

14/03/2016

## **Invitation to Roundtable on Imbricated Identities: Syrian Refugees in Europe and Turkey and the Challenges that the Host Community Faces**

Dear Madam/Sir,

Istanbul Aydin University UNESCO Chair in Cultural Diplomacy, Governance and Education would like to invite you to a roundtable, which aims to discuss the challenges that Syrian refugees and the host country nationals are facing from different and multidisciplinary perspectives. The meeting will be held in UNESCO House, Salle 8, 7 place de Fontenoy, Paris 7<sup>e</sup>, on 24<sup>th</sup> of March at 2 pm.

The incommensurability of Islamic and Western values has occupied the discussions on immigration to Europe for a long time. However, questioning the (im)possibilities of integration of immigrants within their host society due to their different cultural, religious and ethnic values also means questioning the very precondition of democratic freedom that is the acknowledgment of non-hierarchical plurality of identities and value structure within the society. The issue of integration of immigrants makes it apparent that there are indeed some particular identities and values that western world cannot tolerate. With the Syrian refugee crisis, the dualistic understanding of western and immigrant values has once again pose a serious threat to the possibility of helping people in need. The issues of such nature have fallen pray to unidimensional and dualistic understanding and analysis of the problems that refugee population may bring to the host society. The identities and cultural values in question have always been treated as though they occupy the opposite poles of a vertical spectrum.

With the crystallization of the public opinion towards the Syrian refugees both in Turkey and Europe, we started to observe that the hostility between refugees and the host country population has been becoming a fact rather than a possibility. In this roundtable, we would like to invite your valuable contributions to start learning to think about plurality of values, specifically the identities that Syrian refugee crisis resurfaced within host societies. We suggest to connect ethnographic narratives that concerns Syrian refugees both in Europe and Turkey and country nationals to the multi-disciplinary approaches. We realize that it is essential to orient our focus away from dualistic understanding of identities to just democratic understanding of plurality and the fragility of identities. We hope that this roundtable will help us to recover the multiple and interacting identities as



force fields moving at different speeds that effects the lives of millions of people during Syrian refugee crisis. In this sense, our starting point at the roundtable might very well be Connolly's below statement from his 2013 book titled *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism*.

“The human estate is both imbricated with and periodically overmatched by a cosmos composed of multiple, interacting force fields moving at different speeds”(7).

Within this context, this roundtable aims to start a conversation on the issue of integration of Syrian Refugees in Turkey and EU countries in terms of apparent challenges that diversity brings to areas such as education and workplace. You can view the Agenda of the Roundtable below. The working languages will be in English and French.

We will be honored to have your invaluable contribution to this roundtable event. Please send a confirmation of your participation to [gulaygoksel@aydin.edu.tr](mailto:gulaygoksel@aydin.edu.tr) mail address as soon as possible.

Best Regards,

Dr. Gülay Uğur Göksel  
UNESCO Chair in Cultural Diplomacy, Governance and Education

## AGENDA

**14:00-14:15:** Registration of Participants and Welcome Coffee

**14:15-14:30:** Welcome Speech

**Ambassador Hüseyin Avni Botsalı**, Turkey's Permanent Representative to UNESCO

**Dr. Mustafa Aydın**, Istanbul Aydin University President of the Board of Trustees

**14:30-15:00:** Short Movie Screening on Syrian Refugees

**15:00-16:30:** Opening of Discussions and Roundtable

Dr. Gülay Uğur Göksel (Moderator)  
Dr. Aslıhan Öztezel, İstanbul Aydin University  
Zeynep Banu Dalaman, İstanbul Aydin University