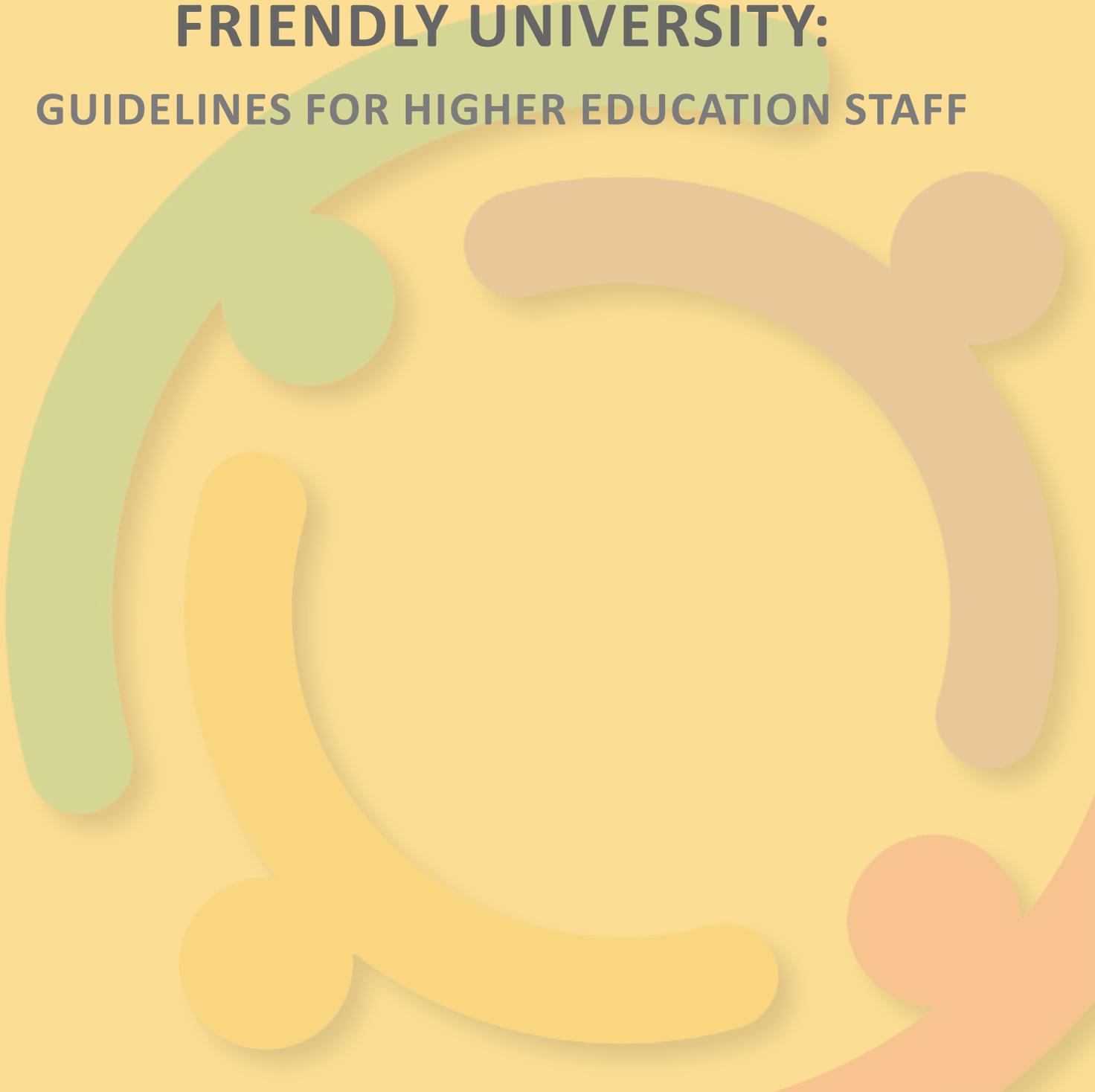




**TOGETHER**

**FOR A REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS  
FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY:  
GUIDELINES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STAFF**





**TOGETHER**

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### **TÍTULO**

For a refugees and migrants friendly University: Guidelines for Higher Education Staff

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## INTRODUCTION

The world in which we live, study and work is continually in transformation, fuelled by factors such as the climate crisis, digital innovation, social and economic changes, and many other issues. The most recent theoretical models and the most up-to-date reflections on inclusion start from the observation that European societies present themselves as particularly complex and at high risk of social, economic and environmental crises, which are more worrying than those of the past century. The recent crisis connected with COVID 19 pandemic reinforces the urgency on building more inclusive Higher Education Institutions (HEI). On the basis of this approach, sustainable development, pluralism, inter-culture, solidarity, educational cooperation, and co-construction are considered necessary, especially with reference to issues related to the presence of migrants and refugees.

According to Eurostat, in 2015, 1,322,850 people applied for international protection in the European Union (EU) (28 Member States) <sup>1</sup>. Although the number of applicants in the EU was not as high as in 2015, in 2018 there was a total of 664,410 applications (28 Member States)<sup>2</sup>, in 2019, a total of 744,810 applications (28 Member States)<sup>3</sup>, and, in 2020, a total of 471,270 asylum applicants (27 Member States)<sup>4</sup>. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of asylum seekers and refugees has also been generally increasing worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

Only 3% of refugees in the world have access to higher education (UNHCR) <sup>6</sup>. Refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection face several barriers both in accessing and in completing their studies, which include language barriers, costs, lack of proof of prior learning, among others.<sup>7</sup>

Taking into account the benefits of inclusion in higher education for refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection, as well as for HEI themselves,<sup>8</sup> several studies have been developed on the possibility of building more inclusive HEI by favouring the enrolment of refugees. At the same time, it is clear that issues related to building more inclusive higher education systems cannot purely rely on a regulatory level and that efforts must be undertaken to develop awareness and to enhance the development of intercultural competences among the academic community as a whole, so that, ultimately, refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection feel welcome in those institutions.

Taking this into account, the Together project aims at:

- Raising awareness, among the academic community, on the inclusion of refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection within the HEI.
- Working closely with higher education staff, both academic and administrative, as well as with higher education students, refugee (and other beneficiaries of international protection) students and policy makers, by sharing specific instruments, knowledge and skills with them in order to develop their social responsibility and to empower them as important actors in the shaping of a more inclusive higher education environment.

The project is addressed to higher education staff (academic and administrative), higher education students and refugees (and other beneficiaries of international protection) studying at HEI, as well as to relevant policy makers.

Besides the present Guidelines, the Project's results include a Refugees Welcome Map, which identifies inclusion activities for refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection implemented by HEI, as well as a Training Package for students, which aims at developing aware-



ness on their potential civic role in promoting the inclusion of refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection, in the higher education environment and in society.

The present Guidelines aim at providing academic staff with a practical oriented collection of intervention proposals on how to make their HEI more accessible and inclusive for refugees and for other beneficiaries of international protection.

They address the following issues: inclusive higher education (Area 1), the development of intercultural competences by and within the context of HEI (Area 2), as well as HEI's third mission and how they may cooperate with other stakeholders in inclusion processes (Area 3). All chapters are developed to include a conceptual framework, good practices, paths and recommendations that may be used towards the development of more inclusive HEI.

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## AREA 1: INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION

### ABSTRACT:

*The first area is dedicated to the inclusive Higher Education especially in relation to refugee students. The area is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter we define the conceptual framework, supporting the readers in understanding the importance of inclusive higher education for refugee students, for their personal and professional development, for their dignity and for their active participation in the hosting community.*

*In the second chapter, we quote some practices, mapped within the Together project, from Italy, Greece, Portugal, Belgium, and the Netherlands that show the positive effects of implementation of inclusive policies and practices on refugee students, while enjoying their right to education, and on the wide higher education community that can improve its competences, overcoming stereotypes and prejudices that very often condition behaviours and strategic choices.*

*In the third and fourth chapter we outline possible strategic approaches and useful recommendations to assess the needs of each HEI in order to adopt positive steps towards a more inclusive environment.*

### CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### **1.0 A brief glossary to start**

The aim of the Area 1 of the present Guidelines is to address issues related to the promotion of a more inclusive higher education environment (HE) where all involved stakeholders (students, academics, and staff) can fully develop their potential. Within such an approach, it is necessary to define a comprehensive conceptual framework starting with a short glossary that is meant to be a tool for understanding key terms that will be used in the discussion of the different topics. The glossary is based on some key definitions created by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), a monitoring body of the Council of Europe, fighting against racism, discrimination, intolerance, antisemitism, and xenophobia in Europe.

Among the different definitions provided by ECRI, we believe that it is essential to have a clear and common understanding of, at least, the following terms, to be able to better contextualise the issues related to the inclusion of refugee students in the HE system.

**Discrimination** is any differential treatment based on a ground such as “race”, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin, as well as descent, belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics or status, which has no objective and reasonable justification.

**Hate speech** is the advocacy, promotion, or incitement, in any form, of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression, on the ground of personal characteristics or status.

**Inclusion** is an approach that values diversity and aims to afford equal rights and opportunities to everyone by creating conditions which enable the full and active participation of every member of society.



Integration is a two-way process with society, governments and local authorities facilitating, supporting, and promoting the integration efforts of individuals.

**Racism** is the belief that a ground such as “race”, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons.

**Vulnerable** groups are those groups who are particularly the target of hate speech, and which will vary according to national circumstances but are likely to include asylum seekers and refugees, other immigrants and migrants, Black and Jewish communities, Muslims, Roma/Gypsies, as well as other religious, historical, ethnic, and linguistic minorities and LGBT+ persons; in particular, it shall include children and young persons belonging to such groups.

While addressing the issue of inclusion of students with a migrant background, we believe that it is mandatory to have a clear understanding of the different status that a migrant person may have, as it is defined by the International Organisation for Migration.

**Asylum seeker:** An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee, but every recognized refugee is initially an asylum seeker.

**Displaced person<sup>1</sup>:** Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, either across an international border or within a State, in particular because of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.

**Migrant<sup>2</sup>:** An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes several well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students.

**Refugee<sup>3</sup>:** A person who qualifies for the protection of the United Nations provided by the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in accordance with UNHCR’s Statute and, notably, subsequent General Assembly’s resolutions clarifying the scope of UNHCR’s competency, regardless of whether or not he or she is in a country that is a party to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol – or a relevant regional refugee instrument – or whether or not he or she has been recognised by his or her host country as a refugee under either of these instruments.

### ***1.1 Data about the % of refugee students in higher education***

As reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, in 2020 82.4 million of people were forcibly displaced. Among those persons, 20.7 million are refugees, under UNHCR mandate. 86% of the forcibly displaced persons are hosted in developing countries.



The five major hosting countries are the following:

Country	% Of forcibly displaced persons
Turkey	3.7 million
Colombia	1.7 million
Pakistan	1.4 million
Uganda	1.4 million
Germany	1.2 million

Nowadays, 5% of refugees can access higher education. This percentage is far below the one of non-refugees enrolled in higher education, which stands for 39%.

UNHCR and partners are committed to ensure that at least 15% of young people can access higher education by 2030.

Inclusive policies and practices of HEIs and their partners can support the fulfilment of this goal and facilitate the active participation of refugee young people in the hosting communities. Furthermore, the promotion of Academic inclusive contexts will be beneficial for all students, staff and professors that can experience a richer learning environment.

### **1.2 Why Education? The importance of Higher Education for refugee young people**

As article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights recognises and underlines, “everyone has the right to education”. Education as a fundamental human right: it is not simply meant to the transfer of notions and knowledge but rather it is “directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for fundamental rights and fundamental freedoms”.

Education is, in fact, a tool to support people to grow up and to fully express their potential and their personality, facilitating the acquisition of competences.

Young people, thanks to the engagement in educational processes, may have better access to the labour market and play an active role in their communities.

Especially for young refugee people, education is thus an essential tool to enter the hosting community and to build their self-reliance. Too often, as said in Refugee Education 2030 – a strategy for refugee inclusion<sup>4</sup>, education has been conceived as a short-term programme for refugee young people administered in parallel to national education systems with the assumption that the displacement situation of most of the young persons would have been solved in a short time.

As a matter of fact, millions of young people were and still are in the situation to be displaced for 20 years and more. This implies that they need to be an integral part of national education programmes as soon as possible, as they can develop their competences and become independent and self-reliant, able to contribute to local communities and their economies.

To facilitate the access to education of young refugee people may be beneficial not only for them but also for the hosting environment, activating a win-win process, where everyone contributes to the well-being of the community.

Coming to higher education, as reported in the previous paragraph, only 5% of refugees can access to university. In most of the cases, refugees face multiple challenges to access higher



education and they often give up studies undertaken in the country of origin due to lack of recognition of qualifications, lack of documents or means of subsistence.

Being forced to give up university studies, not having the means and tools, creates frustration, rejection, low participation in the host community and a poor sense of belonging. On the other hand, having the opportunity to study and graduate in their chosen discipline, not only allows young refugees to identify a learning path that is useful for their personal and professional development, but also enables them to develop relationships and connections, helping them to feel part of a community. In this way, a community that becomes one's own community of reference and not only and no longer the hosting community, it is where one can spend one's skills and where one can contribute as an active citizen. At the same time, the presence of refugee students within the academic community can be considered as a powerful tool to increase competences on the recognition and enforcement of fundamental European and democratic values. Higher education institutions, together with other stakeholders, have the responsibility to put adequate and inclusive measures in place, as said in the Sustainable Development Goal n. 4 of the Agenda 2030, that underlines the importance of inclusive and quality education, being the most powerful and proven vehicle for sustainable development.

### **1.3 Higher education: what makes it inclusive?**

The renewed EU Agenda<sup>5</sup> for higher education includes the building of inclusive and connected higher education systems as one of its priorities. In the document, it is stated that it is important "to ensure that higher education is inclusive, open to talent from all backgrounds, and that higher education institutions are not ivory towers, but civic-minded learning communities connected to their communities"<sup>6</sup>.

To be inclusive, higher education systems and institutions need to develop a culture of inclusion, as said in the Welcoming and inclusive toolkit elaborated by the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (Canada), passing from invisibility of the refugee students to an inclusive culture through the following steps:

- Invisibility
- Awareness
- Intentional Inclusion
- Inclusive policies
- Inclusive strategies
- Inclusive culture

To be able to develop an inclusive culture it is necessary that all members (staff, academics, students, local stakeholders) are on board and together define policies and strategies that will support their inclusive actions.

Making higher education systems inclusive essentially means allowing all young people to enjoy the right to education, as per Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which implies offering the right conditions to students of different backgrounds to succeed.

In practical terms inclusive higher education systems should be able to recognise refugee students' prior learning, despite their status; foresee financial support to underrepresented groups such as refugees and asylum seekers to allow them the opportunity to study and grow up personally and professionally; identify and implement services and support for the enrolment and for the access of refugee students to education; organise – in cooperation with local stakeholders – language courses and orientation services to facilitate the inclusion of refugee students in the University and in the local hosting community; activate local students for mentoring and



peer-to-peer support services in order to develop integrated students' communities. Finally, it is essential that the Universities create and consolidate connections and networks with local stakeholders, public bodies, NGOs and citizens in general to facilitate the activation of inclusive strategies, policies and practices.

All these services and actions can be effective if implemented in environments where the operational, management and educational culture is an inclusive one or aiming at becoming inclusive. In fact, inclusion cannot and should not only be delegated to professors in their classroom management but must be an intrinsic feature throughout academia and in all its areas.

#### **1.4 Barriers to inclusion in Higher Education**

From the mapping carried out in the Together project <sup>7</sup>, it emerged that the greatest challenges in implementing inclusive policies in HE institutions refer to several factors. In most of the cases it was reported that the academic communities and their members are not always aware of the strategies and policies adopted for inclusion of refugee students. Ignoring the existence of international and internal strategies and policies has a direct influence on the lack of awareness of the possibility to identify and carry out services and activities in favour of specific groups of people, such as refugee students, who need support to start up their educational paths in a hosting country. This also entails a lack of awareness of the role that each member of the academic environment (from students to professors, from administrative staff to local partners) can play in the process of including refugee students and developing an inclusive culture.

Not having a clear vision of the strategies and possible actions to be taken also implies that relations with essential partners, such as NGOs, who can support inclusion and participatory processes throughout non formal learning activities, and in social inclusion processes are often neglected or not sufficiently taken care of.

In addition, academic institutions are often confronted with limited availability of funds to support young refugees, both in paying university fees and in obtaining decent living conditions (food and accommodation).

On the other side, refugee students are often confronted with the limited availability of information and guidance on how universities work, and on how to access them. Poor recognition of refugee student's qualifications and the still high bureaucratisation of processes and practices does not facilitate the creation of an inclusive culture and the creation of truly inclusive services.

Moreover, the reiteration of stereotypes and prejudices against refugee students, even in academic contexts, underpins poorly inclusive processes and practices.

To activate genuinely inclusive processes and practices, it is necessary for all actors to continuously work on their own stereotypes and prejudices, becoming aware of their own power and responsibilities to implement the principle that "no one should be left behind", as underlined by the UN group of experts commenting on the Agenda 2030. Wearing the lens of human rights, to ensure that no one is left behind, no human rights should be left behind. This means that the right to education should be equally enjoyed by all students, despite their status, if all stakeholders and decision makers would design policies, strategies, and actions that respect a culture of human rights.



## CHAPTER 2: GOOD PRACTICES

### **2.0 Opportunities to inclusive Higher Education**

Within the Together project <sup>8</sup>, partners mapped several practices of inclusive Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that showed the importance to go beyond the regulatory approach and provide a wider person-centered approach aiming not only at the enrolment of refugees as full students, but also at their involvement in cultural and educational activities, and at their engagement in the local community as active citizens.

Most of the HEIs, interviewed in the mapping phase of the Together project designed and managed activities and projects to facilitate the implementation of inclusive policies and practices, within their third mission.

Among the different practices and projects that can be visualised in the online map <sup>9</sup> of the Together project, it clearly emerges that several HEIs have strongly supported refugees to enter the local communities, finding their place to live, to work, and to express themselves as citizens. The enrolment at the University was in many cases, not only the possibility for accessing education, but mostly the possibility for rehabilitating people, supporting them to redefine their personal and professional paths.

Below, and by way of example, we will present practices of inclusive policies developed in the three partner countries of the project: Italy, Greece, Portugal. These examples will be complemented by others from The Netherlands and Belgium for their level of innovation and specific focus on social inclusion of refugees.

### **2.1 Good Practice in Italy**

**UNITEDBZ** <sup>10</sup> Project from Free University of Bozen-Bolzano.

The UNITEDBZ project was born in 2016 on the initiative of professors and employees of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, in collaboration with institutions and voluntary associations in South Tyrol that deal with the processes of reception of migrants.

It gives asylum seekers and refugees the opportunity to attend the courses offered by UNIBZ for four semesters, sitting its exams as extracurricular students, or students who are not regularly enrolled at university. Candidates who attended school for at least 12 years and are in contact with an association, and are active in the area, can participate in the project. The selected students can attend courses free of charge and the credits they obtain can be recognised if they enrol in one of the university's degree programmes in the future. To be able to study in the three official languages of UNIBZ (Italian, German, English), these students are guided in the improvement of their language skills and are then accompanied in the enrolment and application phase for accommodation and scholarships.

Students do not have to pay taxes and accommodation and they can benefit from language courses run by UNIBZ language centre, and ad-hoc courses run by UNIBZ voluntary teachers, designed to fit the participant's needs (for instance the introduction to the use of computers and online platforms).

Moreover, each project participant has a buddy. The buddies are UNIBZ students who make themselves available on a voluntary basis to facilitate integration of refugees into study and university life, also organising leisure activities in their free time.



The main results of this project are the following:

- 50 refugees attending the UNITEDBZ programme;
- Refugees enrolled as regular students of UNIBZ, thanks to the UNITEDBZ programme;
- Refugees supported in the enrolment procedures in other Universities, with the possible recognition of the exams passed during the UNITEDBZ programme;
- Refugees included in the local communities, thanks to the collaboration of the University with local stakeholders and to the active participation of university professors, employees, and students.

### **2.2 Good Practice in Greece**

**Education Unites: From Camp to Campus**<sup>11</sup> project from the American College of Greece.

The U.S. Embassy in Athens, in collaboration with Deree – The American College of Greece, the American College of Thessaloniki – Anatolia College, and Perrotis College – American Farm School, implemented the programme “Education Unites: From Camp to Campus” that provided higher education scholarships to 100 eligible refugees in Athens, and 100 in Thessaloniki.

The goal of the programme was to give opportunities to displaced students to continue their education and to provide them with knowledge, skills, and academic credits they can use either in Greece or in any other European country they move to in the future.

More importantly, the programme had the objective to help refugees to get out of the camps and become included in the local colleges, offering them hope for their future.

More specifically, the “Education Unites: from Camp to Campus” programme offered two courses per student for two semesters (in 2017-2018) in the three U.S. affiliated colleges in Athens and Thessaloniki. The courses included preparatory English classes, academic classes in diverse fields based on the educational background of the participants, as well as vocational training.

The main results of the programme were the following:

- 100 refugees had the opportunity to continue their education
- Refugees enrolled at the University and/or local colleges
- Refugees got the motivation to get out from the camps
- University professors, employees and students created the environment to include refugees in the daily activities and lessons, offering not only credits and specific courses but also vocational training courses and the support to establish relationships and networks with the local communities

### **2.3 Good Practice in Portugal**

**Local support centre for the integration of the migrants and tutoring programme**<sup>12</sup>- University of Aveiro.

The University of Aveiro (UA) provides its international academic community with a Local Support Centre for the Integration of Migrants (CLAIM). Its main objectives are to offer institutional support, to promote the integration and creation of conditions so that reception in Portugal will be as smooth as possible for all those who study, research or work in the UA (migrants and refugees).

This centre also aims at minimising any difficulties that may arise for migrants and refugees in settling into a new life in Portugal by offering specialised support provided by skilled professionals, in areas such as education, access to public services, accommodation, day-to-day issues, among many others.



The CLAIM centre in the UA is the result of a partnership with the High Commission for Migration (ACM) and is part of the national CLAIM network, which includes 99 other local and national centres that are specialised in the area of migration.

Within the CLAIM, thanks to the activities implemented by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), the migrants and refugees, as well as other international students, may benefit from the support of volunteer local students that act as buddies.

The main results of the CLAIM are the following:

- Migrants and refugees supported in their access to Education
- Migrants and refugees enrolled at university
- Migrants and refugees included in a wider community thanks to the collaboration of the University with different stakeholders and the active participation of the professors, employees, and students.

#### **2.4 Good Practice in The Netherlands**

##### ***Inclusion project***<sup>13</sup> – Utrecht University

Inclusion project was founded in 2016 and has since that time welcomed more than 500 refugee students from over 40 countries.

Inclusion gives refugee students the opportunity to follow bachelor courses at Utrecht University. The programme focuses on both students with and without residence status. Many refugees are on hold for quite some time in an asylum seekers' centre. Inclusion offers them the opportunity to keep on developing themselves academically, by joining UU courses and Utrecht Summer School courses. When Inclusion students successfully complete a course, they receive a certificate (but no ECTS).

During a UU course the Inclusion students are linked to 1 or 2 buddies: regular UU students who have volunteered as a buddy to help the Inclusion students on their way.

They provide with:

- a social network: most buddies meet with their student once every 2 weeks.
- Help with practical matters, such as finding the right buildings/rooms, library, use of Blackboard (university system) and Teams.
- Help with education, for instance how they can best tackle an assignment or how to avoid plagiarism. The buddies do not help with the content itself but can refer the Inclusion students to the help they need.

Inclusion students are enrolled just like regular students, which means they can make use of the UU facilities during their course. This means they have full access to the library, but also to the UU student support services: the Skills Lab and Career Services. The Skills Lab offers students workshops in academic skills (eg. the writing a thesis week, personal coaching, or a workshop on how to give a presentation). The Career Services can help students with their CV, setting up a LinkedIn profile and preparing for job interviews.

A recent development in which Inclusion is broadening its scope is a pilot (started in March 2020) in which UU offers status holders a work placement position for 6-8 months within the UU. 5 positions have been fulfilled in IT, communication, and teaching. The UU will decide before the end of 2021 whether to continue this pilot.



The main results of the Inclusion project are the following:

- In 5 years, more than 500 refugee students attended courses at Utrecht University;
- Refugees are included in the entire high education path;
- Refugees are supported by the Academic community through courses, services and buddies' programme;
- Refugees are supported to establish links with the local community, through work placements and free time activities.

### **2.5 Good Practice in Belgium**

**Convivial meal**<sup>14</sup> is an initiative for the inclusion of refugee students in the university - Université de Mons.

In October 2015, the University of Mons took the decision to welcome and accompany asylum seekers who had recently arrived in the Province of Hainaut. It has the objective of giving the chance to pursue higher education to refugees who have undertaken studies in their country. For this goal, a working group set up and contacts have been established with the reception centers (Fedasil, Red Cross).

Since the 2015-2016 academic year, refugees and asylum seekers have thus followed French as a foreign language (FLE) courses organised simultaneously by the UMONS Modern Language Centre and the Mons - Borinage and Jemappes social promotion schools.

In addition to the FLE courses, socio-cultural integration activities were organised, such as the convivial meals to establish positive relationships with refugees and motivate them to continue to study in Belgium. Arabic-French conversation tables bringing together UMONS students from the Faculty of Translation and Interpretation learning Arabic and refugees were also organised, to reinforce the students' networks.

These people were enrolled as free auditors; this also allowed them to attend classes to familiarise themselves with university activities and to improve their command of French. Material assistance was also offered.

In preparation for the following academic year, the persons welcomed in this way who wished to register as regular students were accompanied in their efforts. Some of them are now registered at the UMONS as regular students.

The main results of the convivial meal initiative together with all other initiatives organised by the University of Mons are the following:

- Nearly 50 refugees were hosted by the University of Mons. In this way, Umons also intends to sensitise the university community to the issue of forced migration.
- Thanks to all the partners involved in the initiative and in the project, the refugee candidates were able to find a positive state of mind, a motivation to work to get by, an active social life, but above all, ambition.
- The local partners and the entire University community have improved their inclusion policies and measures.

### **2.6 Conclusions from the above-mentioned practices**

All the above-mentioned practices and many of the ones collected in the Map of the Together



project show that making higher education systems inclusive requires the provision of the right conditions for refugee students. This goes, clearly, beyond the question of offering financial support and grants for accommodation or free meals and transports, although this is of vital importance for those with low-income backgrounds.

For refugee students to feel included and part of the University as well as the local community, it is necessary that the academic institutions and the various members (students, professors, employees) are aware of existing international strategies, policies, and practices and of the ones that its own institution intends to introduce to open its doors to refugee students. This also implies that each component of the academic institution should have a strong motivation to understand the academic context as a place where inclusion is naturally practiced in compliance with the right to education that must not leave anyone behind.

Moreover, to develop effective operational plans for inclusion, in addition to a strong motivation and vision, academic contexts must strengthen collaborations with local stakeholders, establishing networks that support refugees also in their daily life, fostering the creation of a culture of inclusion both internally and externally to the Institutions.

On the other hand, refugee students should be seen as an active part in the inclusion processes, being motivated to share their stories and background as well as to learn in a new context. By recognising the dignity and skills of refugee students, thanks to the recognition of their studies and their educational and professional paths carried out in their countries of origin, the inclusion processes will be participatory and effective, and the students will be motivated to be part of the local learning community.

Furthermore, it is necessary to structure services, activities, and courses based on the actual needs of the students, starting from existing practices and drawing inspiration from experiences that have already been conducted at a local, national, and international level. Finally, activating processes of comparison and sharing is essential to contribute to the creation of open and authentic intercultural communities.

### **CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC PATH**

As we have outlined above, higher education can only fully achieve its goals if it takes place in a diverse and inclusive academic community – a community in which all members feel a sense of belonging and share the same values. We have also acknowledged that these values cannot be considered as distinct from those of European democratic societies, but rather as a contribution to their consolidation. HEIs need therefore to rediscover their function as a space where citizens grow in knowledge and understanding of modern complex societies and embrace their responsibilities as members of their “*glocal*” communities.

Although there is not one single model to establish an educational environment where diversity is welcomed, there are certain key elements that need to be at the core of any strategic action that academic communities needs to undertake with the aim of creating inclusive environments. This aim is at the core of the Together Project. This is why we have focused not only on the existing paths towards refugee students’ inclusion within HEIs at European level (Together Map), but also on the development of specific tools capable of fostering such positive processes on inclusiveness (Together Training Package). These Guidelines, therefore, are addressed to the overall academic community with the ambition of offering some inputs on possible roads to



inclusive higher education.

From this point of view inclusion could be intended as the process according to which HEI guarantees:

1. More inclusive access
2. No dropouts and improvement of academic success
3. An environment which is welcoming and capable of creating a sense of belonging and understanding

In these Guidelines we focus especially on the third aspect. In this context, to maintain an inclusive academic community it is necessary for the institution to design and adopt processes that

- Create opportunities for students to develop their intellectual, personal, cultural, and social competencies (see Part II of the Guidelines).
- Engage in appropriate inter-institutional relationships and community partnerships to enhance educational and service opportunities (see Part III of the Guidelines).

As stated above, we need to start from the common understanding that diversity is a *bonus* that can be engaged to achieve excellence in research, teaching, learning, and administrative services. All kinds of individual as well as group differences are part of the “diversity” on which each academic institution is based. Differences such as Life experiences, Ethnicity, Socio-economic status, Age, Gender and Sexual orientation, Country of origin, Political or religious affiliations, among others, define every member of the academic community as a necessary asset.

Diversity and inclusion are thus an integral part of the educational mission of HEIs, committing themselves to recognise, to include and to value inherent worth and dignity of each person, to foster understanding and mutual respect, and to encourage everyone to strive to reach their own potential.

With this approach HEIs aim at developing the necessary skills in every member of the academic community to thrive as a member of a pluralistic and democratic society and as a responsible global citizen.

When looking at how HEIs can foster inclusion there are different possible approaches to consider. Tienda (2013) argues that it is not sufficient to have a “diverse student body” to create an inclusive environment but it is rather necessary to promote an inclusive culture through “organisational strategies and practices that promote meaningful social and academic interactions among students who differ in their experiences, view and traits” (p. 467).<sup>15</sup>

Along the same lines Waterfield and West (2006) argue that we need to distinguish a real inclusive culture in HEI systems from two other more limited approaches: the “contingent approach” and the “alternative approach”. In the first case students with special needs (or different backgrounds or belonging to vulnerable groups) will receive “special arrangements” to adapt to the existing learning environment. Vice versa, with the alternative approach these students will be offered a different path of education within the institution. In both cases, although students from vulnerable groups will receive attention and teachers and staff will have to adjust their existing practices, this will not lead to a transformation within the institution and will probably have no effect on many of the students.<sup>16</sup>

It would be thus necessary to avoid focusing on the integration and accommodation of the needs of vulnerable groups, but rather to develop policies and practices that would serve to en-



hance empowerment and participation by all students. This is why within the together project a training Package addressed to all students has been developed.

The need to develop a strategic approach to inclusive culture within HEI thus requires organisational change, or as stated above the strong commitment from the overall academic community (researchers, teachers, staff, and students). Yet, it is very important to consider that actions within HEI are not to be carried out as in any other organisation. HEIs are based on professional autonomy and academic freedom exercised by the single individual academics. Although their behaviors and choices might be influenced by each university's strategic vision, the relevance of individual actions remains crucial. Moreover, HEIs might be influenced by other societal aspects, such as the cultural, economic and governmental environments. On top of that, HEIs are usually structured in autonomous bodies (departments or faculties) which also contribute to the complexity of developing a unique strategy on inclusiveness. Thus, a sound strategy on inclusion must start with a shared perspective of the final goals such an institution wants to achieve.

According to Stefani and Blessinge<sup>17</sup> creating an inclusive HE community is an essential element to achieve equality and eliminate negative attitudes and prejudices. These attitudes may, for example, produce cultural hegemony in the design of curricula and in the selection of reading materials, but many other aspects of the life of the academic community can conflict with inclusiveness.

Considering, as we have done in the Together project, that education is a human right and inclusion is at the core of a truly democratic society, the role of HEI as a crucial part of the society is to keep focused on those values. In this sense inclusion is a set of practices that helps the institution to become diverse and to guarantee the full respect of democratic values and human rights. Therefore, talking about inclusion is not simply guaranteeing or promoting access to vulnerable groups. Creating a diverse and inclusive HEI will better represent diverse societies. There is a need for a change in the mindset within the HEI in order to have a positive societal impact even outside the institutions themselves.

Bearing in mind such a perspective, the first step in the development of a strategy towards inclusion requires a careful analysis of the existing situation within each HEI, taking into account its diverse structures and the presence of a decentralised organisational framework. It will also be necessary to have a clear view on the presence of refugees and students belonging to vulnerable groups, as well as the presence at the level of the local community of actors involved in social inclusion projects and activities. The legal framework concerning the assistance to refugee students should also be clearly outlined before discussing any possible future undertakings. The analysis so developed should point out existing areas of possible improvement in terms for example of financial support, accommodation, language competences, recognition of prior learning; but also, and more importantly in our approach, in terms of intercultural competences within the academic community (students, staff, teachers and researchers). Such an analysis requires the continuous involvement of all the interested subjects: it would be in contrast with the very idea of inclusion to forget the seminal prospect of *nothing about us without us*, adopted at the level of the United Nations when discussing positive actions on the protection of the rights of persons belonging to vulnerable groups.

Once these areas of improvement have been duly defined, a plan of actions can be developed. The plan should be divided into different sectors and for each of them a responsible operational unity should be identified. Ideally, this operational unity should be formed representing all relevant stakeholders. Such an approach will provide the basis for the enactment of internal policies based on the empowerment and participation by refugee students and students belonging to other vulnerable groups.



In this context, first, the establishment of a distinct administrative unit within the HEI which will deal exclusively with the support of the refugees and third country nationals is highly recommended. Such a unit will be responsible for the facilitation of refugees' access to the university services, enabling them to participate in the academic life on an equal basis with their fellow co-students.

Second, the establishment of a research-oriented institution within the HEI, such as a research centre, a hub or an incubator, that will conduct related studies, develop projects and implement activities that will boost the Third Mission of the HEI (See Area 3 of the Guidelines).

## **CHAPTER 4: PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

The preparation and enactment of the HEI plan on refugee students inclusion should, as we stated above, start with the recognition that generally, refugees, although facing similar challenges to other international students, such as social isolation, financial challenges and lack of language proficiency, due to the circumstances of forced migration, of the rules and restrictions of the asylum procedure and their often-precarious situations, also face several additional challenges, such as trauma or psychological distress, gaps in their educational profile, missing documents and other administrative struggles.

On the basis of these facts, academics and staff members should be aware of their important role in reaching out to, and engaging with different groups of stakeholders both internally, their peers, students and university administrators, and externally. Moreover, they should also consider that the processes and requirements of HEIs are built on organisational assumptions about typical students, which can create difficulties for those who do not fit these norms. Academics and staff should pay particular attention to effective communication in order to better promote their efforts towards a transformative inclusion process.

Considering the above, we can outline 4 relevant areas for action:

### **1) Communication**

All policies and actions related to inclusion should be fully and adequately disseminated and communicated, to enhance the possible participation of all elements of the academic community. In this effort to open up through communication it is important to insert incidents of bias and discrimination.

### **2) Assessment**

As we have underlined above, an analysis of the existing situation within the HEI is crucial. In this sense climate assessment of the overall academic community should be carried out periodically, together with a periodic review of all diversity related programs as well as all equity, diversity, and inclusion-related regulations

### **3) Education and Engagement**

As we are going to see in Area 2 of the present Guidelines, the need to educate and engage all students on topics of equity, diversity and inclusion as well as to increase their intercultural competences represents an essential part of any action Plan devoted to the inclusion of refugee students. It would be in fact impossible to promote inclusion without making sure that the student community is ready to understand the value of diversity and to welcome peers belonging



to vulnerable groups. This will also imply, as we are going to see in Area 3 of the present Guidelines, the ability to connect with community organisations that focus on social justice issues and on the support of refugees.

#### **4) Governance**

At the same time, the action plan should also provide the means (both at financial as well as at organisational level) to support academics, staff, and students to lead and develop projects related to the inclusion of refugee students. This should be done in parallel with the provision of the operational units defined in chapter 3 above.

In particular, the 4 relevant areas of the action plan on refugees' inclusion should focus on the following:

##### **1: Communication**

- a) Demonstrate the HEI commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, by publishing the action plan in accessible and visible spaces and using effective communication strategies to share programmes, initiatives, successes and setbacks towards refugee students' inclusion.
- b) Improve mechanisms for reporting and bringing awareness of incidents of bias, hate, and discrimination matters.

##### **2: Assessment**

The assessment phase, as stated above, is particularly relevant while designing the action plan towards refugee students' inclusion. Such an activity needs to be periodically carried out and it might involve the administration of a university's climate survey as well as an inventory of all diversity and inclusion related initiatives vis-à-vis not only refugee students but also students from other vulnerable groups. Groups feedbacks, focus groups and buddy programmes can offer excellent opportunity to evaluate the level of commitment within the overall academic community on issues and values related to inclusion patterns.

##### **3: Engagement and Education**

Educate students, academics and staff on topics of diversity and inclusion, with particular emphasis on the recourse to non-formal education tools. In this context working together with local communities, civil society associations and public institutions needs also to be envisaged (as we will discuss in Area 3 of the present Guidelines). Specific staff training in dealing with refugee students and migrants and with their peculiar exigences is also necessary.

##### **4: Governance**

Define the operational units that will carry out the actions promoted in the plan at the various levels of the organisation of the HEI: students' offices, bursar, departments.



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## AREA 2: INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

### ABSTRACT

*In increasingly diverse societies, HEI are being called to play an active role in enhancing intercultural dialogue and in fostering the development of intercultural competences of students and academic staff. To attain this goal, institutions may consider introducing changes to existing curricula, developing specific courses on the topic, or implementing other formal opportunities such as exchange programmes. Also, HEI may explore the potential of arts, sports, culture and volunteer work, among others, in inclusion processes and in enhancing intercultural competences of those involved, by implementing informal/non formal learning opportunities.*

*The following chapters aim at exploring the concepts of intercultural dialogue and intercultural competences, as well as the role of HEI in this regard. They provide an overview of selected good practices from European countries that illustrate how institutions are addressing these issues and which activities and measures are being undertaken. The final chapters contain a set of practical activities and suggestions on formal and informal/non formal learning opportunities that may be implemented to foster the development of intercultural competences.*

### CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As stated in the Introduction, the rise in the number of asylum seekers and refugees has added to the already diverse European societies<sup>1</sup>. Although the diversity of European societies “represents a wide-ranging resource for innovation, growth and local economic, social and cultural development”<sup>2</sup>, it also poses a number of challenges. As highlighted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, “when it comes to accepting cultural diversity as an enriching factor, there is still a degree of resistance and reluctance among local populations, fuelled by prejudice and misconceptions based on rumours, stereotyping and misinformation”<sup>3</sup>. In this context, the main questions that States and institutions are faced with are how to guarantee inclusion as well as cohesion of societies, while upholding human rights and the rule of law, and which role may stakeholders play in attaining these objectives. Intercultural dialogue and the development of intercultural competences are key in this regard. HEIs are also called to play an active role in fostering inclusion. On the one hand, they are confronted with challenges that may derive from diversity within the institutions themselves. Such challenges may arise at all levels: in the relationship teacher-student, student-student, student-staff, teacher-staff or even at the decision-making level. As previously mentioned, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, for instance, face barriers not only in accessing higher education but also throughout their studies. Such obstacles include language and cultural barriers, for instance<sup>4</sup>. Among the factors that may contribute to migrant students feeling “isolated from the student experience” include “curricula that focus on a ‘western’ world view, inadequate student’s supports and an absence of intercultural spaces for socialising”<sup>5</sup>. In such diverse environments, having intercultural competences is, consequently, essential to tackle these challenges.

Also, HEIs have an important role to play in fostering the development of students’ intercultural competences which are crucial in their life beyond their higher education. For some, tertiary education may be one of the first experiences in (more) diverse contexts, either in their home country or abroad (for instance, in the context of exchange programmes). The development of intercultural competences at this level is key to ensuring that students and graduates are



prepared to be global players, and actively participate in diverse societies<sup>6</sup>.

The present Chapter aims at introducing the subject of intercultural competences, by focusing on its definition and on how they may be developed, as well as on the assessment of intercultural competences. Finally, it focuses on the role of education and, in particular, on the role of higher education, in developing intercultural competences.

Due to their importance in increasingly diverse societies, intercultural dialogue and the development of intercultural competences have been put on the agenda of international and regional organisations, States, and several private entities.

The Council of Europe has been at the forefront of the promotion of intercultural dialogue in Europe as a means to foster inclusion: “the capacity of people to live together with full respect for the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and solidarity, as well as their ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life”<sup>7</sup>.

In 2008, this regional organisation adopted a White paper on intercultural dialogue, in which it argues for the adoption of intercultural dialogue as “a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect”, that plays a crucial role and aims, as its ultimate objectives, to “promote full respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.”<sup>8</sup> The relationship between human rights and intercultural dialogue is also highlighted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), according to which “[i]ntercultural competences complement human rights as a catalyst for promoting a culture of peaceful and harmonious coexistence.”<sup>9</sup>.

In the White Paper<sup>10</sup>, the Council of Europe also identifies the key dimensions of the promotion of intercultural dialogue:

- “[D]emocratic governance of cultural diversity”
- “[P]articipation and democratic citizenship”
- The “acquisition of intercultural competences”
- The existence of “spaces for dialogue”
- Carried out at an “international scale”.

Due to their significance for and within HEI, these Guidelines will focus on the acquisition/development of intercultural competences. In a culturally diverse society, having the necessary “attitudes, behaviours, knowledge, skills and abilities”<sup>11</sup> to deal with diversity becomes increasingly important. In fact, developing “intercultural competences facilitates relationships and interactions among people from various origins and cultures as well as within heterogeneous groups, all of whom must learn to live together in peace.”<sup>12</sup>.

### **Definition of intercultural competence**

There is no single definition of intercultural competences. Nonetheless, it may be defined as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes”<sup>13</sup>. Also, it may be considered as “a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either singly or together with others, to: understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself; respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people; establish positive and constructive



relationships with such people; understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural 'difference'"<sup>14</sup>.

The components of intercultural competence include attitudes such as "valuing cultural diversity and pluralism of views and practices" or "respecting people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own", "understanding the internal diversity and heterogeneity of all cultural groups", "awareness and understanding of one's own and other people's assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and overt and covert discrimination", skills "in discovering information about other cultural affiliations and perspectives" or "in interpreting other cultural practices, beliefs and values and relating them to one's own", empathy, as well as actions such as "seeking opportunities to engage with people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own", "interacting and communicating appropriately, effectively and respectfully with people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own"<sup>15</sup>.

### **Development of intercultural competence**

Acquiring intercultural competences is not an automatic process and, thus, learning and practicing them are essential for their development<sup>16</sup>.

Based on Deardorff's work, UNESCO highlights the minimum requirements of intercultural competence: "respect", "self-awareness/identity", "seeing from other perspectives/world views", "listening", "adaptation", "relationship building", "cultural humility"<sup>17</sup>.

The Council of Europe<sup>18</sup> identifies key competence areas within the context of development of intercultural competences:

- Education for democratic citizenship, which "involves, inter alia, civic, history, political and human-rights education, education on the global context of societies and on cultural heritage";
- Language learning, which "helps learners to avoid stereotyping individuals, to develop curiosity and openness to otherness and to discover other cultures";
- History teaching, which "must encompass the elimination of prejudice and stereotypes, through the highlighting in history syllabuses of positive mutual influences between different countries, religions and schools of thought over the period of Europe's historical development as well as critical study of misuses of history, whether these stem from denials of historical facts, falsification, omission, ignorance or re-appropriation to ideological ends".

These key competence areas should be considered in the development of curricula (including at the higher education level) and in teacher training programmes.

### **Assessment of intercultural competences**

Assessment may be defined as "the measurement or systematic description of a learner's degree of proficiency in intercultural competence"<sup>19</sup>. It derives from the complexity of the concept and the diversity of the components of intercultural competences that assessing such competences is a challenging process.

Some authors have proposed indicators which aim at evaluating success in intercultural learning. Karwacka-Vögele<sup>20</sup>, for instance, divides these indicators in two categories: personal and institutional. The first comprise questions that focus on "personal values and skills, interpersonal relationship building, intercultural knowledge and sensitivity, and global issues aware-



ness”, while the second require analysis of “the curricula, the structure of programmes or the organisation of teaching and student performance.”<sup>21</sup> Using these indicators, particularly those focused on institutions, may be relevant to assess whether and how HEI are approaching intercultural competences’ development.

Also, several specific tools have been developed to assess intercultural competences. These tools, many of which are available online, may be used in several contexts, including to measure the impact of specific actions towards the development of intercultural competences.

For instance, the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (available at: <http://ccaiassess.com/index.html>) “facilitates the identification of an individual or group’s strengths and weaknesses in four skill areas that are fundamental to effective cross-cultural communication and interaction: Emotional Resilience, Flexibility/Openness, Perceptual Acuity, Personal Autonomy”.

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (available at: <https://idiinventory.com/>), unlike other tools, is not focused on measuring personal characteristics (such as flexibility, open-mindedness) but is rather “a cross-culturally valid, reliable, and generalizable measure of intercultural competence along the validated intercultural development continuum [...]”.

Nonetheless, the “existing assessment tools are predominantly self-report instruments, which means only ‘half of the picture’ is measured. What is often missing in intercultural competence assessment (at least in education and the humanities) is the other half of the picture - the appropriateness of communication and behavior, which according to research studies, can only be measured through others’ perspectives, beyond self-report.”<sup>22</sup> For this reason, the author considers that “intercultural competence assessment must involve a multi-method, multi-perspective approach that is focused more on the process of intercultural competence than on an end result”<sup>23</sup>.

### **Role of education in developing intercultural competences**

The development of intercultural competence may take place within a variety of settings (namely, the educational setting) and several actors may play an important role in this regard.

Intercultural education, “which has as its own key objective the development and enhancement of learners’ intercultural competence”<sup>24</sup> is, in fact, one of the key focus areas of research and policy development related to intercultural dialogue and is related to education for democratic citizenship and human rights education<sup>25</sup>.

The UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education, of 2006, identify three pillars of intercultural education<sup>26</sup>:

- Pillar 1: “Intercultural Education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all.”
- Pillar 2: “Intercultural Education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.”
- Pillar 3: “Intercultural Education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations”.

According to UNESCO, intercultural education “aims to go beyond passive coexistence, to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of understanding of, respect for and dialogue between the different cultural groups” and, therefore, is different from multicultural education “which uses learning about other cultures in order to produce acceptance, or at least tolerance, of these cultures”<sup>27</sup>.



At the higher education level, the role of institutions in developing intercultural competences is threefold: i) through their education programmes; ii) as actors in the society; and iii) as a place where to put into practice intercultural dialogue<sup>28</sup>.

As pointed out by Quinlan and Deardorff, “[t]eaching intercultural competence can happen both formally – in the classroom and through the curriculum – and informally, through students’ activities and their daily lives in university residences and around campus.”<sup>29</sup>

The following chapters will particularly focus on the development of intercultural competences within these two settings.

## CHAPTER 2: GOOD PRACTICES

Bearing in mind that accessing and attending a higher education institution is often a challenge and “a step into an alien world for a number of people”<sup>30</sup> and, in particular, refugees or asylum seekers, it is important to develop specific initiatives and practices to promote inclusion. In fact, “[u]niversities are not hermetically sealed from the social hierarchies and inequalities of the outside world, and a lack of reflection on these issues can lead to students of different backgrounds failing to succeed (...)” [ibid]. Thus, some HEI, working often with stakeholders from civil society and NGOs, are developing initiatives and actions to promote intercultural competences and the inclusion of all students, namely refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection.

This chapter aims at presenting good practices and initiatives held in Portugal, Greece, Belgium and Italy, and which can be an example on how higher education institutions can develop intercultural competences of staff and students.

**Portugal:** In Portugal, as underlined by the University of Aveiro (UA), this institution “is a public foundation under private law whose mission is to contribute to and develop graduate and postgraduate education and training, research and cooperation with society. (...) The UA’s mission is to create, share and apply knowledge, involving the whole community through teaching, research and cooperation with the surrounding environment, in order to make a clear difference for individuals and society”<sup>31</sup>.

This higher education institution developed an initiative called “Buddy Program to Support International Students”. This initiative is promoted through the “UA\_Intercultural in close partnership with the Erasmus Student Network - Aveiro (ESN), the Academic Association of the University of Aveiro (AAUAv) and the Association of Brazilians of the University of Aveiro (ABRA)”<sup>32</sup>. This Program “aims at accompanying international students from the very first moment, regarding the preparation and organization of the trip, and facilitating their integration process in the University of Aveiro, the city and the region. (...) This distance support and orientation is provided by older students, based on the principles of voluntary work, in close articulation with the institution. Each new student is automatically assigned one Buddy-older student” (ibid). As explained in the University’s site, it is important to note that this programme and the ‘Mentoring Program’ are “complementary and work sequentially, not replacing or overlapping, focusing on different subjects and working in different moment” (ibid). In fact, this last Program “is an initiative that, through volunteering, promotes experiences of exchange, mutual help and support between Portuguese citizens and immigrants. It allows for the creation of mutual help synergies and for blurring differences in the resolution of the same difficulties, concerns and challenges of daily life, promoting interculturality, civic participation and social responsibility. It is promoted by the High Commission for Migration (ACM) and developed across



the country by a number of local partners. The Social Action Services of the University of Aveiro is a partner entity of the ACM in the Mentors for Migrants Program, in a more targeted way for students, in the establishment of mentoring between mentors and mentees” (free translation)<sup>33</sup>.

These initiatives reflect the work that the University of Aveiro does in promoting the intercultural skills of its students and staff. This institution also makes available to its community CLAIM, a Local Support Centre for the Integration of Migrants as described already above in these Guidelines.<sup>34</sup>

Here, it can also be underlined the special channel created by the University of Coimbra for students, academics and professionals with refugee status, as well as for students in humanitarian emergency, and the launching of the new International Student Lounge (<https://www.uc.pt/en/refugee-help/>).

**Belgium:** According to the University College of Namur-Liège-Luxembourg, this institution “counts more than 6500 students spread on ten campuses, in the Provinces of Namur, Liège and Luxembourg” which “propose a very dense range of trainings in higher education, Bachelor and Master levels, several one-year programme of specialisation and a large number of in-service training sessions”.<sup>35</sup>

This University developed the activity ‘Diversi’day’, Awareness on the migration issue. The main objectives of this initiative were to “opening up to others and to the world in its complex contemporary realities (migration, north /south inequalities), develop a different perspective by thwarting/deconstructing prejudices and stereotypes, cross and enrich points of view by mixing field actors (associations, asylum seekers, teachers, students from different sections)”.<sup>36</sup> In the morning, the activity “took place at the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers of Belgrade, where they were able to attend the challenging show by and with Pie Tshibanda ‘Un Fou noir au pays des Blancs’. The afternoon, at Malonne, was devoted to various awareness workshops, conducted in intersection and animated by numerous associations: Mutual aid and fraternity; Quinoa, Caritas, Amnesty International, Children’s Words, Announce Color, Youth News, Youth and Citizen and the Red Cross (...)” [ibid] (free translation).

**Greece:** As cited by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), this institution “is the largest University in Greece covering all disciplines” (...), being “widely recognized as a vibrant center of learning which draws its inspiration from a long tradition of academic achievement”.<sup>37</sup>

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) developed the S.U.C.R.E. Project, “granted by the Hellenic National Agency (IKY) via the European Commission. The Coordinator of the Project is Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the consortium is consisted of the University of Cologne (Universität zu Köln), VU Amsterdam (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) as well as the Greek Council for Refugees. (...) S.U.C.R.E. focuses on the response of the Universities to the academic needs of refugees/migrants students and scholars and to the formation of good practices guidelines through the development of training modules addressed to voluntary sector working in the field with the specific population. Specifically, the project focuses on the processes required for the proper integration of refugees/migrants (students and scholars) in higher education as well as on their academic support after their acceptance/entrance in a University. In addition, it focuses on the psychosocial integration/support of refugees/migrants and their proper information on legal and health issues. S.U.C.R.E. aims at creating educational/training material to be properly used by practitioners and interested parties”.<sup>38</sup>



**Italy:** As underlined by the University of Trento<sup>39</sup>, this institution “was founded in 1962 and has always aimed at building alliance and reciprocal efficiency with Italian and foreign institutions and organizations”. Always with a strong concern in providing their students and staff intercultural skills, the university has activated multiple services aimed at supporting and welcoming people from other countries, committing itself to realize the objectives of inclusion and equal opportunities through actions and initiatives that raise awareness and spread a culture of equity and justice. The University of Trento organised an “initiative in collaboration with the Autonomous Province of Trento, Cinformi and Opera Universitaria, which drafted a memorandum of understanding for academic year 2016/2017 and beyond, so that every year 5 students will receive a scholarship and proper accommodation for a duration to be determined, but at least for the three years necessary to complete a degree course”<sup>40</sup>. Working together with the University are Department for Health and Social policies and the Department for University, research, youth policies, equal opportunities and development cooperation [ibid].

According to the University (ibid), this initiative started, in a first period with 5 students with these objectives: “provide guidance on academic choice; assess the students’ foreign qualifications so that they can attend single courses and later enrolling in degree courses from the following academic year; exempt students from tuition fees due for single courses and Italian language courses for foreign speakers; reserve a number of spots for asylum seekers, if all departments agree on the proposal, to facilitate their access to education given that all courses have admission test and places are limited; provide support and guidance through the tutoring service; provide support in the enrolment process from the next academic year and help students apply for scholarships and accommodation at Opera Universitaria”.

Other initiatives, organised by academic staff, can be highlighted, such as: ‘Adotta un@ student’, ‘SuXr Project – Students for refugee’s project’, Computer literacy for refugees, Basketball: a world in a word, Italian and refugee’s languages: a seminar for master’s students, CusCus Project, Wikipedia4Refugees” (ibid).

The good practices here highlighted reflect the strategy that some HEI have been organising, taking into account the development of intercultural competences of their academic staff. These competences are essential for the inclusion of refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection studying at a HEI. These activities, and the consequent results, demonstrate the importance of resorting to the complementarity of formal and non-formal education.

### CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC PATH

As affirmed in chapter 1, HEI may play a fundamental role in fostering intercultural dialogue through the development of intercultural competences of all actors involved, using a variety of means, within formal, non-formal and informal learning.

#### **3.0 Formal intercultural learning**

A possible strategy to foster the HEI role in promoting intercultural dialogue and intercultural competences is to focus on formal intercultural learning, particularly, on the curriculum, short courses and “formalized experiential learning opportunities (such as through job training or studying or working abroad).”<sup>41</sup>. The focus is, thus, put on training, which should be made available to students and staff, as it is recognised that only by doing so “will those willing to enter into intercultural dialogue actually be empowered to do so successfully.”<sup>42</sup>



## Curriculum

Developing intercultural competences in HEI may involve the introduction of changes into existing curricula. In this area, more emphasis should be put “on including the following aspects of the curriculum: learning to think in terms of networks, valuing the plurality of ways of being and thinking, creating epistemological bridges between cultures to facilitate dialogue and the joint solution of common problems; using knowledge and opportunity to adapt to and function in unfamiliar contexts”<sup>43</sup>

In the Guidelines for staff within HEI on the creation of intercultural learning environments<sup>44</sup>, the following strategies are specifically focused on curricular changes:

- Ensuring “that when relevant, curricula incorporate information about specific racial and ethnic groups”;
- Ensuring “that course materials question racialized stereotyping”;
- Referring “to literature and research developed outside of the Global-North”;
- Creating “conditions for students to introduce literature and research from outside of the Global-North”;
- “Case-studies and other scenarios should incorporate diversity through such things as the names and the gendered roles given to characters.”

Due to their role in fostering intercultural education in other levels of education, particular attention should also be paid to the development of the intercultural competences within programmes directed at teacher training. For this purpose, it may be necessary to provide expertise on intercultural competences “so to equip teachers with supportive content and relevant techniques.”<sup>45</sup> According to the Council of Europe, “[t]eacher-training curricula need to teach educational strategies and working methods to prepare teachers to manage the new situations arising from diversity, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, sexism and marginalization and to resolve conflicts peacefully, as well as to foster a global approach to institutional life on the basis of democracy and human rights and create a community of students, taking account of individual unspoken assumptions, school atmosphere and informal aspects of education.”<sup>46</sup> Also, it stresses the need for “[t]eacher training institutions [...] to develop quality-assurance instruments inspired by education for democratic citizenship, taking account of the intercultural dimension, and develop indicators and tools for self-evaluation and self-focused development for educational establishments.”

Furthermore, in their strategies towards the development of intercultural competences, HEI should consider the internationalisation of the curriculum, the introduction (or increase) of foreign languages learning and “enriching the curriculum with intercultural and international content (such as sustainable resource development, since cultural assumptions influence interactions between humans and the natural world)”<sup>47</sup>. With regards to language learning, it may be argued that “[b]ecause there is no simple, one-to-one correspondence between languages, and because languages carry meanings (some of which are unique to particular cultural perspectives), competence in a language is crucial to understanding the cultural perspectives, beliefs and practices to which it is linked. Skills of interacting, as well as other components of intercultural competence, are thus very much dependent on at least one partner in the interaction having competence in the language of the other (or both partners having competence in at least one common language – a lingua franca). Where both partners have plurilingual competence which includes the other’s language, the interaction will be all the richer and more successful.”<sup>48</sup>

**Short courses**

Intercultural competences may be enhanced through the organisation of short courses directed at all actors of HEI. These short courses may be organised as part of the mandatory students', teachers' and staff's curriculum, but also as non-mandatory training activities, and may be organised by the institutions themselves, research centres, students' associations, private institutions or through strategic partnerships.

**Formalized experiential learning opportunities**

Furthermore, the organisation of learning opportunities such as teacher mobility, staff mobility and student mobility/exchange programmes may prove important.<sup>49</sup> Mobility programmes, however, do not per se guarantee the development of intercultural competences of their participants<sup>50</sup> and, therefore, their development should be approached as to enhance their potential role in this regard.

**3.1 Informal intercultural learning**

As previously mentioned, intercultural learning can also happen "informally, through students' activities and their daily lives in university residences and around campus."<sup>51</sup> These learning opportunities can "occur through exchanges; fine arts; cultural organizations; public spaces, such as museums and libraries; new media; and so on. Such learning also occurs through daily lived experience in interacting with those who differ in age, gender, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, political beliefs, or physical abilities, to name a few differences. [...]"<sup>52</sup> Taking this into consideration, HEI may consider the development of a wide range of cultural activities. As highlighted by the Council of Europe, "[t]he arts are also a playground of contradiction and symbolic confrontation, allowing for individual expression, critical self-reflection and mediation. They thus naturally cross borders and connect and speak directly to people's emotions. Creative citizens, engaged in cultural activity, produce new spaces and potential for dialogue."<sup>53</sup>

Informal/non-formal intercultural learning within HEI may encompass the organisation of film discussions or festivals, reading groups, theatre, creating writing, cultural events or activities, sports, volunteering activities, the creation/organisation of (physical) spaces for intercultural dialogue or a combination of several of these activities.

These activities may be organised by students, or by HEI' bodies (including international offices). However, in this case, it is important that students are involved in their development, bearing in mind that "it becomes imperative that students themselves are more involved in their own global competence development."<sup>54</sup> This may entail, for example, the involvement of students' associations and groups in the organisation of events/activities.

**3.2 Importance of adopting a broad strategy**

The measures previously outlined aimed at the development of intercultural competences should be considered as a whole, and should target students, lecturers and other staff. As highlighted before, the development of students' intercultural competences allows them to play a positive role in HEI themselves but also beyond, as active members of their societies. Also, lecturers have a fundamental role in cultivating intercultural dialogue, as they are called to manage diversity within their classes and actively contribute to the enhancement of their students' intercultural competences<sup>55</sup>. Furthermore, the role of other academic staff in fostering intercultural dialogue should not be undervalued. Often, they are confronted with challenges



that arise from diversity within institutions. Also, they are called to play a role in the organisation of activities directed at the inclusion of students and teachers within the institutions, such as events for newcomers, programmes for international students and teachers, and they are often responsible for providing information on such programmes. As active actors in this process, academic staff plays an important role in creating a respectful and inclusive environment<sup>56</sup>. For this reason, they should also be included in activities designed at fostering intercultural dialogue in HEI and, most importantly, should benefit from special programmes or activities specifically designed to enhance their intercultural competences.

It is important that these activities are part of a wider strategy to enhance intercultural dialogue within HEI. One important recommendation arising from the seminar Intercultural Dialogue on the University Campus (March 2008) is, in fact, that intercultural dialogue is made a part of the mission of higher education: “[t]he leadership of higher education institutions should include intercultural dialogue as one of the aims of the university. They should consider including intercultural dialogue in the mission statement of the institution, and they should allocate adequate resources (both financial and staff) to implement intercultural dialogue. They should regard teaching and research that seek to foster intercultural dialogue on campus, as well as in society generally, as an integral part of the mission of higher education”.<sup>57</sup>

Also, specific bodies may be created in order to develop and implement strategies to be adopted by HEI. One such body may take the form of a Welcome Committee, formed by current/former students with refugee or international protection status, as well as national and other international students, lecturers/researchers and administrative staff. This Welcome Committee would be particularly responsible for the inclusion of new students, in particular, refugee students and other beneficiaries of international protection. The creation of such bodies creates opportunities for the development of intercultural competences of those involved, while contributing to inclusion processes of HEI (See Area 1).

## **CHAPTER 4: PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Taking into consideration the main aspects to be considered in any strategy focused on intercultural dialogue and development of intercultural competences, the present chapter outlines some practical recommendations directed at HEI.

### **4.0 Assessment**

Despite their shortcomings, the assessment of intercultural competences through indicators or existing tools may be important as to understand how HEI are considering the development of intercultural competences within their institutions, and to identify best practices and inadequacies in this regard.

#### **4.1 Development of a broad strategy on intercultural competences development**

The results of the assessment may inform the development of a comprehensive strategy on intercultural competences’ development that takes into consideration the aspects outlined in Chapter 3. This strategy should focus on the mission of the institution, the allocation of resources, teaching and research in this area, as well as the implementation of activities/opportunities, both in formal and in informal/non-formal education, directed at the enhancement of competences of students, lecturers and (other) academic staff. Since the development of these may involve external actors, HEI may consider the development of strategic partnerships (see Area 3). Also, HEI may consider creating specific bodies responsible for key areas, such as a



Welcome Committee, which is directed at the inclusion of newcomers but also contributes to the enhancement of intercultural competences of those involved.

#### **4.2 Adoption of measures focused on formal education**

When considering the development of intercultural competences through formal learning, HEI may consider the following:

- a) The introduction of changes into existing curricula. As mentioned, particular attention should be paid to teacher training programmes, due to the important role that teachers play in enhancing the development of intercultural competences in other levels of education. Also, HEI should take measures directed at the internationalization of the curriculum.
- b) The organisation of short courses aiming at the enhancement of intercultural competences. Some HEI, in Europe, develop, for instance, specific courses directed at the development of higher education teachers' intercultural competences. For instance, the Utrecht University organises a course directed at "Dutch and international teachers in higher education who (will) teach in an international or (culturally) diverse classroom" which aims at supporting "teachers in developing the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to effectively adapt [their] teaching to the specific needs of a heterogeneous and diverse classroom."<sup>58</sup> HEI are also proposing short courses to students directed at the development of their intercultural competences (for instance, see the Summer School organised by the University of Groningen <https://www.rug.nl/education/summer-winter-schools/intercultural-competence/?lang=en>).
- c) The development and implementation of mobility programmes, combined with measures directed at enhancing their potential role in developing intercultural competences of those involved. This may be done, for instance, through the organisation of staff training weeks, through symposia or even through the provision of training to mobility students. Some HEI are already taking steps in this regard. For instance, some HEI organise international staff training weeks, which include discussions on the development of intercultural competences (<https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/international/faculty-staff/mobility-staff/staff-week/index.html>) or symposia to debate topics such as internationalisation and development of intercultural competences (see, for instance, the symposium organised by the University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia entitled "Internationalisation and Intercultural Competence in Higher Education: Quality and Innovation" <https://mon.uvic.cat/grac/internationalisation-and-intercultural-competence-in-higher-education-quality-and-innovation/>). Also, HEI are also organising and providing training to mobility students. The project IEREST Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers, for instance, aimed "at developing, testing and disseminating an Intercultural Path (namely, a set of teaching modules) to be provided to Erasmus students before, during, and after their experience abroad, in order to encourage learning mobility and to support students in benefiting as much as possible from their international experiences in terms of personal growth and intercultural competencies."<sup>59</sup> Other HEI have a set of different training programmes/activities on intercultural competences directed at teachers and other academic staff (such as different workshops/training activities or individual and targeted support to a lecturer) (for instance, KU Leuven: <https://www.kuleuven.be/diversiteit/diversity/intercultural-competences>).



### **4.3 Adoption of measures focused on informal/non-formal education**

As mentioned, HEI may consider the development and implementation of informal/non-formal learning opportunities directed at the enhancement of intercultural competences, which may include:

#### **a) Film discussions or film festivals**

HEI may decide to display films or documentaries, followed by panel discussions on particular issues. In fact, films “can be a key to self-reflection and to openness to explore other places as well as conflicts and tensions related to diversity, either in the past or present, in contexts which may never be physically accessible to learners. With regard to films and texts, in non-formal and formal educational settings, facilitators or teachers may purposely select films, film scenes or extracts from written sources to discuss where diversity becomes crucial, either by asking learners to discuss their view of the events or to take the perspective of and empathise with the people involved in a given scene or passage. These discussions may focus especially on why they think these people talk to each other but fail to really communicate, whether intercultural competence is manifested and whether and why cultural diversity fuels tension and conflict in the selected extracts.”<sup>60</sup> For instance, in 2020, the Tampere University decided to screen the documentary film “When you can’t go back”, on a Syrian computer engineering student, followed by a panel discussion on academic freedom and refugee scholars (<https://www.tuni.fi/en/news/screening-documentary-film-when-you-cant-go-back>).

#### **b) Reading groups, theatre, creative writing**

Other activities may include the organisation of reading groups, theatre or creative writing groups. Theatre “enables people to explore and reflect on experiences that they would probably never encounter otherwise. Many short stories and poems also lend themselves well to the development of intercultural competence. They can be read, enjoyed, discussed, illustrated with drawings, retold or even [...] rewritten from the learners’ own perspectives. These learning activities based on literature, obviously appropriate for the language or literature class but also adaptable to other subject matter, allow learners to gain knowledge about people they have never met and to learn about lives they have never imagined. These processes can help learners to develop a willingness to question what is usually taken for granted in their own environment and to challenge their stereotypes of other people. Depending on the content or message of the poem, short story or play that teachers and facilitators select for use, these activities may even help learners understand how society and individuals can protect the dignity and human rights of people regardless of their cultural affiliations.”<sup>61</sup>

#### **c) Cultural events or activities**

Cultural meetings may take a variety of forms, including, for example, cooking events, traditional dances, exhibitions, among others. One important feature of these activities is that they allow for intercultural exchanges between students and academic staff.



#### **d) Sports**

Due to their potential in fostering the development of intercultural competences, HEI may also organise sports activities. As recognised by the Council of Europe, in fact, “[s]port is an important potential arena for intercultural dialogue, which connects it directly to everyday life. [...] Playing together under impartial and universal rules and a governing notion of fair play can frame an intercultural experience.”<sup>62</sup> For these reasons, some initiatives have been developed in order to enhance the potential of sports in the inclusion of migrants and refugees. For instance, the German programme “Integration through sports” provides financial and other type of support to sports clubs and aims at encouraging the enrolment of refugees and migrants in sports clubs and help their inclusion in local communities. (<https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/integration-through-sports>). Although not directly implemented by HEI, the programme relies on several partnerships with educational institutions.

#### **e) Volunteering activities**

Volunteering activities may include ongoing activities but also volunteer weeks/days. Volunteering activities may occur within the institution itself [for instance, by engaging volunteer students in providing support to (prospective) refugee students, such as the programme implemented by the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Germany ([https://together.pixel-online.org/refumap\\_scheda.php?id\\_sch=629](https://together.pixel-online.org/refumap_scheda.php?id_sch=629))] or towards the community at large (for example, by providing students with opportunities to engage with local organisations and provide support to migrant communities).

#### **f) Spaces for intercultural dialogue**

HEI may also consider the creation of spaces of intercultural dialogue, where some of these activities may occur<sup>63</sup>. For instance, the University of Aveiro, in Portugal, has developed the UA Intercultural Area [[https://together.pixel-online.org/refumap\\_scheda.php?id\\_sch=644](https://together.pixel-online.org/refumap_scheda.php?id_sch=644)] where international students may get help dealing with practical questions, and which also functions as a setting for exhibitions, concerts and other activities.

Furthermore, HEI may consider the development of programmes that combine different activities. For example, the University of Thessaly, Greece, together with the Second Chance School of Volos and the NGO ARSIS, organised an activity which involved walking through different paths or routes. Seven different routes were used, and every route focused on a specific theme (everyday life, refugees’ life, literature, history etc.). These worked as a trigger for the development of intercultural communication and exchange among the participants in the framework of critical intercultural education and experiential learning. [[https://together.pixel-online.org/refumap\\_scheda.php?id\\_sch=573](https://together.pixel-online.org/refumap_scheda.php?id_sch=573)]. Also, the Utrecht University’s project “Making journeys: building blocks for diversity” aims to use Arts Based Research (ABR) as an innovative educational tool to explore how diversity plays out in the university’s educational context. As part of the project, an exhibition entitled ‘Journeys into Diversity’ was organised and comprised photos, drawings, videos, objects, and paintings made or brought by refugee students, their fellow students, and teachers, as well as a workshop with arts-based activities (e.g. drawing, photography, and poetry). [[https://together.pixel-online.org/refumap\\_scheda.php?id\\_sch=600](https://together.pixel-online.org/refumap_scheda.php?id_sch=600)].



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## AREA 3: THIRD MISSION

### ABSTRACT:

*This part of the Guidelines deals with the Third Mission of HEIs, namely leveraging academic teaching, knowledge and research outcomes for the benefit of society and the economy. It focuses mainly on the positive impact that the Third Mission of HEIs could have on the social inclusion of refugees and other third-country nationals within European societies, and is divided into four chapters.*

*Chapter 1 introduces the definition of Third Mission of HEIs, weighs its importance in times of massive population movements and identifies its main actors and contributors. Chapter 2 presents good practices of Third Mission initiatives implemented by HEIs in Greece, Italy, Portugal, as well as by Universities across Europe. Chapter 3 seeks to outline a sustainable strategic framework for HEIs, in order to enhance their connection and cooperation with a view to improving and disseminating the potential of their Third Mission so as to achieve a more profound social impact. To this end, chapter 4 lays down tangible recommendations regarding the development of a strategic framework for HEIs and the engagement of their staff members, the involvement of external stakeholders and the implementation of related networking activities.*

### CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### **1.0 Introduction to the ‘Third Mission’ of Universities**

The traditional responsibility of Universities is linked to two main missions. The first one is Education, which is considered as its principal mandate and concerns the transmission of knowledge to students, who must meet specific criteria in order to qualify as such. The second mission is Research, which means producing new knowledge. University staff as well as young researchers, such as PhD students and post-doctoral researchers, work in libraries and laboratories in order to reach new or correct conclusions, not known or thought of yet.

It is commonly accepted that Universities have changed dramatically in the 21st century. For the last 30 years, there have been wider references to the Third Mission of Universities. This new, “Third Mission” concerns utilising the results of the knowledge and research produced for the benefit of society and the economy, and has been recognized as equally well-suited for the Universities. The latter must also engage with both societal needs and market demands. This constitutes the so-called Third Mission, which adds an additional function to foregoing. In this context, a University’s activity is linked with the socio-economic context within which it functions. This means an end to the gatekeeping of knowledge, which was being kept within the academic community. It can be considered closely related to the lifelong learning necessities of society, but goes beyond serving just these necessities. It is certain that scientific dialogue is not only restricted to scientific staff and those considered qualified to be students, but also society as a whole.

Thus, universities now develop their strategies around these three missions and try to combine them as harmoniously as possible. Academics discuss how to integrate these missions effectively within a coherent institutional framework, trying to produce knowledge not only to be used for teaching purposes and for producing new products or services – i.e. for commercial uses – but also in order to maximise societal prosperity, to respond to new needs, dangers, challenges



faced by society. As one might expect, different countries and individual Universities implement their Third Mission in different ways, emphasising different aspects and prioritizing different activities.

However, there is also debate concerning the negative effects of having to serve the market and society in general instead of science and students. The discussion is whether the adoption of a market- or society-oriented behaviour by a University could undermine its key research activities and funding. This is mainly because governments develop 'third mission' policies allocating funding to this end, while policy-makers and experts are pursuing specific indicators. On the other hand, one could certainly argue that equilibrium is needed and that the 'third mission' could also serve as a source of funding for Universities. Moreover, making positive contributions to a community is a valuable goal in itself and can be productive in the medium and long term, and in unforeseeable ways.

Universities may also choose their priorities or combine different aspects of third mission policies, namely:

**Developmental and research aspect:** A University reinforces the local economy through its research projects and the new technologies that it creates and adopts.

**Innovative aspect:** A University is the main producer of innovative knowledge and diffusion of expertise in the regional and local productive sector, while also mobilizing local business forces, becoming a permanent source of information on national and global economic developments.

**Economic aspect:** A University is a major force which invests in, buys goods from, transacts with and reinforces cooperation with local branches of the economy.

**Social aspect:** A University provides knowledge and actually creates new jobs, thus retaining youth in the region and in the country. It also responds to social needs through research and education, acknowledging the importance of lifelong learning activities, to society's need for further education based on continuously evolving standards. It also multiplies the working forces and functions as an incubator for initiatives aiming at fostering change and progress in societal matters, such as integration of immigrant, gender equality, protection of vulnerable social groups and environmental awareness.

**Cultural aspect:** A University is a centre of life and culture for the city where it is located, as it promotes cultural diversity and cultural skills, strengthens the preservation of cultural heritage and contributes to the cultural development of the region.

### ***1.1 The Third Mission in the era of massive population movements***

The role of Universities includes, inter alia, providing the State with necessary background knowledge and techniques to manage migration and refugee crises and enable society to be ready for and to culturally accommodate and help immigrants and refugees integrate into that society as smoothly as possible. Academic institutions can help by introducing multi-cultural programmes, by helping refugee students either start or continue their studies, and by providing a friendly environment<sup>1</sup>. These initiatives can also take place in coordination with local communities and thus become part of the Third Mission of HEIs.

In this context, the prevailing view is that Universities should persuade their governments to



proceed with a new educational “Marshall Plan”, a plan to prevent further brain drain.

Reasons for the migration and refugee crisis include war, violence, conflict or persecution, hunger, extreme poverty <sup>2</sup>, as well as the economic gap between rich and poor countries. It is clear that the migration of well-educated people widens this gap even further, while also resulting in a huge brain drain; however, the worst-case scenario is being forced to flee one’s homeland as a refugee.

Large migration and asylum flows pose major challenges not only to the countries of origin, but also to the countries of destination. Universities in the latter need to develop strategies in order to offer solutions. These might concern initiatives to welcome migrants and refugees as students. We have already explored such strategies and initiatives elsewhere. Nevertheless, Universities should also use their resources in order to help their own national societies welcome migrants and refugees by empowering both existing inhabitants and newcomers.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for the empowerment of social and humanitarian studies at Universities <sup>3</sup>. The current crisis is not just economic; it is a humanitarian crisis that stems from the neglect of values for the sake of transfer of technological knowledge. Universities must finally focus on values and human rights, and must respect international law. Discriminating on the basis of religion, gender, skin colour, ethnicity or nationality is certainly not the answer – indeed, it is an additional problem. Universities need to respond to society’s demands, problems and structures, and these needs now include the acquisition of skills and cultural competences for society as a whole. Universities cannot remain cloistered and blind to these needs.

As stated in the First Part of these Guidelines, Universities and their leaderships should intervene vigorously and finally serve their historical and moral objective: to play a vital role in making decisions that help ensure peace and sustainable development; furthermore, Universities must, when necessary, oppose policies affecting negatively the values of humanity and mankind.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, the environmental crisis is another issue to which Universities must respond effectively.

### **1.2 How it works**

The contribution of activities undertaken by HEIs has become more decisive for society at large; therefore, governments around the world have acknowledge a greater need for recognising and providing financial support to such activities.<sup>5</sup> Third Mission activities are now being organized at HEIs and mainly concern the creation, use, application and exploitation of knowledge, as well as other capabilities of Universities beyond their academic environment. In a globalised world, Universities should not only feel obliged to internationalise themselves but also take into consideration and care for their own region. They should therefore endeavour to contribute to the well-being of local society: this is the very essence of the Third.<sup>6</sup>

The Third Mission concerns activities that are being developed and evolve sometimes through the mediation of Technology (or Knowledge) Transfer Offices at Universities<sup>7</sup>. The role of Technology or Knowledge Transfer Offices, in the narrow sense, focuses on leveraging the results of academic research in order to strengthen the public, private and third sector, and concerns exchanging information, providing technical aid, concluding research contracts, carrying out collaborative research, consulting, promoting business culture, networking, consolidating partnerships with local, and regional partners but also in preparing the strategic plan of Universities and the regions where these activities are developed <sup>8</sup>. In other words, it concerns a wide range of Knowledge Transfer activities (University), certain of which generate revenue and contribute



substantially to offering financial support to the community and HEIs alike. Technology (or Knowledge Transfer) Offices offer organisational support to academic entrepreneurship and the continuous professional development of researchers, which expands their opportunities to have the results of their academic research used by industry<sup>9</sup>. Through Technology (or Knowledge Transfer Offices), Third Mission activities contribute significantly to the “self-sufficiency” of HEIs, as they aid the process of business discovery and the increase of reputation, of prestige, influence or social benefits leading to additional research funding and/or increased demand for university knowledge in addition to the role of universities as creators of knowledge<sup>10</sup>.

The Third Mission is carried out in different ways by different HEIs. The complexity of the role of the Third Mission is immense and every institution is faced with a wide range of challenges. The impact that each University may bring about depends on the wider institutional and regulatory environment in which they operate.<sup>11</sup>

For our purposes, we decided to focus on the need to accommodate refugees and immigrants. One could certainly focus on other social aspects, i.e. start-ups, research on climate change, or other issues.

We envisage the Third Mission as a tool to increase social responsibility and promote equality and tolerance in a pluralistic society. Universities should not be islands of knowledge; they need to become socially responsive. There is an urgent need for HEIs to leverage the knowledge they produce in order to address the practical concerns of everyday life, as societies are now changing by welcoming immigrants and refugees.<sup>12</sup>

### ***1.3 Societal structures working alongside with the University***

Local authorities, institutions and chambers, societies and associations can play a vital role working alongside Universities towards achieving the Third Mission. They are the natural sources and pools for finding and engaging people from all strata, classes and ages – therefore refugees and immigrants as well. Universities can provide all the above with ideas that can lead to small- or large-scale projects which will engage citizens from a wide spectrum. HEIs play a vital, pivotal role: whether in sciences or humanities, arts or music, they have a wide variety of projects to cooperate on. Research is the prime source of knowledge, of course, but applications and mutual exchange of experience is also important. Institutions and Chambers are run by qualified individuals with long experience in their fields, and can provide HEIs with invaluable resources and knowledge. HEIs and local authorities have long been working together, using the valuable knowledge produced by academics and applying it experimentally in all manner of sectors: technology, agriculture, medicine. On the other hand, HEIs have faced and practice internationalisation of their syllabi towards the formation of a European identity for all citizens, whether they are locals, immigrants or refugees.

Refugee structures, associations, societies, NGOs and day centres are the main forum for cooperation and exchange of experience. The main tool will be engaging volunteers from both sides: students and young newcomers can work, enjoy life and have fun together, widening their outlooks and integrating non-formal learning approaches into their lives. Internationalisation and a knowledge-based economy have become decisive factors shaping the way we think, research and act. Individuals can only manage the complexities and diversities they have to overcome as a challenge, if they indeed widen their scope to include newcomers. Experiential learning is the answer to many educational problems facing HEIs through the non-formal learning that volunteering can provide. Students meet with their peers and gain experience



from that encounter, meet with children and families and reflect upon their situation. They are challenged to apply their knowledge and expertise in order to address the needs of newcomers within the intercultural setting of our societies.

In many cases, national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been active in certain countries and they can act as a liaison between newcomers and established nationals. This reflects the historical fact of population movement and enhances cooperation, understanding and awareness. This intercultural cooperation is mutually beneficial for both refugees and Universities.

#### ***1.4 University functions - the use of volunteers***

In order for Universities to be capable of achieving positive results in the pursuit of their ‘third mission’, however they choose to define it, they need both material and immaterial sources, and human capital in particular. It is evident that both academic and technical staff on the one hand and students on the other constitute the necessary human resources.

**Students:** All students must actively engage with third mission initiatives. These include activities across a wide spectrum, according to one’s own faculties, level of studies and maturity. It can range from providing free lessons in the native language to those who need them (children or adults), to supervising and caregiving activities for secondary school or University students. It is well known that a peer system of help and supervision benefits both sides: native students become more responsible, and newcomers are given the support and guidance they need. Numerous activities (not far from the subject matter of several faculties) can be organized, aiming at the inclusion and the employment of the refugees.

We tend to think that just because refugees cannot speak the national language, they have nothing to say. We also forget at times that certain refugees used to be academics, teachers, University students, high school students before they were forced to leave their country. If we want to include all refugees in our own countries, we have to ensure that their needs are accommodated at our Universities.

**Academic staff:** Apart from encouraging students to enrol in the above activities and supervising them, academic staff may be charged with enhancing the academic knowledge and skills of adult refugees. Seminars might be held at certain HEIs and, if it is feasible, certain tasks can be assigned to adult refugees. The exchange of ideas and practices may surprise everyone involved in such activities.

## **CHAPTER 2: GOOD PRACTICES**

The so-called refugee crisis in Europe increased the pressure on Universities, to shift from mainly teaching and performing research, and adding a Third Mission, portrayed as “a contribution to society”.<sup>13</sup> This Chapter is focused on the description of exemplary cooperation patterns between Universities and the third sector in the field of refugees’ integration and access to academic opportunities namely in Greece, Portugal and Italy. It also aims to shedding light on interactions between today’s university and its environment, as part of the university’s social responsibility in order to give a practical view on the examined topic as well as to be an inspiration for other Universities which would aspire to develop such initiatives in the future.



## **2.0 Good Practice in Greece**

The outbreak of the refugee crisis in Greece during the years 2015-2016 exposed the role of Universities as engines that contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of the regions in which they operate. The way Universities are achieving the above goal is by transferring knowledge and technologies to industry and to society at large.<sup>14</sup> Such an example is the **VAI project**<sup>15</sup> which was set up by 10 partners from Academia, Civil Society, Local Government & Media based in 4 countries: Austria, Germany, Italy, Greece. The project was coordinated by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the largest Greek university, supporting excellent education and research in a wide range of disciplines. The VAI project has been inspired by the wave of solidarity back in 2015-16 which was triggered during the Europe's so-called "refugee crisis" and the 2015 "summer of migration". The project sought to explore one of the core elements of the Third Mission; volunteerism and more specifically how and why does volunteering by, with and for immigrants may relate to integration. The project's overall objective was to explore innovative actions facilitating active participation and social integration. This was approached through a stepwise process of 3 Work Packages: "National Researches", "Capacity Building" and "Establishing volunteering opportunities" – hence producing "better knowledge", creating "better tools", and promoting "better practice".

Another project which was coordinated by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was the **SUCRE**<sup>16</sup> project, which has extensively analyzed above.<sup>17</sup> In this project, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, University of Cologne and VU Amsterdam collaborated with Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), a Greek NGO which has been active since 1989 in the field of asylum and human rights in Greece. The results of the SUCRE project have proved that universities are able to respond to the needs of refugee/migrant students and to become allies for those working in the field with refugees/migrants and hence expand their role beyond teaching and research.

The same role plays the University of Piraeus (UniPi) at the project **TEACHmi | Teacher preparation for migrant school inclusion**.<sup>18</sup> The 36 months duration of implementing Teachmi project is focused on reinforce the role of education. This goal will be realized by promoting the common EU values of tolerance and non –discrimination, while putting stress on strengthening social cohesion. Project's impact will help youngsters to become open-minded and active members in the diverse and inclusive society. The tools will be utilized and all the knowledge and good practices which will be exchanged will provide to all students the possibility to receive the best educational approach possible. In addition, all the intellectual products of the project will foster inclusion and the provision of a higher quality of school services, targeted to the needs of the students from an early age.

Finally, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens at the **Mig-HealthCare**<sup>19</sup> project was a member of a consortium of Universities, along with national authorities and NGOs from ten countries across Europe. The partners of the projects have diverse experience on issues of public health and integration of refugees and migrants. The overall objective of Mig-HealthCare is to improve health care access for vulnerable migrants and refugees, support their inclusion and participation in European communities and reduce health inequalities. Mig-HealthCare was a community – based project. Therefore, it produced effective community-based care models, pilot tested in different contexts and countries, which focused on health promotion and prevention. It developed guidelines and tools to reorient health care services to a community level. Being a member of that project, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, paved the way for the establishment and development of similar community – based initiatives from other Universities across Europe.



### **2.1 Good Practice in Portugal**

Several Portuguese HEIs host refugee students or students who, despite not having refugee status or subsidiary protection, are nationals of countries where there are situations of armed conflict. In many of those initiatives Portuguese HEIs go beyond the function of the University as a teaching and research institution and they contribute to the development of the communities they belong to.

This is the case with students who are hosted through the **Global Platform for Syrian Students**,<sup>20</sup> a non-profit multi-stakeholders organization. In this initiative universities established deeper engagement with academics and external stakeholders. The non-profit founded in November 2013 by Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, with the support of a core group of institutional partners, namely the Council of Europe, the League of Arab States, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and the Institute of International Education (IIE). The aim of the project is “to provide access to higher education for Syrian students affected by the war, in safe countries throughout the world.” The Academic Consortium of the Global Platform includes several Portuguese higher education institutions. The Global Platform is also setting up a Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies (RRM), which is “aimed at providing more, better and faster academic opportunities for students in vulnerable situations or facing humanitarian emergencies created by wars, conflicts and natural disasters”.

Another example in the examined topic comes from the University of Aveiro (UA). The UA provides its international academic community with a Local Support Centre for the Integration of Migrants (**CLAIM**). This initiative, analysed above in Area 1 of these Guidelines, is a great example of how Universities can and should rediscover, understand and capture the contribution of research, and of higher education in general, to the cultural life of nations.<sup>21</sup>

Simultaneously, the University of Porto organized the **U.Porto Volunteer Day 2019**.<sup>22</sup> During this day took place awareness-raising activities as well as activities which aimed at promoting active citizenship and active intervention by the academic community. Each day was directed to activities in different areas of the city, with the objective of covering the three centers that constitute the campus of the University of Porto. The activities held included a conference on the theme “Changing the world through innovation and collaboration – a challenge within our power” (“Colaborar e inovar para mudar o mundo, um desafio ao nosso alcance”) with the participation of Jorge Sampaio (President of the Republic 1996 – 2006 & Chairman of the Global Platform for Syrian Students), Gustavo Carona (Humanitarian doctor) and testimonies from Syrian students studying at the University of Porto. This talk was followed by a presentation of the Global Platform for Syrian Students project of setting up a Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies (RRM), which mentioned above. Other activities included solidarity markets and workshops on volunteering, social inclusion, forced migration and ethnical minorities. The Volunteer Week ended with a Solidarity Walk with the support of CDUP (Sports Center of the University of Porto). During this Week University of Porto engaged with the local and regional community and government and proved that Universities are able to encompass the Third Mission.

### **2.2 Good Practice in Italy**

As in the rest of Europe, in Italy, too, many universities have begun to take action to promote the inclusion of refugees and to join various European and non-European projects that offer refugee



students opportunities to integrate into the Academic community and in the Italian community at large.

To this extent the Università of Padova established the initiative “Cultura e Accoglienza”. The goal of the initiative “Cultura e Accoglienza” was to promote a connection between refugees, university and territory. In order to get the refugees closer to the world of academic studies, the University adopted a peer-to-peer approach to help them in the language courses and exams. In this way, there was the possibility to spread different experiences and backgrounds between refugees and students. Simultaneously, in order to favor the communication and the sense of belonging to the society, the University offered each participant two linguistic courses of different levels trying to stimulate the participants to achieve a better level of Italian. In addition to it, the project provided each participant a tutor in order to have a didactical support during the linguistic courses and, for the ones who chose to follow an academic course, also during the preparation of the exam. The didactical support of tutors was fundamental also for the museum visits that the coordination tutors organized during the academic year and it built a basis for a strong and sincere relationship between tutors and refugees. One of the project main results has been the engagement of the inner community and the society of Padua’s territory.

Another initiative from the same University is the Arqus Alliance, Action Line 2 Widening Access, Inclusion and Diversity, task force 2.6 Enabling Refugees. Since its inception, the Arqus Alliance has agreed to put people at the center of its mission. Enabling people has been identified as a leitmotif within and for the Alliance. Similarly, amongst Arqus’s major goals widening access and inclusion, and quality learning for all sit alongside our people-centered approach, which pervades the entire philosophy of the Alliance. According to this approach “Knowledge is no longer a privilege, but a right”. Universities, as societal institutions with their three major missions of education, research and outreach, can help disseminate a more democratic and inclusive perspective throughout society, by becoming a model and by educating people to embrace diversity. The actions address under-represented groups of all kinds: those with special educational needs due to physical and intellectual disabilities; migrant and refugee populations; women; LGBT; gifted students. Initiatives of the project include; mapping, planning, organizing, and sharing knowledge and best practices about structured actions to widen access and to foster public engagement, inclusion, attention to diversity, and sustainability in line with the 17 objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda, working as an open and innovative laboratory. The initiative “Asylum seekers to University” as well as the “Bolzano senzatetto – obdachlos in Bozen” which are mentioned above, are also good examples of cooperation patterns between universities and the third sector. In fact, in the initiative “Bolzano senzatetto – obdachlos in Bozen” students of the Faculty of Design and Arts designed products for the homeless. The materials that were used for production were disused materials of the Salewa company. The collaboration between the University and the Salewa brand is a good example of the third mission of the Universities.

### **2.3 Good Practices from Universities across Europe**

Students in UK have built a national network the so-called STAR (Student Action for Refugees) with the aim to building a more understanding and just society where refugees are welcomed and can thrive in the UK. A few examples of the work done by this network are the following; Volunteer locally working directly with refugees, building understanding and connections; Campaign nationally for policy change and equal access to higher education for refugees; Learn about refugee protection and the asylum journey in the UK with experts and peers. Among others STAR worked in partnership with SolidarityNow to support the establishment of student-



led groups at Greek universities. The vision of the Network is a society where refugees are welcomed and can thrive as equal members of the community.

The Vilnius University, in Lithuania established the innovative project 'From Alienation to Inclusion'. The innovative character of the project lies on the developing of a unique on-line environment which contains comprehensive training modules on social integration of migrants and refugees into EU societies, while seeking to eliminate all those social, linguistic and psychological barriers which prevent migrants and refugees from being integrated in the new environment. Also, the environment of the project is being endowed with a variety of other pioneer digital tools and applications, specially designed for the creation and establishment of a strong network amongst European NGOs, social enterprises and charities for migrants and refugees, thus forming strong alliances, sharing best practices amongst those organizations and preparing a fertile ground for future collaborations, by simultaneously supporting, in a practical way, the notion of global citizenship and developing a mutual European policy in order to defend human rights and to fight against racism. Accordingly, the ultimate aim of the project is to bring together such organizations, thus adopting a more collective and therefore effective action.

There are several other examples of initiatives across Europe in which universities interact with the society at large. Such an example is "the bunt", an initiative facilitated by the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). BUNT Karlsruhe (Bündnis für die Unterstützung von Geflüchteten in Karlsruhe) is a city-wide network of GOs, NGOs, educational institutions and faith-based organizations striving to improve cooperation and information sharing among stakeholders working with and for refugees in Karlsruhe. In the initiative "Exploiting the potential of newly arrived people and facilitating their establishment in the Swedish society" by the Linköping University the University actively works to exploit the potential of newly arrived people and enable their establishment in the Swedish society.

Finally, in the initiative "Let's Work Together!" which is facilitated by the University of Tampere an action group, called "Let's Work Together!" was established with the aim to supporting and helping integrating asylum seekers and refugees in Finnish society. The School of Education in the University of Tampere and its partners organize common low-threshold activities for asylum seekers and refugees by the means of education. The aim is to provide meaningful activities to asylum seekers and refugees in Finland together with Finnish people. The group collects together students and staff from the University of Tampere as well as adult and vocational education actors in the Pirkanmaa region interested in integrating asylum seekers and refugees. It invites people and organizations to participate in the planned activities and to generate new forms of activities. Activities include, among others, courses, children's club activities and a Family Café. Courses may be attended by adult asylum seekers and refugees with sufficient English skills and capabilities to study in academic level. These courses are part of the normal curriculum and study schedule of the University.

## **CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC PATH**

### ***3.0 Towards a Strategic Framework for the Third Mission of HEIs***

In order to address growing societal challenges, there is increasing demand for HEIs to use their knowledge gained from research and teaching to fulfill their Third Mission, contributing to the social inclusion of all persons in local communities and in society at large. This involves taking responsibility, actively and consciously, within a strategic framework of cooperation that



will involve various stakeholders and will set the main priorities, allowing for the successful realization of the Universities' objectives within the scope of their Third Mission.

The concept of the HEIs' Third Mission has been defined in many and diverse ways, and encompasses a wide range of models, dimensions, functions and activities, sparking various debates between scholars and policymakers. It may be considered as a crucial mission of HEIs that requires the most innovation in terms of organisation of HEIs. Three crucial points should be raised in order to better consider the social engagement of HEIs' Third Mission. Firstly, the term itself is vague. Although HEIs generally acknowledge their social responsibilities and refer to social engagement in their mission statements, the practical meaning remains unclear. Secondly, HEI staff members play a key role in identifying important areas of social interest and initiating active engagement. However, these occasional actions have to be formalised. Thirdly, HEIs need incentives and resources in order to carry out social engagement.

On the other hand, refugees and asylum seekers, being international students, widen the scope of the process of social engagement, providing HEIs with the impetus to establish support structures that could be used in aid of various marginalised or non-traditional groups of students. Additionally, experience with refugee students offers possibilities to apply the lessons learned from these programmes to other groups accordingly. Forced and voluntary migration are a continuous phenomenon of our times. The implementation of inclusive policies will benefit host countries and HEIs, while the potential contribution of refugees and migrants to our societies can benefit society at large. Therefore, it is considered important to develop sustainable programmes for supporting both the social and the academic integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

To this end, a multi-tiered approach is required, taking into consideration both the need to facilitate access to higher education for refugees, including recognition of their qualifications, and the importance of achieving the socio-economic integration of refugees in the local community and in labour market and providing psychological support to refugees. This chapter seeks to outline a sustainable strategic framework of cooperation, not only among HEIs themselves, but also between HEIs and local authorities, civil society organizations, social networks and associations, in order to enhance their connection and cooperation with a view to the improvement and dissemination of the potential of their Third Mission, achieving a more profound social impact.

### ***3.1 Conceptualization of a Strategic Framework for the Third Mission of the HEIs***

The Third Mission of HEIs concerns the way HEIs consciously and strategically develop their activities and contribute to society within the scope of their Third Mission. These HEIs activities are conducive to the shift in various stakeholders' expectations as to what HEIs can achieve and what their role in society is.

HEIs can contextualize their Third Mission by acquiring information on social and economic needs and by linking the trends and demands of society, enabling those who are outside HEIs to know what the capacities of universities are.

Moreover, the degree of structural inclusiveness of HEIs in their local environment and their connection to local social issues also need to be considered in order to identify an effective strategic framework and develop related action plans.

A successful cooperation framework should be developed as part of a comprehensive strategy for higher education integration, for refugees in particular or for disadvantaged groups in general, taking into consideration a wide range of aspects, from outreach and recruitment to



services and teaching practices. To this end, the strategic plan that should be implemented by HEIs in order to achieve a higher degree of inclusiveness and improve their societal connections, interactions and cooperation within the scope of their Third Mission should be:

- Collaborative, being developed or implemented in conjunction with other institutions, local, regional or national actors, such as NGOs, municipalities, regional authorities and other related stakeholders. The plan has to be established within the local or national context of migration, social inclusion and (higher) education policies. The importance of all actors working together to tackle challenges and create opportunities for refugees is underlined. In this regard, we should look beyond the support of international organisations, such as the European Union and the UNHCR, and include stakeholders who act at both the national and the local level, such as local authorities, various NGOs, social networks and associations, in order to help achieve the HEIs' Third Mission.
- Inclusive, by involving the hosted refugee population in the development and implementation of the process, based on the needs of hosted refugee populations, their interests, demands and expectations. Furthermore, HEIs should involve and engage all organisational units and as many academic and administrative staff members as possible when fulfilling their Third Mission.
- Sustainable, in terms of funding models and long-term planning, as well as easily applicable, having the potential to be replicated and broadened in scale. It should also provide for the potential to be upgraded and transferred to other HEIs, in terms of cost of implementation, national policy contexts, institutional realities and different groups of disadvantaged learners.
- The conceptualisation of a comprehensive strategic framework for the sustainable implementation of the Third Mission of HEIs should point towards a variety of different aims and priorities, depending on the focus of their organisational units and their staff members, including, among others:
  - The development of a specific content-related profile for the HEI's Third Mission, based on the existing expertise and related activities of the HEI in question.
  - The development of concrete measures for implementing the HEI's Third Mission, taking into consideration the diversity of cultures within the HEI.
  - The transfer of academic knowledge to help resolve diverse societal challenges.
  - The transfer of technologies and innovations in the form of cooperation with public and private stakeholders.

By defining and adopting a thorough strategic plan, HEIs recognize the benefits of investing resources in order to become hubs for cross-sectoral collaboration with the local community, local and national stakeholders in refugees' integration processes. Finally, HEIs improve and expand their interconnections and cooperation ties with the third sector within the context of their Third Mission, thus achieving a higher degree of inclusivity in society.

### ***3.2 Development of a Strategic Framework for the Third Mission of the HEIs***

The sustainable strategic plan for the promotion of the Third Mission of HEIs can be developed by taking the following four foundational elements into consideration so as to establish a concrete and target-group-oriented framework for the social inclusion of refugees:



- **HEIs' institutional context:** As a concept, the Third Mission has yet to be established and elaborated in depth. Each university chooses the areas where it interacts with society. Researchers of best practices point out three main aspects of activity: transfer of technologies and innovations, continuing education, and social participation. While the priorities, goals and activities in pursuit of the Third Mission may vary from HEI to HEI, the development of an appropriate institutional body within the HEI is required in order to ensure the achievement of its Third Mission. Whether as an academic centre, a committee, a working group of researchers, or an administrative unit functioning under the scope of the HEI, a separate body mandated to serve and promote the HEI's Third Mission will undoubtedly ensure its consistency and continuity. This body may further serve as an institutional liaison between the HEI and the various community stakeholders. A comprehensive communication and dissemination plan is also necessary to keep refugees, related stakeholders, as well as academic and administrative staff members informed and involved.
- **HEIs' staff members:** The academic and administrative staff of universities should play a key role in the design and in the implementation of the strategic plan developed for the Third Mission of HEIs. On one hand, academic and research staff can contribute by recording existing practices, collecting and analysing data and conducting studies in order to develop specific models, activities, programmes and good practices that will promote the social inclusion of refugees into the society. Additionally, academic staff could train administrative staff members and students, thus ensuring the most effective implementation of the specific actions that will have been developed in the framework of the strategic plan adopted. On the other hand, administrative staff members should provide counselling, social welfare, professional development, administrative and technical support to refugees. In this context, additional funding would allow for training new personnel. Furthermore, paid student positions or internships may increase student engagement and potentially lead to more peer-contact for refugee students. In order to provide substantive support to refugees, qualified personnel such as language-teachers are also required.
- **External networks and affiliations:** HEIs could achieve a deeper social impact and better outcomes when implementing their Third Mission cooperatively rather than individually. In order to achieve synergies and develop networks of cooperation, HEIs should establish channels of communication and affiliations with the various stakeholders within society, namely other HEIs, local authorities, community enterprises and non-governmental organisations, as well as with the entrepreneurial sector. Networks and affiliations will allow for the realization of Third Mission activities at a wider scale, greater dissemination results, as well as further funding opportunities.
- **Funding:** Most of the core elements listed above depend on funding. Project-oriented funding include personnel, relevant training courses, activities, public relations and networking. HEIs should seek new or additional funding opportunities at the local, national, European or international level, in order to implement the scheduled projects within the strategic framework developed for their Third Mission. While the project-specific time-limit of funding schemes allows for sound implementation of the HEIs' Third Mission, project deadlines and uncertainty about open funding applications cause insecurities as well. HEI efforts for further or new funding should be answered promptly and well before the previous funding periods end.



## CHAPTER 4: PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### ***4.0 Practical recommendations for the institutional context of the HEIs***

In order to fully realise their Third Mission, HEIs should develop a holistic inclusion framework that will consider the role of education and training, human rights, and human dignity. They should encourage the harmonisation and streamlining of procedures to ensure access of refugees to all levels of education, starting with learning the local language as a matter of integration. Within the scope of their Third Mission, universities are committed to welcoming refugees. Good practice initiatives exist across various European HEIs and require accessible financing that is permanent rather than short-term in order to support their sustainability. HEI procedures and initiatives have to be open and non-discriminatory. Effective inclusion of refugees in higher education relies on a long-term strategy linked to the university's Third Mission and its social responsibility. This goal needs institutionalised and sustainable structures with refugees placed at the centre, as well as a commitment by and involvement of the entire university community.

The Third Mission should be envisioned as a shared agenda of all organisational units and as many university members as possible. Active participation may include a variety of different aims and priorities, depending on the focus of the organisational units or individuals, such as: extended networking with societal actors and third-party funders; extended cooperation with public and private stakeholders; better preparation of students to take over responsible posts in politics, society and economy; as well as promotion of social integration of disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals and groups, such as refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. HEIs can develop actions that will promote the institutional dimension of a comprehensive framework for the implementation of their Third Mission.

First, the establishment of a research-oriented institution within the HEI, such as a research centre, a hub or an incubator, that will conduct related studies, develop projects and implement activities that will boost the Third Mission of the HEI. A noteworthy example is the "Third Mission Centre" established at the Moscow Higher School of Economics University in 2020, aiming to serve as the first think tank of this kind in Russia. The Centre prepared the first Russian public report on the HEIs Third Mission and initiated a free digital internship programme for Russian regional universities to share the experience and knowledge concerning their Third Mission.

Second, many European HEIs have set up Knowledge Transfer Offices in recent years, aiming to improve collaboration with various private and public stakeholders so as to leverage their research results and increase their engagement and social action in the community, especially by empowering those in need. The creation of Knowledge Transfer Offices is envisaged in the Communication from the European Commission titled "Improving knowledge transfer between research institutions and industry across Europe: embracing open innovation - Implementing the Lisbon agenda".

Third, HEIs should develop a communication plan to promote their Third Mission. They could utilize any existing ICT means and social media accounts to ensure the required visibility and dissemination, becoming more accessible and reachable to all interested parties. The introduction of a separate "Third Mission" section on the website of the HEIs, as is the case with the website of the University of Bologna, would add further value, contributing to the dissemination of the objectives and outcomes of their Third Mission.



#### **4.1 Engagement of staff members of HEIs**

The Third Mission of HEIs may serve as a powerful tool for engaging both specific stakeholders and society at large, thus promoting the social integration of refugees. To this end, staff members of HEIs should play an important role. A series of measures and actions that could be adopted to encourage and support the engagement of academics, non-teaching staff and external stakeholders in Third Mission activities are listed below. HEIs could:

- Engage academic staff members in Third Mission initiatives by organising group discussions, focus groups and peer-to-peer meetings, taking their multidisciplinary academic profiles into consideration.
- Record, evaluate and reward the performance of staff members who contribute to the successful realization of Third Mission initiatives. Conduct research and adopt new incentives in order to further engage academic and non-academic staff members in Third Mission activities.
- Organise staff training seminars, aiming to strengthen knowledge sharing, peer support and academic partnerships to facilitate refugees' integration in and access to HEIs. The main objective of the training should be to provide university actors - both academic and administrative staff – with a set of tools to enhance the role of HEIs in the integration and support of refugees.
- Provide orientation, information and incentives to refugees concerning the possibility of following a higher education curriculum, emphasizing the importance of improving their educational and social skills as well as to increase their civic engagement in the local community. The question of whether refugees are informed of their possibilities to access higher education should be clearly answered, aiding them in overcoming their initial insecurities about the remaining challenges, such as the recognition of foreign degrees.
- Focus on the design and implementation of volunteer and social initiatives in cooperation with academics, administrative staff and students, with the support of non-profit organisations providing community engagement. Their engagement can include initial networking, counselling refugees after hours, mentorship initiatives and social activities such as sports groups.

#### **4.2 Involvement of external stakeholders and networking activities**

When realizing their Third Mission, universities act as intermediaries for engagement with external stakeholders, in order to innovate and to develop a knowledge-based society from theory to practice, to promote social inclusivity and equal opportunities for every individual. HEIs can and should play a multitude of practical roles, going beyond their traditional missions of teaching and research.

HEIs should develop communication channels with all related public and private external stakeholders, community actors and civil society organisations in order to change the common perception that universities only provide teaching. In fact, universities have the potential and capacity to support refugees and promote their integration in academia as well as their social inclusion in the local community in general. The systematic interconnection and development of networking activities would contribute towards this direction. HEIs could:

- Invite communities to identify their learning needs in order to ensure that the services



provided by HEIs would be suitable and useful.

- Strengthen the involvement of civil society organisations, bridging the cognitive, institutional and cultural gaps that hinder cooperation with them in practice.
- Produce leaflets and media communication material for different targeted groups of interest within society.
- Explore and exploit the potentials of ICT, fostering communication with the various external stakeholders.
- Identify potentially helpful support structures (at the individual and organizational levels) to further implement their Third Mission.

Networking activities should also be developed among universities themselves. HEIs could establish regular channels of communication with other academic institutions and document existing Third Mission activities implemented by various HEIs in order to further disseminate the good practices being implemented in the field of social integration of refugees. They could also deepen their cooperation by signing Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) for the establishment of HEI Third Mission Networks. This process could offer the impetus required to initiate and implement new activities in research and academic teaching within the context of their Third Mission. Moreover, it would increase their abilities to advocate for their Third Mission's goals in promoting social inclusion of refugees inside and outside the universities.

Finally, in addition to community organizations, civil society, local stakeholders and academic institutions, HEIs should foster dialogue with policymakers, aiming to expand the potential of their Third Mission. Generally speaking, government authorities may have limited capacity to directly address all aspects of social integration of refugees within the territory of their state due to the legal framework in force, bureaucracy or even lack of political will. On the other hand, policymakers could play a crucial role in introducing measures and undertaking actions to support the Third Mission of the HEIs. This way, they would be contributing to the most effective implementation of the inclusive strategic plans of HEIs for the integration of refugees, allowing for a more holistic social inclusion approach to refugees. Among other things, government authorities and policymakers could:

- Avoid designing social policy interventions based on the “one-size-fits-all” approach, as the educational, social and cultural profiles of refugees vary.
- Introduce regional development hubs that would function as support structures for Third Mission activities, bringing together academics and stakeholders to exchange knowledge and develop jointly designed initiatives.
- Motivate public and private bodies, community stakeholders, civil society organisations and society at large so as to achieve more intense engagement with the academic community by encouraging donations and funding for the realisation of the Third Mission of HEIs through specific incentives.



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