Call for participants:
Innovative and interdisciplinary scientific eyes on the refugee crisis

Large numbers of refugees have reached Europe via the Mediterranean in the past months. The UNHCR estimates that until mid-October, over 700,000 people have arrived by sea this year. Over 500,000 have started an asylum procedure in EU countries in the first 7 months of 2015, substantially more than last year. It is unlikely that the increased influx will soon come to a halt, since a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria – the country of origin of most refugees – is not in sight (Carter, 2015).

The UNHCR calls it the biggest refugee crisis that the world has seen since World War II. The influx involves dire circumstances for many refugees, tensions between EU member states and neighbouring countries, and social unrest within European communities. A humane and effective solution is required for what seems to be an unsolvable problem. At the same time, there may be opportunities, for example related to the influx of young people for the job market and social security systems in countries with ageing populations.

The crisis is a typical ‘wicked problem’ with many facets and complexities. It has health, social, economic, legal, cultural, historical, political and technical aspects. The important issues in the short-term (shelter, safety) are distinctively different from those that will arise in the long term (integration, labour, stability). During the Leaders’ Meeting on refugee flows along the Western Balkans Route (25 October), the President of the European Commission said that only a collaborative international approach could succeed in addressing this emergency.

We believe that Science – in all its forms, from the humanities to the STEM disciplines – should be used in this effort of addressing the refugee crisis. In particular, Science should bring together existing knowledge, from a range of disciplines, to provide input for an integrated approach to understanding the problem and seeking solutions.

Our goal

Young Academies can and should contribute to addressing the refugee crisis. We have the capacity to bring together experts, from a range of disciplines and countries, and to collaborate to support and inform the development of creative and innovative approaches to the crisis. Involving experts from Europe, including the Balkan countries, (former) countries of conflict, and neighboring countries, will allow for the inclusion and exchange of local experience and insight.
We will develop a vision document that is based on the latest evidence, to provide policy makers and committed citizens with information and potential approaches to address various aspects of the current refugee crisis. We intend to provoke an active and nuanced dialogue via social and traditional media.

Our specific objectives are to:

1. Develop a brief or statement for policy makers and committed citizens;
2. Liaise with international policy makers to ensure the brief is considered;
3. Initiate and encourage a nuanced dialogue about evidence regarding the refugee crisis and ways of addressing it;
4. Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among an international group of excellent young scientists, including scientists who are refugees.

Expert Meeting 10 & 11 December 2015

The Global Young Academy and the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts organize a two-day expert meeting to develop the vision document. The meeting will include up to 20 young scientists from a wide range of disciplines will take place 10-11 December in Amsterdam, and it will be hosted at the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts. A professional facilitator from the training company KnowInnovation will moderate the process. We plan to involve online input from a broad community of young scientists around the world, including scientists who are refugees.

Criteria for participation

- Expertise in any discipline that can be relevant to the topic of refugees, migrants, migration and the diaspora;
- Young Academy member/alumnus, or recommended by a Young Academy member;
- Availability for the full two days of the meeting (10 and 11 December) and, if necessary, the ability to travel on 9 December;
- Availability for preparatory discussions and writing in advance of the expert meeting (online, approximately one full day in the two weeks ahead of the workshop).

While this call is intended for members of Young Academies (from any country), other experts who are recommended by a Young Academy member will also be considered. Please share the call with experts who may be interested.
How to apply

Please send the following:

a) a brief CV;
b) a max 1-page summary of the key elements of the evidence base in your discipline;
c) a statement confirming that you will be available for the preparations and the expert meeting itself;
d) of which Young Academy you are a member/alumnus, or who has recommended you.

Please send your application to info@globalyoungacademy.net as soon as possible, and no later than 9am UTC on 9 November 2015. We will inform applicants by 10 November. We kindly ask participants to contribute the flight costs (via department/university or external funds). In case of lack of resources, we will consider requests for travel funding (please indicate any requests on your application). Accommodation for two nights, lunches and dinner on 10 December will be provided.

Main contact for organizational questions

Global Young Academy managing office (info@globalyoungacademy.net)

Main contacts for content-related questions

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References


