

Higher Education programmes for people of refugee status in Europe at the University of Vienna

Aims of the transfer activity

The Media Governance and Industries Research Lab at the Department of Communication of the University of Vienna is offering free academic courses for individuals with refugee or asylum seeking status in Austria or another country of the European Economic Area (EEA) who have an interest in pursuing University study. The courses run between 2017 and 2018 and are supported by the European Union's ERASMUS+ programme.

Person(s) responsible for the project

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Project runtime

01.12.2016 - 30.11.2018

Funding

Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission



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Cooperation partners from outside of the University

The program is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission and realised by the Media Governance and Industries Research Lab at the Department of Communication of the University of Vienna, in cooperation with the CEU – Central European University, Budapest, and the University of East London.

Project description

The program is to offer university preparatory courses that will enhance newly arrived migrants' access to higher education while facilitating their language acquisition. It will assess and validate the learning and qualifications that our refugee students hold and will seek to facilitate the transition of qualifications to European university environments through preparatory work and through advocacy to encourage national governments to recognize refugee degrees. The program consists of two streams, OLlive and OLlive-UP. As part of the Open Learning Initiative (OLlive), refugees are offered the opportunity to attend academic courses and tutorials held by staff and students of the University of Vienna in order to prepare for university admission. OLlive is a free of charge, academic non-degree programme to people of refugee and asylum seeking status to support them in connecting their previous professional and academic experience to their new lives in Europe, including the possibility of higher education studies at a later stage. OLlive cycles last 12 weeks each. There will be five cycles between April 2017 and November 2018. Courses take place on Saturdays. Olive-UP is an intensive, full-time course of study for individuals with refugee or asylum seeking status with the goal of preparing students for higher education study. It aims to prepare students to make competitive applications to BA and MA programmes at European universities. The OLlive-UP programme focuses on academic tutoring, academic German, English, developing academic skills,

advocacy, and human rights training. Olive-Up is a six-month programme, starting in September 2017. Courses take place Mondays-Fridays.

Results/Impact

The program's mission is to expand the boundaries of the University by extending learning opportunities to marginalised members of society. Universities in recent years have become increasingly cloistered from society at large. Outreach programs like OLIVE help to strengthen the educational missions of universities as well as reinforce the university's crucial role as guarantor of a vibrant and inclusive public sphere. This can lead to more members of marginalised and disadvantaged groups, in this case refugees and asylum seekers, gaining confidence and skills to enter into formal learning and the support of society at large to do so. The program is also to reach out to disadvantaged and deprived areas. Also, it is to take on the challenge of helping to build a sustainable network of advocacy and leadership for refugees. Its aim is not only to improve individual lives by advancing employable skills, but also to contribute to the process of developing a durable structure of institutions and actors that place the question of active refugee participation and representation in host societies at the forefront. This way the project not only enhances access of a disadvantaged group to higher education through an innovative and new educational approach, but will also foster social dialogue and contribute to the integration of refugees.

Transfer aspect of the activity

It is to reflect the role of higher education institutions towards the needs of marginalized learners and systematically transform itself and be prepared to provide concrete opportunities for integration into learning environments for disadvantaged populations with a variety of needs. This fundamentally restructures the systemic structures of the university with real potential for further change in the broader community.

Achievement of objectives

The program's impact on academic, policy, empowerment, and mainstream societies will be verified.

Academic: The teaching and learning models, their impacts, the cost and outcome data of the particular educational and training components of the projects will be made transparent and easily accessible to European higher education networks.

Policy: EU level: targeted advocacy work will reach out to the political and policy making bodies of the European Union and policy practice champions in the European Commission. The impacts will be based on two principles of relating to the refugee communities: the duty to protect and the principle of inclusive societies as the source of progress and economic growth. Domestic policy formation: Due to advocacy work to which the consortium will see partnership with other domestic pro migrant advocacy groups, and national policies are expected to move towards the recognition of refugee degrees and improving access to higher education including the provision of scholarships, embedded access programs in universities, and, where needed, far-reaching language training to an academic level.

Empowerment impacts: Individual citizenship resources: participating in project activities will help the individual beneficiaries increase their learning abilities, build their self-esteem, and enhance their social networks. **Social inclusion impacts:** the program will increase the visibility of refugee inclusion matters and educational good practices in the prime domestic outlets of the mainstream media. Better trained, densely networked, and self-esteemed refugees in European societies will have better chances for labor market, social and political integration. The good practices of social inclusion initiatives of prestigious universities will invite the mainstream youth groups in other universities to build interest and trust in other likeminded programs for vulnerable members of the larger community.

Measures for a longer-term realization

By assessment of objectively verifiable indicators of achievement.

Visibility of the transfer activity

The project is committed to making the best practices of the project widely and freely available. The dissemination strategy is guided by two principles: (1) the project hopes to encourage the adoption and replication of its key programs in other institutions of higher education and (2) it intends to use its program and the learning derived from it as a basis for advocacy and policy change. Our dissemination strategy is thus structured around publications and communications that further each of these two key principles.

Webpage/Publications

News section on <http://olive.univie.ac.at/en/home/>
<http://olive.univie.ac.at/home/news/news/olive-infoabend/>

Keywords

social integration through higher education; refugees and asylum seekers; open university