



ERN+ Webinar Series on Complementary Pathways of Refugee Admission

Hope for a Better Future: Higher Education Scholarship Opportunities in Europe for Refugee Students

**Event Programme
&
Background Note**

Date: **Wednesday 08 March 2017**

Time: **15.00-17.00**
Central European Time (GMT +1)

Webinar language: English

Webinar Programme

15.00 - 15.10 **Welcome & introduction to the webinar: David Watt, European Resettlement Network**

Part I: An introduction to higher education pathways (presentations by panellists 15.10 - 15.35)

- 1. Complementary Pathways and Education Opportunities for Refugees in Third Countries, by Leah Nichles**, Durable Solutions Officer for Complementary Pathways, UNHCR, Department for International Protection
- 2. Canada's Student Refugee Program: Fostering Refugee Youth Integration and Inclusion Through Peer to Peer Refugee Sponsorship, by Michelle Manks**, Senior Manager, Student Refugee Program & Campus Engagement, World University Service of Canada (WUSC)
- 3. A perspective from Canada's Student Refugee Program, by Maher Boudani**, Master Student in Electrical Engineering, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

15.35 - 16.00 **Questions and discussion on the introductory presentations** - Participants are invited to share their own experiences as well as submit written questions to the panellists and organisers before and during the interactive webinar.

Part II Exploring the European context: which lessons learned from past experience can lead to future potential? (presentations by panellists 16.00 - 16.20)

- 4. Funding and support under the European Commission's Erasmus Mundus programme: providing scholarships to students in a vulnerable situation, by Elisa Maviglia**, Project Advisor, European Commission Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA)
- 5. Practical experience: Lessons learned from EU-funded student scholarships at European universities, by Patricia Szendro Terán**, Project Coordinator International Projects, Technische Universität Berlin

With further contributions from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) on higher education scholarships in Germany

16.20 - 17.00 **Questions and discussion** - Participants are invited to share their own experiences as well as submit written questions to the panellists and organisers before and during the interactive webinar.

See the end of this document for panellists' bios

Background

In Europe and elsewhere, renewed debate on enhancing access to international protection has been brought about by the millions of people affected by protracted displacement crises worldwide. Record numbers of people are now forcibly displaced, with 1.2 million people having been identified as in need of resettlement globally in 2017.¹ However, despite some positive developments at the European level in establishing resettlement programmes, and an increase in the number of EU Member States making resettlement places available, the contribution of European countries to resettlement remains modest.

Within the context of such displacement, as well as continuing arrivals through the Mediterranean, scholarship opportunities to higher education institutions in the European Union (EU) have the potential to offer a pathway for refugees to arrive safely in Europe. Moreover, increased access to such opportunities can offer refugees hope for a better future, enhanced opportunities for economic self-reliance, and greater participation in civic and public life.

Higher education is particularly important for refugees. Yet, their access is severely limited, with just one percent of all young refugees currently enrolled in tertiary education.² Access to higher education is not only a right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it also represents an important way in which refugees can establish a secure future for themselves and their families. Many refugees will not have had the opportunity to pursue the path of education they had envisaged, or will have been forced to interrupt their studies because of having to flee their homes. By supporting refugees to engage in or complete study programmes in the EU and gain relevant qualifications, Member States can provide the conditions for refugees to reach their potential and, in turn, facilitate integration into their communities. Such initiatives can also serve to establish the foundations for the reconstruction of post-conflict societies in the event that refugees choose to return to their home country in the future when it is safe to do so.

However, there are several important considerations to be made when providing such scholarships. Scholarship opportunities need to take into account the specific challenges facing refugees, which should also be addressed prior to a student's departure to the country of study. It is crucial that higher education initiatives in third countries do not jeopardise the legal status, protection or psycho-social well-being of refugees, and that they ensure that students do not find themselves in situations of expired residency, destitution or forced return to their countries of origin as a result of pursuing studies abroad.

In the European context, a small number of higher education opportunities for refugees have addressed the dimension of admitting refugees from outside the EU, with most having been made available to Syrian refugees. Some examples include initiatives by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and a number of foundations and universities in the United Kingdom. The European Union's Erasmus Mundus Programme has also facilitated the participation of refugee students in scholarship opportunities at a number of universities in the EU.

¹ UNHCR, Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html>

² UNHCR, Education - the key to a secure and sustainable future for refugees and their communities, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cda.html>

With the momentum that has developed through the establishment of various opportunities in Member States and at EU level, there is potential to apply lessons learned both from initiatives in Europe and elsewhere in order to move towards the establishment of more comprehensive higher education scholarship programmes in the EU. In developing these, lessons can also be taken from non-European programmes, and in particular through the more than 35 years of experience generated over the course of Canada's [Student Refugee Program](#). This program provides a durable solution for refugees, who are able to engage in study programmes and gain relevant qualifications in Canada, thereby helping them to establish a secure future for themselves and their families.

Objectives of the Webinar

This webinar is the second in the European Resettlement Network series exploring complementary pathways of refugee admission to Europe. On 23 February 2017, a webinar was held to discuss community-based private sponsorship as one such pathway. Following this, and with the overall goal of identifying ways to further build the capacity of stakeholders who aim to establish or enhance scholarship programmes in European countries, this webinar seeks to address the possibilities and challenges, and contribute to the discussion on higher education scholarship opportunities in Europe. It will serve as a forum for the exchange of practice and discussion in the process of identifying potential models suitable to the European context.

The webinar will begin with an introduction to the essential elements that must be taken into consideration when developing a scholarship programme, addressing core protection and technical aspects. Next, the Canadian model will be highlighted and its lessons shared, with a view to understanding how this experience can be of assistance to actors in Europe. Lastly, there will be the opportunity to explore initiatives in Europe and discuss the potential scope for moving forward in the European context.

With contributions from UNHCR, the World University Service of Canada (WUSC), and scholarship providers and actors in the EU, panellists will address central questions and challenges relevant to the subject matter. Key discussion points to be addressed by the panellists and discussed in the Question & Answer sessions include:

1. The process of identification and selection of candidates for scholarship programmes
2. Requirements for pre-departure training and support to contribute to refugees' successful participation in study programmes, and their successful integration into their new environments
3. The key considerations for scholarship providers, including legal status and the support provided to scholarship holders during the study period
4. Possibilities for funding and successful partnerships between relevant actors that can enable the development and sustainability of scholarship programmes
5. The relationship between scholarship providers, government actors, higher education institutions and host communities
6. Prospects for the long-term, including the question of needs and expectations of refugees upon graduation, integration prospects, and how refugees can harness the advantages of completing higher education under a scholarship programme

Background to the project: European Resettlement Network+

Building on the experience that the European Resettlement Network has gathered since 2010, the ERN+ follow-up project, “Developing Innovative European Models for the Protection of Refugees and Providing Support to New Resettlement Countries”, seeks to demonstrate the complementary nature of pathways such as higher education scholarships to existing resettlement programmes, and to highlight the increased need to expand the European protection landscape.

In the framework of this project, various forms of admission are assessed, including community-based private sponsorship programmes and student scholarships, as well as other programmes of humanitarian admission in a range of forms such as, for example, enhanced family reunification schemes.

Using the established structure of the European Resettlement Network to communicate and inform on such pathways of admission, the project aims to bring together national, regional and local government, international organisations, civil society, think tanks, academia and refugees. Through a series of webinars, targeted roundtables and focused feasibility studies, the project seeks to identify possibilities for the implementation of pilot projects in selected European countries, while also further expanding the ERN community of practitioners and stakeholders. The project will build upon the experiences and the lessons learned in order to identify opportunities for the incorporation of these pathways as more permanent features of international protection in Europe.



Co-financed by the European
Commission

The Project is co-financed by the European Commission under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

Panellists' Bios

Leah Nichles, Durable Solutions Officer for Complementary Pathways, Department for International Protection, UNHCR

Leah Nichles works on UNHCR's Comprehensive Solutions team, providing guidance and developing policy models for the protection of refugees in the area of complementary pathways. In a career spanning thirty years, Leah has been a community development worker in inner-city communities in Australia, working with people with disabilities and with refugees and migrants. She has worked for Australian state and federal governments writing and administering policies on public housing, on settlement and integration of migrants and refugees – including skills recognition and regional migration, and she has administered Australian migration programmes from Latin America and Western Europe. She brings this experience to UNHCR.

Michelle Manks, Senior Manager, Student Refugee Program & Campus Engagement, World University Service of Canada (WUSC)

Michelle Manks manages the World University Service of Canada's Student Refugee Program. This unique youth-led program works with the Canadian post-secondary community to fund, place and support refugee students at institutions across the country. In her role, she is responsible for overseeing the support provided to refugee youth by student, faculty, and staff volunteers at participating campuses and providing refugee resettlement and integration training. In addition to engaging partners in-Canada, her responsibilities also include oversight of the program's overseas activities, including the recruitment, placement, and preparation of young refugees coming from Africa, South-East Asia, and the Middle-East.

Maher Boudani, Master Student in Electrical Engineering, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

I am originally from Damascus, Syria. Between 2007 and 2010, I was actively involved in book reading clubs and participated along with colleagues in many events aimed to raise awareness about mass internal immigration from rural and suburban areas to big cities in Syria. In 2011, I was actively involved in the Syrian uprising, and was detained twice by the secret police, in August 2011 and in March 2012. I escaped to Jordan thereafter where I participated in a local students' team aimed at launching relief operations for Syrian refugees in camps.

I have a bachelor degree in Electrical Engineering and am currently pursuing a Master degree in Electrical Engineering at the University of Victoria. I am interested in politics, social causes, and economy; my research area interest is about Max Weber's theory.

Elisa Maviglia, Project Advisor, European Commission Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA)

Elisa Maviglia is project advisor at the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. She works for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees department. This action is financed under the new Erasmus + programme and provides funding for the set-up of international master programmes aiming to foster excellence, innovation, and internationalisation in HEIs. Elisa is also responsible for overseeing mobility schemes financed through the Erasmus Mundus Action2 Partnerships, an EU-funded action which belongs to the Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013). These projects provide scholarships for mobility exchanges to students and staff from Europe and from the rest of the world. She supervises projects active in Middle East and Western Balkans. Before working in the international dimension of higher education, Elisa worked at the Executive Agency in the domains of vocational training, adult education and social inclusion - notably the inclusion of the Roma people and minorities through educational measures. She built her expertise on education also thanks to her past experience at UNICEF Egypt and the Permanent representation of Italy to UNESCO in Paris.

Patricia C. Szendro Terán, Project Coordinator International Projects, Technische Universität Berlin

Patricia Szendro Terán is project manager in the International Projects Team within the International Affairs Office at Technische Universität Berlin. The International Projects Section is in charge of providing support regarding Erasmus + project applications for faculty members as well as implementing own projects that are targeting the internationalization of Higher Education Institutions. As former Erasmus Mundus Office, International Projects is still responsible for several Erasmus Mundus Action 2 mobility projects realized with Universities in the Arab Region. In line with this task, the Team is responsible for the application process, selection and acts as direct contact point for their incoming scholars coming from diverse countries as e.g. Syria, Jordan, Palestine or Paraguay.