



SUPPORTING UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY PATHWAY FOR REFUGEE-MIGRANTS

Navigating Higher Education in Europe: Challenges for Refugee Students and Strategies to Overcome Them

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Studienstart International UoC

- Orientation semester that prepares for desired degree programme by offering basic courses in the respective field of study, subject-specific German courses, seminars on intercultural awareness and study skills
- Rewarded with 12 credit points, which will be credited to the Studium Integrale (obligatory part of Bachelor's degree programme)
- Orientation events and intensive supervision
- After successfully completing Studienstart International plus, the student transfers directly to the first semester without having to apply again

— STUDIEN —
— START —
— INTER —
— NATIONAL
— plus

General Background

Primary education

Only **50 percent** of refugee children have access to primary education, in contrast to a global average of 90 percent.

Secondary education

The gap becomes wider: Only **22 percent** of refugee adolescents attend secondary school compared to a global average of 84 percent.

Tertiary education

At the higher education level, we observe that **one percent** of refugees attend university when 34 percent of youth around the world do so.

Source: UNHCR

General Background

Humanitarian Response

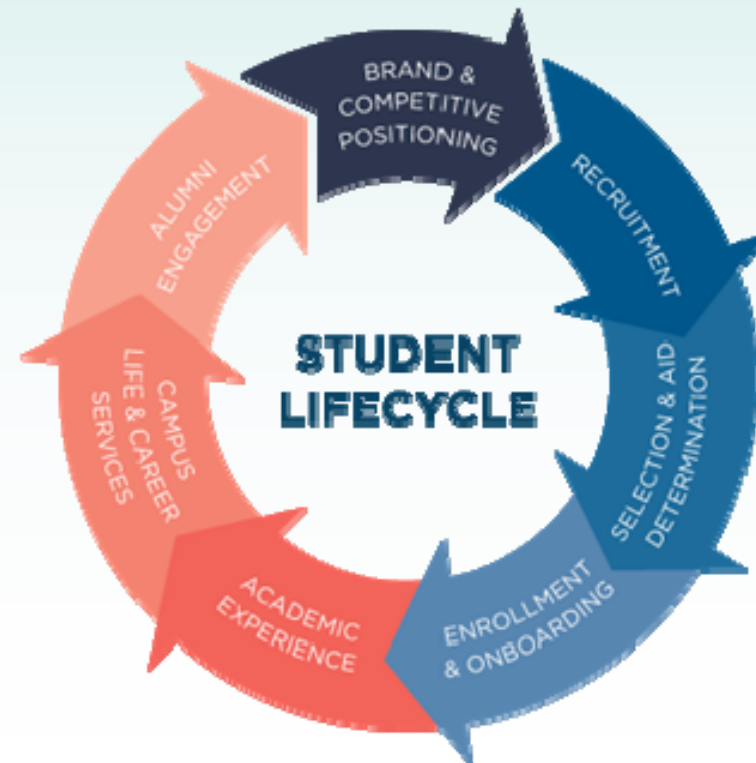
Food

Shelter

Health

Education

General Background





Geographic Profile: Universities



Geographic Profile: Students

Challenges and Best Practices

FRAMEWORK



Challenges

CHALLENGES & BEST PRACTICES

**Transition Into
Adulthood**

**Shifting Support
Structures**

**Information
Barriers**

**Non-recognition
of „foreign“
Education**

**Linguistic
Barriers**

**Financial
Barriers**

**Lack of
Administrative
Harmonization**

**Intercultural
Gap**

**Social
Discrimination**

Transition Into Adulthood

CHALLENGES & BEST PRACTICES

Suddenly Adult

Best Practices:

- Comprehensive “all encompassing” Advising
- Psychosocially Sensitive Advising
- Staff Training
- Human Perspective

Shifting Support Structures

CHALLENGES & BEST PRACTICES

“Each refugee student was supported by two students who helped to integrate into campus life and society as a whole.”

“In Syria, we get money from our parents, no student is working, you focus on your studies. Here, you only rely on yourself.”

Best Practices:

- Structured Buddy Programs
- Long-term Advising
- i.e. “Study-Buddy” at Siegen University

Non-Recognition of “foreign” Education

CHALLENGES & BEST PRACTICES

“The main challenges are clearly the language, and the official documents needed for admission. They are often missing.”

Best Practices:

- Transparent Evaluation Procedures
- Alternative Evaluation Pathways
- Respect and Appreciation for Applicants

Linguistic Barriers

CHALLENGES & BEST PRACTICES

The key challenge in the educational journey of refugee students.

“I don’t want to study for this (language) exam my whole life.”

Best Practices:

- Language Courses
- Translated Information
- Multi-lingual Advisors

Financial Barriers

CHALLENGES & BEST PRACTICES

“Based on our experience, many students faced difficulties to follow courses mainly because they were still struggling with their personal material condition”

Best Practices:

- Comprehensive Information About Funding Opportunities
- Creative Funds
- i.e “Stipend Counselling” at the UoC

Social Discrimination

CHALLENGES & BEST PRACTICES

Intersectional discrimination

On the basis of “race” and ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, political belief and socio-economic status

Best Practices:

- Openness and Acknowledgement
- Staff Training

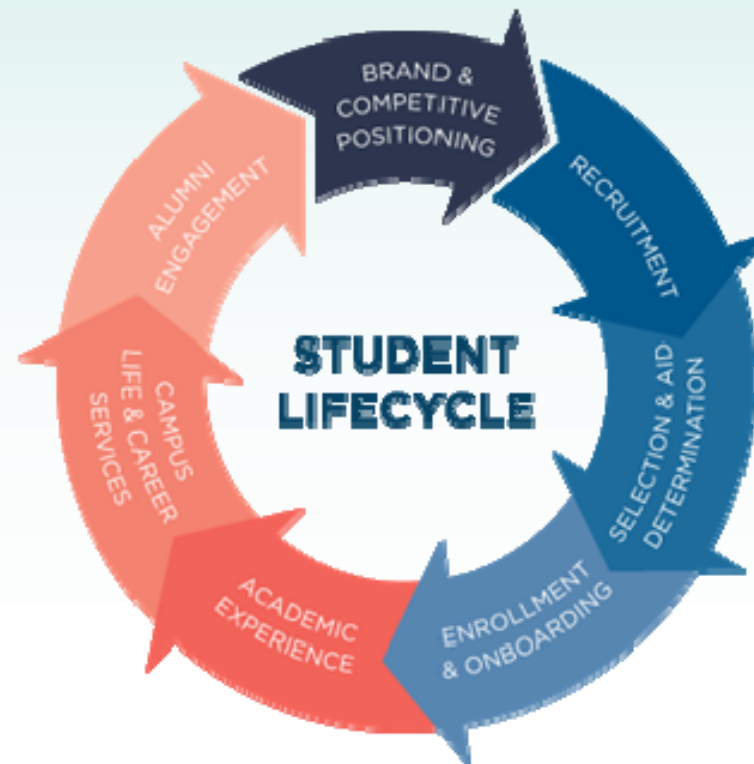
Advice from Around Europe

“Be prepared for several revisions of your initial research/education/implementation plan because the conditions of the target-population are extremely fluid and unforeseen cultural, linguistic and administrative barriers constantly appear. Also, base your actions on diverse teams of experts with different disciplinary and cultural backgrounds”

“Have *all*
lawy *e).”*

“Ask the refu
 person(s) th
 information
 as 1-2 contact
 ll necessary

General Background



Pressing Issues

Interaction with fellow students

"its okay i guess, i kind of feel lonely all
 "The atmosphere here is not friendly as i thought
 it would be."
 "Due to the large number of students I
 do not have much contact with other
 students. I hope that this will change in
 the future, because I've never counted
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Pressing Issues

Language Difficulties

“(...) I think the language is really good at mastering most importantly, if the students prepare well with the language then they will have less problems in the lectures and can best complete their studies, That's why I always say first comes the language.”

Pressing Issues

Feeling of Injustice:

“I understand the difference between the education systems and quality, however i can’t see the difference not entirely fair. A pharmacist refugee for example is considered a bachelor student here while European ones are treated as master holding students.”

Key Questions Going Forward

- How do we better prepare as Institutions of Higher Education to provide continued support for refugee students through their academic journey?
- How do we help curb potential drop-out rates due to lack of institutional support?
- How do we build bridges between communities by including European peers in the social integration efforts of refugee students?
- Do our expectations and assessments of the current situation match those of our refugee students?

Thank you!