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# HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR REFUGEES

A reference framework for  
expanding protection and  
solutions opportunities through  
complementary pathways of  
admission to Europe

Co-funded by the  
European Union



The European Resettlement Network is a joint initiative coordinated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Its current project, co-funded by the European Union under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), supports the further development of resettlement and complementary forms of admission to the EU for those in need of international protection. The content and conclusions of this paper cannot necessarily be taken to represent the positions of each coordinating organisation, but serve to contribute to the debate on expanding the provision of protection-sensitive, sustainable European pathways of admission for refugees.

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Principal author: Anneke Smit in cooperation with UNHCR.

Editors: UNHCR, IOM, ICMC Europe.

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International Catholic Migration  
Commission (ICMC) Europe



International Organization  
for Migration (IOM)



Office of the United Nations High  
Commissioner for Refugees.  
(UNHCR)

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# A. Introduction

In 2017 there were over 65 million people forcibly displaced worldwide, including more than 22.5 million refugees.<sup>1</sup> These figures are on the rise in 2018.<sup>2</sup> Most refugees remain in protracted displacement situations of five years or more, with little immediate hope of returning to their countries of origin.<sup>3</sup> With very limited spaces made available for third country solutions, less than 1 percent of refugees benefit from resettlement each year.<sup>4</sup> Faced with few other options, many refugees risk their lives and those of their families on perilous journeys hoping to reach Europe and elsewhere to seek asylum and a durable solution to their forced displacement.

In the September 2016 *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*,<sup>5</sup> adopted by 193 Member States in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, committed to a new era of global responsibility-sharing in the protection of refugees and migrants. The *New York Declaration* and its annexed *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF) set out States' commitments to making available or expanding resettlement and other complementary pathways of admission for refugees in a meaningful way.<sup>6</sup> The *New York Declaration* and the CRRF call for a multi-stakeholder approach which involves "national and local authorities, international organisations, international financial institutions, civil society partners (including faith-based

organisations, diaspora organisations and academia), the private sector, the media and refugees themselves"<sup>7</sup> in taking shared global responsibility for finding durable solutions for the growing numbers of refugees. As a means to achieving these goals, and in consultations with States and other stakeholders, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will develop a Global Compact for Refugees for inclusion in his annual report to the UN General Assembly in 2018, with Draft 1 released on 9 March 2018.<sup>8</sup>

In 2016, the European Resettlement Network (ERN+), funded by the European Union (EU), launched a project on complementary pathways of admission to Europe for refugees. The project reflects the urgent need to continue to find new and additional opportunities to provide protection and solutions to refugees, including those who would otherwise be in need of resettlement but for whom durable solutions are not available, while continuing to expand and strengthen resettlement programmes. The three strands of the project examine higher education scholarships, humanitarian admission programmes, and private or community-based sponsorship in the EU, with due consideration for the momentum developing around the *New York Declaration* and the development of the Global Compact for Refugees in 2018. The three coordinating organisations are the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and UNHCR.

This study focuses on higher education scholarships as a complementary pathway for the admission of refugees to the EU and other European countries for the purposes of study and to widen potential solution options for refugees. The first part of the paper presents some broad descriptions of the required elements of a multi-stakeholder approach to higher education programmes for refugees to Europe. The second part of the paper

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1 "Figures at a Glance: Statistical Yearbook", (19 June 2017), UNHCR, online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>> ["Figures at a Glance"].

2 UNHCR reported 67.7 million people of concern to the organisation in 2018. UNHCR Global Appeal 2018-2019, UNHCR, online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/publications/fundraising/5a0c05027/unhcr-global-appeal-2018-2019-full-report.html>>.

3 See Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016 (UNHCR, 19 June 2017), online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34.pdf>>; see also, for example: James Milner & Gil Loescher, Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons From a Decade of Discussion, (Refugee Studies Centre, Forced Migration Policy Briefing 6, January 2011), online: <<https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/pb6-responding-protracted-refugee-situations-2011.pdf>>.

4 "Figures at a Glance", supra.

5 New York Declaration, GA Res 71/1, UNGAOR, 71st Sess, UN Doc A/Res/71/1, (2017) [New York Declaration].

6 "Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Delivering More Comprehensive and Predictable Responses for Refugees", (n.d.), UNHCR, online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html>>.

7 New York Declaration, supra, paras 77-79, Annex I: Comprehensive refugee response framework, at 14, 16.

8 "Global Compact on Refugees, Draft 1", (2018), online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/5aa2b3287>> ["Global Compact"].

uses The Netherlands as a case study of how such scholarship programmes might be developed in one Member State of the EU. As explained in further detail in the case study, The Netherlands was selected for an initial exploration on the basis of a number of factors, including an indication of significant institutional experience that could contribute to a successful pilot programme. However, this will depend on several important considerations and further reflections by all the relevant stakeholders in The Netherlands.

This paper is based on, in particular: the ERN+ scoping paper on higher education scholarships from December 2017;<sup>9</sup> consultations at the ERN+ *Round Table on Higher Education Scholarships for Refugees in the EU* held in The Hague on 26 October 2017; UNHCR's "Higher Education Considerations for Refugees in Countries Affected by the Syria and Iraq Crises";<sup>10</sup> and interviews

with approximately 30 stakeholders representing government ministries, international organisations, universities, university organisations, refugee-supporting organisations, student organisations, and refugees themselves. The ERN+ scoping paper on higher education scholarship schemes provides greater detail on several existing refugee scholarship schemes (including in Germany, France, Japan and Canada),<sup>11</sup> and can be read in conjunction with this paper.

The study is further informed by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC)'s "Building Educational Pathways for Refugees" toolkit, released in November 2017,<sup>12</sup> and the "UNHCR Written Contribution to the Public Consultation on the European Union's [EU] legislation on the legal migration of non-EU citizens" (December 2017).<sup>13</sup>

9 Student Scholarships in Europe: Expanding complementary pathways of admission for refugees, (ERN+ Scoping Paper, December 2017), online: <<http://www.resettlement.eu/resource/ern-student-scholarships-refugees-expanding-complementary-pathways-admission-europe>> [ERN+ Scoping Paper].

10 Higher Education Considerations for Refugees in Countries Affected by the Syria and Iraq Crises, (UNHCR: Education and Resettlement Units, Division of International Protection, July 2015), online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/publications/education/568bc5279/education-brief-7-higher-education-considerations-refugees-countries-affected.html>> ["Syria and Iraq"]; see also, Left Behind: Refugee Education in Crisis, (UNHCR, September 2017), online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/events/conferences/59c4bd3b7/behind-refugee-education-crisis.html>> [Left Behind].

11 Although the Canadian model is referred to several times in this paper it is important to bear in mind that this model is built on a private-sponsorship resettlement model, unlike what is being proposed here.

12 Michelle Manks & Lisa Weighton, Building Educational Pathways for Refugees: Mapping a Canadian Peer-to-Peer Support Model, (WUSC in partnership with UNHCR, 2017), online: <[https://s3.amazonaws.com/assets.wusc.ca/NEW%20website/02%20Impact/Reports%20and%20Publications/educationPathways\\_07.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/assets.wusc.ca/NEW%20website/02%20Impact/Reports%20and%20Publications/educationPathways_07.pdf)> [WUSC Handbook].

13 UNHCR Written Contribution to the Public Consultation on the European Union's [EU] legislation on the legal migration of non-EU citizens, (UNHCR, December 2017), online: <[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-migration/201712\\_unhcr\\_legal\\_migration\\_consultation.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-migration/201712_unhcr_legal_migration_consultation.pdf)>.

## B. Motivations for the study

Resettlement continues to be a core protection tool and, with growing resettlement needs identified at 1.2 million refugees,<sup>14</sup> increased resettlement opportunities for refugees are urgently needed. However, with record numbers of refugees globally and limited places made available for resettlement, it is necessary to consider expanding complementary pathways of admission for refugees in third countries so as to provide greater opportunities for refugees to live safe and more dignified, productive and fulfilling lives. Complementary pathways of admission for refugees through scholarship programmes are part of a range of safe and regulated avenues by which refugees are provided with lawful stay while they can widen potential solutions options for themselves. They can allow the institutions and organisations supporting such programmes - for example higher education institutions (HEIs) of all types, national governments, municipalities and regional governments, student groups, community groups, refugee groups and organisations supporting refugees, to name a few - to contribute to the global call for responsibility-sharing and solidarity for responding to forced displacement and expanding solutions for refugees.

More specifically, the study seeks to promote access to higher education in the EU and other European States for refugees from countries outside of Europe through a process of broad community engagement by a variety of stakeholders, such as those mentioned above. While 36 percent of the global population accesses higher education, less than 1 percent of refugees have this opportunity.<sup>15</sup> The lack of access to education for refugees has recently been described as creating a “lost generation” which will have negative effects for those potential students, their home countries, and the countries which currently host them.<sup>16</sup> Observers have called

upon participants to the thematic consultations informing the development of the Global Compact on Refugees to ensure that the Compact recognizes “the need for high quality secondary and higher education particularly for refugee youth of high promise and potential.”<sup>17</sup> More must be done to create additional spaces for refugee students to continue their education. This would ideally include opportunities both in their first country of asylum, despite the existence in many cases of significant barriers or capacity constraints, as well as scholarships to study in third countries, including within Europe. The focus of this paper is on creating opportunities in Europe for refugee students currently in other countries with limited options to access a durable solution.

The benefits of scholarship programmes extend beyond direct protection and education goals. As the decades-old WUSC programme in Canada as well as pilot education programmes in several EU Member States and Associated States and elsewhere have shown,<sup>18</sup> refugee assistance programmes which engage HEIs and their various communities – students, staff, faculty members, alumni, and refugees themselves – also serve important functions regarding public education and societal change in the receiving/scholarship country. Further,

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14 UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs, (UNHCR, June 2017), online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/593a88f27.pdf>>.

15 Left Behind, *supra*.

16 Adel Abdel Ghafar & Firas Masri, “The Lost Generation: Children in CZones”, Brookings, (29 May 2016), online: <<https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-lost-generation-children-in-conflict-zones/>>.

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17 Jens Waltermann, Statement on the Global Compact on Refugees, Third Thematic Discussion, 18 October 2017 and Fourth Thematic Discussion, 14 November 2017: Education as a complementary pathway – the need for transnational education opportunities for young refugees, (UWC International, 2017), online: <[www.unhcr.org/5a0ac3717.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/5a0ac3717.pdf)>; Education is also identified as a “top refugee issue to monitor in 2018” by Refugees Deeply, see: Charlotte Alfred, “The Top Refugee Issues to Watch in 2018”, Refugees Deeply, (12 January 2018), online: <<https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2018/01/12/the-top-refugee-issues-to-monitor-in-2018>>; see also the Global Education Monitoring Project which similarly positions education as one of the most important elements of the Global Compact: GEM Report, “The Global Compact for Migration will go on – with or without the United States – for the sake of education”, Global Education Monitoring Report: World Education Blog, (4 December 2017), online: <<https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2017/12/04/the-global-compact-for-migration-will-go-on-with-or-without-the-united-states-for-the-sake-of-education/>>; Education International, “UN Global Compact on Migration must put workers and education rights first”, Education International, (01 August 2017), online: <<https://ei-ie.org/en/detail/15267/un-global-compact-on-migration-must-put-workers-and-education-rights-first>>.

18 ERN+ Scoping Paper, *supra*.

harnessing the goodwill of these receiving communities may help to open further pathways to protection and solutions for refugees. Further, long-standing scholarship programmes may also have an exponential impact on refugee communities in countries of asylum as students become motivated to remain in education and study hard through the potential to win a coveted place to study abroad if they achieve good results.

A variety of small and, in some cases, institution-specific, higher education schemes have operated or are currently operating across several European countries. In addition to those mentioned above, the following pilot programmes, many of which are run in affiliation with the global Scholars at Risk (SAR) network, can be noted as examples: the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam's SAR programme for graduate refugee students;<sup>19</sup> Norway's StAR programme;<sup>20</sup> UAF Netherlands' SAR programme;<sup>21</sup> the University of Portsmouth's pilot programme in partnership

with SAR and Amnesty International;<sup>22</sup> the University of Edinburgh's services for refugee students as a member of the Council for Academics at Risk (CARA);<sup>23</sup> and the London School of Economics SAR scheme.<sup>24</sup>

This study examines the suggested core components of creating a third-country refugee scholarship programme to an EU Member State or other European country by which persons in need of international protection are provided with lawful stay in a country under conditions that allow for their international protection needs to be met, while widening temporary solutions options for refugees through higher education. The study presents general considerations relevant to European countries, with the final section, as noted, focusing on The Netherlands as a case study in order to apply the considerations to a particular context.

19 "Subsidized Projects", (n.d.), VUVereniging (webpage), online: <<https://www.vuvereniging.nl/nl/wij-steunen/gesubsidieerde-projecten/index.aspx>>.

20 Providing a Safe Haven for Student Activists - A Midway Evaluation of the Students at Risk Programme, (SIU Report Series, February 2017), online: <<https://www.siu.no/eng/Publications/publication-database/evaluation-of-the-students-at-risk-programme>>.

21 "Scholars at Risk: Protecting Academic Freedom", (n.d.), UAF (webpage), online: <[https://www.uaf.nl/wat\\_doet\\_het\\_uaf/projecten/scholars\\_at\\_risk](https://www.uaf.nl/wat_doet_het_uaf/projecten/scholars_at_risk)>.

22 Ellie Bothwell, "PhD scholarship scheme provides support for refugees in 'despair'", Times Higher Education, (14 July 2016), online: <<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/phd-scholarship-scheme-provides-support-for-refugees-in-despair>>.

23 "Refugee Crisis Portal", (15 July 2016), University of Edinburgh, Global Justice Academy (webpage), online: <[http://www.globaljusticeacademy.ed.ac.uk/human\\_rights\\_and\\_social\\_justice/refugee\\_crisis\\_portal](http://www.globaljusticeacademy.ed.ac.uk/human_rights_and_social_justice/refugee_crisis_portal)>.

24 "Scholars at Risk", (n.d.), London School of Economics (webpage), online: <<http://www.lse.ac.uk/sociology/human-rights/scholars-at-risk>>.



## C. Parameters of the study

Two preliminary points should be noted. First, the study as a whole has been informed to some extent by research in one EU Member State – The Netherlands – and interviews conducted with Dutch stakeholders, with reference where possible to other national contexts. As such, there may be considerations unique to a particular EU Member State or other country which are not discussed here. Further research, and perhaps advocacy, will be required among stakeholders in a given Member State where there is interest in establishing a programme. Nevertheless, the study does endeavour to draw as many lessons and recommendations as possible that can be applicable in any European country.

Second, the study is also significantly informed by the work of the Canadian Student Refugee Programme (SRP), run through WUSC. The WUSC programme has been ground-breaking for its resettlement-based approach that sees refugee students arrive within a broader national community refugee sponsorship programme. While what is proposed here is not a resettlement programme, the Canadian model remained instructive. Further, where European States pursue a community sponsorship programme, such as the kind which provides the framework for the WUSC programme, they may wish to consider a student scholarship element as part of such a programme.

# D. Proposed programme framework

This section addresses several of the key considerations in crafting a higher education scholarship programme for refugees to arrive in a European country from a previous country of asylum. The aim is to provide a framework setting out many of the key steps involved, which can serve as a starting reference point to inform efforts to pilot such a programme. This section covers programme elements beginning with the target group and overall framework through to the study period and beyond in the scholarship country.

## I. TARGET GROUP AND PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

A number of initial decisions must be made about the parameters of a higher education scholarship programme for refugees that involves admission to a European country and stay for the purposes of study. The following sections are intended to guide those decisions.

### Target group of beneficiaries

**The target group for the programme envisaged in this study is persons in need of international protection currently outside of Europe** in another country of asylum, who would be selected on the basis of certain criteria linked to academic skills as well as criteria informed by the refugee's specific needs (see subsequent sections on *Eligibility* and *Selection*). For ease of recruitment and the associated operational measures, it may be tempting to focus a pilot programme on refugees from just one country of first asylum. However, it may make sense to select more than one country affected by a large movement of refugees or a protracted situation, given the desire to offer persons of concern alternatives to dangerous routes to Europe from these States and contribute to the global efforts to secure solutions for refugees and share responsibility.<sup>25</sup> Having more than one geographic focus for selecting refugee participants would allow it to be tested across different refugee

situations – including length of displacement, refugee camp versus urban refugee populations, and levels of education of the refugee population. At the same time, confining a programme to a modest geographic range (rather than a fully open call to all refugee populations worldwide) will keep it small enough to likely be more manageable in its first iteration.<sup>26</sup>

### Higher education institutions (HEIs)

More than one HEI should ideally be involved in a national pilot programme. Securing a number of partner HEIs would allow a broader range of potential courses of study and geographic locations in the receiving country. The involvement of a range of HEIs may also allow the testing of a pilot programme in different types of higher education environments, including both academic and more technical training programmes. Each HEI may also engage its own group of partner organisations – municipalities, student organisations, private sector etc. – meaning that each additional HEI may actually bring on board several new partner constituencies. This will help to add to the profile of the programme as well as its sustainability. It would also help to ensure that the programme be viewed not as an undertaking of a specific university, but rather a national programme reflective of a consortium of interested stakeholders.<sup>27</sup> This may have important effects in terms of visibility of the programme and perhaps governmental support. The precise number of students to be admitted within the framework of the programme in a given country will depend on a number of factors including, for example, the existing refugee-assistance infrastructure, the number of HEIs participating, the government's agreement to issue visas, and the possible funding structure.

26 For comparison, the Canadian WUSC programme currently includes refugees from five countries of asylum (down from as many as 37 at various points in past), but it is a more mature programme.

27 For example, in Italy a number of HEIs throughout the country are part of a nationwide scheme (U4Refugees), to facilitate the integration of refugees into universities, see: "Italy: Initiatives to Facilitate Refugees' Access to Universities Proliferate and Unite", (20 July 2016), European Website on Integration, online: <<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/italy-initiatives-to-facilitate-refugees-access-to-universities-proliferate-and-unite>>.

25 UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs, *supra*.

## SUPPORTING FEMALE APPLICANTS

As women are traditionally underrepresented in higher education scholarship programmes abroad for refugees (see, for example, the experience of WUSC where on average fewer than 33 percent of participants are women),<sup>1</sup> measures should be taken to encourage women to apply. This may include targeted scholarships for women. Jusoor, a scholarship organisation targeting Syrian refugee students in the United States, Canada and Europe, reports receiving 900 scholarship applications in 2017 for a women-only scholarship call for Syrian refugees,<sup>2</sup> with numerous other examples of international scholarship competitions focused solely on refugee women.<sup>3</sup> UNHCR has also acknowledged that affirmative action programmes may sometimes be warranted in order to achieve substantive gender equality,<sup>4</sup> while numerous studies show the link between the education of girls/women in a family and the economic well-being of the family.<sup>5</sup> The Global Compact on Refugees, Draft 1 also recognises the need to implement “measures to meet the specific needs of refugee children and youth, especially girls” and expand “access to secondary and tertiary education, including through scholarships and connected learning, with a particular focus on women and girls.”<sup>6</sup>

For a pilot programme, while it is advisable to make an open call for applications to reach the widest possible target group, it could also be considered to ensure that the conditions of the programme are such that prospective female applicants will feel that applying for, and ultimately accepting, a scholarship would be viable for them. A key element of this will be addressing family unity concerns – for example, ensuring that the woman’s nuclear family and other dependant relatives could accompany her to the scholarship country. Another consideration is to include counselling of female applicants and their families as they reach a finalist level, to ensure they are well supported and understand what to expect during the scholarship period as well as what support is in place for them in the country of scholarship. However, if after the first intake year it is found that the number of female applicants and scholarship recipients is not at or near gender parity within the overall group of successful candidates, then it may be advisable to offer a dedicated programme for female applicants in the second year as part of the overall programme, or a number of dedicated spaces only available to female applicants.

1 WUSC Handbook, *supra*.

2 The application deadline was 25 January 2018; it is therefore not yet known how many will take up the scholarships they are awarded (in universities and colleges across the United States and Canada): “100 Syrian Women, 10000 Syrian Lives Scholarship Program”, (n.d.) Jusoor (webpage), online: <<https://jusoor.syria.com/100-syrian-women/>>.

3 These include: Graduate Women International, “Hegg Hoffet Fund”, (n.d.), Graduate Women International (webpage), online: <<http://www.graduatwomen.org/what-we-do/grants-fellowships/hegg-hoffet/>>; “Mary Davidson Scholarship for Refugee Students”, (n.d.), Australian Education Network (webpage), online: <<http://www.australianuniversities.com.au/scholarships/guide/9478-mary-davidson-scholarship-for-refugee-students.html>>; “Shawna Scholarship”, (n.d.) UNRWA (webpage), online: <<https://www.unrwa.org/shawna-scholarship>>; “Joan Reid Scholarship for Refugee Women”, (n.d.), Australian Education Network (webpage), online: <<http://www.australianuniversities.com.au/scholarships/guide/9128-joan-reid-scholarship-for-refugee-women.html>>.

4 See for example: UNHCR’s Commitments to Refugee Women, (UNHCR, 12 December 2001), online: <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/479f3b2a2.htm>>.

5 See for example: Shanta Pandey, Min Zhan & Youngmi Kim, “Bachelor’s Degree for Women with Children: A Promising Pathway to Poverty Reduction” (2006) 25:7 Equal Opportunities International 488; “Giving Special Attention to Girls and Adolescents”, (n.d.), UNFPA (webpage), online: <<http://www.unfpa.org/resources/giving-special-attention-girls-and-adolescents>>; and “Girls Education”, (25 September 2017), World Bank (webpage), online: <<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation>>.

6 “Global Compact”, *supra* at 9.

It should also be noted that the larger the number of partners and organisations involved, likely the greater the complexity and the administrative burden that this entails. Regular multi-level and multi-stakeholder consultation and coordination on identification, selection and pre-departure issues will be key, including with UNHCR operations and other relevant international organisations and actors on the ground in the country of selection.

### Areas and level of study

HEIs should be encouraged to make as broad a range of courses available as possible. A pilot programme may target undergraduate (bachelor's) or graduate level students, or both. There are justifications for pursuing each. Undergraduate (bachelor's) level education will be accessible to a wider range of refugee applicants, as this will only require them to have completed high school studies, or have begun but not completed undergraduate study in their country of origin. By contrast, graduate students will have had to have completed undergraduate-level education, either prior to fleeing their home countries or during their displacement; these numbers may be smaller, and these students may be somewhat older and therefore more likely to have nuclear family members they would ideally wish to have accompany them to the country of study. Acknowledging the importance of this, the Japanese scholarship programme for Syrian refugee students allows students' families to accompany them to Japan.<sup>28</sup> This was also the case in the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Leadership for Syria programme.<sup>29</sup> Yet graduate studies in a European country may also be seen as prestigious and may make a significant improvement in the student's ability to access good employment and higher incomes.

### Length of initial programme commitment

Participating organisations should be prepared to make a commitment for the full length of the programme. This will include not only the study period but also a sufficient planning period in advance of the first intake to ensure that all aspects of the programme have been fully considered and

addressed prior to launching the programme. For participating HEIs, an initial commitment of three intake years is recommended. This length will allow the programme to mature, and to provide time to tweak what does not work in the first year for successive years on the basis of targeted monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Regardless of the length of the initial commitment, it will be important to include robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, both during the programme and in the phase-out period, to ensure that any future programmes benefit from the lessons learned. Selected students will be sponsored for the full length of their study programme, and the programme should not conclude before the last intake group completes their degrees.

## II. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION

For a scholarship programme of the sort envisaged by this study to be successful, the participation and cooperation of numerous stakeholders is required. However, there must be an organisational core to the programme through which all coordination, and some of the funding, is channelled. There is a variety of possible models – a dedicated programme administrator embedded in one of the partner organisations; a new organisation created for the sole purpose of managing the programme; or a volunteer committee or board made up of representatives of the participating organisations to oversee the programme.<sup>30</sup>

### Programme coordination

**Embedding a programme administrator within an existing organisation is likely to be preferable in most circumstances for a pilot programme** as it is likely more straightforward to implement rather than creating a new organisation, as well as more stable and reliable than administration undertaken by a volunteer committee or board. Depending on the size of the scholarship programme, the programme administrator could be a full-time or part-time position for the term of the pilot programme. Given the complexity of managing the protection and

28 B. Bollag, "Refugee Scholarships: First Do No Harm", (31 May 2017), online: <<https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2017/05/refugee-scholarships-first-no-harm/>>.

29 ERN+ Scoping Paper, supra.

30 Some national SAR organisations, for example, run this way, although these may take on less responsibility than an embedded programme coordinator would be able to. The DAAD programme also runs this way, see: "Organisational Structure", (n.d.), DAAD (webpage), online: <<https://www.daad.de/der-daad/organisationsstruktur/en/>>.

legal status issues of the students accepted into the programme (for example, central data collection, coordination of processes in countries of asylum from where refugees will depart, and communication with partners in those countries as well as with ministries or embassies of the country providing the scholarship), it may make sense for a relevant government ministry or department in the country of scholarship to house the programme administration.<sup>31</sup>

**If a government ministry or department is not in a position to take the administrative lead, then most other key organisational partners could be considered**, including universities, municipalities and/or regional authorities – in particular if there is already an active department within these entities working on refugee issues. Other candidates for this role include: a national student scholarship organisation; a professional NGO with an asylum or refugee focus; a refugee-led organisation; an organisation of universities within the scholarship country; or a national student organisation. Given the legal and administrative elements necessary for the success of such a programme, if a government ministry or department is not the lead on the programme, then careful work must be done to ensure that there is nonetheless government/ministry/department consultation and support, and that any potential legal, administrative or institutional roadblocks to the programme's success have been identified and a solution found.

Besides the above organisations, other key partners who may not be in a position to serve as organisational leads but who could also play important roles could include: international scholarship organisations; single-institution student organisations; international organisations including UNHCR; and organisations working on labour market access, including private sector actors and refugee communities. Regardless of which stakeholder becomes the organisational lead, it may be advisable to form an advisory board comprising representatives of the partner organisations and (at least as the programme matures) a refugee student representative. This would assist in performing an oversight and accountability function of the programme

31 For example, The Government of Canada's Academic Relations Program's international scholarships are managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade: "Canada International Scholarship Programs", (n.d.), Government of Canada (webpage), online: <<http://international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/atip-aiprp/assessments-evaluation/scholarship-bourses.aspx?lang=eng>>.

administration and consider any proposed amendments to the programme as it develops.

### Coordination within participating organisations

**Each participant organisation should identify a programme lead, either from within existing staff or hired specifically to run the programme.** Depending on the number of students to be admitted per year and on the size of the organisation's role in the programme, this could be a full- or part-time position, or absorbed into an existing position. Of particular importance will be ensuring HEIs have a staff or faculty member with responsibility for managing all aspects of the programme relevant to the institution, including being a primary contact person for scholarship students for all issues concerning the studies and wellbeing of students. Again, this may be full- or part-time, depending on the number of students and expected workload.

### Programme evaluation

In order to meaningfully test the success of the programme, in particular if a number of different HEIs are involved, **a monitoring plan will need to be developed prior to implementation.** This should include both mechanisms for addressing issues as they arise, as well as yearly and final reports from all stakeholders.

## III. FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND PROGRAMME SUPPORT

**Secure, sufficient, and predictable funding is one of the core requirements for the creation of a successful and sustainable refugee scholarship programme.** The focus should be on attaining funding which is reliable and sustainable throughout the life of the pilot programme and, ideally, beyond this to support an established programme. In Canada's WUSC programme, funding comes from a variety of sources in addition to the student sponsor group. This is seen as both desirable and likely necessary to meet the financial needs of the programme, while better ensuring sustainability by diversifying income sources.<sup>32</sup>

32 WUSC Handbook, supra.

## Higher education institutions (HEIs)

**Higher education institutions** – either central administration or individual faculties or centres – may provide funding in the form of tuition waivers for students or may make other lump-sum donations. Waivers and in-kind contributions may be provided for accommodation and/or meals, for example. In addition, the potential support described in the section on pre-study support that universities could provide (participation in language and mentoring programmes, for example) may all be provided as in-kind contributions by the university.

Other campus funding models exist. For example, the SAR project at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is funded in part from donations by **faculty members**. These include donations of a EUR 25 gift voucher presented by the university administration to faculty every year at Christmas time: faculty may choose to purchase an item from the university bookstore or to donate the value of the voucher to the SAR programme. **Faculty and staff associations or unions**, where they exist, may donate or encourage members to do so. In addition, **alumni** of the HEI may be asked to contribute to the scholarship programme.

**Current students and student organisations at participating HEIs** may play a role in funding the programme. The Canadian WUSC model runs on funding provided mainly by students. This is normally collected as a very small levy on student tuition, and in Canada is often voted on in a student referendum. The amount of the levy varies between HEIs, but the national average is approximately EUR 3 per student per year; this provides funding for both the primary support for the student for one year (similar to other community-based refugee sponsorship programmes in Canada) and some operational costs for WUSC at a national level.<sup>33</sup> Students may also engage in fundraising activities, and may contribute through in-kind donations of time, used books or other materials.

<sup>33</sup> These funds go to paying for the monthly subsistence of WUSC students (for the first year), and an additional CDN \$3,000-5,000 per sponsored refugee student is provided to the central WUSC office by participating universities in order to fund the central administration of the project, see: WUSC, WUSC Student Refugee Program: Guide to Planning a Winning Referendum (World University Service of Canada, July 2015), online: <<http://assets.wusc.ca/Website/Resources/StudentRefugeeProgram/referendumguide.pdf>>.

## Non-governmental organisations, faith-based groups, diaspora organisations and private donors

**External funding, including private donations by individuals and non-governmental, faith-based and diaspora organisations as well as public fundraising campaigns** can be useful in providing “extras” which may go towards supporting administrative costs and other types of assistance. If external funding is to be relied upon for core funding, a firm commitment for the duration of the programme, or at least a significant portion of it, should be made.

The **private sector may support a scholarship programme through monetary donations** or in-kind donations such as for accommodation, meals, clothing, books or other necessities. While there are some examples of private sector contributions to refugee assistance from foundations and businesses, this represents a major untapped source of potential for underwriting scholarships or providing core funding, as well as for mentoring, job placement and other career development-related needs.<sup>34</sup>

Other organisations, including **national student organisations, associations of universities, or professional organisations working with refugees and asylum-seekers** may also contribute through financial donations and/or with organisational assistance.

## Governments and the European Union

**Municipal and regional governments** may be in a position to provide either direct funding or an in-kind donation of accommodation assistance. In addition, municipalities (along with universities and students’

<sup>34</sup> See, for example: “Scholarships for Syrian Refugees”, (10 August 2015), The Said Foundation, online: <<https://www.saidfoundation.org/news/scholarships-syrian-refugees-0>>; (In 2014 the Said Foundation committed over US\$1.8m to the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR to fund scholarships for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.); “Global Initiative Brings Canada’s Refugee Sponsorship Model to the World”, (27 June 2017), Radcliffe Foundation, online: <<http://radcliffefoundation.org/frank-giustra-direct-impact-philanthropy-2-2/>>; (A Canadian initiative “inspired by Canada’s private sponsorship program”).

organisations) may be in a position to coordinate offers of home stays for temporary/settling-in periods as well.<sup>35</sup>

**Government ministries or departments** may provide part or full core funding for a scholarship programme; they may also make in-kind contributions such as covering the salary of an administrator to coordinate the scholarship programme within their office.

**The European Union** may be able to provide financial support for components of the programme in a number of different ways through existing programmes, or through instruments that provide project-based funding. These instruments include the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund<sup>36</sup> and Erasmus+, the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe.<sup>37</sup> In response to calls for proposals issued periodically under both instruments, a scholarship coordination body may identify opportunities to submit proposals for funding to undertake a range of activities, including research or feasibility assessments, initiatives to exchange on and upscale existing practice with other actors, or to bring about structural developments in institutions that can support the preparation and implementation of components of the programme.

### International organisations

Lastly, some resources from international organisations such as **UNHCR, IOM, and others working with relevant populations in the departing country** may be required to facilitate refugee access to a higher education scholarship programme. This could include, for example, in the advertising of the scholarship programme, reaching

out to refugees, implementing the selection process, and the pre-departure briefing process. UNHCR may be able to provide support services and assist with counselling to refugees, the advertisement of opportunities, the identification of candidates, liaising with countries of first asylum and third countries to obtain travel documents as well as exit and entry visas, and providing guidance and technical support on protection-sensitive scholarship programmes for refugees. IOM may be able to provide assistance linked to travel documentation, exit permissions, pre-departure health assessment, pre-departure orientation and information sessions, and movement assistance.

## IV. PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS AND RELEVANT SUPPORT

The protection and legal aspects of a higher education scholarship for refugees departing to a third country from their previous country of asylum must be carefully addressed. Receiving institutions need to work closely with national governments and authorities to ensure the granting of legal status and to ensure the protection needs of refugee students are met, including through securing lawful travel and entry to the country of scholarship. Although the type of residence permit may vary from country to country, maintenance of the legal status in the scholarship country for the duration of studies is essential to avoid refugees finding themselves in situations of destitution, expired residency or forced return as a result of pursuing studies abroad. In order for the programme to create the opportunity for students to maintain secure legal status in the scholarship-granting country for as long as is required for protection purposes, it will likely be required to take further considerations than those usually given to the issuing of a student visa in the general course of events.

Further, the scholarship programme should complement parallel protection interventions and priorities for refugees, and any negative impact on ongoing resettlement programmes needs to be avoided. The programme should not be offered as a substitute or replacement for resettlement opportunities and resettlement places should not be reduced as a consequence of admitting students through scholarship programmes.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example: Welcoming Refugees - Local European Experiences, (Report from the Conference held in Norrköping, 25-27 January 2017), at 11, online: <<https://www.kirjastot.fi/sites/default/files/content/Welcoming-Refugees-%E2%80%93-Local-European-Experiences-conference-report.pdf>>.

<sup>36</sup> For further information, see the website of the European Commission: "Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)", (n.d.), European Commission (webpage) online: <[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en)>.

<sup>37</sup> See the 2018 Erasmus+ Programme Guide for more information on the eligible criteria for the Key Actions of Erasmus+: Erasmus+ Programme Guide, (European Commission, 25 October 2017) online: <[http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf)>.

The following key elements need to be factored into a higher education scholarship programme:

### Support for attaining required travel documents and visas

The government and relevant institutions of the country of scholarship, in collaboration with UNHCR, IOM, or other partner organisations, should provide refugees selected for a scholarship programme with the **necessary support to obtain the required valid travel documents and visa(s)**, including passport, and entry and exit visas. This process can be complicated and even dangerous for refugees to attempt on their own, in particular if travel to another country is required or if an embassy of their country of origin must be approached. UNHCR and/or IOM can assist refugees with these procedures in coordination with the embassy of the scholarship country.

### Efficient and reliable system of processing visa applications

**An efficient system of processing visa applications must be established and perhaps guaranteed by the scholarship country**, either through regular visa application procedures or through a specialized category. Whether a distinct category must be created for this programme will depend on the existing student visa regulations of the scholarship country. This will include considerations such as the usual speed of processing, the rejection rate of applications, documentation requirements, and the requisite elements of a successful application. It may be necessary to adopt some flexibility in the typical student visa requirements, including financial aspects, given the specific situation of refugee scholarship students: the visa process may need to reflect a more complex funding system for scholarship students than for self-funded ones (although there may be precedent for this in other scholarship programmes for foreign students). Flexibility in meeting documentary requirements may also be necessary given most refugees lack access to the educational and legal institutions of their countries of origin. These considerations emphasise the importance of government and institutional support for, and cooperation in, the establishment of the programme.

Student visas can be quite expensive, with the fee to apply ranging in European States between EUR 50 to over EUR

300;<sup>38</sup> if possible, the cost of the visa should be waived by the scholarship country. If not, then the cost of the student visa should be included in the scholarship funds made available to the student.

### Protection against refoulement

Participation of refugee students in the scholarship programme should not jeopardise their rights or legal status. As student visas generally provide for legal entry and stay for educational purposes only, to address a potential protection gap, certain basic guarantees must be provided to refugees selected for the scholarship and who will leave their country of asylum to take up a scholarship offer.

**The protection against *refoulement*, or the prohibition of expulsion or return to a country where a refugee would be at risk of persecution, torture or other serious human rights violations, is a primary factor.** Moreover, the right to seek asylum at any time in the country of scholarship must be respected, consistent with international law. This should apply regardless of the status upon which refugees arrive in the scholarship country.<sup>39</sup> In the event that a student does submit an application for international protection at any moment during her or his stay, it must be ensured that no negative credibility inference is made where that application is submitted following an initial period of stay in the scholarship country. In this regard, it must be recognised that the situation in a refugee's country of origin or previous country of asylum can change both very quickly and very dramatically, whereby the conditions under which they left are not the conditions that have persisted.

**In the event that return or re-entry to the previous country of asylum is not possible**, prospects to remain legally in the country of scholarship beyond the period of

38 See: Dana Vioreanu, "How to Get a Student Visa for Italy", (n.d.), MastersPortal (blog), online: <<http://www.mastersportal.eu/articles/1654/how-to-get-a-student-visa-for-italy.html>>; Dana Vioreanu, "How to Get a student Visa for Belgium 2018", (n.d.), MastersPortal (blog), online: <<http://www.mastersportal.eu/articles/1634/how-to-get-a-student-visa-for-belgium-in-2018.html>>.

39 Anecdotally it is reported that most students will prefer not to take this step unless absolutely necessary. The anticipation is, therefore, that this will not lead to a significant number of asylum claims (evidence from Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs/ SPARK programme and the DAAD Leadership for Syria programme in Germany).



study for protection reasons should be provided, including the possibility to convert their visa into work or other visa types, and to avail themselves of their right to seek asylum.

### Right to work during study period

Ideally, **the student visa should include the right to undertake lawful part-time or seasonal work during the study period.** This can help the student to build an important network, develop skills, improve language abilities and integrate with the broader community, while fostering self-reliance through greater financial independence beyond the scholarship package, which in any case must be sufficient in and of itself to support the refugee student. However, student visas for a number of EU Member States (e.g., Spain and the Czech Republic) do not include a right to work, which must instead be applied for separately. Should there be restrictions on including a right to work with a student visa in a given context, it should be considered to at least permit internship opportunities over the course of the study programme.

### Post-study opportunities for seeking work, internships or further study

**Legal provision should be made for a generous (ideally 12-18 months) post-graduation period in the scholarship country or in the EU** for the purposes of seeking lawful employment, post-study internships and apprenticeships, and/or further study. This may be either as part of the student visa or as an add-on with a simplified and efficient application procedure. Allowing a sufficient period to search for a job will increase the likelihood of the student finding work and gaining a work permit, leading to a potentially long-term solution to her/his displacement and a successful start on a chosen professional path. As a benchmark, under Article 25 of the *EU Directive on Students and Researchers*, a period of nine months shall be granted to each student to remain in the Member State to seek employment or set up a business following the completion of studies.<sup>40</sup>

40 Member States need to have transposed the Directive into national law by 23 May 2018, see: EC, Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing, [2016] OJ, L 132 [EU Directive 2016].

### Provision for close family members to accompany the scholarship student

**Close family members – at a minimum, the spouse (including common law/same-sex spouses) and minor children – should ideally be provided visas to travel and reside with the scholarship student**

during the period of study, and should have their status extended consistent with any extensions granted to the student. This allows for a wider range of applicants to access the programme (see discussion above about encouraging greater female participation). It will also support a larger number of persons (i.e. the nuclear family) in achieving solutions to their displacement, even for a time, and help to minimize distractions to the scholarship student from their course of study since they will know their closest family members are safe. In refugee scholarship programmes in Germany and Japan, family accompaniment has been possible for refugees selected for the programme.<sup>41</sup> The visa status for accompanying family members should allow access to health care, social security, and education at the same level granted to the refugee student, and on the same basis as nationals of the scholarship country.

Many refugee young adults in their late teens and early twenties continue to reside with their parents and siblings while in their country of first asylum, and remain a socially and economically important member of that family unit. It is likely not viable for the proposed programme to include family reunification in the short term for these students and their families. However, in cases where stay is extended beyond graduation, States might consider to apply flexible family reunification provisions at that point for non-accompanying family members (including, for example, parents of a young student who was living with her/his parents prior to leaving to take up the scholarship and any minor siblings). This could further reduce emotional strain for

41 In Japan, for example, participants may bring their spouse and children “who are eligible to be granted “Dependent” resident status in accordance with the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act of Japan”, see: Application Guidelines on Japanese Initiative for the Future of Syrian Refugees (JISR) 2018, (September 2017), online: <<https://www.jica.go.jp/syria/english/office/others/c8h0vm0000ahd5fa-att/guidelines.pdf>>.

scholarship students and encourage longer-term integration into the scholarship country while providing a solution for more refugees.<sup>42</sup>

### Changes in study or family status: impact on visa validity

For a variety of reasons, a scholarship student may be unable to complete the full period of study for which the scholarship and visa were awarded. There must be clarity about the economic impact of non-completion of the degree programme, including potential continued access to housing, healthcare, the status of family members, etc.<sup>43</sup> **Provisions must be made for the effects of a discontinuation or the prolongation of the study visa in the event of illness or having to repeat a semester.** This may have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine: whether the study may be continued following a brief pause (still in the scholarship country); whether a transfer should be made to a different programme; whether the student should return to their previous country of asylum, where possible (consistent with the principle of *non-refoulement*); or whether the student and any accompanying family members may be permitted to remain in the scholarship country under different conditions.

## V. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to apply for a scholarship, applicants should generally, at a minimum, have been granted refugee status in the previous host country or considered as persons in need of international protection by UNHCR. From this starting point, the following considerations will be relevant.

### Academic and extracurricular qualifications

In crafting eligibility criteria for a scholarship programme, **academic and related qualifications should be a primary factor**, and applicants will need to meet the admission requirements of the particular HEI at which they hope to study. Some flexibility may be necessary in the satisfaction of some eligibility criteria; this may be up to the HEI to make such a determination and may be on a case-by-case basis. Flexibility will also be necessary in terms of the proof students must present of their qualifications: *see discussion of Education Documentation below.*

### Language ability

Relevant language skills are necessary to succeed in a higher education programme in a third country. It is ideal if the student already possesses skills in the language of instruction at the time of application, whether English or, where relevant, the language of the scholarship country, depending on the courses offered. However, **language acquisition can be facilitated or reinforced by harnessing existing and new distance-learning opportunities at the pre-departure phase**, potentially facilitating access to the programme for a greater range of applicants (at a minimum, however, the student should have some basic language skills in the language of study at the time of application). If the student is to undertake language study prior to departure, then sufficient time (at least several months but this will vary by student and potentially by scholarship country) will need to be built-in between acceptance and departure to the scholarship country. It may also be possible to provide language training after arrival in the scholarship country to reach a standard required for studies, in which

42 EC, Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification, [2003] OJ, L 251; In Canada, the WUSC programme requires students to have no dependents as they must arrive alone. However in some cases young adults who have still been living with their parents and siblings are accepted in the programme and then find themselves far from all family members with few legal channels through which they can bring them to Canada. This distracts from their studies and can be difficult for local student WUSC chapter members to address.

43 Effective student counselling may also reduce the risk of these occurrences, see: WUSC Handbook, supra; "Refugee Support Services at Universities: Support in Every Situation", (n.d.), Study in Germany, DAAD, online: <[https://www.study-in.de/refugees/studying/refugee-support-services-at-universities\\_53743.php](https://www.study-in.de/refugees/studying/refugee-support-services-at-universities_53743.php)>.

case extra time will need to be factored into the post-arrival phase that aligns with the commencement of the semester. By contrast, if the student will be expected to begin study shortly after arriving in the host country, then a higher level of language ability must be shown.

### Meeting the specific needs of refugees

An important further consideration is that the opportunity to study in Europe can provide not only an education but also a **much-needed solution to specific challenges that refugee candidates for the programme may face in their country of asylum**. While recognising that academic qualification and perceived ability to complete the programme should be a primary consideration, scholarship programmes can play a truly transformative role for refugees in a number of ways, which should ideally be taken into account for eligibility and selection criteria. Some of the factors that can contribute to impactful results include assessing barriers to higher education in the country of asylum, prioritising refugees in socio-economically disadvantaged situations, or those with specific needs owing to disabilities, health or experience of violence or torture.<sup>44</sup> Eligibility or selection for scholarship programmes may also be informed by an identification of the risks that refugees face by continued stay in their country of asylum, such as, for example, challenges to their legal status or threats to their physical safety. This could involve the identification of certain eligible refugees from among those who have been identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement,<sup>45</sup> but for whom resettlement is not possible for a variety of reasons.

44 See: DAFI Policy Guidelines, (UNHCR, October 2009), online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/568bc43a6.pdf>>: While the DAFI programme has a different focus that the programme proposed in this study, elements of this document (such as the selection of DAFI scholars on pages 12 and 13) may be relevant for other scholarship providers. Updated DAFI guidelines will be available on UNHCR's website from mid-2018.

45 This figure is at 1.2 million for 2018, see: UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2018, *supra*. Refugees are identified for resettlement on the basis of their specific needs linked. For information on UNHCR's resettlement submission categories, see UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Chapter 6, online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf>>.

## VI. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

### Dissemination of call for applications

**UNHCR, IOM and NGO partners working in the field with refugee populations will, in many cases, be able to assist with the advertisement and dissemination of information on the scholarship programme.**<sup>46</sup> Schools or organisations offering programming to refugee students in a camp or urban setting may also be able to assist, as well as the host country department of education and/or higher education and refugee communities broadly.

The call for applications may be disseminated by text, social media, email, letter, flyer, poster and/or in person by UNHCR and partner staff where appropriate, and should be listed on any relevant websites, including those of the embassy and cultural institutes of the scholarship country, in a language that potential applicants can reasonably be expected to understand.

More targeted invitations to apply may be made, depending on the size and scope of the scholarship programme. For example, UNHCR, IOM and NGOs may be able to identify potential applicants who can be invited to apply. Staff in schools or programmes teaching refugee students may be able to assist in recommending specific students based on field of study, degree level, age, prior experience, language, etc.

It will be important that advertising and invitations to apply are done in a way which ensures that the information is spread geographically (not just to capital cities or camps, but more broadly to the whole refugee population), across socio-economic groups and in a protection-sensitive manner. Every effort should be made to ensure that all information is communicated in a timely, transparent, and inclusive manner, and that a diverse group of applicants is reached from nationality, religious, ethnic, gender (see discussion above under *Target group and programme framework*), and sexual orientation

46 These include organisations such as the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save the Children, and Oxfam.

and gender identity perspectives. Students with disabilities should be encouraged to apply as well, with a non-discrimination approach fundamental to ensuring that the programme is transparent and accessible to all. Expectations must also be managed to avoid possible tension among refugee communities or with humanitarian actors, over the limited places available.

### Pre-deadline communication of scholarship programme details

Prior to the scholarship application deadline, **a robust information package should be made available to assist applicants in making an informed decision** to apply, and to ensure applications will not be withdrawn on the basis of information revealed at a later stage. Comprehensive information materials about the core components of the programme and the application procedure should be made available to target groups. This should include a full explanation of the scholarship programme and process, measures to help manage the expectations of scholarship recipients, and full details on the protection implications of the scholarship programme. It may be advisable to make this available in the form of a webinar which is then posted for future reference.

Topics covered should include:

- ✓ The legal status of the scholarship holder in the country of scholarship, and the rights attached to this status;
- ✓ Clear information on scholarship coverage/amounts (travel, monthly living allowance, housing, health insurance, books);
- ✓ Clear information on whether return to the previous country of asylum will be possible, either to visit during the term of the scholarship or on a longer-term basis once the scholarship has been completed;
- ✓ The effect, if any, of the scholarship and study on the selected student's refugee status recognition granted by UNHCR or by the current country of asylum prior to departure;
- ✓ Details on which, if any, family members may accompany the scholarship student, under which visa and with which financial and other supports, and potential future family reunification options in the scholarship country;
- ✓ Details on legal status at the end of the period of study, access to further education programmes, visas for the period of seeking employment and/or work visas if the refugee is unable to return to their previous country of asylum or their country of origin;
- ✓ Information on access to asylum in the scholarship country;
- ✓ Details of the scholarship and academic programme, recognition of the programme in other countries or by other institutions, course of study and schedule, academic requirements and reasonable expectations for availability of academic support;
- ✓ Availability of language courses;
- ✓ Details on access to services for disabled applicants and/or family members;
- ✓ Details on documents required and alternative means of proving qualifications;
- ✓ Information about the visa application process (and support providers);
- ✓ Timeline for consideration of applications and reasonable expectations throughout the application and selection process;
- ✓ All of the above as relevant for any accompanying family members including schooling or childcare and language supports for children.

Later, when selected students accept the scholarship, it may be advisable to have them sign a document indicating they have read all of these conditions and understand these will be the terms of the scholarship.

## Application process

The application package to be submitted by an applicant might include:

- a standardised application form;
- a copy of passport or identity document;
- a high school diploma; Bachelor's or higher education diploma if applicable;
- a language proficiency certificate (for example such as IELTS or TOEFL for English or DELF/DALF for French, or a test developed specifically for the programme), if required;
- a cover letter explaining the student's interest in and qualification for the programme;
- a letter of recommendation;
- a curriculum vitae detailing education and any relevant work or volunteer experience;
- documentation related to the refugee's registration with UNHCR or to her or his protection status.

A **mechanism for electronic submission of applications, as well as in person or by post** (if applicable), should be made available. The scholarship country representation in the country of asylum or another partner might be designated for receiving applications. A transparent system to ensure submitted applications in paper copy are accurately recorded should be put in place, along with a system for confirming to all student applicants that their file has been received and is complete. Application data should be verified against the applicant's status as recorded by UNHCR at the earliest possibility and ideally before confirmation of receipt is sent to the applicant. It will also be important to respect data privacy standards and ensure the responsible handling of refugees' data.

It would be preferable for scholarship application timelines in a particular country of asylum to be coordinated, to allow applicants the opportunity to consider all scholarship opportunities from any range of providers contemporaneously. If not possible, clear selection criteria

and a transparent application and competition process will make it easier for students to make informed choices about their options. Opportunities for study at HEIs within the country of first asylum may also be available to refugees: if so, **careful thought should be given to the interplay between third-country and country of first asylum scholarship programmes.**

It is reported that international scholarship programmes sometimes "poach" students from host country scholarship application processes mid-way, undermining the integrity of other programmes. It may also be wise to create an explicit policy that students already benefiting from in-country scholarships are not eligible to apply for these third-country programmes.

## VII. SELECTION

A **variety of modalities can be considered for the initial selection process**, which will lead to providing a short-list of candidates to the HEI(s). This may include creating a selection committee consisting of representatives from participating HEIs, a representative of the scholarship country's national foreign scholarship organisation and/or accreditation organisation, and potentially a professional representative of an NGO dealing with refugee and asylum issues in the scholarship country. UNHCR may also be involved. Most or all of this process could take place in the scholarship country, which could minimize costly in-country operations in the country of first asylum (although see *Interviews*, below).

### Verification of academic qualifications

In the context of long-term displacement and the inability to return to countries of origin (or first countries of asylum), it can be very difficult or impossible for refugees to obtain all necessary academic documentation. Flexible and simplified **alternative methods for recording and – to the extent possible – verifying academic and extracurricular qualifications should be sought**, so that this process takes into account the situation of refugees. Documentation requirements for admission may be adapted to avoid placing refugees at risk through trying to obtain the relevant documents. This could include simplified application forms, acceptance of non-original academic certificates, or testing in lieu of certificates.

Many, if not all, European countries have established foreign accreditation centres and processes which can assist with the conversion of grades from HEIs or high schools in the country of origin or country of asylum into a form recognisable in the country of scholarship.<sup>47</sup> The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR), designed by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) and the UK's National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), is one example of other initiatives which may provide an informal but standardised mechanism for assessing and recording refugees' academic qualifications.<sup>48</sup> The EQPR process includes both the inspection and verification of any documentation the student is able to provide, as well as an interview to supplement and account for any missing paperwork.

## Interviews

**Interviews will be an important part of the selection process.** Interviews may be a part of the process of short-listing candidates to present to the potential HEI. They should ideally be conducted by at least two members of the selection committee (consistent with a variety of in-country application processes for programmes which require an interview). If applications are being made to particular HEIs, then it may make sense to include a representative of the HEI on the interview panel, or to have the HEI conduct the interview itself.

Depending on the level of the language of study required for scholarship eligibility, **interviews may be conducted either in the language of study or in the first language of the applicant**, as appropriate and when feasible (through the use of interpreters if required). This may be more important in some areas than others. For example, candidates in Science, Technology,

Engineering and Math (STEM) fields may be proficient in the technical terminology of their field in the language of proposed study but not in conversational language. Conducting interviews in applicants' first language might provide a better indication of the potential for success in the programme. Consideration should be given to any issues of cultural sensitivity relevant to the interview.

Ideally, **interviews should be conducted in person**, but interviews conducted through Internet video calling (e.g., Skype) – with members of the interview team located in the scholarship country and applicants in the country of first asylum – may also be possible.

## Creation of applicant short-list

**The selection committee will be responsible for providing a short-list of candidates**, which will then be forwarded to participating HEIs for final decisions. Criteria for short-listing may include:

- academic achievement, including minimum GPAs as required by HEIs (which may be interpreted generously for refugee applicants);
- statement of interest;
- academic and personal reference letters;
- language proficiency test score, as set by the selection committee;
- extra-curricular involvement, including contributions to communities both in the country of origin and in the country of asylum;
- interview assessment and scores.

As discussed above in the section on *Eligibility*, an important further consideration for selection committees is the potential for the applicant, if awarded a scholarship, to **access a much-needed solution to specific challenges in the country of asylum**.<sup>49</sup> These should ideally be included in a clear vulnerability or needs matrix which can inform the selection in a structured and transparent way.

47 Information on ENIC-NARIC networks is available at: <<http://www.enic-naric.net>>; See also: "Academic Recognition", (n.d.), Federal Ministry of Education & Research: Recognition in Germany (webpage), online: <[https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/academic\\_recognition.php](https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/academic_recognition.php)>; and "Recognition of Foreign Higher Education in Bulgaria", (n.d.), European Youth Portal (webpage), online: <[http://europa.eu/youth/bg/article/37/6604\\_en](http://europa.eu/youth/bg/article/37/6604_en)>.

48 "European Qualifications Passport for Refugees", (n.d.), Council of Europe (webpage), online: <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>>.

49 For an example of how academic qualification and need for a durable solution interplay in other scholarship programme, see: "Selection Criteria", (2017), United World Colleges (webpage), online: <<http://www.uwc.org/selectioncriteria>>.

## Final selection

**The final selection of students for the programme should be made by the HEI**, which must be satisfied that the student is sufficiently motivated, is suited for the particular course of study and meets the requirements of the intended programme. This will include a consideration of whether an applicant meets the normal minimum requirements of the programme and, if not, whether some flexibility can be shown to the applicant in terms of meeting those requirements. Where language training before study but after arrival in the scholarship country is not part of the programme, if the student has not attained the minimum required language proficiency score, the acceptance may be made conditional on such attainment by the start of the degree course.

## Transparency and communication

**The selection process should be a transparent and non-discriminatory one.** Applicants should be informed regularly throughout the process (or be able to access the information easily online or by mobile phone) of the status of their application, either through an updated website or through regular email or text communication. It should be considered whether students who are short-listed but not ultimately selected can be provided written feedback on the application (at least on request and depending on the size of the scholarship programme). This should include suggestions for improving their application with the aim of re-applying the following year. UNHCR has experience in counselling applicants in this area, in particular with long-standing scholarship programs implemented by UNHCR and other organisations in the refugee education sector<sup>50</sup>, which may guide the post-selection counselling process.

Selected applicants will need to be informed of their selection in a timely manner and provide their consent to depart on the programme on the basis of full transparency and disclosure of all the relevant information (see *Pre-deadline communication of scholarship programme details*).

<sup>50</sup> UNHCR's long-standing DAFI programme is perhaps the clearest example, see: "DAFI Programme", (n.d.), UNHCR (webpage), online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/dafi-scholarships.html>>.

## Security and health assessments

Prior to entering the scholarship country, **students will likely have to pass the security and pre-departure health assessments** normally required of resettled refugees. This will include a health assessment (as discussed below), which will note any ongoing medical conditions, treatment needs, and prescriptions to ensure continuity of care. However, an individual's health condition (within reason and provided it is not a threat to public health along the standards of the World Health Organization [WHO]) should not be grounds for discrimination or rejection from the programme.

## VIII: PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION AND COUNSELLING

After refugees have been selected and communicate their acceptance, a robust programme of pre-departure briefings and counselling for applicants is necessary for refugees to be as fully prepared as possible for their programme of study and residence in the new country.

**Briefings** to be held prior to departure could be covered by the ministry or visa office of the receiving country and participating HEIs. Experienced international organisations such as UNHCR, IOM<sup>51</sup>, or an outside contracted organisation may be able to support or deliver such briefings.<sup>52</sup> Ideally, there will be a representative from higher education – either from the scholarship country or, depending on the access of refugees to education in the country of asylum, perhaps someone from a university in that country. Briefings and counselling may take between two and ten days, and should be led with the participation of cross-cultural trainers. This is an important stage for expectation management and topics to be covered should include:

- the length of pre-study in the scholarship country and support programme available at that time, where relevant;

<sup>51</sup> IOM implements pre-departure orientation for 14 EU Member States and Associated States' resettlement programmes, and has developed specific curricula in close consultation with those states - similar programmes may be designed for the different scholarship countries and the needs of the scholarship students.

<sup>52</sup> WUSC, for example, has offered to collaborate with EU Member States on such briefings.

- procedural information on steps related to travel and arrival;
- the higher education system of the scholarship country, collection of credit points, etc.;
- accommodation information;
- content on culture and integration in the scholarship country;
- detailed information on the costs covered and financial and/or material support provided;
- community services available to the scholarship student upon arrival and instruction about health, transportation, banking, shopping, and other relevant services;
- health consultations (including psycho-social health), to include students providing details about ongoing health concerns and treatments that can be passed on to the relevant organisations in the scholarship country to ensure continuity of care.

**Other topics to be addressed may be more focused on the course of study and the applicant's role as a student.** These may be best addressed by a representative of one of the HEIs and include: student responsibilities and code of conduct; conditions under which a scholarship may be terminated by the scholarship provider; whether it is possible to change degree programmes or institutions during the scholarship period; details about travel to the scholarship country; contact information for the HEI and programme representatives; information about the specific HEI; and advice on any online or other study to be undertaken by the student prior to departure, whether related to the field of study or to language.<sup>53</sup>

## IX. ARRIVAL AND PREPARATION FOR STUDY

**The arrival in the scholarship country and the pre-study period are important and should be carefully coordinated:** they can set the stage for the success of the participant's studies and the period of stay in the

scholarship country. The need for acclimatization after the student arrives in the scholarship country and before beginning the formal study programme should not be underestimated – rushing into study may result in complications such as an inability to manage a full course-load at a later stage.

### Arrival

The student would ideally be met at the airport by a representative of the HEI and/or student organisation sponsoring the student. A representative of one of the partner organisations – IOM or a refugee-supporting organisation, for example – may also be present.<sup>54</sup> The person(s) meeting the student at the airport should be able to assist them in reaching their assigned housing (temporary or long-term) and give them basic initial guidance. It may be necessary to provide some financial assistance to the student immediately upon arrival in the scholarship country (and preferably also a small amount prior to departure in order to cover any unexpected expenses during travel).

### Introduction to campus

**The student group, HEI representative(s) or others designated by the lead organisation should be available as needed over the first weeks in order to assist with the initial settlement process.** If a student group assumes the role of supporting the new student on campus, responsibility should be shared across the group to ensure the continuity of this assistance. Which student group (or groups) is engaged may depend on whether the refugee student is a Bachelor's/first degree, diploma, or graduate student.<sup>55</sup> If the programme is being managed at a national level by a non-governmental organisation, a "buddy" at the host institution may be matched with the student at this point, as well as contact with the campus coordinator of the scholarship programme of the host HEI.

<sup>53</sup> Including opportunities through organisations such as the Open University (UK) and possibly online language study through the Erasmus+ OLS, if it can be made available outside of the EU, or similar, see: "OLS for Refugees", (n.d.), Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support (webpage), online: <<https://erasmusplusols.eu/ols4refugees/>>.

<sup>54</sup> IOM has access up to the gate and could therefore meet the student as she/he steps out of the plane. IOM can also assist with clearing immigration and customs procedures, which may help to alleviate stress.

<sup>55</sup> On some campuses there will be several different student groups providing support to refugee students, see for example: "International: General Guidance", (n.d.), Universitat-Wuerzburg (webpage), online: <<http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/en/international/studying-in-wuerzburg/options-for-refugees/offers-by-students/>>.



Even where students groups are heavily involved in the implementation of the scholarship programme, it is critical that from the outset the refugee student also has one university employee to whom they can go with any concerns, whether legal, academic, social or other. This person may be from an international student office, a student services department, or a specific faculty or department but should be able to refer the student to whatever service they require on or off campus, as well as acting as a liaison in the case of problems in the wider community.

## Language training

**Language training (sufficient in both length and quality) will be a critical aspect of the settlement process for many scholarship students.** Although students should have been chosen in part based on their language skills in the language of the scholarship country and/or English (depending on the primary language used at the HEI), it is anticipated that most will still need some support, especially with regard to academic language or subject-specific vocabulary, and some will need intensive training, particularly if the net has been cast fairly wide in terms of language ability during the application process. Many, if not all, HEIs will require that the student submit a certificate of proficiency in the language of instruction prior to the student beginning studies.<sup>56</sup>

The length of the period of pre-study in the scholarship country will depend on the amount of language study required and how much of that can be accessed while the student was still in the previous country of asylum. If intensive language study is to be undertaken in the scholarship country, a period of as long as three months may be necessary, and some programmes have even included a full year of language and preparatory as part of the scholarship.<sup>57</sup> A relatively short period of stay in the scholarship country before beginning the new course of study may be possible; however, too short a stay could place unreasonable demands on the student to

study efficiently and effectively while they are still finding their way around a new community and new educational institution. This should be carefully considered.

Students should be given tailored advice to ensure that they enter a language course at a sufficient level for the university course they wish to follow. Continued access to language support throughout the period of degree study (or at least during the first semester or first year) can help too. This may include support for skills such as writing essays in the language of study. If the study programme is taught in English then training in the official language of the scholarship country should also be offered during the study period: this will be particularly important for post-study employment purposes. Student volunteer programmes on campus may also provide extra language practice for scholarship students.<sup>58</sup>

## Auditing other university courses

In addition to language courses, offering scholarship students the opportunity to attend or **audit a course at a HEI in the scholarship country** (preferably the institution they will attend for their degree programme) may provide another important opportunity to begin to acclimatize to the university environment and expectations, while helping to strengthen language skills in the relevant discipline. There is a growing number of such programmes across Europe. As an example, the InclUUsion programme of Utrecht University in The Netherlands offers such opportunities, and a similar programme runs in a number of German universities, including the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.<sup>59</sup>

Other opportunities to follow courses at no cost may also be available to the student. For example, Vienna's Youth College programme for refugees, provides free

<sup>56</sup> For English-language programmes, for example, this is often IELTS, see: <<https://www.ielts.org>>; or TOEFL, see: <<https://www.iets.org/toefl>>.

<sup>57</sup> ERN+ Scoping Paper, supra.

<sup>58</sup> For example, universities in Germany offer free language courses for refugees, see: Dana Vioreanu, "How Are Universities in Europe Giving a Hand to Refugee Students?", (n.d.), MastersPortal, online: <<https://www.mastersportal.eu/articles/1940/how-are-universities-in-europe-giving-a-hand-to-refugee-students.html>> ["Giving a Hand to Refugee Students"].

<sup>59</sup> "InclUUsion", (n.d.), Utrecht University (webpage), online: <<https://www.uu.nl/en/education/inclusion>> ["InclUUsion"]; "Refugees Welcome", (n.d.), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (webpage), online: <<https://www.international.hu-berlin.de/en/news/refugees-welcome>>.

courses to refugees on a number of subjects in addition to an opportunity for refugees to access integration supports.<sup>60</sup>

## Health and psycho-social care

**Access to health care and psycho-social care, including trauma professionals, for those that may require it, will be critical both upon arrival and throughout the programme.** This may be provided on campus by the HEI, or it may be necessary to arrange for this support in the wider community. Professional NGO networks can play a role here, at a minimum in signposting services.

## Connecting to student groups

Depending on the organisational structure of the scholarship programme, a student group on campus and/or staff or volunteers from a university's international student centre can provide support and advice as needed as well as simple social interaction, all of which will be key. In this regard, there are instructive models in a variety of EU Member State HEIs.<sup>61</sup>

## Connecting to other refugee students and members of the diaspora

**Being connected to other refugee scholarship holders, as well as other members of the diaspora community, may also be a helpful support.** Jusoor holds regular national "mentorship meetings" for their scholarship holders.<sup>62</sup> These allow scholarship students to get to know others in similar circumstances and to seek guidance from scholarship programme organizers as needed. Accompanying family members should be included in such events.

60 L. Taylor, "City of Vienna spurs far-right politics to give refugees an education", (28 March 2018), Thomson Reuters Foundation News (webpage), online: <<https://news.trust.org/item/20180328000253-07fob/>>.

61 "InclUUsion", *ibid*; see also: "Giving a Hand to Refugee Students", *supra*; and "Supporting Refugees at Universities", (n.d.) European Resettlement Network (webpage), online: <<http://www.resettlement.eu/page/supporting-refugees-universities>>.

62 Jusoor is a non-profit organisation. Through its scholarship programme, it enables Syrian youth to continue academic study and attain an education. Jusoor, online: <<https://jusoorsyria.com/programs/jusoor-scholarship-program>>.

## X. LIVING COSTS

A refugee scholarship programme should include **sufficient funding to cover the full costs of the scholarship** from pre-departure counselling and language training, through to travel, the direct and indirect study costs, as well as costs of living during the full study period. These will include:

- tuition and registration fees;
- school supplies and necessary equipment, such as computers;
- accommodation;
- household costs (food and non-food items);
- transportation;
- research and internship costs;
- medical fees; and
- monthly subsistence allowance.

A one off 'relocation' grant or monthly grant for clothing, linen, etc. may also be provided. Ensuring an adequate scholarship grant is fundamental in guaranteeing that the wellbeing and security of scholarship holders is maintained. Protecting against hardship or destitution, possibly through provisions for a contingency allocation in the event of unforeseen costs, is not only a central part of a scholarship programme, but also underpins the integrity of the programme and its ability to address the needs of refugee students in a comprehensive way.

## XI. ACCOMMODATION

A higher education scholarship programme for refugees should make provision for **safe and affordable housing**. Who provides it will likely depend on each situation – if the HEI itself has student housing available, this may be a preferred option, at least for single students. A municipality may also be able to provide housing through its stock of social housing allocated for refugees; however, scholarship beneficiaries may not be eligible for such housing support as they may not be granted refugee status upon arrival. Commercial landlords may be approached to provide accommodation solutions, for example, through rent-free schemes or rent at a reduced rate.

**If possible, students should be able to access this housing upon arrival to minimise disruption and allow a smoother process of settlement.**

Students would ideally be permitted choice among housing options, but this may not always be feasible. Accommodation should be located within reasonable proximity to the HEI and amenities, including public transit and access to grocery shopping. Ideally, a variety of housing options should be available to suit both single students and those arriving with spouse and/or children, although this will depend on the resources available in European countries where housing shortages are posing challenges for States. Where possible, and in particular for single scholarship students, housing which encourages interaction with other students or members of the community should be promoted as a way of developing social ties, fostering support networks and building social capital. Due consideration should be given to providing housing which is appropriate in light of cultural and religious norms, and any physical disabilities that a student may have.

**If accommodation cannot be provided directly to scholarship students upon arrival, then a housing allowance or voucher could be provided.** Support for searching for affordable and appropriate housing could be provided by the student group, the international student office or the scholarship support coordinator. In this case, temporary housing should be arranged prior to arrival for a sufficient period to allow the student to secure longer-term accommodation.

It may be advisable for a scholarship programme to continue to provide support for housing for a period following the completion of their studies (unless considered unnecessary due to the student finding employment or another solution within the period). The length of this period might correspond to the length of time the student visa extends past the completion of their studies; if accommodation is not provided during this time, it will make it much more difficult for students to engage in a fulsome search for employment related to their studies given the economic pressures they may face.

## XI. HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY AND STUDY

Support established for scholarship students upon their arrival in the scholarship country should continue, as much as possible, once students begins the formal study programme. There are also additional considerations at this point to ensure a successful programme of study.

### Awareness-raising and training for faculty and staff

At the beginning of each academic year, **professors and staff in programmes hosting scholarship students should be encouraged (at least) to complete a training/sensitivity course** on refugee-related issues, including refugee protection and working with vulnerable students. This may be offered by the HEI, one of the national coordinating organisations, UNHCR or IOM.<sup>63</sup> Student groups participating in the scholarship programme may also be invited to participate in this or a parallel training course.

### Tuition

**Tuition arrangements will vary between programmes.** For example, tuition may be waived by the HEI; paid by the relevant ministry/department; paid out of a scholarship fund managed by a non-governmental organisation or student group; or other such approaches. Neither the scholarship student nor any members of a student group supporting the student should have to cover any such expenses related to tuition.

### Flexibility in study programme

**Flexibility should be shown in crafting the study programme.** Institutions should, if possible, offer reduced course loads to students, in particular in the first year, as this may ease the burden during the time of transition and settlement. In the event of challenges with their studies, or medical or mental health difficulties

<sup>63</sup> At a minimum this should include professors who will be supervising students' work in graduate-level study, but ideally undergraduate level faculty would participate as well. IOM offers such training for universities in Italy and Spain, in partnership with WUSC.

that negatively affect the student's academic work, every effort should be made to keep the student in the programme with the required support in place (including ongoing access to psycho-social and mental health care). If it is considered necessary for the student to take a break from their studies for documented health reasons, there should be a mechanism through which the student may make such a request (for a reasonable period), with living expenses and rent continuing to be paid. While changes to the study programme or transfers between HEIs should be minimized, there should be a policy in place outlining when requests for such changes might be considered.<sup>64</sup>

## XII. LABOUR-MARKET ENTRY AND EXTENDED STAY

**Support should be in place (ideally well before the completion of studies) to aid students' transition to the next phase if they are to remain** in the scholarship country for protection-related or other reasons, such as to seek employment. Such support should assist them in securing their legal stay through finding work, job placements, internships, further study or other opportunities. WUSC reports that two-thirds of students in the SRP secure employment in their first year in Canada, and 66 percent of all former SRP students are currently employed (this may be aided by the fact that in the Canadian context students are permanent residents which may be more attractive to employers than those with student visas or short-term work visas).<sup>65</sup>

As discussed above, the student's legal stay in the scholarship country should include - either as a part

of the original student visa or as an easily accessible 'add-on' - a period during which employment, internships, business opportunities and/or further study may be sought. While some EU Member States, such as the Slovak Republic, Lithuania and Latvia, do not allow for legal stay in the country following completion of studies, many Member States allow for at least six months following the completion of studies for students to find employment opportunities, with Germany allowing for up to eighteen months.<sup>66</sup> Ideally the scholarship country would provide a potential stay of at least eighteen months for the proposed programme.

**Services should be made available to support scholarship students in accessing the labour market.** This could include career advice, guidance in crafting a CV, and assistance with the actual job search process, and may begin quite early in the study period. Further, students should be encouraged to take up internships or other volunteering opportunities for limited hours in the week during their studies to help to gain experience and build professional networks.

In at least some EU Member States, programmes offering career and labour market entry assistance for refugees already exist. For example in France, organisations such as le Secours catholique, Singa, Baam, Revivre, le Secours populaire, Action emploi réfugiés, and France Terre d'asile<sup>67</sup> provide such services to refugees with status within the country and could presumably be enlisted, with additional funding if necessary, to work with scholarship students as well. In Germany, employment search support for refugees include the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) and its Early Intervention programme.<sup>68</sup> Where such support

64 See also section above, *Changes in study or family status: impact on visa validity* for the visa implications of such an interruption of study. Effective counselling before or following acceptance of the scholarship and prior to registering in a degree course in the scholarship country may help to minimize the number of these requests.

65 SRP Results, (WUSC, 2017), on file with author.

66 Immigration of International Students to the EU: European Migration Network Study 2012, (European Commission, 2012) at Annex 4, online: <[http://www.emn.lv/wp-content/uploads/Immigration\\_of\\_International\\_Students\\_to\\_the\\_EU\\_SR\\_11April2013\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.emn.lv/wp-content/uploads/Immigration_of_International_Students_to_the_EU_SR_11April2013_FINAL.pdf)>; As mentioned earlier in this study, the EU "Students and Researchers Directive" allows for nine months, see: EU Directive 2016, supra.

67 Avi Davis, "How to Look for a Job in France", (15 May 2017), InfoMigrants (webpage), online: <<http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/2605/how-to-look-for-a-job-in-france>>.

68 "Jeder Mensch hat Potenzial – Arbeitsmarktintegration von Asylbewerberinnen und Asylbewerbern (Early Intervention)", (2014-2015), Germany Federal Employment Agency, online: <<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1208&langId=en&refugeeId=41>>.

does not already exist, or where it cannot be extended to students of scholarship programmes, these initiatives may provide inspiration for what can be conceived. There may be a role for private sector mentoring here too.<sup>69</sup>

The availability of employment opportunities for scholarship students completing their academic programmes will also be enriched by the **cooperation of private sector employers**. As outlined in a recent OECD/ UNHCR report on the challenges for employers in hiring refugees, there are a number of barriers to employers hiring refugees, some of which may be lessened by government and civil society programmes designed to bring potential employers and refugees together.<sup>70</sup>

It may even be worth pursuing a commitment by a number of businesses and/or public sector employers to provide positions for scholarship students for a prescribed period following graduation.<sup>71</sup>

### XIII. A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

This section has presented an overview of the principal programme elements, stakeholders, funding considerations and refugee protection safeguards to inform the establishment of a national student scholarship programme in a European country as a complementary pathway to solutions for refugees, at least as a pilot. It is intended to provide a broad framework upon which interested stakeholders can build. Further consideration and development of this framework will be required to move towards a pilot programme.

The following section of this paper briefly considers how the principle programme elements might be relevant in one State, The Netherlands, before concluding with some recommendations for stakeholders in any European country on practical first steps to implement a programme of this kind as well as suggestions for a more modest scholarship programme launch in the event that such an involved programme is not possible at the outset.

69 See, for example: Milica Petrovic, "Mentoring Practices in Europe and North America: Strategies for Improving Immigrants' Employment Outcomes", (January 2015), King Baudouin Foundation, at 22-25, online: <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/KBF-Mentoring%20Practices-FINAL.pdf>>, citing private-sector mentoring initiatives including: Joblinge, a German programme developed by Boston Consulting Group and Eberhard von Kuenheim Foundation of BMW AG; Steps Ahead Mentoring, a UK initiative developed by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development; the Dutch Dream Foundation's Dare to Have a Dream programme; and a mentoring programme for newly arrived refugees in Sweden, developed by the Swedish Engineers Association; see also: "ISS Netherlands Joins Partnership to Strengthen the Integration and Employment of Refugees", (12 December 2016), ISS, online: <<https://www.issworld.com/press/news/2016/12/12/iss-netherlands-joins-partnership-to-strengthen-the-integration-and-employment-of-refugees>>.

70 OECD & UNHCR, "Hiring Refugees – What are the Opportunities and Challenges for Employers?", (Migration Policy Debates, No 10, September 2016), online: <<https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debates-10.pdf>>.

71 In Canada, the Business Development Bank of Canada offers internships for refugees, see: "BDC Internships: Breaking Down Barriers for Refugee Employment", (20 June 2017), Hire Immigrants, online: <<http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/success-stories/bdc-refugee-internship-program/>>; in Guelph, Ontario, Canada, Jim Estill of Danby, an appliance company, sponsored 50 Syrian refugee families which included employment opportunities with his company, see: "Jim Estill", (n.d.), Danby (webpage), online: <<https://www.danby.com/jim-estill/>>; and Starbucks has committed to hiring 10,000 refugees by 2022, see: "Starbucks makes Global Commitment to Hire 10,000 Refugees by 2022", (n.d.), Starbucks (webpage), online: <<https://www.starbucks.com/responsibility/community/refugee-hiring>>.

## E. Case Study: The Netherlands

The Netherlands has many years of experience welcoming refugees for resettlement, as well as a long history of refugee student assistance through, for example, the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF),<sup>72</sup> which has provided support to in-country refugee students since 1948 along with partner universities. For over 60 years, thousands of Dutch students from universities across The Netherlands have shown their solidarity with refugee students, acting as volunteer “buddies” for refugee students and even contributing a token annual amount to UAF to support refugee education.<sup>73</sup> NUFFIC, the country’s organisation for international education, also has extensive expertise in promoting and managing programmes of study in The Netherlands for overseas students, and in undertaking the selection of students for such programmes, including the verification of qualifications.

In addition, a number of organisations in The Netherlands, some of which are mentioned below, are undertaking innovative programme development for refugees, including on HEI campuses, and this helps to create an environment which may be conducive to a national refugee student scholarship pilot programme whereby refugees are admitted to The Netherlands from outside the country. On this basis, and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, The Netherlands is considered to have the potential to explore the establishment of a student scholarship programme for refugees.

This portion of the study concludes that while not all elements and partners may yet be in place in The Netherlands, there are signs that with some further advocacy, design and organisation, a successful pilot could be possible, if the government and relevant actors

would be prepared to embark upon an initial exploration of the potential. Further, at least some potential partner organisations show enthusiasm for such a pilot programme, which may be further explored by relevant stakeholders on the basis of the reflections included in this study. It is important to note that no assumptions or expectations are being made on any of those identified in the following paragraphs. The study reflects potential stakeholders based on the information available, without precluding any other relevant stakeholders nor making assumptions on the willingness, capacity and resources of those identified to undertake a role. The study is a point of departure for further discussions about the potential for a programme as described in the subsequent paragraphs.

### PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

In light of the above, it is recommended that a pilot programme in The Netherlands remains relatively small in the first iteration, similar to the Japanese and German models.<sup>74</sup> As recommended above, a commitment to three entry years is suggested, ideally with several Dutch universities participating, and the programme open to students from three to four countries of first asylum.

A number of Dutch universities, including Utrecht University, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Wageningen University have developed important experience in providing services to refugees, which may serve as inspiration for establishing a pilot programme at any institution. HEIs that would be involved could ideally be geographically situated in various regions across The Netherlands, in a mix of larger and smaller urban centres, and represent a diversity of educational institution-types, from research to technical.

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72 “Foundation for Refugee Students UAF”, (n.d.), *UAF* (webpage), online: <<https://www.uaf.nl/home/english>>.

73 The organisation’s major sources of financial support are the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Postcode Loterij, and private donations from 26,000 individuals or groups. The modest student contributions, as well as student volunteerism, however, show the willingness of Dutch students to support refugees in higher education.

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74 ERN+ Scoping Paper, *supra*.

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION

In The Netherlands, it is not obvious where the organisational centre of a higher education scholarship programme for refugees should lie. It is not immediately apparent that one of the relevant ministries would be in a position to coordinate such a programme. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs previously collaborated with the Dutch NGO SPARK<sup>75</sup> in 2013 on a pilot programme to provide scholarships in The Netherlands for approximately 20 Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon. It is not known if the Ministry would be interested to run such a programme again in the near future. In any case, consultation and coordination with all the relevant ministries (Justice and Security; Foreign Affairs; Education, Culture and Science; as well as Social Affairs and Employment) would be required for a successful programme in The Netherlands.

Given its expertise and experience, NUFFIC could certainly have a role, as a minimum, in the selection process or validation of education qualifications (see below). Further, NUFFIC has been managing scholarship programmes for international students for more than 60 years.<sup>76</sup> NUFFIC's broad experience of scholarship management and collaboration with government, HEIs and applicants is highly relevant and makes the organisation a likely candidate to play a significant role in a programme. In addition, and with particular emphasis on its refugee expertise, the UAF may be well-placed to undertake an organisational or supportive role if it is provided the required capacity and resources to do so. The UAF also has operational experience with the Scholars at Risk (SAR) network and SAR programmes at a number of Dutch HEIs. It can be assumed that a significant operational grant would have to be made to the UAF in order to have them undertake this role. In light of these two organisations' expertise, a collaboration between NUFFIC and UAF might be considered.

75 SPARK is primarily focussed on the creation of study and scholarship opportunities within the MENA region, rather than the promotion of overseas scholarships, see: *Spark Online, supra*.

76 The range of scholarships managed by NUFFIC can be seen on the NUFFIC website. NUFFIC (webpage), online: <<https://www.nuffic.nl/en/scholarships>>.

The VSNU (Vereniging van Universiteiten), or Association of Universities of The Netherlands<sup>77</sup> has been involved with the previously active Refugees in Higher Education Task Force,<sup>78</sup> a collection of organisations (many already listed above) working on refugee-related issues, including improved language training for refugees. As such, they could provide a forum for exchange or otherwise support the programme through representing Dutch HEIs and/or channelling important information.

## FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND PROGRAMME SUPPORTS

Funding has been identified as the most significant barrier to the viability of a programme in The Netherlands. More specifically, given that a number of key organisations have shown an interest in principle, they also indicate that they would require extra funding/staffing to participate in such an initiative. The central and/or regional government is the primary funder of scholarship programmes in some countries.<sup>79</sup> It may be necessary to secure a government financial commitment for both the core operating budget as well as some contributions towards tuition and living expenses for scholarship students, at least in the start-up years and for the majority of the scholarships. Moreover, opportunities for project-based funding may be available for parts of the programme through various funding instruments of the European Union, including, for example, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund or Erasmus+.

Some Dutch municipalities may consider making in-kind contributions, including accommodation and introductions, if desired, to refugees and other newcomers. The Municipality of Utrecht is providing in-kind support for the InclUusion programme being run at Utrecht University, for example.<sup>80</sup> Housing may also be available through

77 *Association of Universities (vsnu)* (webpage), online: <<http://www.vsnunl.nl/>>.

78 "Refugees", (11 March 2016), *Association of Universities (vsnu)* (webpage), online: <[http://www.vsnunl.nl/en\\_GB/refugees.html](http://www.vsnunl.nl/en_GB/refugees.html)> ["vsnu Refugees"].

79 "Catalan Scholarship for Refugees - Deadline 14 December 2017", (27 November 2017), UNHCR: *Refugees - Lebanon* (news release), online: <<https://www.refugees-lebanon.org/en/news/194/catalan-scholarship-for-refugees-deadline-14-december-2017>>.

80 "Information for Refugees and Other Newcomers in Utrecht", (n.d.), *City of Utrecht* (webpage), online: <<https://www.utrecht.nl/city-of-utrecht/living/information-for-refugees/>>.

the municipality. However, there is a serious shortage of social housing generally in The Netherlands, and only a limited amount of social housing spaces available in a given municipality, so the needs of scholarship students must be balanced with those of asylum-seekers, those already granted asylum, and Dutch nationals eligible for social housing.

In terms of student financial contributions, more work is needed to fully assess the range of potentially suitable models. As noted, in Canada, some student groups have held referendums on the inclusion of a levy to support the sponsorship of a/several refugee student(s). It appears that such referendums are not common in The Netherlands. According to the ISO (Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg), the country's largest student organisation, there is not much precedent for this kind of approach in The Netherlands, and a levy imposed from above by the HEI/Ministry may not be seen favourably. Further consultation with student organisations and/or training sessions may be considered, however, to further familiarize these groups with the idea of supporting refugee students in a scholarship programme of the sort envisaged here.

Other funding may be provided by other parties in The Netherlands. For example, private individuals with links to the programme could be called upon to offer a room to scholarship students, at least for the first months following their arrival. This would be both a financial contribution and a means of encouraging language development and social inclusion.

Private businesses may also provide funding. These options may be a step too far for an initial, simplified scholarship programme, but may be developed over time as the programme matures. As an example, the Nationale Postcode Loterij donates €900,000 to UAF every year to support the organisation.<sup>81</sup> In 2016, UAF received a one-off contribution of €1.5 million from the Postcode Loterij for its Refugees@Campus programme.<sup>82</sup>

## PROTECTION, VISAS AND LEGAL STATUS

The Immigration and Naturalisation Service of the Ministry for Justice and Security is responsible for the admission of third-country nationals to The Netherlands, including for the purpose of study.<sup>83</sup> The approval rate of applications for student visas to The Netherlands is very high.<sup>84</sup> However, as already discussed in this paper, flexibility may be required with regard to applicants' ability to fulfil the standard conditions for issue of a student visa, and the need or value of creating a special category for the purposes of the programme could be considered. Careful assessment and good coordination would be required to ensure that visas would effectively be granted to refugees selected for the scholarship programme. Since foreign students are encouraged to seek work in The Netherlands following the completion of their studies, there should be no concern in practice about having to satisfy a visa officer of the intent to return. This may help to make The Netherlands an ideal focus for a pilot programme. At EUR 317, the Dutch student visa is among the most expensive in Europe. However, this is normally applied for by a host institution, so could perhaps simply be rolled into the financial assistance provided by the HEI.<sup>85</sup>

There are no formal restrictions on student visa-holders applying for asylum in The Netherlands; therefore, this process is available to all students as a safeguard. As mentioned earlier in this study, it is important that State authorities recognise that participation in the scholarship scheme should not negatively impact upon a possible asylum claim, and no credibility inference should be made from the fact that a scholarship student does not make a claim immediately upon arrival in The Netherlands. An assessment of this critical consideration would be required in The Netherlands as in any other country to ensure an effective right to seek asylum in line with international law.

81 See: "900,000 from the National Postcode Lottery for Refugee Students", (16 February 2018), UAF (webpage), online: <<https://www.uaf.nl/nieuws/artmid/3887/articleid/257/%E2%82%AC900000-van-nationale-postcode-loterij-voor-vluchtelingstudenten>>.

82 "Refugees@Campus: Het UAF Studentmentoringproject", UAF (webpage), online: <<https://studentmentoring.uaf.nl/over>>.

83 "Study", *Immigration and Naturalisation Service, Ministry of Justice and Security* (webpage), online: <<https://ind.nl/en/study>>.

84 99 per cent of applicants are approved, according to interviews for this study with Dutch authorities

85 "International students and part-time jobs", (n.d.), NUFFIC (webpage), online: <<https://www.studyinholland.nl/documentation/international-students-and-part-time-jobs.pdf>>.



## APPLICATION PROCESS AND SELECTION

There are (hitherto informal) indications that several Dutch organisations may be in a position to be involved with the selection of students for participation in a pilot programme. As mentioned previously, the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service is the competent authority for admission to The Netherlands, and, in the case of resettlement, is advised by COA on integration and the Dutch Foreign Police on security. In terms of the assessment of applications for scholarships to be approved by the authorities for admission, participating universities and NUFFIC could be approached to further discuss the potential for playing a role in elements of the selection of students applying for higher education scholarships under this programme, with regard to academic suitability for the programme. UNHCR may also be able to assist, for instance in terms of confirming identity, family status information and in providing technical advice on specific protection needs related to the higher education of refugees.

## PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION AND COUNSELLING

COA's expertise could be crucial as they are the provider of pre-departure cultural orientation briefings for refugees resettled to The Netherlands. IOM may also be willing to contribute to a pilot programme, funding permitting, in light of their extensive experience in pre-departure training and counselling of refugees selected for resettlement to other countries. Both of these organisations would be in a position to provide training that is tailored to entry into Dutch society. Basic Dutch language training should be provided; however, students should also be assessed for, and assisted with, English language proficiency as most courses students enter at Dutch HEIs will be conducted in English.

## ARRIVAL, PREPARATION FOR STUDY AND INTEGRATION

In terms of settlement support, UAF's student "buddy" programme or a similar model may be able to play a role; at present, it matches refugee students already in The

Netherlands with established Dutch students. This could perhaps be extended to matching students on campuses with newly arrived scholarship recipients. However, it may also be preferable to have not just a "buddy" but a full support group of students available on campus (starting with meeting the scholarship student at the airport). Both the UAF and ISO have important expertise in mobilizing students on campus, and could perhaps be called upon (with sufficient funding and support) to assist in connecting to student groups and building the necessary support.

The Dutch Refugees in Higher Education Task Force or its members may be in a position to provide best practice on university preparation for refugee students based on data gathered from universities across The Netherlands.<sup>86</sup> The European University Association (EUA) "Refugees Welcome" website also includes refugee-supporting initiatives at Dutch universities, which may be approached either to participate in a pilot programme or at least provide ideas for the types of support programmes university communities participating in a higher education scholarship pilot programme may wish to explore.<sup>87</sup>

Utrecht University's InClUusion programme provides study opportunities to refugees in The Netherlands, including the opportunity to experience university study before beginning formally. This small programme is a model which may be replicable across other Dutch universities and colleges (for example, it is beginning replicated at the University of Wageningen and Eindhoven University of Technology).<sup>88</sup> While InClUusion is currently offered only to asylum-seekers and some refugees already in The Netherlands, there may be scope for the programme to accommodate refugee students admitted to The Netherlands within the framework of a programme as described in this paper, or for the lessons

<sup>86</sup> "vsnu Refugees", *supra*.

<sup>87</sup> "Refugees Welcome Map", (n.d.), *Refugees Welcome* (webpage), online: <<http://refugeeswelcomemap.eua.be/Editor/Visualizer/Index/34>>.

<sup>88</sup> *A Next Step to a Worthwhile Future for Refugee Students*, (Wageningen University & Research, n.d.), online: <[https://www.wur.nl/upload\\_mm/2/9/b/9e5d058e-a30d-44b2-add2-624b77df7e40\\_Flyer\\_WURth-while\\_2017.pdf](https://www.wur.nl/upload_mm/2/9/b/9e5d058e-a30d-44b2-add2-624b77df7e40_Flyer_WURth-while_2017.pdf)>; TUenable (Eindhoven University of Technology), online: <<https://educationguide.tue.nl/studying/studying-with-special-needs/tue-enable/>>.

learned from the programme to be applied to a bespoke or broader new initiative.<sup>89</sup>

There are various forms of Dutch language training in the Netherlands available both to resettled refugees with their language grant, and to refugees granted status through the in-country asylum process. These training programmes may be in a position to offer their services to arriving scholarship students as well, as it would be critical for students to have a good command of Dutch to ease integration during studies and maximise employment opportunities upon graduation. It will be important that students receive accurate information as part of the pre-departure briefing about the courses most appropriate for preparing them for their course of study. In many cases, students would be entering English language programmes and therefore would also require access to English language study if their skills are not high enough.

## ACCOMMODATION

Some Dutch universities provide (limited) accommodation for rent by students, including international students.<sup>90</sup> Municipalities also may be in a position to provide housing, which may take one of several forms, including single-person accommodation, shared housing, and family accommodation.<sup>91</sup> There are interesting models of refugee students living in housing in which they are integrated with Dutch nationals in a municipality, which can be helpful to overall cultural integration. Both Utrecht and Amsterdam have such housing available.<sup>92</sup>

89 The timeline for the InclUusion project is in any case currently set until 2020.

90 See for example: "Before you arrive", (n.d.), *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (webpage), online: <<http://masters.vu.nl/en/international/before-you-arrive/index.aspx>>.

91 "A Place to Live", (n.d.), *Gemeente Amsterdam* (webpage), online: <<https://www.amsterdam.nl/bestuur-organisatie/volg-beleid/vluchtelingen/information-for/place-to-live/>> ["A Place to Live"].

92 See for example: Letty Reimerink, "In this Amsterdam Housing Project, Dutch Youth and Refugees Live Together - and Run the Place", (8 December 2016), *Citiscopes*, online: <<http://citiscopes.org/story/2016/amsterdam-housing-project-dutch-youth-and-refugees-live-together-and-run-place>>; and "A Place to Live", *ibid*; Another model is used by the City of Refuge project in Amsterdam, in which the foundation maintains a house earmarked specifically for the recipient of its fellowship each year, see: "Vluchtstad", (n.d.), *Letterenfonds* (webpage), online: <<http://www.letterenfonds.nl/nl/amsterdam-vluchtstad>>.

## HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY AND STUDY

The structure of tuition for a programme in the Netherlands will need to be established, and may take cues from the tuition structure for in-country refugee students. In most cases, refugee students in The Netherlands rely on the same funding possibilities as Dutch citizens, namely student loans.<sup>93</sup> In exceptional cases where no other funding sources are available, tuition is paid to universities by UAF, which receives government funding as well as other donations (including from HEIs and HEI faculty). For scholarships funded by the government or other external sources, this may be an appropriate model; in other cases where the HEI itself is providing funding, it could be possible to explore whether fees can be waived or significantly reduced by the institution or costs covered in another way.

UAF, COA and/or other refugee-assisting organisations may continue to be engaged with scholarship students after students have begun their study, and allow students access to their programming and services as their studies continue.

## LABOUR-MARKET ENTRY AND EXTENDED STAY

A student visa in The Netherlands is currently valid for three months following the completion of studies. In addition, The Netherlands has a visa available to students following graduation to allow them to seek employment in the country: the *zoekjaar* or Orientation Year for Highly Educated Applicants.<sup>94</sup> It is important to note that the student normally does not have access to most social assistance during this year; it may be worth considering if an exception can be made to this restriction for refugee students under the proposed programme. If not, then funding will need to be made available to students

93 For information on eligibility for individual student finance loans, see: "Student finance", Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, online: <<https://duo.nl/particulier/student-finance/index.jsp>>.

94 "Frequently Asked Questions: Orientation Year Highly Educated Persons", (23 November 2017), *Immigration and Naturalization Service: Ministry of Justice & Security* (webpage), online: <[https://ind.nl/en/documents/faq\\_orientation\\_year\\_highly\\_educated\\_persons.pdf](https://ind.nl/en/documents/faq_orientation_year_highly_educated_persons.pdf)>.

as a safety net to support them until they find sufficient paid employment during the year. At a minimum, it should be explored whether the cost of the Orientation Year visa can be waived or included in the scholarship funds – at EUR 641, it would otherwise be prohibitive for many scholarship participants. The visa is not renewable, so normally students must find employment within the one year window and have their employer apply for a work visa for them in order to continue their stay in The Netherlands. Partnerships with private sector companies active in refugee employment could be sought in order to explore possibilities for such companies to consider the profiles of programme graduates with a view to welcoming them as employees into their organisation.

In terms of labour market entry, a number of organisations in The Netherlands already provide support to refugees in their job market entry preparation and networking. These include: Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland,<sup>95</sup> CSR Partnership Van Ede en Partners,<sup>96</sup> Refugees Start Force,<sup>97</sup> and the “VOORwerk” programme, a collaboration of COA, UAF and IOM.<sup>98</sup> While these services generally support refugees already in The Netherlands, their programmes may be expanded to support scholarship students arriving on a special programme.

## SUMMARY

Sufficient services and support, and to a large degree legal immigration frameworks, exist in The Netherlands to make the creation of a pilot national scholarship programme for refugees a possibility. However, what is required is a commitment to coordination and funding of such a programme. The process of exploration for a pilot programme may take some time, but stakeholders could benefit from engaging in preliminary discussions to explore the options in The Netherlands, to assess

how best practices from Dutch resettlement experience might be applied, and to further consider the modalities of a possible programme on the basis of this study.

One possible next step could be to propose a pilot programme which could benefit from government funding in the first instance, including financial assistance to embed a programme coordinator in an organisation such as a government ministry or UAF. Likewise, it may be that one HEI is prepared to run a trial scholarship programme as an example for a wider scholarship programme, involving more HEIs, which may follow. While less than this study aspires to, such a first step would still be a significant development and is to be encouraged. In any case, excellent communication and collaboration between potential stakeholders will be the first step. Some previous scholarship programmes in Europe have developed thanks to the initiative of a small group of individuals, who were able to galvanise interest and support, and foster debate on where to begin exploring a possible pilot.

95 “Work and Integration: Read How We Accompany Refugees”, (n.d.), *VluchtelingenWerk Nederland* (webpage), online: <<https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/wat-wij-doen/begeleiding-bij-werk-integratie>>.

96 “The Stories of Liana, Atefeh and Hassan”, (n.d.), *Van Ede & Partners* (webpage), online: <<https://www.vanede.nl/de-verhalen-van-liana-atefeh-en-hassan/>>.

97 *Refugee Start Force* (webpage), online: <<https://refugeestartforce.eu/>>.

98 *VOORwerk* (webpage), online: <<http://www.iom-nederland.nl/en/integratie/voorwerk>>.

## F. Study conclusion and recommendations

Achieving solutions to refugees' displacement is an urgent need, increasingly understood to be the shared responsibility of many stakeholders including HEIs, governments, civil society, the private sector, and refugee communities themselves. The need to secure increased educational opportunities for refugees in protracted situations is equally pressing: higher education increases professional opportunities for the student, and generally improves the socio-economic standing of the student and her/his family.

While some organisations and governments focus on providing higher education opportunities for refugees within the country or region of first asylum, providing the possibility for some students to study outside their country of asylum, for example in Europe, is also an important piece of the protection framework. Such a programme helps to increase the total number of higher education study spaces available to refugees internationally, but also provides a unique set of benefits: offering spaces for refugee students to study at European universities, and potentially to remain in a European State in the long term, sends an important message of solidarity with countries of first asylum and their educational institutions. It further provides an opportunity for refugees whose particular situation might make studying in a HEI in their country of asylum impossible or particularly challenging, or whose specific needs and vulnerabilities would be better addressed by finding a secure solution in a third country that carves out a pathway towards the attainment of a durable solution to their forced displacement

in the long-term. Lastly, it provides an important opportunity for academic communities in Europe to enrich their diversity, foster inclusive communities and to unite around the cause of assisting refugees to continue with their education, and to raise awareness more generally of the plight of refugees and refugee youth.

This study has proposed the creation of a national scholarship programme for refugee students to study in a European State both as a means to higher education and as a pathway to long-term protection which is complementary to resettlement. The programme will have the largest impact if it is able to target carefully the refugees most in need of solutions (and their families).

As the study has tried to highlight, the success of such a national refugee scholarship programme will rely on the cooperation of a broad range of actors. Each is able to contribute a critical element of a successful programme, and a firm commitment of all to the programme for its full duration will be key.

The programme should be accessible and transparent, with refugees informed of all relevant information about the scholarship throughout the full process. As the study highlights, to facilitate access to the programme, some flexibility may need to be shown in applicants' ability to satisfy certain requirements due to the specific situation of refugees. These may relate to the standard entrance conditions of the HEIs in question, to documentary evidence and more.

## CORE PROTECTION COMPONENTS

Flexibility and situation-specific programming will be required in crafting a scholarship programme in a particular country. However the core components discussed in this paper are recommended to ensure the protection of refugees. As a minimum, these core protection components should include:

- ✓ protection against *refoulement*;
- ✓ upholding the right to apply for asylum;
- ✓ not jeopardising the safety and security of refugees by undermining their legal status and rights;
- ✓ ensuring that participating students' economic needs are met during the programme, including protection against hardship or destitution;
- ✓ ensuring that students' psychological and social well-being is not adversely affected by the programme and that access to health- and psycho-social care is provided for those who need it;
- ✓ ensuring students are fully aware and consent to all the relevant details regarding the effect on their rights and responsibilities of participation in the scholarship programme, departure from the country of previous asylum, and stay in a new country;
- ✓ ensuring the right to remain lawfully in the country of scholarship beyond the period of study in the event that return or re-entry to the previous country of asylum or to the country of origin is not possible, including the possibility to convert refugees' visas into work or other visa types.

## FIRST STEPS TO ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL REFUGEE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

There is no single answer when deciding where the development of such a student refugee scholarship programme should begin. Any of the stakeholder groups, or some combination thereof, may take the organisational lead. Because of the importance of addressing the legal questions of visas and immigration statuses correctly, it may make sense for government ministries to take a lead. Yet it may be more realistic that the impetus for planning such a programme will come from national HEIs themselves or from refugee-supporting organisations. No matter which group(s) initiate the planning process, it may seem daunting to determine the first steps to be taken to gain the political and financial support, and to work out the logistical necessities of such a scholarship programme.

A national refugee scholarship programme will ultimately require a high level of coordination among multiple groups. However it may initially spring from the efforts of just one or a couple of organisations - student association, refugee-supporting organisation, government ministry, (formal or informal) association of HEIs - willing to take the lead.

The following are some suggestions for interested stakeholder groups to begin with:

- reach out to HEIs, in particular those with a history of offering innovative programming to refugees;
- consult organisations of universities, national student groups, Scholars at Risk (SAR), etc. to gauge interest and explore potential roles and organizational models;
- consider which organisations' existing refugee supporting programmes might be able to accommodate refugee students, and what extra funds and/or capacity would have to be added to do so;
- be sure to include representatives from all the relevant organisations and groups, in particular representatives of refugee communities themselves, in initial conversations;
- form a national coordinating committee with representatives of all interested organisations;
- engage relevant government ministries at an early stage to ensure all potential legal barriers are addressed early; assess which existing safe and regulated immigration pathways (such as student visas, work visa, employment seeking visas) may be used to craft a programme offering a secure status to refugee participants that meets their protection needs;
- appoint a lead within each organisation to coordinate internally and communicate with other partner organisations;
- connect with UNHCR and IOM to indicate interest and gauge potential logistical and organisational support (both in the intended receiving country and in the country of asylum);
- plan early for (a diversity of) sustainable funding sources;
- reach out to the private sector for potential cooperation on funding and employment opportunities.

## SCALE OF PROGRAMME

Further, while this paper has proposed the creation of a national refugee scholarship programme of ambitious scope, it may be that in the first instance a small pilot programme involving, for example, one HEI and refugees from one country of asylum seems a more feasible option in some States at a particular moment. The discussion and recommendations contained in this paper will also be relevant within an initially smaller operational framework. Viewed as a first step towards building a more robust and sustainable programme, such a pilot would still be a very positive development.

At a time when all members of society are called upon to assist with providing complimentary pathways to refugee protection and solutions, and given the crisis arising from the inability of most refugees to access to higher education, it is hoped that a programme such as that proposed here may provide a pathway to protection and education for a significant number of refugees within EU Member States and other European countries.



