

# Statement on Forcibly Displaced and Refugee Students

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## 1. Definitions

<b>Forcibly displaced persons</b>	<p>Under forcibly displaced persons we include refugees, displaced persons, asylum seekers, at-risk students and persons in refugee-like situations.</p>
<b>Refugees</b>	<p>Refugees are persons outside their countries of origin who are in need of international protection because of feared persecution, or a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or freedom in their country of origin as a result of persecution, armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder.</p>
<b>Asylum-seekers</b>	<p>A general term for any person who is seeking international protection. In some countries, it is used as a legal term referring to a person who has applied for refugee status or a complementary international protection status and has not yet received a final decision on their claim. It can also refer to a person who has not yet submitted an application but may intend to do so, or may be in need of international protection.</p>
<b>Displaced persons</b>	<p>The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence (whether within their own country or across an international border), in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.</p>
<b>Persons in refugee-like situations</b>	<p>Persons in a refugee-like situation are “groups of persons who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to those of refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.</p>

<b>At-risk students</b>	Individuals who face potential political persecution or disruption of their education due to activism. They typically hold passports and aim to complete their education with the possibility of returning to their country of origin, without seeking asylum.
<b>Migrants</b>	Traditionally, the word migrant (or, more accurately, international migrant) has been used to refer to people who choose to move across international borders, not because of a direct threat of persecution, serious harm, or death, but exclusively for other reasons, such as to improve their conditions by pursuing work or education opportunities, or to reunite with family. Migrants in this sense of the word—unlike refugees—continue in principle to enjoy the protection of their own government, even when they are abroad. If they return, they will continue to receive that protection.

## 2. Introduction

Worldwide, more than 110 million persons are currently forcibly displaced. Regarding the educational rights of these persons, the UN refugee-like situations, surpassing any previous recorded figures in history. Regarding the educational rights of these persons, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) set the [“15 by 30 target” regarding tertiary education](#), with the aim being to achieve an enrolment rate of 15% of refugee youth in higher education by the year 2030, which would amount to approximately half a million refugee students. Currently, the global enrollment of refugee students is at 7% reported in October 2023. According to the UNHCR’s 2023 Mid-Year trends, refugees aged 18 to 24, represent 13 percent of refugees globally, which is 4 million refugees, of which a little over 262,000 (7%) are enrolled in higher education ([UNHCR 15by30](#)). In comparison, this number is significantly lower than the enrollment rates of non-refugee students in European countries ([UNHCR Education Report 2023](#)).

## 3. Refugee students’ educational rights and protection mechanisms

The educational rights of forcibly displaced persons are protected through a multitude of frameworks. These encompass conventions, declarations and treaties on international level (UN, UNESCO), on European level (Council of Europe, European Union), as well as decisions of the International and European Courts of Justice, laying out rights of forcibly displaced persons, as well as legal obligations of countries.

Typically, refugee and forcibly displaced persons’ rights in education (see Table I: ‘Selection of relevant international frameworks regarding educational rights of refugees and forcibly displaced persons’) are generally linked to and derived from fundamental/human rights, educational rights as well as rights to employment, with the latter implying educational rights as to the right of forcibly displaced persons to be granted educational opportunities to access employment. Furthermore, the recent trend in Europe to connect a skills-based approach to education to skills of forcibly displaced persons ([EU CEDEFOP project](#)) is elevating initiatives regarding forcibly displaced students’ educational rights.

Nonetheless, higher education is not considered “mandatory,” which unfortunately affects the rights of forcibly displaced persons to higher education as it is less enforceable, especially in regards to accompanying support services. In addition, most of the regulations and mechanisms on global and European levels are either not binding; or binding, but with the choice of form and methods for implementation left up to

signatories/member states (state discretion), resulting in inconsistencies in the implementation and thus difference in the extent of protections of educational rights of forcibly displaced persons. Lastly, the right to seek asylum does not equal the right to be granted asylum, affecting the rights of displaced persons to higher education as it is consequently less enforceable, especially in regards to accompanying support services. In addition, most of the regulations and mechanisms on global and European levels are either not binding; or binding, but with the choice of form and methods for implementation left up to signatories/member states (state discretion), resulting in inconsistencies in the implementation and thus difference in the extent of protections of educational rights of displaced persons. Lastly, the right to seek asylum does not equal being a refugee, or receiving refugee status. Therefore, displaced persons that are undocumented and/or do not (yet) have an asylum status as the decision ultimately lies in the hands of the competent national authority after reviewing criterias set in the [Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#). Therefore, educational rights are scarce for those that are not granted refugee status as such.

It must be ensured that the fundamental rights to education are guaranteed for forcibly displaced persons. Especially in a context where xenophobic, racist and discriminatory ideas, movements and political agendas increasingly influence policy making and culture.

### **3.1. Students at risk and students in refugee-like situations**

As previously noted, various categories of forcibly displaced persons exist, with only refugees being officially acknowledged as having full protection of their educational rights. Furthermore, within the higher education sphere, it is crucial to recognize the significant distinction regarding at-risk students. At-risk students are individuals who are in danger of political persecution and/or denied to complete their education pathway due to their activism. They usually differ from refugees, as they often hold the legal right to travel (passport holders). While refugees seek to resettle and access education, the main objective for students who qualify as students at risk is to complete their educational pathway. Usually, but not always, the aim is to return to their country of origin, thus not seeking asylum as such. Regardless, they share many of the same struggles as refugees and other forcibly displaced persons when it comes to accessing higher education and necessary support infrastructure. Similarly, other forcibly displaced persons might have the same struggles as at-risk students.

## 4. Learning Pathways and Recognition of Qualifications and Skills

In the pursuit of fostering inclusive higher education environments, ESU advocates for robust policies concerning Learning Pathways and Recognition of Qualifications. These policies are essential both for ensuring equitable access to HE and recognizing the diverse skills and experiences individuals bring to academic settings. Prioritising accessibility and individualised adaptation is a prerequisite for all students, regardless of background and needs. Ensuring legal certainty in admissions and recognition of qualifications is crucial to guaranteeing equal study conditions.

Forcibly displaced students encounter multifaceted difficulties in accessing higher education, with documentation hurdles being one of the most significant barriers. Many forcibly displaced persons lack proper documentation due to displacement, which often prevents them from meeting the standard admission requirements. Additionally, the documentation required for the recognition of qualifications acquired in their home countries presents a significant barrier, thus hindering their access to higher education opportunities. This is because forcibly displaced persons often lack the means to obtain or verify such documentation in their host countries.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) contains standards for recognition procedures. However, lacking or non-implementation as well as institutional-level anchoring of procedures (rather than system-level based approaches) across countries further complicate these issues, creating uncertainty for forcibly displaced students regarding their eligibility for higher education. Countries further complicate these issues, creating increased uncertainty for forcibly displaced persons regarding the eligibility for higher education.

Partial qualifications that are only units of learning outcomes, as well as informal and non-formal learning, are even harder to prove. This even though recognition of partial qualifications and skills acquired through informal or non-formal learning are important elements to promote inclusivity and diversity within the higher education system.

Lastly, other barriers exist such as sometimes overly complicated administrative processes, costs for recognition processes or the lack of centralised and easily accessible information on recognition practices in different countries.

## 5. Integration, support services and difficulties

Migrants, including refugees, are among the groups most at-risk of poverty and social inclusion in Europe, encompassing severe material deprivation and economic strain, housing issues, health conditions and work intensity, falling usually through the gaps of welfare states and social support systems ([Eurostat 2022](#)). This is also applicable to other groups of forcibly displaced persons.

## **Asylum-seeking, freedom of movement and safety on campus**

Forcibly displaced students are faced with different obstacles, including their [limited freedom of movement](#) as they are usually not allowed to leave the country and sometimes even are bound locally. This in combination with long durations of asylum procedures prevents students from going on mobility.

While education and educational spaces should be safe spaces, there are instances where law enforcement units are accessing campus facilities and other higher education related spaces (e.g. workplaces, dormitories, etc.) for deportation purposes. This is not only infringing forcibly displaced students' rights, but also infringes campus integrity, making campuses unsafe spaces and thus keeping persons without an officially recognised refugee title from obtaining an education.

## **Visa barriers**

Visa-related issues (especially in case of at-risk students that do not seek asylum) are critical struggles faced by fleeing students. Visa policies and processes are often tedious, unclear, and time-consuming. They impose a lot of effort on students who are already struggling. Furthermore, in many countries, applying for a visa (as well as residency and work permits), imposes costs both regarding required documents as well as proof of financial stability. This includes the need to have the ability to have permanent access to assets, often encompassing thousands of euros. Also often higher education institutions and public authorities lack the needed understanding for why obtaining certain documents is not possible, including travelling abroad or entering consulates/embassies of the country of citizenship to renew documents. At-risk students and other forcibly displaced persons who are unable to renew their documents due to dangers associated with it, are sometimes issued alternative documents by their host country. Though these

documents usually are only sufficient for travelling purposes, they tend not to be accepted for enrolment in higher education.

Additionally, visa barriers can impact forcibly displaced students' ability to partake in mobility programmes such as Erasmus+. Despite the REST directive of the EU, Ireland and Denmark have opted-out of granting refugees and asylum-seekers from other EU countries to enter their higher education systems within the Erasmus+ scheme. For forcibly displaced students residing in non-EU-countries barriers can even be higher.

## Preparatory programmes for HE studies

Preparatory programmes for HE studies and accelerated education programmes are scarce within Europe, with mentoring, scholarship programmes or language preparatory courses often not covering the full course of study or lack of funding in terms of external influences to higher education, such as living and accommodation. Moreover, lack of research into peer support programmes, such as workshops, community integration activities, incentives to participate in sport related activities, and extracurricular programmes to build social capital ([Mahon, 2022](#)), increase this issue.

## Academic Barriers

Education disruption due to conflict, displacement, and resettlement leads to gaps in learning pathways, non-completion of and inability to access study programmes, and limited access to educational resources. Lack of accessibility to textbooks, technology, and internet connectivity can hinder the ability to engage with course materials, conduct research, and complete assignments. This is exacerbated by the lack of familiarity with academic expectations and conventions of the host country's education system, curricula, and standards, making it challenging for forcibly displaced students to transition to and succeed in the new academic environment.

Academic support plays a significant role in the trajectory of forcibly displaced students, particularly in coping with academic demands and developing adequate knowledge and skills. Limited academic literacy and language skills increase the likelihood of not understanding instructors' expectations or explanations. Additionally, specialised and timely comprehensive counselling services lack the knowledge to provide forcibly displaced students with guidance on legal barriers and professional development opportunities.

## Language Barriers

In the EU, less than half of refugees have adequate knowledge of the host country. Limited opportunities to practise English or the host country's language(s) in a judgement-free environment can increase feelings of inadequacy and isolation. This leads to encountering judgement that can discourage students from speaking and practising the language. Language is a key indicator for integration, with less than half of refugees having advanced language proficiency ([EC & OECD, 2016](#)). This is also applicable to other forcibly displaced persons. Moreover, at this current point, knowledge of the host country's language(s) is a foundational step from which all other success flows, such as academic achievement, social integration, and positive employment and health outcomes. It is therefore crucial that the opportunity to acquire these skills is provided in a free and freely accessible way. Language barriers can affect forcibly displaced students in various aspects of daily life, including running day-to-day errands, gathering and submitting important documents to government offices, accessing the labour market, accessing crucial social services, and housing. Furthermore, the frequent lack of proficient language skills amongst forcibly displaced persons, both practically and in terms of official certifications, of required languages (usually the host countries' native language(s) and/or English), leaves them unable to enrol in higher education.

Mandatory standardised tests, such as IELTS, TOEFL, or similar assessments, often require forcibly displaced persons to demonstrate their English language skills or the native language(s) of the host country. Inadequate access to information and associated high cost, as well as a lack of prior language learning background place a burden in accessing higher education on forcibly displaced students. This struggle is further exacerbated for forcibly displaced persons residing in countries where the predominant language differs from their native language or linguistic background. It is furthermore a worry that several countries in Europe have announced their plan to limit or reduce the existing number of English language programmes, including bachelor's and master's degrees. This can reduce access to educational opportunities, especially if they are not proficient in the local language.

With regard to multilingualism, certain languages are often promoted more than others, with education institutions not embracing the full range of linguistic diversity and thus posing a disadvantage towards speakers of certain languages against others, hindering the potential to enhance their learning experience.

As refugee students' language proficiency increases, their likelihood of finding employment increases ([EC & OECD, 2016](#)), which is also true for other forcibly displaced

persons. Language plays a key role in housing, as reports in Europe have shown that landlords are often hesitant to rent housing to non-native speakers of the country or individuals with international protections, sometimes resulting in even higher rent prices being demanded.

## Lack of financial support

Approximately 70 percent of refugees face restricted access to the labour market, which can result in difficulties for students with refugee backgrounds to access financial support like study grants in some countries. In many countries, refugees have to fulfil specific criteria before getting any support, like having the official refugee status or living for a certain amount of years in the country ([UNHCR 15by30](#)). This struggle is also true for other forcibly displaced students.

Furthermore, grants rarely cover all direct and indirect costs related to one's studies, including for cultural and integration purposes. Forcibly displaced students therefore usually rely on student jobs. In addition, forcibly displaced students like any other student should not be required to work in order to complete their studies. Policies that limit the number of hours that forcibly displaced students are allowed to work create barriers regarding their ability to gain work experience and earn additional income if they wish to do so. Additionally, the lack of suitable documentation or not having a permanent address (yet) can make it difficult to open a bank account, impacting the ability to pay, e.g., their rent or tuition related fees.

Tuition fees are a barrier for forcibly displaced students in many European countries, with an increasing number of them introducing higher fees for third-country nationals. Even though they are sometimes waived through quotas and/or students with an official refugee status, fees are a barrier, especially for forcibly displaced students and especially at-risk students that usually do not undergo asylum-seeking processes as their aim is to return to their home countries upon graduation.

There is an ongoing housing crisis in Europe, with growing housing needs clashing with insufficient building rates in many cities and housing becoming unaffordable. Finding adequate housing is a problem that is exacerbated for forcibly displaced students. They tend to be exploited, accept unfit housing or fall victim to slum landlords due to often not being able to prove sufficient income and/or organise guarantors. Problems also include the ability to pay high rents, to provide all required documents as well as the ability to engage in contractual renting agreements. Forcibly displaced students tend to be exploited, accepting unfit housing or being victims of slum landlords. These living conditions impact forcibly displaced students' physical and mental health.

Finally, remote asylum facilities can often have limited access to public transport, certain house rules, are ill-equipped, ill-maintained and the poor quality of these centres has resulted in injury, sickness and loss of lives of forcibly displaced persons. These reduce the free mobility of forcibly displaced students and accessibility to campuses and non-curricular activities as well as quality of life.

## **Social inclusion and integration**

Education plays a crucial role in providing forcibly displaced students with a sense of purpose, knowledge, and economic self-sufficiency. It involves having the same opportunities and rights as citizens, access to living and healthcare services, participation in the labour market and in education, and the ability to join a community and build ties and friendships. Forcibly displaced students often face struggles regarding social inclusion and integration within the higher education community. These barriers include the absence of integration transition measures and programs in HEIs, insufficient institutional support and recognition of previous qualifications for entering education, limited legal and rights protection knowledge, housing affordability, inadequate higher education institutional support for employment, lack of educators' knowledge about the situation of forcibly displaced students and how to support them in their educational pathway, financial hardships and job scarcity.

Also, social and educational exclusion is increased by, among others: education disruption and communication barriers, social isolation, discrimination based on language and perceived differences and in housing, lacking health and psychological support, inadequate education and training of medical staff for forcibly displaced persons' needs, and an escalation in assaults and hate speech. This leads to lower performance in higher education and a higher risk of health concerns.

## **Psychosocial and general health**

Restrictive policies, economic hardship, and discrimination lead to poor health and health inequality, which is impacted by their surrounding and shared conditions and lifestyle. The reconfiguration of family life and increased discrimination lead to higher change of mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorders, sleep disturbance, depression. In comparison to their peers, refugee students report a higher prevalence of these conditions ([OECD](#)), while encountering limited access to knowledge about mental health treatment. Additionally, there is a lack of training resources for therapists and psychologists' knowledge tailored for forcibly displaced students' concerns, such as

facing higher degrees of communication barriers, integration within the academic community, cultural barriers, discrimination, and social exclusion. These struggles are also true for other forcibly displaced students.

Moreover, legal, linguistic, administrative, and language barriers significantly impede access to healthcare for refugees in Europe, causing lack of quality healthcare, impacting their education, increasing their susceptibility to illnesses and mental health concerns ([UNHCR](#)), resulting in forcibly displaced students accessing hospitals and emergency care more frequently, leading to financial strain and long waiting times. Limited language knowledge, particularly in regards to medical terminology, lead to incorrect diagnoses, confusion, and incorrect treatment ([Nowak et al., 2022](#)).

## Other legal and institutional barriers

Legal barriers and policies often restrict access to labour markets and lead to lower motivation for participation in higher education ([UNESCO, 2022](#)). Furthermore, research indicates that higher education, especially bachelor programs, often feature stricter requirements than other education pathways such as short cycle programmes. However, higher education increases future earnings (income premium) and skill and knowledge development, with refugee students building networks and connections as well as increasing social and economic mobility ([UNESCO, 2022](#)). This is also true for other forcibly displaced students.

Unclear higher education policies that make rules and procedures difficult for forcibly displaced students to access higher education, the absence of resources aiding in integrating culturally and academically, and inadequate knowledge of higher education institutional staff that have the specific training or understanding of difficulties and support needed for forcibly displaced students add to the poor coordination of policies for forcibly displaced students in Higher Education.

Higher education institutions often overemphasise employability and career training for forcibly displaced students, neglecting a well-rounded education. At the same time, the inability of higher education institutions to comprehend specific needs of and legal frameworks pertaining to forcibly displaced students, can lead to clashes between national law and requirements for work-place learning and student jobs, for example in regards to the weekly hours required for the job.

These struggles are exacerbated by administrative and legal hurdles, which largely impede access to accommodation for forcibly displaced students. Discrimination in the housing market drives forcibly displaced students to live in segregated areas with

low-quality housing, contributing to broader social integration issues. European Union law, specifically the [Race Equality Directive](#), ensures equality of treatment. However, legal and administrative barriers, such as requiring a valid identification document, prior documentation of a permanent address or living agreement, or the presence of a notary or interpreter, are cost intensive and make accessing private accommodation (rather than reception centres) unattainable for refugee students ([ECRE 2020](#)). These struggles also apply to other forcibly displaced students.

## 6. Recommendations

Higher education global enrolment among refugees is the highest in Europe, where it serves an instrumental role in social, economic, technological and cultural advancement. It acts as a pathway for individuals to make meaningful contributions to society, whether as leaders, researchers, or community advocates. The exchange of knowledge among diverse individuals promotes inclusivity. Moreover, enrollment and completion of higher education programs leads to enhanced personal development, stability, skill development, labour force opportunities, social integration, and reduced risk of financial burdens. This ultimately ensures equal access to education. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement, and the implementation of various treaties and mechanisms differs largely between countries, higher education systems and institutions.

### Policy regarding forcibly displaced persons

- All higher education systems and institutions should implement mandatory training for educators and administrators on forcibly displaced students. Inclusivity should be prioritised in higher education administrative processes.
- for forcibly displaced students needs within their institutions  
Implement required training for educators and administrators on forcibly displaced students.
- Accommodate student jobs and programmes to fulfil national and international legal requirements, while ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for forcibly displaced students.
- Higher education institutions' policies should actively involve local and national student unions in order to address and mitigate barriers faced by forcibly displaced students within their respective countries or higher education institutions.

- HEI policy regarding forcibly displaced students should include the incorporation of forcibly displaced students' perspectives in integration initiatives and policy development processes, ensuring their voices are heard and their unique difficulties are effectively addressed.
- Decision-makers and stakeholders should work forward to better understand the phenomena and implications of climate-caused migration and ways of tackling it.
- HEIs and public authorities must commit to collect and provide accurate data and documentation about forcibly displaced students with a particular focus on legal barriers to HE access, financial burdens and forcibly displaced students' academic progression.

## Recognition of qualifications and skills

- Stakeholders should contribute to the development of an enabling policy environment that supports the access into higher education for all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances.
- Implementation of the Global Recognition Convention and the Lisbon Recognition Convention for non-EHEA country forcibly displaced persons in line with the 2020 Rome Communiqué of the EHEA, implementation of the [2017 Recommendations of the LRC Bureau on the recognition of qualifications for refugees](#), the [2012 Council Recommendation on VNFIL](#) and tools such as the [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees](#).
- Up-to-date, centrally stored, transparent and easily accessible information to the applicants on the recognition process.
- Encouragement of the different administrations, such as HEIs, local authorities and embassies to cooperate together and directly share their information when necessary and if legally possible.
- Development of clear and fair assessment frameworks and validation procedures, especially with view to alternative recognition procedures in case of lacking documentation, in order to effectively evaluate and acknowledge the diverse learning backgrounds and experiences of forcibly displaced students
- Following a system-level approach to recognition procedures of qualifications for forcibly displaced students (instead of placing processes on institutional-level via higher education institutions)  
Provision of adequate support and resources for transition programs and pathways
- Providing pathways for forcibly displaced students to access higher education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) through replication of and

participation in Initiatives such as the [DAFI Tertiary Scholarship Programme \(UNHCR\)](#)

- Partaking in and supporting pragmatic initiatives, such as community sponsorship and complementary pathways, as highlighted in the Commission Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU
- Flexibilisation of access to higher education, encompassing admission procedures and tailored support services to facilitate the enrollment and retention of forcibly displaced students, including alternative assessment methods, such as portfolio reviews, interviews or proficiency tests, without compromising on quality and legal certainty.
- Addressing forcibly displaced students' financial constraints regarding costs associated with recognition of qualifications and accessing of higher education

## Application process

- Ensuring non-discriminatory and transparent application processes offering consistent, inclusive, and equitable access and support
- Establish integration programs to support accepted students who may lack the required language proficiency, credit recognition, or fulfilment of foreign education prerequisites or incomplete transcripts.
- Implement and anticipate conditions impacting forcibly displaced students' in qualification recognition systems
- Replace missing academic records and identity verification with alternative assessment methods (i.e. providing entrance exams and language proficiency support such as translations or extended time limits).
- Developing recruitment initiatives by higher education institutions, in person or in forcibly displaced persons' hosting places that encompasses mentoring, information sharing, application processes, and scholarship opportunities.

## Asylum-seeking, freedom of movement and safety on campus

- Implementing ways for all forcibly displaced students to partake in study related mobility.
- Prohibition of deportations from campus and higher education-related facilities (e.g. workplaces, dormitories, etc.) without legal enactment by the hosting country

## Visa

- Establishment of specific student visa for at-risk students and students in refugee-like situations and offering of adequate counselling
- Establishment of alternative identification documents for at-risk students and students in refugee-like situations that enable them to enrol and continue their studies
- Authorise all asylum seekers, forcibly displaced and at-risk students to go abroad for mobility.

## Preparatory programmes of higher education studies

- Establishment of preparatory programmes to facilitate enrolment of forcibly displaced persons, encompassing support in obtaining qualifications to access higher education
- Preparatory programmes should be flexible, accessible at different points in time during the year and cover all associated costs such as for accommodation and costs of living
- Preparatory programmes should also facilitate cultural integration

## Academia barriers

- Tailor teaching, learning, and assessment methods to meet the needs of forcibly displaced students
- Online courses (connected higher education) can be used as a temporary solution for forcibly displaced students while trying to obtain all necessary documentation in order to attend academic lessons. They serve as a first contact with the institution and other peers to avoid social exclusion. It is however necessary to make sure that this kind of solution is limited to the shortest period of time possible: lessons in presence must be an absolute priority, as they in fact contribute to avoid phenomena of social exclusion on many levels. This does not apply to situations that explicitly called for prolonged duration of online classes.
- Awareness raising for the situation of forcibly displaced students and regular training for academic staff as well as education on forcibly displaced students in curricula to sensitise the academic community for the needs of forcibly displaced students.

## Transition, Social inclusion, and Integration programmes

- Implement integration transition measures when students enter Higher Education.
- Academic counselling in HEIs should be adequately informed on legal barriers and qualifications for forcibly displaced students to employment.
- Establish integration initiatives, ensuring students have access to higher education institutions' provided services, support, and opportunities for integration, (such as career and internship placements and extracurricular activities.)
- Develop safe spaces for forcibly displaced students, where HEIs should encourage forcibly displaced students to participate in extracurricular activities and develop workshops to integrate them with other students.
- Higher education institutions should develop bridging and training programs with NGOs supporting forcibly displaced persons and students to facilitate the integration of forcibly displaced students into academic life.
- Higher education institutions should strengthen partnerships with employers and provide transition measures to increase the change of employment for forcibly displaced students.
- Strategic partnerships should prioritise active participation, educational initiatives aimed at addressing barriers faced by forcibly displaced students, and be available in multiple languages to accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds among students.
- Inclusivity and accessibility should be prioritised in the design and delivery of these programs, ensuring that all students, including forcibly displaced students, can fully participate and benefit.

## Language barriers

- Free language courses of the primary language of both the host country and the study programme should be offered by municipalities and higher education institutions and other institutions offering education, including but not limited to colleges, adult high school institutes and folk high schools.
- Language requirements in the application process should be voided or the opportunity to complete a language course should be implemented upon the start of a study programme.
- Higher education institutions should increase investments in language instruction, for instance by developing partnerships with organisations that provide language

testing that do not require fees to obtain certificates or qualifications of proficiency.

- Alternatively, higher education institutions should use innovative measures of assessing language requirements through in person interviews or personalised assessments.
- Language instruction should be holistic, encompassing a local and global context taking into account the differences of comprehension and cultural backgrounds of forcibly displaced students.
- The potential of the diverse range of languages spoken by forcibly displaced students should be promoted and used to enhance their learning experience, e.g. in regards to language requirements and the promotion of multilingualism during studies
- If Higher Education Institutions require language skill certifications, Higher Education Institutions should offer language level courses and tests free of charge for forcibly displaced students.
- It is also fundamental that Higher education institutions invest in offering languages of international circulation for all academic staff and personnel, in order to pursue the elimination of any language barrier with forcibly displaced students: language accessibility must not only depend on the directly involved students, but should also be a responsibility of the institution itself.

## **Lack of financial support**

- Forcibly displaced students should not have to pay tuition fees themselves.
- Removal of specific residency status or other criteria to be eligible for financial assistance, such as study grants/loans.
- Removal barriers for students to open a bank account.
- Ensuring forcibly displaced students have affordable and quality housing and supporting them through the housing process. Particularly with consideration to where there are barriers in an understanding of the housing market, language, financial and digital/technological access.
- Offering financial support through scholarship programs, including students at risk.

## Psychosocial and general health

- Academic support services, such as psychological and academic counselling should be provided on an ongoing basis that can adequately address and respond to problems/issues of forcibly displaced students.
- Higher education institutions should establish a welcoming atmosphere, providing orientation, and offering support from the beginning of the forcibly displaced persons' integration process, while also addressing cultural perspectives on mental health.
- Higher education institutions should be equipped to provide trauma-sensitive responses and support.
- Academic and psychological counselling should adequately inform forcibly displaced students about opportunities, scholarships, and programs, both within the institution and beyond, while also assisting them with the recognition process for their documentation.
- HEIs should include information regarding forcibly displaced students' health, with information regarding common patient-doctor interaction, access to interpreters and resources on free access, and cultural norms and documentation needed for medical circumstances.

## Other legal and institutional barriers

- Create clear pathways and procedures for forcibly displaced students to access Higher Education
- Train administrative staff to understand the academic and non-academic struggles of and offer proper support to forcibly displaced students.

## Table I

*Selection of relevant international frameworks regarding educational rights of refugees and forcibly displaced persons*

Level	Institution	Framework	Synopsis
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International	UN	<a href="#">Global Compact on Refugees</a> <i>(2018, non-binding)</i>	Support for recognition of qualifications, complementary pathways for admission to third countries. Other more general rights of refugees.
	UNHCR	<a href="#">Complementary pathways for admission to third countries</a> <i>(mechanism)</i>	Programme assisting access to higher education for refugees, including travels.
	UNESCO	<a href="#">Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education</a> <i>(2019, binding)</i>	Provisions regarding the recognition of qualifications.
European	Council of Europe	<a href="#">Lisbon Recognition Convention</a> <i>(1997, binding)</i>	Provisions regarding the recognition of qualifications (including in case of loss of documents).
		<a href="#">European Qualifications Passport for Refugees</a> <i>(mechanism)</i>	EQPR is a standardised document that explains the qualifications a refugee is likely to have based on the available evidence.

	EU	<a href="#">Qualification Directive</a> <i>(2011, binding - part of <a href="#">CEAS</a>)</i>	Right for adults to access the general education systems under the same conditions as third-country nationals legally resident; access to activities such as employment-related education opportunities for adults.
		<a href="#">Race Equality Directive</a> <i>(2000, binding)</i>	Framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, including the principle of equal treatment
		<a href="#">Reception Conditions Directive</a> <i>(2013, binding, - part of <a href="#">CEAS</a>)</i>	Stipulates receiving rights of refugees, including, healthcare, material conditions (e.g. housing), families, employment, vocational education training, etc.
		<a href="#">Research and Studies (REST) Directive</a> <i>(2016, binding)</i>	Allowing refugees to participate in Erasmus+ (opt-out countries: Denmark and Ireland).
		<a href="#">Temporary Protection Directive</a> <i>(upon enforcement regarding specific groups of refugees)</i>	Residency permits, access to social welfare, labour market and education, provisions for return. Third-country nationals can be included, up to member states.

