



Attention: news desks/ science and education correspondents

For immediate release

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EUA: “Enable refugee students to gain access to higher education”

The European University Association (EUA) calls upon policy makers and higher education institutions in Europe to enable refugee students to gain access to higher education. The EUA Council – comprising the Presidents of 33 national rector’s conferences – adopted a statement on refugee students and academics during its last meeting on 23 October 2015, to support the following action:

- Ensuring the broad provision of information on the various educational opportunities open to refugees;
- Developing foundation and bridging courses and specific programmes that allow refugees to acquire the necessary skills for entering higher education;
- Providing language teaching as a key element of societal integration and a prerequisite for successfully completing a study programme;
- Guaranteeing access to education for school age children;
- Waiving or shortening ‘waiting periods’ to enter higher education and to qualify for student financial support and benefits;
- Offering access to higher education also for non-recognised refugees;
- Ensuring flexible conditions, procedures and processes for the recognition of degrees and diplomas, periods of study and prior learning, in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention;
- Offering funding support for refugee students and scholars and ensuring that additional means are made available for higher education institutions that engage in this process in the form of bursaries, grants and structural support measures, both from national funding sources and from Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and the European Social Fund.

EUA calls on the EU and EU member states to demonstrate leadership and accept responsibility for managing the ongoing refugee crisis.

Like many other actors in society Europe’s universities have a responsibility to act. There are already numerous examples of universities, their staff and students responding to the current emergency by providing support to refugees in general and by reaching out to refugee students, academics and researchers. In many cases, refugees are being accommodated on university campuses and provided with basic services; they are also being offered opportunities such as language training, cultural and sports activities, access to information, and assistance and advice on a wide range of issues. Many of these initiatives have been initiated and are being sustained through the commitment of students and staff, and are being carried out in collaboration with local authorities and with the support of local communities. This immediate response to an emergency situation underlines universities’

spontaneous willingness to help at a very basic level and, at this early stage, to rise to the challenges that Europe is facing.

“But universities can do much more”, says EUA President Rolf Tarrach. “It is to be expected that a considerable number of the refugees entering Europe are either students who have had to break off their studies or young people likely to qualify for access to higher education. It will be crucial to develop procedures that will allow those who wish and are able and qualified to do so to apply for entry to higher education or to continue their studies.” The expected outcome should be a more rapid integration in the host country and increased chances of contributing to the economy and society as a whole.

Rolf Tarrach underlines: “Failing to act now may result in resignation, failure and social marginalisation, not only of current refugees, but also of future generations.

Access to higher education is surely one of the best ways of helping student refugees to gain qualifications, enabling them to seek employment and pursue a career and thus build a life for themselves and their families.”

ENDS

Notes:

- [EUA Statement](#), October 2015

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The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.