



Global Young Academy

The voice of young scientists around the world

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The Changing Demography of Talent

Report on the Third International Conference of Young Scientists and

General Assembly 2013 of the Global Young Academy

The Global Young Academy (GYA) held a successful and highly productive General Assembly in Halle, Germany, on 15-18 May 2013. The packed four-day programme included keynote addresses by Ms. Cornelia Quennet-Thielen (State Secretary of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)), Mr. Thomas Sattelberger (former CHRO of Deutsche Telekom), and Prof. Lee Berger of the University of Witwatersrand. The meeting brought together 78 GYA members from 37 countries, distinguished members of the GYA advisory board, and senior science ambassadors from around the world. The theme of this year's meeting was "Demography and Global Research", encompassing issues such as large multi-investigator research groups, international science networks, and global mobility. Many of the programmed events and working group activities addressed opportunities and challenges that these issues present for the next generation of scientists.

Prof. Lee Berger presented an inspiring vision of globalised research, peppered with success stories and cautionary tales from his own adventures in palaeoanthropology. Prof. Berger portrayed a world at a historic turning point, with communication technologies enabling collaborative ventures that were unimaginable a generation ago, and traditional geographical boundaries imposing fewer constraints. He urged young scientists and the GYA to practise foresight and leadership in shaping the future of globalised science. This call to arms found resonance in subsequent working group activities, many of which took up themes of the address - notably the current state of young scientists, and the transformative potential of new technologies.

Mr. Thomas Sattelberger, former CHRO of Deutsche Telekom, underscored the importance of strong science-industry links. Citing a shortage of scientific literacy in the workplace, Mr. Sattelberger observed that talent is nowadays more critical than capital to a company's success. The resulting dynamic of supply and demand creates migration patterns that must be carefully managed if potential benefits to individuals, institutions, and nations are to be optimised. Mr. Sattelberger highlighted several successful initiatives at Deutsche Telekom - recruitment of new graduates, training of existing employees, flexible working conditions, intergenerational teams - all of which are premised on inclusivity and investment in the full diversity of talent.

State Secretary Ms. Cornelia Quennet-Thielen of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) reviewed the first few years of the GYA from the perspective of the BMBF saying that, "the launch of the Global Young Academy in 2010 produced something completely new – instilling a breath of fresh air into the global network of outstanding researchers. It is already clear today that the GYA was not just a storm in a teacup or a squall that passes over as quickly as it arises but a constant wind that brings lasting changes". Ms. Quennet-Thielen reflected on the many impressive achievements of the GYA since its inception - assisting in founding NYAs in several countries, establishing ties between developing and developed countries, advancing science policy recommendations. To stunned applause, Ms. Quennet-Thielen then announced that the BMBF would fund the GYA Office initially (!) for the next three years, thus ensuring its financial stability through the next phase of expansion. The announcement vindicates the hard work that has gone into establishing the GYA as the voice of young scientists around the world. This core-funding from the BMBF, which follows the seed funding provided by the Volkswagen Foundation, will only amplify this voice. In his response to the announcement, GYA co-chair Rees Kassen called upon GYA members, alumni, and partners, to view the core-funding announcement as, "an investment in you as the next generation of leaders in global research." The key strategic partners of the GYA – the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the IAP - The Global Network of Science Academies and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation – all expressed their support for the GYA in this new phase of growth and consolidation.

The General Assembly witnessed the induction of 43 new GYA members in 2013. The General Assembly also saw the launch of several new Working Groups to extend the existing range of GYA activities. Among the new projects are *Measuring Excellence in Science Engagement*, which seeks to develop quantitative assessments of outreach activities, and *Think Tank*, which will bring together representatives from academic, business, and public sectors to examine risk from a multidisciplinary perspective. As at previous General Assembly meetings, Working Group activities continued throughout the entire programme.

In a significant development since the last General Assembly, a number of external bodies have also approached the GYA with proposals for collaboration and support. The US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is looking to work with the GYA on a series of climate change lectures, possibly in a BRIC country (Brazil, Russia, India, or China). The major funders of Grand Challenges projects world wide, including Grand Challenges Canada, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and USAID, also offered to support a GYA project. Responses to both of these opportunities were discussed at the General Assembly meeting.

As examples of the breadth of talent and expertise among young scientists highlighted by keynote speakers Sattelberger and Berger, select GYA members presented new findings from their own research. These talks spanned a range of topics, from cell biology and applied mathematics to human decision making. The presentations showcased outstanding scientific creativity, technical expertise, and communication skills among the membership. They also brought to light shared interests between individuals, stimulating new conversations and friendships that further strengthen the academy. In keeping with the theme of the conference, many of the presentations focused on demography and global research, its sustainability and influence.

The programme events were held at the distinctive and prestigious main building of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina - the newly renovated 'White House of science' in Halle an der Saale. This superb setting, and the illustrious history of the Leopoldina, set the tone for a highly productive and successful General Assembly meeting. The meeting benefitted enormously from the support of Leopoldina staff and facilities, and the grandeur of the building itself seemed to sustain even the most sleep-deprived members through to the final day.

The last day of the General Assembly meeting was devoted to internal affairs and election of new leadership, including Sameh Soror of Egypt and re-elected Rees Kassen from Canada as Co-Chairs. Also elected at the meeting were Executive Committee members Abdullah Shams Tariq (Bangladesh), Bettina Speckmann (Netherlands), James Tickner (Australia), Jose Correa (Chile), Laura Petes (USA), Michael Sutherland (UK), Olanike Adeyemo (Nigeria), Phil Gona (Zimbabwe/USA), and Vidushi Neergheen (Mauritius). The immediate past co-chair Bernard Slippers (South Africa) will continue to contribute to this forum.

The GA was preceded by two voluntary workshops for GYA members on Science Communication and Dialogue with Stakeholders. In the Opening Session on 15 May, the new GYA members were inducted. In 2013 The GYA admitted 43 new members and now has 155 members and 63 alumni from a total of 61 countries on all continents.

The GYA GA 2013 was generously sponsored by the Leopoldina and IAP - The Global Network of Science Academies.



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