian Maercker, President of Esslingen University of Applied Sciences, Esslingen, Germany

Prof. Dr. Sascha Spoun, President of Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany

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### Interview

#### Dr. Vanessa Lux

(Research fellow, AE Genetic Psychology, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany)



Hundreds of thousands of displaced persons have arrived in Germany over the last two years. The flow of refugees presents a unique opportunity to further internationalise the country's higher education system, says psychologist and AGYA member Vanessa Lux.

*You have invited renowned scholars, university presidents, and other high-ranking experts from Arab academic institutions to the Arab-German Young Academy's conference in Berlin. What do you expect from the exchange with them?*

From an Arab perspective, migration in the region is nothing new. Syrians have been migrating to Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt for years. In these countries, the issue of how to include displaced persons from other Arab countries into educational systems has

been being dealt with for a long time. Even if the situation in Germany is inherently different, we want to learn from their experience, in order to improve our own integration programmes. AGYA put the topic of migration on the agenda at its conference in Abu Dhabi last year, where international and regional challenges in higher education were being tackled. During that event, the idea of planning a large international conference that would serve as a platform for dialogue and exchange of experiences was born.

*Where do German universities stand in terms of internationalisation?*

Despite many improvements, internationalisation remains one of our biggest challenges. Higher education in Germany enjoys a good reputation, however, we need to attract more scholars, in order to fuel debate and to advance research. Also, on a student level, international students have to overcome too many barriers before they can enter a study programme. Consequently, many scholars and students decide to go to the Netherlands, the UK, or the US instead, because the admissions process there is less complicated. We do not open up to foreign researchers easily enough! At the upcoming conference, we want to ask Arab scholars how to better cater to their interests.

*But what about their countries of origin? If every Syrian with a university degree leaves the country, Syria will have a problem.*

Not all scholars migrate – a substantial number of them stays. Moreover, a huge number of migrants will return, because they want to rebuild their home country or live closer to their family. They will decide for themselves what's best for them. In higher education, it's all about circular migration. It could be that some refugee scholars will return home for a few years and then come back again - that is how knowledge transfer works. It's not a one-way street. It's about flexibility and fluidity, and our job is to create appropriate structures to minimise barriers.

## Workshop: Integrating Migrants into the University

This workshop focused on the experiences and challenges of integrating migrants into institutions of higher education. The participants discussed different programmes that aim at facilitating access to the university, as well as scholarship initiatives, which help provide shelter from forced migration. The workshop was chaired by Dr. Florian Kohstall, AGYA member and head of Freie Universität Berlin, Cairo Office, and coordinator of 'Welcome to Freie Universität Berlin Program'. During the workshop, experts from Germany, Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia presented different models that have been applied by their universities to facilitate access to higher education programmes for refugees, as well as scholarship initiatives, which help provide shelter from forced migration.

The discussions indicated that the language skills of the refugees represent the most determinant factor for admitting refugees to higher education programmes. Incomplete documentation and missing certificates from previous studies were also cited as another key barrier faced by host universities when working with refugees. In addition, a major challenge for universities is to integrate students from diverse educational backgrounds, while, at the same time, not comprising on the quality of education in general.

### Chair

Dr. Florian Kohstall, AGYA member and Head of Freie Universität Berlin Cairo Office & Coordinator 'Welcome to Freie Universität Berlin Program', Germany

### Rapporteurs

Dr. Assem Abu Hatab, AGYA member and Lecturer at the Department of Economics & Rural Development, Suez Canal University (SCU), Al-Arish, Egypt

Dr. Ammar Abdulrahman, AGYA member and Former Director of the Archaeological Department, Damascus, Syria, University of Tübingen, Germany

### Speakers

Dr. Ahmed Debez, Assistant Professor, Center of Biotechnology of the Technopark of Borj-Cedria, Tunis, Tunisia

Dr. Christian Hülshörster, Head of Division, Scholarship Program Southern Hemisphere, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Bonn, Germany

Prof. Dr. Natheer Abu-Obeid, President of the German Jordanian University, Amman, Jordan

André Nollmann, Head of International Office, Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Dr. Brigitte Perlick, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Referat für Internationale Angelegenheiten/Central Office for International Affairs, Erlangen, Germany

Prof. Dr. Mahmoud M. Sakr, AGYA Advisory Board member and President of the Academy of Scientific Research & Technology, Cairo, Egypt

Abraham Willem van Veen, Head of Department I – Student Services, Technical University of Berlin, Germany

Dr. Anja Zorob, Project Manager 'University without Borders', Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany

The workshop participants concluded that addressing the challenges of refugees' higher education requires a holistic approach, which takes into account higher education programmes per se as well as pre-university programmes. The academic preparedness of high school graduates in general is a key success factor for the personal development of each student in the higher education system. General preparatory courses, which would be compulsory for migrant and non-migrant students, to provide them with the necessary skills for university life (e.g. language, maths, critical thinking, etc.) should be established, in order to smoothly integrate them into the system of higher education.

### Key Recommendation

**Integrate general preparatory courses into existing programmes**  
Implement general preparatory courses that are compulsory for both migrant and non-migrant students to prepare them for the demands of German universities. These courses should provide aspiring students with the necessary skills for university studies (e.g. language, maths, critical thinking, etc.) so as to facilitate their integration into higher education in Germany.

### Contact and further information

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### Interview

**Dr. Maha Shuayb**  
(Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies, Beirut, Lebanon)



*Lebanon has more refugees per capita than any country in the world. What are the main challenges for Syrians when gaining access to the country's educational system?*

The nationalistic agenda inherent in our educational system is an obstacle, as education meant to strengthen national identity. It is a declared goal of our school curriculum to 'develop a Lebanese citizen' and that excludes marginalized groups as well as Syrian refugees. One of the major challenges to the educational inclusion of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is that most of the subjects at school are taught in either French or English. As the Syrian educational system provides all courses in Arabic, Syrian refugees in Lebanon face several language barriers, which lead to a high dropout rate.

Parallel structures, i.e. morning shifts for mostly Lebanese pupils and afternoon shifts for Syrian refugees, form an additional barrier of integration. Other challenges are that they often cannot afford transportation costs or school supplies, and that children

have to work instead of attending school. Not only Syrian refugees but also other marginalised groups face these problems in Lebanon.

*Does that have consequences for Syrians enrolling in the higher educational system?*

Language barriers are also major obstacles for enrolment at Lebanese universities, as the language of instruction is also English or French, which in turn explains the low numbers of refugees in higher education. Even in a few years from now, the demand for higher education will still be very low: There are currently about 487,000 children and youth aged 3-18 registered by the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR in Lebanon. Out of them 81,239 are listed as adolescents aged 15-18 years but only 2,280 of them are enrolled in formal secondary education. The majority of all underage persons is at the risk of failing the school system.

*You participated in several discussions regarding the German educational system. What is the source of your interest in Germany?*

We need to compare to solve the problems in our education system. Both, Germany and Lebanon, face the challenge to integrate Syrian refugee children in the education system. As Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies, my aim at the conference is to exchange best practice examples from Lebanon and Germany to improve the opportunities and participation of refugees in education in both countries.

I am for example highly interested in the so-called 'Willkommensklassen' in Germany – welcome classes that follow a model of gradual integration. This is a highly interesting integration approach, to overcome language barriers, as there is ideally no spatial and temporal separation between welcome classes and regular classes.



## Workshop: Innovation and Knowledge Transfer

The workshop focused on the exchange of experiences between initiatives for innovation and knowledge transfer in Arab countries and Germany. In particular, the contribution of migration and transnational networks was discussed. The workshop was chaired by Jun.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Kalman Graffi, AGYA member and head of the Laboratory for Technology of Social Networks at the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, Germany.

Speakers from Egypt, Palestine, the UAE, Slovenia and Germany stimulated the debate by presenting their pertinent research findings and project experiences. The discussants outlined the importance of fostering innovation on the macro, meso and micro level. In this regard, circular migration plays a crucial role in innovation as it constitutes a multiple gain configuration for personal development as well as for institutions in the host countries and in the countries of origin. The workshop participants stressed the fact that migration produces cross-national and cross-institutional knowledge transfer that can generate

innovative ideas. As cultural diversity is an incubator for innovation, migrants can contribute to the social, economic and cultural life not only in their host countries but also in their transnational networks if a conducive environment empowers them at appropriate levels.

### Key Recommendation

**'Support innovative potentials of migrants!'**

Cultural diversity is an incubator for innovation: The innovative potentials of migrants must be supported by enabling them to establish transnational networks. The perspectives of migrants on host societies may generate innovative ideas and empower them to contribute to the social, economic and cultural life not only in their host countries but also in their transnational networks.

### Chair

Jun.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Kalman Graffi, AGYA member and Heinrich Heine University of Düsseldorf, Germany

### Rapporteurs

Dr. Ralf Hermann and Susanne Ruppert-Elias, DLR Project Management Agency, European and International Cooperation, International Bureau, Bonn, Germany

### Speakers

Prof. Dr. Juliane Brach, Department of Economy and Society of the Arab World, Bremen University of Applied Sciences, Bremen, Germany

Dr. Mona El-Tobgui, Fraunhofer Center for International Management and Knowledge Economy, Senior Advisor, Cairo, Egypt

Prof. Dr. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry, President of the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI), Portorož, Slovenia

Prof. Dr. Martin Franz, Institute of Geography, University of Osnabrück, Germany

Prof. Dr. Imad Khatib, Secretary General, Palestine Academy of Science and Technology, Ramallah/Jerusalem, Palestinian Autonomous Territories

Dr. Sybille Krummacher, Head of International Relations, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Germany

Prof. Dr. Ghaleb Natour, Director of the Central Institute of Engineering, Electronics and Analytics – Engineering and Technology at Forschungszentrum Jülich and University Professor at the Faculty for Mechanical Engineering at RWTH Aachen University

Prof. Dr. Mahmoud Sakr, President of the Academy of Scientific Research & Technology, Cairo, Egypt

Prof. Dr. Hani Sewilam, Academic Director of the Department of Engineering Hydrology, RWTH Aachen University, Germany

Dr. Victor Zengyu Huang, Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship, Zayed University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

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### Interview

**Prof. Dr. Imad Khatib**

(Secretary General, Palestine Academy of Science and Technology (PALAST), Ramallah, Jerusalem, Palestinian Autonomous Territories)



'Most of the Palestinians who still reside in refugee camps in Syria want to come back to the Palestinian Autonomous Territories.' Prof. Khatib, Secretary General of the Palestine Academy of Science and Technology, explains the effects of the war in Syria on the Palestinian education system.

*Does the current migration movement of the last two years in the region affect the Palestinian Autonomous Territories?*

Over the last years, there have only been a few Palestinians who have returned. Since the war erupted in Syria, Palestinians who sought refuge there have fled via Egypt back to the Gaza Strip.

*Has the Palestinian Ministry of Education & Higher Education reacted to the returnees?*

The ministry has set up several programmes to absorb them into the general education system and the universities. Some problems do however persist, especially for returnees who have studied medicine in Syria or Yemen. Medicine is a very competitive programme and there are limited places. Students have to achieve high marks in order to be accepted. Other problems are the equivalency and the standards of certificates from other countries.

*How do you expect to profit from other countries' experiences?*

Most of the Palestinians who still reside in refugee camps in Syria want to come back to the Palestinian Autonomous Territories. At some point, they may be given the opportunity to do so. This will be very challenging for us, but other countries' experiences could help us. I want to be prepared.



## Workshop: Higher Education Across Borders

In this workshop, best practice examples of online and blended learning initiatives that address refugees and migrants were presented. Moreover, the role of online and blended learning programmes in internationalisation and knowledge transfer, as well as for the future of higher education learning, was discussed. The workshop was chaired by AGYA member Dr. Tobias Redlich, Scientific Head of Laboratory, Chief Engineer, Senior Lecturer, and Head of the 'Value Creation Systematics' Research Group, Institute of Production Engineering, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Helmut Schmidt University Hamburg, Germany. Presenters from Egypt, Germany, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) shared their knowledge about and experience with online and blended learning, reflecting a wide range of contexts, including:

- formal face-to-face (Anja Penßler-Beyer), online (Christina Gloerfeld), and blended post-secondary programmes;
- collaborative international graduate programmes (Dr. Hosam Refai);
- informal massive online open courses (Nafez Dakkak);
- university-based projects for refugees (Prof. Dr.-Ing. Rolf Granow, Hila Azadzoy);
- non-government organisation initiatives (Dr. Nuha Al-Shaar)

The workshop participants clearly indicated that online and blended learning are successful and sustainable approaches that offer numerous advantages to the learning process. Benefits include greater accessibility of resources, increased flexibility

with regard to time and location, enabling of collaboration between individuals in different locations, and reduced financial implications. With regard to the design and development of online university programmes and courses, presenters and attendees agreed that it is crucial to understand the target audience in order to ensure that its needs are met. This requires a holistic approach, including national, international, and migrant students in the design and development of the programmes. The aim is to ensure that their individual needs are met through the course or programme.

More importantly, it was argued that online and blended learning models provide an opportunity for collaboration and interaction between and among the three groups of target learners (i.e. national, international, and migrant students). While it may be a challenge to arrange for individuals to physically be in the same place at the same time, possibilities afforded by technology and opportunities provided by online and blended learning modes can allow educators to transcend the boundaries of time and space.

### Key Recommendation

**Create and maintain perspectives for scholars and students in the Arab world**

Establish study programmes in the region to support North-South-South cooperation within the EU framework: Arab students should have the opportunity to study in other Arab countries with German/EU funding. Propaedeutic courses to enhance soft skills among students and researchers should be offered.

### Chair

Dr. Tobias Redlich, AGYA member and Scientific Head of Laboratory, Chief Engineer, Senior Lecturer and Head of the 'Value Creation Systematics' Research Group, Institute of Production Engineering, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Helmut Schmidt University Hamburg, Germany

### Organizer/Rapporteur

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Barbara Winckler, AGYA member and Junior Professor of Modern Arabic Literature & Culture, Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Münster, Germany

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### Speakers

Dr. Nuha Al-Shaar, AGYA member and Department of Arabic and Translation Studies, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Hila Azadzoy, M.A., Head of Academics, Kiron Open Higher Education, Berlin, Germany

Nafez Dakkak, CEO of Edraak, Queen Rania Foundation, Amman, Jordan

Christina Gloerfeld, M.A., Research Group Mobile Learning, University of Hagen, Germany

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Rolf Granow, Director of the Institute for E-Learning Services at the Lübeck University of Applied Sciences and Managing Director of oncampus GmbH, Lübeck, Germany

Mohamad Mourad, Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Cyberjaya, Malaysia

Anja Penßler-Beyer, M. A., Linguistic Engineering Team, Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany

Prof. Dr. Hosam Refai, Dean, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt

Prof. Dr. Rana Tamim, Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, College of Education, Zayed University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

### Interview

**Prof. Dr. Rana Tamim**

(Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, College of Education, Zayed University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates)



'Digital and online media could be an approach to reach out-of-school Syrian children.' Prof. Tamim, Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies at Zayed University in Dubai investigates the new ways in which technology can solve educational issues of refugee children in the Arab world.

*Professor Tamim, is migration and the current refugee movement subject to public debate in the UAE, as it is here in Germany?*

I am not personally aware of the presence of refugees in the UAE, however the subject of migration is present within public discourse. This is mainly due to the fact that migrants constitute 88.5% of the population in UAE. It is hence less a question

about refugees and more about migration. That being said, the UAE has accomplished a lot with regards to offering education to children from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

*How do refugee students compare to other international students? And do digital and online media help in catering to those groups?*

Refugees are different from international or expatriate students who have come intentionally with their families. For refugees, in particular, technology is one of several very helpful tools. Technology empowers students to transcend the boundaries of time and space. It could even offer an opportunity to reach refugees living in camps around the world. For example, in Lebanon, the significant number of newly-arrived Syrian children who are of school age is very substantive. This is putting pressure on the available resources including schools and universities. Digital and online media could be an approach to resolving the situation.

*What are you personally taking with you from the AGYA conference?*

The AGYA conference provided me with the unique opportunity to talk to participants from different countries who are interested in developing classroom materials for teachers.

It also gave me the chance to obtain more information about MOOCs (Massive Open Online Course) and discuss approaches to incorporating linguistics and Arabic as an academic language in the development of teaching materials. My plan is to make use of the knowledge I gained from the conference participants and build on the network of individuals I met to further benefit the education community and develop educational resources to meet the needs of the learners in different contexts.



## Workshop: Teacher Education and Education Research

Problems and best practices in student education, as well as the potential of education research for internationalisation and knowledge transfer in higher education – these were the topics of the workshop on ‘Teacher education and education research’. The workshop was chaired by Dr. Ahmad EL-Guindy, AGYA member and Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Texas A&M University at Doha, Qatar.

In this workshop, language acquisition was also identified as one of the main obstacles in education programmes targeting migrants/refugees, not only in Germany, but also in some Arab countries, e.g. Lebanon, where classes are taught partially in French or English.

The workshop participants further pointed to the fact that a group of migrants is, in itself, heterogeneous, especially with regard to academic skills and educational background. Skilled students and scholars from all kinds of social backgrounds, in particular, need appropriate programmes and regulations that will allow them to participate fully in the educational system and labour market as early as possible; if this is successful, they will become the cultural interfaces – embedded in both cultures – who enable enrichment in both societal contexts (in the country of origin and in the country of destination).

**Chair**  
Dr. Ahmad EL-Guindy, AGYA member and Department of Mathematics, Texas A&M University at Doha, Qatar

**Organizer**  
Dr. Samar Saad Eldeen Azab, AGYA member and Assistant Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology, Faculty of Pharmacy, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt

**Speakers**  
Dr. Maha Al-Hendawi, Co-President of AGYA and Director, Core Curriculum Program & the Foundation Program, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar

Prof. Dr. Anies Al-Hroub, American University of Beirut, Lebanon

Tabea El-Hokayem, Research Associate, Herder-Institute, Leipzig University, Germany

Christine Freudenberg, International Education of Students, Berlin, Germany

Prof. Dr. Bashshar Haydar, Department of Philosophy, American University of Beirut, Lebanon

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Lena Heine, Managing Director, Department of Language Teaching Research, Faculty of Philology, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany

Prof. Dr. Abdel Meguid Kassem, Kasr Al-Aini Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University, Egypt

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Anne-Christin Schondelmayer, Institute of Pedagogy, Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany

Dr. Maha Shuayb, Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies, Beirut, Lebanon

**Commentator**  
Dr. Jochen Pleines, Associate Professor, Dean School of Applied Humanities and Languages, German Jordanian University, Amman, Jordan

Against the background of the new situation in primary schools, secondary schools, and universities, the participants discussed the challenges posed by the current migration movement for teacher education in particular. In this regard, they stressed the need for enhancing the intercultural sensitivity of teachers in the areas of language acquisition and learning cultures. Again, the workshop participants recommended a holistic approach, i.e. teacher education programmes that deal with the topic of heterogeneous student groups, including students at risk/vulnerable student groups. A lack of academic skills or experience with violence are challenges that not only concern migrants, but societies as a whole.

### Key Recommendation

**Incorporate intercultural training courses into teacher education curricula at universities**

Enhanced cultural awareness, knowledge, and practical skills aid in pro-actively managing intercultural issues. Intercultural and language training should be provided for students in teacher education programmes and, in the form of continuing education programmes, for current teachers and school counsellors.

### Contact and further information

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### Interview

**Jun.-Prof. Dr. Anne-Christin Schondelmayer**  
(Institute of Pedagogy, Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany)



‘Educational questions and problems regarding migration and diversity in Germany are similar to the ones experienced in Arab countries.’ Prof. Schondelmayer, Chemnitz University of Technology, reflects on the approaches to migration taken by Germany compared to those of the Arab world.

**At Chemnitz University of Technology, what was your experience with the large migration movement in the past two years?**

I experienced their direct physical presence, as refugees were housed on our campus in Chemnitz. Our students and staff showed great solidarity and support with the refugees. By sheltering refugees on the campus, the students came into direct contact

and exchange with them. Refugees heavily rely on the internet for information and communication; this is why we granted them access to the university’s free WiFi system.

**Did the influx of refugees affect your faculty and your work in particular?**

There have been students suggesting that we open up lectures to the refugees, as other universities in Germany have done. Currently, refugees may only attend certain individual lectures, as nothing has been institutionalised yet.

The migration movement has also affected me, as an instructor of intercultural education. There is new data available, and new laws have been passed that students in the educational field need to know about. This meant that I had to rewrite my lectures and include current social and political developments.

**Have you profited from your exchange with colleagues from Arab countries at the AGYA conference?**

People in general, as well as politicians, react in similar ways regarding migration. In this respect, educational stakeholders are caught between governmental demands on one hand and responsibility for migrant children, students, and scholars on the other. During the conference, it was interesting to observe that the questions and problems regarding migration and diversity are similar to the ones experienced in Arab countries, and that they are very comparable around the world. Sharing these problems and experiences helps us to develop joint strategies.



## Workshop: Migration Research in a Comparative Perspective

In this workshop, participants discussed the possibilities and challenges of Arab-German cooperation for the interface between migration research and education in the analysis of the current migration movement, both between Arab countries and from Arab countries to Europe. Dr. Jan Völkel, AGYA member and DAAD Long-term Lecturer at the Euro-Mediterranean Studies Program, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, Egypt, chaired the workshop.

Experts from Egypt, Germany, Lebanon, the Netherlands, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Tunisia and the United Kingdom presented their latest research findings and discussed the role of researchers regarding policy advice. With regard to future trends in migration research, the workshop participants identified several trending topics, e.g. the integration of refugees in the countries of destination, immigration regulations, environmentalist-induced migration, and the links between migration and criminal organisations. The focus on topics such as these, the discussants argued, results from the political discourse that, in the end, directs the research funds.

### Chair

Dr. Jan Völkel, AGYA member and DAAD Long-term Lecturer at the Euro-Mediterranean Studies Program, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, Egypt

### Rapporteur

Dr. Hanan Badr, AGYA member and Institute for Media and Communication Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

### Speakers

Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Awad, Professor of Global Affairs, Director, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), American University Cairo, Egypt

Prof. Dr. Christian Kaunert, Professor for Political Science, Director of the European Institute for Security and Justice, University of Dundee, Scotland

Prof. Dr. Laura J. Khoury, Department of Social and Behavioral Science, Birzeit University, West Bank, Palestinian Autonomous Territories

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Prof. Dr. Rabih Shibli, Director of the Center for Civil Engagement and Community Service, American University of Beirut, Lebanon

Dr. Melissa Siegel, Head of Migration Studies Training & Research Projects, Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology, Department Migration and Development, Maastricht, The Netherlands

### Commentator

Nora Jasmin Ragab, PhD, Fellow, Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology, Maastricht, The Netherlands

Steve Thorpe, PhD, Scholar, University of East London, formerly IOM Cairo, Egypt

The workshop participants debated the universality vs. particularism of the concepts in the North and the South, and the question of knowledge production and knowledge transfer. To overcome a skewed production of knowledge, the participants recommend better North-South-South cooperation between researchers in the area of migration research. It was further argued that an interdisciplinary approach to the topic could open up new perspectives and develop innovative solutions.

Collaboration between Arab and EU migration researchers, they argued, could be strengthened through collaborative research funding, as well as through student exchange programmes. These would add comparative perspectives that could help expand the limited scope of migration research.

### Key Recommendation

**Support both fundamental and comparative migration research** Fundamental and comparative migration research in highly internationalised teams should be supported: Social sciences must put emphasis on migration and flight and conduct research on the migration continuum. This should include comparative research on the socio-cultural dimension of migration patterns.

### Contact and further information

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### Interview

**Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Awad**  
(Professor of Global Affairs, Director, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, AUC, Cairo, Egypt)



'To prevent a lost generation, Syrian children need to be protected through education.' Egypt is largely affected by the refugee crisis. Prof. Dr. Awad, Director of the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo, explains the challenges faced by Egyptian educational institutions dealing with refugees.

### How has the crisis in the region affected academic institutions in Egypt?

Even if Egypt is not a large destination for refugees, there are still substantial numbers of refugees from Iraq and Syria, as well as the horn of Africa and Sudan, with Syrians constituting the largest group at present. In general, refugees have access to public universities in Egypt. However, these institutions are overloaded having largely exceeded their capacity. It has become difficult to provide quality education for the very same Egyptians themselves.

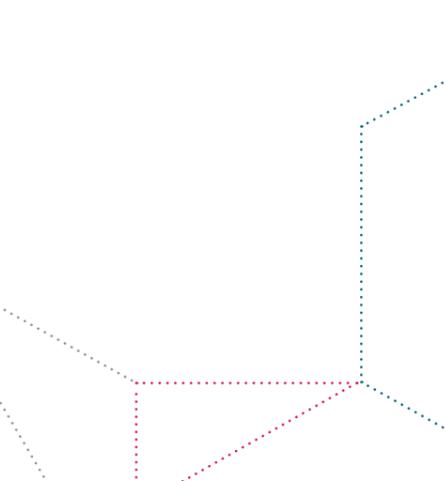
Therefore, a major challenge for Egypt's universities is to provide access for refugees while not compromising on quality standards for all the student body.

### Which other challenges do Egyptian universities face?

With regard to Syrian refugees, without belittling the importance of higher education for youth, the fundamental problem is that of primary and secondary (high) school education like in other countries of refuge, many Syrian children in Egypt do not attend school. Therefore, they will be unable to proceed to higher (university) education. In order to prevent the loss of a whole generation, we have to adapt appropriate measures to provide these children with an education.

### You are an expert in migration studies. What is the most interesting aspect you have learned about during the AGYA conference?

It was extremely useful to learn about the diverse experiences of the different *Länder* in Germany in their dealings with the refugees. The search for a coherent approach, constituted by these diverse policies, is certainly the right way to go.



## About AGYA

AGYA was established in 2013 as the first bilateral young academy worldwide. AGYA promotes Arab-German research cooperation based on the idea of scientific excellence and social commitment of early career scholars (3-10 years post-PhD). AGYA currently has more than 50 members who are distinguished researchers from various fields of the Natural Sciences, Life Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences and Technical Sciences; half of whom are based in the Arab world and half in Germany. The current members are affiliated with over 40 different renowned institutions in Algeria, Egypt, Germany, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. AGYA fosters the intercultural experiences of its members and promotes them as ambassadors of science and culture.

AGYA promotes scientific exchange through joint interdisciplinary research projects at the interface of science and society. Moreover, the academy aims at providing policy advice in the fields of science and education policy. The members engage actively in issues of mutual interest for the Arab world and Germany: As of

now, AGYA members have established six working groups, which address the following topics: 'Energy, Water, and Environment'; 'Common Heritage and Common Challenges'; 'Transformation'; 'Arab and German Education'; 'Health and Society' and 'Innovation'.

AGYA is independent in respect to the content and forms of its academic activities. The activities of AGYA are carried out by its members including the Steering Committee consisting of three Arab and three German members. The AGYA has two Co-Presidents. Since October 2016 Prof. Dr. Ahmad Sakhrieh holds the office of the Arab Co-President and Jun.-Prof. Dr. Kalman Graffi acts as German Co-President.

AGYA has been granted a four million euros fund provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) for the next four years.

**More information:** [www.agya.info](http://www.agya.info)  
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