AGILE
HIGHER EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN REFUGEE CRISES

Landscape analysis of Higher Education crisis support mechanisms and initiatives for refugee students

PUBLICATION ON FINDINGS

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Abstract

The AGILE project sets out to forge inclusive higher education systems, for all exiled students that will also be capable of adapting their responses to deal efficiently with emergency refugee crises such as the war in Ukraine. This report will thus explore the different initiatives developed by Higher Education Institutions across Europe and beyond so as to share best practices and understand the barriers and levers affecting successful Higher Education integration.

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Statement of originality

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Disclaimer

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Project summary

This publication is a result of the Erasmus+-funded AGILE project ("Higher education resilience in refugee crises: forging social inclusion through capacity building, civic engagement and skills recognition", http://www.agileproject-erasmus.eu/), whose aim is to increase the resilience of HE systems to address the ongoing needs of refugees through social participation and skills recognition.

The AGILE project aims to enrich HE curricula by proposing new pedagogical designs that encourage grassroots and digitally enhanced actions in both formal and informal learning environments.

University Paris 8 coordinates the project. The consortium is made up of six universities (University Paris 8, Bordeaux Montaigne, University, University of Hamburg, University of Ljubljana, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Kaunas University of Technology), one think-tank (Polish Rectors Foundation) and one business partner (Web2Learn) specialised in open recognition systems and social learning.

Consortium

Partner n°	Name	Short name	Country	Logo
1.	University Paris 8	UP8	France	
2.	University Bordeaux Montaigne	UBM	France	
3.	Web2Learn	W2L	Greece	
4.	University of Ljubljana	UL	Slovenia	
5.	Polish Rectors Foundation	PRF	Poland	
6.	Lviv Polytechnic National University	LPNU	Ukraine	
7.	University of Hamburg	UH	Germany	
8.	Kaunas University of Technology	KTU	Lithuania	

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List of abbreviations

The following list presents the acronyms used in the deliverable in alphabetical order.

Abbreviation	Meaning
FLE	Français Langue Etrangère / French as a Foreign Language
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MEnS	Migrants dans l'Enseignement Supérieur / Migrants in Higher Education
MESRI	Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur, de la recherche et de l'innovation / Ministry for Higher Education
OFPRA	Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons

Executive summary

This report provides an overview of the **support systems and mechanisms** implemented by Higher Education Institutions across Europe, to address the needs of exiled students whether they are academic needs or socio-economic ones. The report then goes on to **assess their impact** on refugee integration into higher education.

Our project's second Work Package (WP2) included two roundtables with academic staff from HEIs offering refugee education programmes, one roundtable with different decision-makers which included both national policy-makers and academic staff, a large-scale on-line survey as well as two public talks with exiled students so as to gain authentic first-hand feedback from both refugee students and academic staff.

Since AGILE's aim is to give practical help and guidance to those HEIs seeking to create **coherent, sustainable, scalable, inclusive and adaptable support systems for exiled students,** we have chosen not list what each country has implemented but to **highlight the best practices and common findings** so as to give the reader an overview of the main initiatives, levers and barriers.

All the activities carried out as part of AGILE's Work Package 2 sought to provide concrete examples of these initiatives, barriers and levers which in turn enabled us to propose practical guidelines for building a reflexive and adaptable study environment capable of bringing together the social and academic conditions necessary for exiled students to be integrated into their host HEI and thus to succeed in their higher education in their host country.

General introduction

The AGILE project aims to forge inclusive Higher Education systems that will help all exiled students to better integrate their host HEIs. The different initiatives and programmes must be adaptable and capable of dealing efficiently with emergency refugee crises such as the war in Ukraine. Hence, faced with an ever-challenging socio-political context, European HEIs need to be able to offer exiled students sustainable, multi-level and inclusive learning curricula if integration and social cohesion are to be attained[1].

Key data for exiled students in each partner country

Below you will find some official figures concerning the number of exiled students enrolled in HE in partner countries. These figures were not easy to obtain and are not always up-to-date.

France

In 2018-19 approximately 900 refugee students pursued their studies in bridge diplomas available across France. By 2023 this figure had increased to 1500. Today, 39 bridge diplomas are available and there are now 54 HEI members of the MEnS « Migrants dans l'Enseignement Supérieur ». In 2019, this association was pivotal in creating the Diplôme Universitaire "Passerelle" (the "bridge programme") for exiled students which provides a French language and socio-cultural teaching programme to prepare students for future HE studies.

Germany

Available figures were only obtained for 2020. The number of newly enrolled refugees at German higher education institutions remained high that year with the figures for the winter semester **2019/20 at 3,000***. This was a slight decrease compared to the winter semester 2018/19, when the number of newly enrolled refugees was at 3,700.

It may seem surprising that considering the number of refugees welcomed by Germany** which is the fifth largest host country in the world, few projects and measures are included in this report. This can be explained by the fact that Germany is a federal country, which means that, unlike France's bridge diploma, there is no unique national programme for the welcoming of student refugees that could be referred to in a report.

Each federal state and each university has its own initiatives which include language courses and social inclusion initiatives. One example is the ApaLe project at the Catholic University of Applied Social Sciences in Berlin*** which offers an international course for social professions leading to a degree that is recognised in Germany.

* Retrieved from Hochschulerektorenkonferenz
** https://de.statista.com/infografik/18439/fluechtlinge-und- asylbewerber-in-eu-laendern/
*** https://www.khsb-berlin.de/de/ApaLe

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[1] In 2022, only 6% out of 108 million refugees had access to higher education in their host countries (figures from https://www.unhcr.org/fr).

Greece

Although government figures were available for exiled pupils in primary and secondary education, no official statistics were found concerning the number of exiled students studying in Greek HEIs.

Lithuania

Before the war in Ukraine, 1068 UA citizens were enrolled in full-time studies at all levels. Incoming exiled students from Ukraine increased as the war continued and almost 1,000 more were admitted to HEIs **in 2022 bringing the total to 2068***.

* Information from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of Lithuania: in 2022 about 940 exiled students were admitted to HEIs.

Poland

Before the war in Ukraine, 36 000 Ukrainian students were enrolled in Polish universities. **Recent data shows that the number of Ukrainian students enrolled in 2022/2023 reached 48,150***.

* Retrieved from the Polish government : Source 1 & Source 2.

Slovenia

No official figures were available at the time of publishing our report.

Ukraine

Although no official figures for the whole of Ukraine were available, our partner institution, Lviv Polytechnic National University, has welcomed **498 students** from regions severely affected by the war such as the Donetsk region, the Luhansk region, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Kherson region, the Zaporizhzhya region, the Kharkiv region, the Sumy region and the Chernihiv region.

Of the 498 students welcomed in 2022, 375 students are studying for a Bachelor's degree and 123 students are studying for a Master's degree.

1. Methodology and objectives

Whilst all the activities in WP2 sought to learn more about the initiatives in place, the difficulties encountered and the levers available, the methodology varied depending on the participants.

While roundtables were the basis for exchanges between academic and administrative staff, more direct and individual activities were organised to facilitate student input. The first of these activities was an online survey, which enabled us to reach students from different countries, and then two public talks with students took place.

The first **two online roundtables** concentrated on sharing experiences, good practices and provided insights into HEI responses for welcoming exiled students. The majority of speakers were academic staff with experience in welcoming refugee students and academics. These exchanges sought to enable the partner universities to:

- acquire an overview of institutional practices and refugee programmes across Europe and beyond;
- share good practices, ideas and assessment of certain activities as a means of improving integration;
- share their difficulties and discuss barriers to building inclusive curricula.

The **online survey** on the sociolinguistic and academic integration of students with a refugee background enabled us to reach more students outside of France and so compare strategies and outcomes from a student point of view. To encourage students to give detailed answers, it was possible for them to answer the open questions in their first language when necessary.

Two public talks were organised in Paris and Bordeaux in order to have qualitative and direct student feedback. The questions up for discussion were conceived so as to encourage students, no matter what their level of French or English, to share their insights, frustrations, difficulties and perhaps more importantly their ideas to improve integration. It was important for us to have students lead the discussions so as to help all participants feel at ease to express what they really felt. All the feedback was then summarised orally at the end of the public talk by the student facilitators. Participants could add comments as the conclusions of each group were presented.

The **final roundtable** brought together **four policy-makers** from three countries: **France, Lithuania and Slovenia**. It sought to raise awareness about the barriers and drivers of socially inclusive curricula for refugees so as to improve HEI responses[2]. The four policy-makers discussed suggestions and proposals to improve refugee integration into higher education. These exchanges were the opportunity for the University of Ljubljana and Kaunas University of technology to discuss barriers and levers with French policy-makers. Throughout the WP2, we gathered information from our partner institutions and countries and this knowledge will be included in the section dedicated to this round table.

All of our activities and exchanges sought to facilitate knowledge and the exchange of good practices so as to enable other HEIs to learn from solutions developed and applied elsewhere.

In this section, we will thus concentrate on the common denominators found among the countries participating in the activities.

Focus points aim to give more in depth detail about specific activities that the AGILE team believe to be transferable and useful for HEIs and countries wishing to develop their welcome strategies. Often, we have drawn on several promising and evaluated approaches that exist in France.

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[2] The reduced number of participants is explained by the complexity of policy-makers' diaries (last minute cancellations, difficulty in finding a date which suited all the participants, authorizations which failed to arrive in time etc.).

2. Analysis of the obstacles and enablers for developing effective HE initiatives for refugees

2.1. Roundtables - HEI practices across Europe

Two roundtables with participants from HEIs in Europe and beyond were organised in January and March 2023 so as to better understand how different countries approach and implement the welcoming of refugee students (Table 1).

The first roundtable included presentations from France, Germany, Greece, Norway, Poland, and Portugal. The second roundtable included input from Brazil, Turkey, France, Lithuania, and Slovenia. Our decision to go beyond the partner HEIs enabled us to have a wider view of the different responses to the integration of newly arrived refugee students in Higher Education establishments.

Roundtables	Name of Institution	Name of participants
Roundtable 1 *25th January 2023*	Universidade de Aveiro (Portugal)	Miguel Oliveira
	University of Science and Technology (Norway)	Georgios Neokleous
	UMCS Rector's Proxy for Internationalisation of Education (Poland)	Ewelina Panas Alina Czarnacka
	Université Bordeaux Montaigne (France)	Camille Nau
	University of Warsaw (Poland)	Sebastian Pawlak
	Universität Hamburg (Germany)	Jana Hesse Silke Boenigk
	Aristoteles-Universität Thessaloniki (Greece)	Alexandros Triantafyllidis
Roundtable 2 *24th March 2023*	Universidade Federal do Paraná (Brasil)	Tatyana Scheila Friedrich Elaine Schmitt Ragnini,
	TED University, Ankara (Turkey)	Melike Ünal Gezer Özlem Erden Başaran
	Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania)	Saulė Juzelėnienė Lina Jonaityte
	Université Paris 8 (France)	Sophie Wauquier Ilaria Pirone
	University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)	Simona Zavratik Doman Zalac

*- **Table 1.** Participants in the two round tables -*

Both roundtables gave considerable insight into practices and initiatives in place but also **revealed shared observations and conclusions.** It is the presentation and analysis of these initiatives and shared denominators that can be found below.

2.1.1. How local and national contexts influence support systems

It goes without saying that national context and the form that support systems for exiled students take are inextricably linked. The political stance taken by a government determines whether or not there is a national framework with a dedicated budget (or not), not only for the exiled students but also for the recruitment of the necessary support staff needed. At HE levels, it is also a question of the political commitment of the governing bodies and their willingness to use their own budget to finance specific programmes and the recruitment of social workers, administrative staff and teachers to accompany them.

The majority of the programmes and initiatives presented by the participants depend heavily on the individual commitment of teachers and staff. Despite the shared conviction of the need for "a whole university approach", institutions have yet to succeed in creating a coherent and cohesive policy for inclusion and so **individual initiatives are often the only answer.**

However, the example of the **Nouvelle Aquitaine region in France** shows how regional commitment can facilitate coherent policies in HEIs. This region, which includes seven HEIs, took the decision to act collectively by including the commitment to coordinate and welcome exiled students in their territorial coordination agreement. This commitment ensured the recruitment of a project manager to manage, coordinate and develop welcome programmes which also reflect and take into account all the work accomplished by the MEnS association which works at a national level for better refugee integration in HEIs in France.

FOCUS 1. *The Nouvelle Aquitaine model – Sharing experience, pooling resources, creating a regional response*

In 2018, the signatory institutions of the Convention de Coordination Territoriale (Convention of territorial coordination, henceforth CCT) agreed on a certain number of objectives, one of which is to coordinate, at a regional level, the reception and support systems that promote the university integration of migrant populations in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region. This is achieved in part through the implementation of training schemes like the bridge diploma in Bordeaux Montaigne University designed to help exiled students acquire a solid command of the French language and the socio-cultural codes needed to ensure that they are better integrated, whether in the pursuit of their studies or in the exercise of a profession.

The success of this action is clearly linked to the recruitment of a project manager.

The Project manager is responsible for:

➢ establishing and developing a clear policy with a coherent set of actions, designed in partnership with local authorities, the State, charities and associations, so as to enable as many people as possible to access support and training;

➢ mapping existing facilities and identifying the needs for the welcoming and integration of migrants on a regional scale;

➢ designing a relevant communication plan to inform local actors of all the possibilities available so as to better guide migrants and promote the various schemes set up by the partners;

➢ seeking the private or public funding needed to ensure the development and on-going improvement of the project.

2.1.2. Funding

A recurring problem mentioned in all the exchanges, regardless of the country, was the lack of sufficient funding to meet not only the needs of those students enrolled but to welcome all the exiled students who wish to pursue their studies.

Without direct government funding, HEIs are reliant on university budgets or projects that finance the initiatives (European Social Fund, FAMI[4], local/regional councils, patronage, sponsoring and fundraising) and once again, teacher and staff goodwill.

Even in France, where a national bridge diploma exists, universities continue to use their own budget to finance them and also to create specific programmes in periods of emergency (Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine).

Pooling resources between HEIs at a local level is one way in which to reduce costs but financing study programmes and student grants remains a key factor if we are to improve exiled student support and integration.

2.1.3. Language and support programmes

Whether a country offers English-language bachelor or master degrees is a factor determining the type of host language course required within the support system.

In France for example, the number of HE courses taught in English remains limited and so it is vital that students acquire a B2 level in French if they wish to study in a French HEI. For those wishing to enrol in a master's or law degree a C1 level is often required. This means at least 192 hours per semester are necessary for a student to obtain one level of French and so, for a refugee who speaks no French on arrival and who wishes to study at a French HEI, a minimum of two years following a language course will be necessary before being able to apply and then integrate HE. This language requirement explains the creation of **a specific university diploma** that enables students to benefit from student grants and accommodation during this compulsory period of study.

In Germany, the majority of German universities also require a B2 or C1 language level. At Hamburg University, an additional foundation year can also be required after obtaining the B2 level so that students are appropriately prepared for their future degrees and achieve the C1 level. While this has the advantage of increasing chances of success it also means that exiled students who start with an A1 level have to spend three years studying before finally integrating the degree course of their choice (Universität Hamburg, 2021)[5].

Slovenia also requires students to follow courses in Slovenian but has opted for a solution that allows students to follow some courses that are offered in English whilst learning the language.

In other partner countries, ministries choose to support the development of English-language bachelor and master programmes whilst offering host-country language courses too. This response not only allows exiled students to continue their studies almost immediately but also has the added advantage of helping HEIs to become more attractive for international students in general.

Both roundtables very much confirmed the unique nature of the more standardised French approach. Although each HEI and region has specificities and includes specific local or regional responses to welcoming refugee students, the overall language and welcome programme is structured in a similar way in every French HEI. In France, the MEnS Network has developed a diploma (the "DU Passerelle" or bridge diploma) recognized nationally by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. French HEIs can also participate in the UNIV'R programme which provides university corridors supported by the HCR for refugees living in a third-party country but wanting to integrate a master's degree in France. Another programme called PAUSE enables HEIs to employ exiled academic scholars and receive partial funding from the government.

These national programmes are not, however, sufficient in the number of places offered, to meet with demand but they do contribute to creating a national, academically recognised framework for welcoming refugee students while leaving room for local specificities.

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[4] Fonds Asile Migration Intégration / Asile, Migration and Integration Fund
[5] Retrieved from of [University of Hamburg](#).

FOCUS 2. *The French model*

We have chosen to focus on three different support programmes available in France as they are transferable and adaptable.

BRIDGE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME
(DIPLÔME UNIVERSITAIRE PASSERELLE - DU PASSERELLE)

The **bridge diploma programme**[6] was first introduced in 2019 when it received governmental accreditation thanks to the advocacy and determination of the MEnS. The diploma seeks to give exiled students the level of French necessary to pursue their studies at a French HEI and ensures that every exiled student in France can access the same nationally recognised diploma.

THE MENS NETWORK - MIGRANTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

 The MEnS network is committed to developing and promoting a proactive policy for welcoming students and researchers in exile in French higher education institutions and the courses they offer. The MEnS was behind the creation of the bridge diplomas. Today 52 HEIs are members of the MEnS network.

Having a national system means that each university follows the same model which includes French language courses and guidelines for a module aimed at helping students adapt and understand their new home. Each HEI decides on the content of this socio-cultural module (which offers between 24-40 hours per semester depending on language levels). Usually, it includes workshops and pedagogical projects as well as visits (town halls, health services, legal associations, exhibitions etc.).

The national recognition of the diploma by the HE ministry has been an incredibly significant lever in improving the living conditions of refugee students because as a result **all students under 30 are eligible for student grants and university accommodation** thus lifting two barriers to successful study and integration. Every two years the ministry renews its accreditation of these diplomas thus ensuring continuous improvement and adaptation.

The very nature of this diploma means that a **coherent support system is in place**. Once exiled students have obtained the B2[7] level of French necessary to integrate a university course they are also accompanied in the administrative paperwork necessary to enrol in the course of their choice. In general, roughly 70% of students enrolled in the bridge programme obtain their diploma and continue their studies. For those students who had already begun their HE in their home country, we found that they rarely continued in their original field of study usually due to either the difficulties related to understanding course content in French despite the French language level obtained or the length of study necessary to qualify.

Despite all the very positive aspects of this diploma, barriers remain and so new solutions and ideas have emerged over the years.

Below you will find some of the most prevalent barriers to student success in the bridge diploma and possible solutions:

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[6] See Appendix n°1 for the structure and exact content of bridge diploma
[7] B2 is the minimum level of French required to enrol in a bachelors or masters degree.

Barriers (Bouffet et al., 2021).	Solutions
Heterogeneity of the academic backgrounds of students means no one solution can be applied to all.	individual meetings with staff to detect problems, propose appropriate study paths, encourage motivation, extra tutoring, mentoring etc.
Heterogeneity of motivation (drop-out rate) varies and is usually linked to personal journeys. Exiled students need to earn a living quickly because of the lack of other revenues and feel they have to become proficient in French means they have to accept to take at least two years before integrating the diploma of their choice and this can be demotivating.	Individual and group meetings with staff to check students to see how they are doing (often a point comes when they feel they are not progressing fast enough and so they lose confidence or they need to earn a living). Apprenticeships which combine time in HEIs and work in a company, internships so that they can discover different careers.
Complexity of external administration (procedure of the asylum claim, lack of housing, social protection) is often a source of stress which in turn hinders language learning	The most efficient solution is to employ someone capable of accompanying them (help them with filling in forms, online platforms, understanding documents, especially for new arrivals who do not master the language). However, we know that the violence of those procedures (especially while the asylum claim is being reviewed) will still cause stress, despite the help of a social worker.
Funding	The MEnS network manages 2 fundraising programmes: ➢ AIMES (funded by the state and private sponsors) for all HEIs offering a Bridge Diploma. However, this programme is not sufficient to fund fully the diplomas ➢ AIMES+, a project lead with 14 universities funded by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund for almost 4 years Many universities turn to their local authorities for funding.
Individual trauma can hamper learning	Create partnerships with hospitals and associations so as to provide possibilities for psychological help and support groups throughout the programme.
Anonymity of HEI courses after the sheltered, small groups of the bridge programme means that students are unprepared for the reality of a bachelor's or master's degree	Attend classes prior to enrolling to see what it is really like, ensure mentoring by students already in the courses, creation of **post bridge diploma knowledge-levelling courses** to help students adapt. This support system would enable students to continue receiving help whilst studying in their degree courses.
Not all exiled students have the necessary language level to be accepted into a bridge programme which is, in most French universities, a two-year programme and accepts students who already have an A2 level in French	Creating partnerships with associations and local charities means that students can acquire the A2 level before applying to the bridge programme.

UNIV'R – PROGRAMME UNIVERSITÉ POUR LES RÉFUGIÉS / PROGRAMME UNIVERSITY FOR THE REFUGEES

The aim of this programme[8] initiated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, is to develop a university corridor to France, i.e. a legal and secure admission route enabling French-speaking refugees residing in a first country of asylum to pursue a master's degree in France.

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[8] All information taken from Camille Nau (University Bordeaux Montaigne), chargée de mission CCT (Convention de Coordination Territoriale), first semester review of the UNIV'R project.

PROJET UNIV'R
12 établissements (2022)

- Université de Bordeaux,
- Université Bordeaux Montaigne,
- Université Clermont Auvergne,
- Université Jean-Monnet Saint Etienne,
- Université Littoral Côte d'Opale,
- Université de Nanterre,
- Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne,
- Université Paris 8 Vincennes-St Denis,
- Université Paris 13 Sorbonne Paris Nord,
- Université Picardie Jules Verne,
- Université Rennes 1,
- ENIB (Ecole Nationale d'Ingénieurs de Brest).

For the 2022 campaign, 21 students were selected, of which only 4 were women. 7 nationalities were represented (Central African (9), Rwandan (3), Congolese (3), Burundian (2), Chadian (2), Guinean (1) and Mauritanian (1) and they were from 8 countries of first asylum: Cameroon (6), Chad (3), Togo (3), Niger (2), Senegal (2), Morocco (2), Tanzania (2) and Uganda (1). The transfer to France was granted and financed by the Ministry of foreign affairs.

The HEIs who decided to participate in the programme and welcome these students exempted them from paying tuition fees and allocated living grants from their own funds. The selected students receive a monthly grant ranging from €600 to €810 to live on depending on the HEI. The importance of setting up a socio-administrative support system on arrival was absolutely essential for the well-being of the students and both local and national associations played an important role in this.

"PAUSE" PROGRAMME – EMERGENCY WELCOME PROGRAMME FOR ACADEMICS IN EXILE

The PAUSE[9] Programme was created in 2017 to protect and host scholars (teachers, researchers, PhD students or post PhD colleagues) at risk for 1-3 years. This programme is financed 60% by the ministry of higher education and 40% by the host HEI. The average cost is 100 000 euros for one year. Language and trauma are the main hurdles for incoming academics and the major drawback is obviously finding an academic position after the three years.

Up until 2017, France had no programme to protect academics in danger, whereas such programmes existed in other countries: CARA[10] (UK), SRF[11] (USA), SAR[12] (International), Philipp Schwartz Initiative (Germany).

Between 2017-2023: 222[13] researchers and PhD students (30% of the total number) have benefited from this scheme which ensures academic freedom and supports researchers at risk. 30% of the researchers come from Syria with the remaining 60% coming from Iraq, Turkey, Russia and Afghanistan, Burundi, Venezuela, Pakistan and Yemen. Two thirds of them specialise in humanities.

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[9] PAUSE stands for Programme Accueil d'Urgence des Scientifiques en Exil (emergency welcome programme for academics in exile). The initiative was created in direct response to the persecution of Syrian academics after the ransacking and destruction of Palmyra and by the horrific assassination of the former director of the ancient site of Palmyra, Khaled Assad, who was beheaded on 18 August 2015 by the Islamic State (DAESH) in Syria.
[10] CARA stands for the Council for At-Risk Academics
[11] SRF stands for Scholar Rescue Fund
[12] SAR stands for Scholars at Risk
[13] Retrieved from Campus France.

2.1.4. Responding to an emergency – the Ukrainian example

With the war in Ukraine, HEIs in Europe were confronted with the sudden arrival of students having fled their country often leaving behind their families. Some partners like Lubin University in Poland were a mere 80 km from the border with Ukraine so the need was to provide language courses and support as quickly as possible. Other countries such as Slovenia and Lithuania had less experience in welcoming refugees and had to quickly adapt to provide language courses and support.

In all partner countries where Ukrainian student refugees were welcomed, short programmes were set up to address the problems of isolation and solitude as well as giving the students the opportunity to learn about a new culture and language. The length of the war was not anticipated and so, as the war has dragged on, long-term solutions (extra groups, language classes) were opened without any assurance of government funding.

Despite the fact that not every HEI has a systematic welcoming procedure for refugees, academic staff were quick to respond to the influx of incoming refugee students, to address their immediate needs and their integration into studies.

Our 1st AGILE publication, "European universities tackling the Ukrainian refugee crisis: insights into grassroots digital actions" provides an overview of bottom-up actions carried out by university staff and students in Europe in the face of the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis.

FOCUS 3. *Solidarity with fellow researchers in Ukraine*

In addition to the programme Pause, the "European Reform University Alliance" (ERUA), funded by the European Commission as part of the Erasmus+ European Universities Initiative, has created a post-doc ERUA fellowship to support **early career researchers from Ukraine**. The fellowships have allowed young researchers to continue their research and collaborate with other researchers in a secure, international & interdisciplinary research environment. So far, 2 post-doc positions of 6 months have been funded by the 5 partners.

The project partners are the University of Paris 8 (France), the University of Konstanz (Germany), the University of the Aegean (Greece), the University of Roskilde (Denmark) and the New Bulgarian University (Bulgaria).

FOCUS 4. *Addressing needs in a crisis*

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, French HEIs, national agencies and local authorities have worked together to provide support for Ukrainian students entering France.

Many universities have provided support for displaced students from Ukraine (by opening specific classes/programs, simplifying application procedures etc.). This is reflected in the number of universities having joined the MEnS Network following the war in Ukraine (membership increased from 42 to 52 members). To finance these actions, there was only one call for projects from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, operated by Campus France. However, due to the application criteria, only some of the universities were able to apply. The rest financed these emergency actions with their own funds.

Like Bordeaux Montaigne university, Paris 8 also has a bridge diploma and in 2022 the Ukraine Language Solidarity Scheme (Dispositif Langue Solidarité Ukraine - DLSU) was created to host 12 Ukrainian victims of war in this bridge programme. Another scheme was created in 2022 to answer the needs of Ukrainian and non- Ukrainian victims of war who spoke French - Ukraine Solidarity + University Methodology Scheme (Dispositif Méthodologie Universitaire Solidarité Ukraine - DMUSU). Thirty places were made available and 80 teaching hours were aimed at helping students find the resources and methods necessary to study at university.

In the summer of 2022, Bordeaux Montaigne university set up three specific groups to enable Ukrainian students to learn French prior to beginning French language day classes in the new academic year. All French universities were invited to submit the inherent costs to the Ministry of higher education (DGESIP) and have since received partial government funding for the supplementary costs incurred. Each university could decide whether or not to limit the courses to students or to open classes up to the general public.

2.1.5.   Working with the community to provide language acquisition and support

Faced with the limited means and human resources of most HEIs, collaboration with associations, charities and other organisations is vital for support systems. The need to organise and coordinate these shared actions and initiatives so that they are complimentary is also essential (Cadet et al., 2010).

Too few places in language courses at HEIs also mean that associations and volunteer language teachers are essential in helping exiled students to begin learning the host country language. Bridges can then be built between these organisations and HEIs so that students can later enrol in the HEI language programme for example. Associations can also help with socialisation, accommodation, administration and career orientation. The need for this kind of support has intensified with the arrival of Ukrainians.

One example of how HEIs can collaborate with associations and charities is reflected in the training scheme set up by Bordeaux Montaigne University to help and guide teaching volunteers of all ages who have no prior experience.

> **FOCUS 5.** *Bordeaux Montaigne university training programme for volunteers who teach French to refugees and asylum seekers*
>
> Twice a year, university teachers who, for the most part teach in the bridge diploma, provide practical workshops and free training for volunteers in Bordeaux associations and reception centres for asylum seekers. The pertinence of this programme was fully recognised when Ukrainians arrived in the spring of 2022.
>
> Each session provides 40 hours of courses divided into 3 pragmatic modules, spread over 2 months for 20 volunteers of all ages and backgrounds. The courses were adapted to meet the needs of volunteers who had no prior teaching experience and were not necessarily very comfortable using IT tools.
>
> *The complete programme content can be found in Appendix n°2.*

2.1.6.   Meeting specific needs, accompanying the individual

All partner HEIs spoke of the initiatives and structures organised and managed by their International relations offices which seek to help all international students whether they be exiled or not, to better integrate the host institution.

For Poland, Norway, Greece, and Portugal for example, the support system for exiled students was very much a part of the more general support system in place for international students as a whole. Other universities have added more specific initiatives in order to address the problems linked to exile and all that it implies.

Before moving on to explore these very specific initiatives it is important to take a closer look at all those led by the International relations offices which are used to dealing with diverse linguistic, intercultural, and academic backgrounds but are not always equipped to deal with specific requirements. On the whole they included:

- intercultural activities to facilitate integration and understanding;
- buddy programs;
- language tandems;
- mentoring programs and meetings with former exiled students now enrolled in degree courses;
- business mentoring sessions to encourage entrepreneurshi[14].

These initiatives play a vital role in helping recent migrants and refugees integrate the higher education systems of the host countries but they are rarely sufficient. Whilst it is important that exiled students should be

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[14] Business mentoring sessions for inclusive entrepreneurship – Lubin university, Poland

considered as international students (rather than being labelled "refugees") their needs are very individual and may require specialised professional help.

In order to truly facilitate social cohesion and integration into the host country, all the partners unanimously recognise the need for a holistic and individual approach. For exiled students there are no standard responses. Every experience will be unique with varying degrees of trauma and students need to have the possibility of sharing their difficulties with a professional. This is not the role of HEI staff but they can create the conditions necessary for students to share their experiences and needs so as to build an effective, wide-ranging support system, which will enrich the more institutionalised support system of each HEI.

Participants gave many examples of holistic, whole-person support of which the most common were:

- Individual meetings to give personalised guidance and support which could range from helping students fill in documents, understand health/accommodation services, their rights, to informing them where to go to receive professional psychological or medical help, legal advice, financial support etc.;
- Extra language tutoring (by host country students) in groups of 2-4, overseen by language teachers, to help those struggling with the language so as to enhance chances of success and increase socialisation;
- Initiating regular language practice opportunities by creating places on campus for exiled students to meet and chat with host country students ("coffee and small talk", where students speak for ½ an hour in each language which can also raise self-esteem and help students understand language transmission), buddy programmes, informing them about student associations or how to do volunteer work etc.);
- Building partnerships with artistic and cultural associations who organise off campus activities and who are experienced in dealing with exile.

The need to forge links and build a network of associations and communities to implement a cohesive appropriate response was unanimously agreed upon, not just because of a lack of funding but more importantly to recognise the skills and specialised contributions of charities and communities in creating a comprehensive support system.

2.1.7. Raising awareness in HE staff, giving specific training to those who will deal with exiled students

Training administrative and teaching staff to understand and address the needs of refugee students means that a whole university approach can be established with a clearly understood policy and procedures.

Participants spoke frequently of the difficulties exiled students faced due to a lack of staff training which in turn means that staff are ill-equipped to give pertinent answers to very specific questions.

A good example of this is the enrolment procedure in HEIs. This is perceived as one of the biggest barriers for students because systems are complicated and for exiled students specialised knowledge about what is possible and what is not

necessary. Procedures often vary depending on student profiles and the courses chosen so for those members of staff who deal with admissions, HEIs need to include specialised training about procedures linked to exiled student status and intercultural awareness.

For this, workshops could be organised locally on a regular basis to accompany staff and promote the information and videos made available by the MEnS[15].

By training and raising awareness HEIs could transition from systems that rely heavily on individual commitment and contributions to HEIs who have a clear and coherent policy for welcoming exiled students.

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[15] https://reseau-mens.org/nos-formations/

2.2. Online survey of exiled students

After having shared knowledge about different refugee education programmes and initiatives with staff across continents, WP2 then sought to give a voice to the principal stakeholders, exiled students. The survey and the two public talks that followed enabled us to confront our conclusions from the staff roundtables with the first-hand experience of refugee students. These student-based activities brought to light the challenges facing exiled students, their experiences and perceptions of the initiatives in place and provided useful insights about their specific needs (Friedrich et al., 2021).

By carrying out a *large-scale online survey on the sociolinguistic and academic integration of graduate students with a refugee background*, we were able to reach a greater number of exiled students from various contexts and countries whereas the public talks focused on French exiled students.

Methodology

The online questionnaire (see Appendix n°3) was collaboratively designed via EUSurvey and was translated into all partner languages. Every HEI contributed to the choice and wording of the questions and, in order to help students who were not at ease in English or their host country language, it was decided that the open questions could be answered in their first language(s). As it was anonymous, students were more likely to express themselves freely, unfiltered remarks could be made and the students were able to choose when to fill in the survey.

University support system

Most students' universities offer support for foreign students in general and refugee students in particular (only 3% of the participants said there is no support at all). The types of support most commonly offered were:

- Language courses (93)
- Financial support (80)
- Administrative help (59)
- Additional courses, tutoring (54)
- Psychological counseling (52)

Among all students, 65% (98 students) responded they used some kind of support.

Do you feel like you need more support from the university?
- Yes ■ No
48% (75) — 52% (80)

Academic courses

26% (40) changed their original subject.

Reasons:

- Changed career prospects
- Changed priorities/interests
- New/different subjects available or accessible
- Course language

In all countries the host language was important as 53% of courses were taught in the host language compared with 42% in English. Communication with staff was also in the host language (62%) while communication with peers revealed that other languages were also important (e.g. Russian, Ukrainian or Turkish: 34%).

Which degree(s) are you studying for or did you study for?
(Bachelor Degree, Master Degree, Doctorate/PhD, I am not/did not)
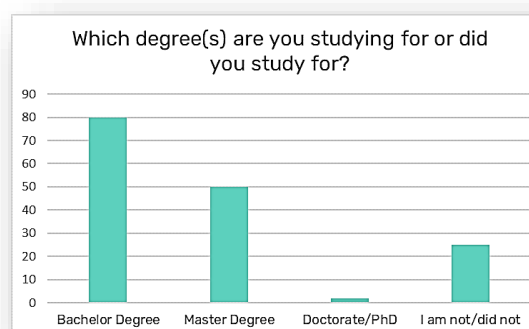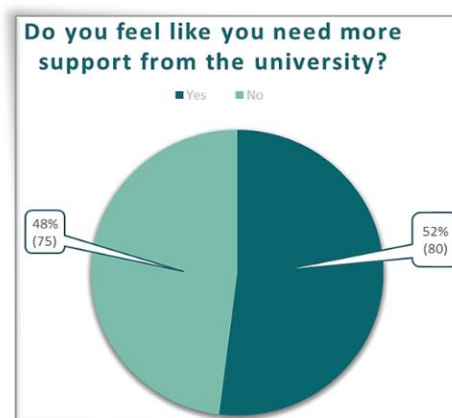
The table below shows that 94 respondents were enrolled in HEIs at the time of the survey.

Are you currently taking academic courses at your host university?

		Answers	Ratio
Yes		94	60.65 %
No, not yet		43	27.74 %
No, I have already finished my courses		18	11.61 %
No Answer		0	0 %

General feedback

Things that helped most with integration:

➢ Peer support
➢ Support from professors and university staff
➢ Family support
➢ Open-mindedness

Main challenges:

➢ Language barrier
➢ Different culture
➢ Administrative issues
➢ Loneliness
➢ Stress

Would you be willing to help other students in exile in the future?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

21% (33)
3% (4)
76% (118)

Results

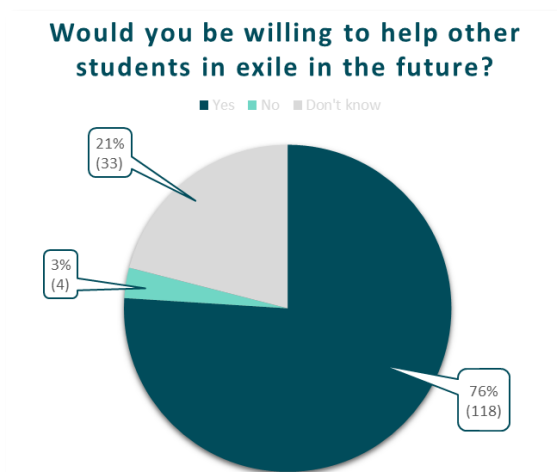**155 students** from France, Poland, Germany, Slovenia, Lithuania, Italy and Ukraine (host countries) answered the survey although the majority of respondents were from France and Poland.

The survey revealed that **73%** of respondents use 3 or more languages on a daily basis (languages of home and host country + English). Language levels were disparate and ranged from no prior knowledge to C2. Half of the students who answered the survey decided to take language courses with 74% (59 students) reaching level B1 or higher and 49 % (39 students) reaching level B2 or higher. For 55 % (85 students) the required level to enrol in a bachelor or master's programme was B2 and for 19 % (30 students) it was B1.

The survey also confirmed that **97%** of respondents received some kind of support, the most common of which was language tuition. Interestingly 48% said they would have liked to receive more support.

Concerning academic courses, **26%** of respondents had changed their career orientation but many of those who answered the survey were only enrolled in language classes as they did not yet have the required level for degree courses.

Perhaps the most revealing information was the willingness of exiled students to provide peer support (118 respondents out of 155).

Students fully recognised the need for adequate support in both administrative and teaching areas but also laid emphasis on the necessity for communication outside the classroom to combat loneliness and psychological isolation.

2.3. Public talks with exiled students

The organisation of two public talks with refugee students was, like the online survey, an essential part of the Erasmus + project. It is always very easy to « do what we think is best » but if HEIs are to be truly pertinent and reflexive then it is essential to have direct feedback from those who have benefited from the programmes in place and include them in the conception and improvement of the welcoming process. The first public talk took place in Paris on the March 24th and the second took place on May 17th 2023[16].

Exiled students enrolled (or previously enrolled but now in employment) in the respective universities were very keen to take part, to "make a difference", "to help new arrivals" and to assume a more active role in the French welcome system.

Public talk at the Université Paris 8, 31/03/2023. Photo credits: Service création Audiovisuelle, Université Paris 8.

Methodology

Both Paris 8 University and Bordeaux Montaigne University encouraged exiled students to lead the discussion groups and present the findings. Once volunteers had been identified, staff then worked with them and helped them with the task, which could seem a little daunting (speaking in public, animating a discussion group in French).

The public talks were coordinated so as to follow the same pattern but the questions asked varied depending on the lead students (who were either past students from the bridge diploma or students enrolled in masters, PhDs) input.

Before the talk, meetings were held with the exiled students who had accepted to lead the discussion groups with other refugee students. They prepared brief introductions about themselves and a list of topics and questions to help and guide them in the discussions. The topics discussed were:

➤ what part of the welcome program was the most/least useful?
➤ what was the most difficult thing for you about pursuing your studies?
➤ what did you most/least enjoy and why?
➤ what advice would you give a refugee hoping to study in France?
➤ what could HEIs do to improve the welcome procedure?

Results

For the students and former students present at both public talks, the bridge diplomas were unanimously considered "vital" for any kind of integration. Many positive aspects were mentioned such as the limited size of groups (with a maximum of 20 students) and the dedication and accessibility of all staff working in the programme.

Regular individual meetings with the teachers in charge[17], individually or in small groups, meant that they felt truly accompanied and less alone.

The students spoke of the need for quick access to a social worker and a contact person capable of answering questions related to health, accommodation, psychological help, budget/financial needs). Being introduced to charities and associations was also important as they are often specialised in certain areas like organising cultural and intercultural activities, providing legal advice, providing help with food and clothing or providing professional psychological help).

During the public talks we could clearly measure the importance of specific responses for this audience. The advantages of employing someone who is trained

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[16] The original date (24th March) had to be postponed due to Bordeaux Montaigne university being inaccessible to students and teachers during the months of March and April due to the social unrest linked to the retirement reforms in France.

[17] Lecturers in Bordeaux are given 18 hours a year to follow students.

in these questions so as to give appropriate answers and advice without being unduly affected by the problems facing the exiled students was also very clear. The support system within the bridge diplomas was judged excellent and often salutary.

Public talk at the Université Bordeaux Montaigne, 17/05/2023.

Despite the institutional language acquisition programmes in place in Paris 8 and Bordeaux Montaigne, the students highlighted how important it was to practise daily with other students and people outside the university. Indeed, for those students now enrolled in degree courses in HEIs, they spoke of the "shock" of being in a degree where there were only

French speakers who spoke quickly with very specific vocabulary. However, tandems and buddy programmes were often unsuccessful due to the workload linked to the bridge diploma and the need to work to earn money. At a national level the feedback concerning buddy programmes is more positive.

The major difficulties encountered by exiled students were unsurprisingly housing, dealing with administration, bureaucracy and stress linked to refugee status applications. Financial worries weighed heavily on asylum seekers who are not allowed to work (so they do so clandestinely).

These factors obviously affect success rates as students can find it hard to concentrate on their studies and many spoke of the need for regular psychological support.

Another initial difficulty was the feeling of isolation and loneliness that again exemplifies the importance of language and culture programmes for exiled students.

FOCUS 6. *Student ideas for improvement*

Since the public talks were designed to give an audible voice to exiled students and former students, here are their recommendations:

⇨ construct the cultural and social visits with the students;

⇨ organise fun activities (e.g. bowling) to lighten the load of everyday life and forget about difficulties;

⇨ use games to practise the language more (with French students at lunchtime for example);

⇨ tell students that integration into a bachelor or master's degree is far more difficult and stressful than they will expect. Groups will no longer be small like in the bridge diplomas and you will be surrounded by French students who already know each other, you will need to make an effort to approach students**;

⇨ be ready to change your study and career plan early on. Working in a second language means that some subjects are impossible after just one or two years of language tuition (prime examples being law and medicine);

⇨ ensure that psychological help is offered to all the students (discussion groups with trained professionals, psychological help in native tongue);

⇨ more internships and contact with businesses should be offered so students can explore different careers.

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* The need to help students when they begin their bachelor or master's degree is Hamburg university has set up foundation courses for students wanting to enrol in a bachelor degree. In France HEIs are beginning to develop knowledge levelling/transitional programmes to accompany students in the first year of their bachelor degree.

2.4.　Public talks with policy-makers

Reception policies for refugee students

Despite the reduced number of representatives, the round table brought together experienced French policy-makers with a highly structured support system and 2 countries that have less experience in welcoming refugee students, Lithuania and Slovenia, although Slovenia dealt with a refugee crisis as a result of the war in Yugoslavia in 1999. The exchanges were a means for the two more novice universities to benefit from the French experience and having fewer speakers meant that more time could be spent on each topic, question or difficulty.

Slovenia

Evolution of asylum applications received in Slovenia from 2000 to 2022 - The top line represents the total number of asylum applications (first applications + subsequent applications). Below, the number of refugees accepted (in green) and the number of applications rejected (in red)[18].
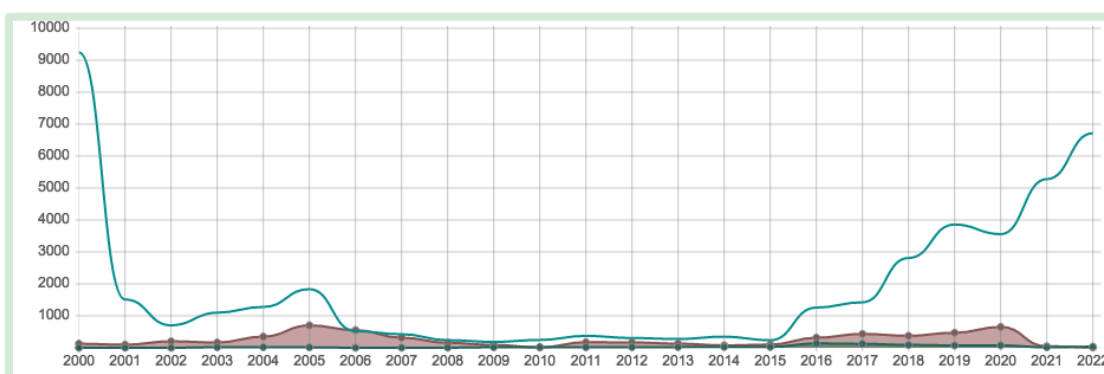
*- **Figure 1.** Evolution of asylum applications received in Slovenia from 2000 to 2022 -*

In 2020, 277,964 immigrants were living in Slovenia, representing around 13% of the total population. These are all people who live permanently in the country but were born in another country. This number also includes recognised refugees, but not yet asylum seekers. The figures are based on census data and projections by the United Nations Population Division.

France

The French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Ofpra) published its annual activity report on Monday 3rd July 2023[19], giving an overview of asylum figures in France for the past year.

By the end of 2022, France had taken in more than half a million refugees. There were 547,102 refugees or people under the protection of the Ofpra by 31st December 2022.

In 2022, 56,276 people were placed under the protection of France, either following a decision by the Ofpra or on appeal to the National Court of Asylum (CNDA), according to the annual report.

After Germany, France is the second most sought-after country in Europe, with more than 131,000 asylum applications lodged last year, an increase of 27.2% in one year.

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[18] Figures taken from https://www.donneesmondiales.com/europe/slovenie/refugies.php
[19] All information is directly taken from the Ofpra annual report for 2022.

Lithuania

Evolution of asylum applications received in Lithuania from 2000 to 2022- The top line represents the total number of asylum applications (first applications + subsequent applications). Below, the number of refugees accepted (in green) and the number of applications rejected (in red).
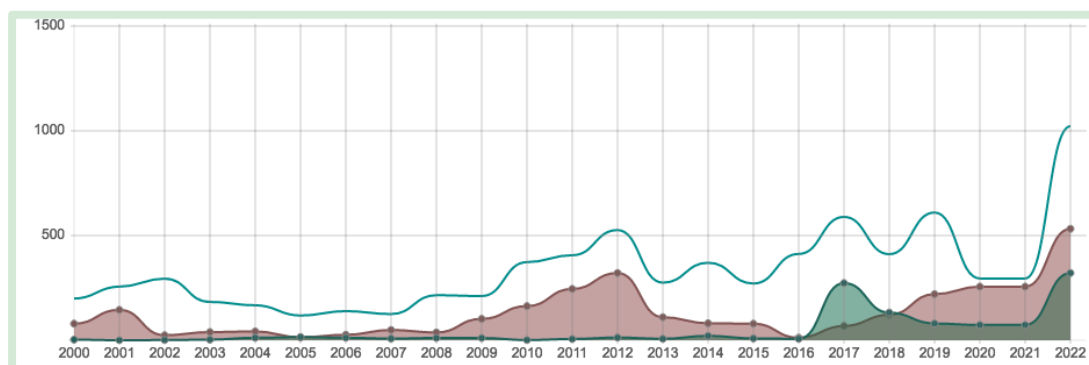
*- **Figure 2.** Evolution of asylum applications received in Lithuania from 2000 to 2022 -*

Those present at the round table emphasised the need for the assessment and evaluation of systems in place so as to encourage a bottom-up and top-down, concerted public policy.

Developing a public policy that is inter-ministerial and that meets needs, in consultation with all stakeholders (associations, people concerned, universities, etc.) would be a real breakthrough. The discussions of barriers and levers resulted in constructive ideas and recommendations that would facilitate public policy.

Participants also agreed on the necessity for inclusion during the academic year of newly arrived students with government funding to alleviate the pressure on HEI budgets and where necessary tuition-fee waivers.

At a national and local level there is an obvious need for improved access to information about the possibilities of resuming higher education for exiled students. University staff (especially administrative staff), including those in charge of student accommodation, must be duly trained in the specific situation of exiled students in order to guarantee guidance adapted to their needs and without discrimination.

FOCUS 7. *The special case of Ukrainians*

From the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 to January 2023, 69645 Ukrainians (not including children) have obtained temporary residence permits and are recognised as beneficiaries of temporary protection.[1]

As can be seen, Slovenia and Lithuania have been confronted with an increase in the number of exiled students due to the war in Ukraine. The war in Ukraine (and this will not be the last) has proved that an appropriate welcome is necessary and that HEIs are capable of working with communities to find solutions.

Germany, like France, has a long tradition of welcoming refugees and this tradition can be traced back to the second World war. The Syrian crisis that began in spring 2015 was also a period when deans, researchers and students were particularly mobilised and sought to lift administrative, linguistic and social barriers when hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees arrived on European shores, mainly in Greece.

This influx of refugees has obviously had a profound effect on the European Union's asylum policy and has provoked a wide range of reactions from governments and citizens alike, ranging from spontaneous or organised solidarity with migrants to outright hostility and rejection.

Slovenia and Lithuania, like France, guarantee the right to enrol in Higher Education institutions but there is no harmonised legislation so treatment differs according to status. All three countries enabled Ukrainian students to study for free. In France all Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (not only Ukrainians) are exonerated of the enrollment fees to University in France. It was also possible for students arriving in Lithuania to transfer to Lithuanian universities. Lithuania also allocated state scholarships to cover living expenses whereas in France this was not immediately the case but was quickly implemented. HEIs themselves and local communities who housed students primarily shouldered the cost related to the language and support systems.

Recommendations from the policy-makers round table

APPOINTMENT OF POLICY OFFICERS AT A UNIVERSITY LEVEL

This would facilitate the organization and coordination of the various actions in place for exiled students both from a political and a practical point of view.

CREATION OF INTER-MINISTERIAL WORK GROUPS AT BOTH A EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL LEVEL

In order to anticipate an action plan for emergency management should crises (re)arise (such as those in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Sudan) an inter-ministerial working group, in consultation with student associations, the people concerned and academic establishments should be set up.

IMPROVEMENT OF RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

Whether with or without proof, a coherent admission policy in each country is vital as is the training of staff in these procedures. All exiled students could, for instance, as is the case in France, be admitted to HE on academic criteria only and not on the legality of the status.

The Lisbon Convention (article 7) specifies the need for special procedures for those who do not have access to their diploma. In France, as a response to the procedures in place the MEnS, the Union for exiled students along with other partners like UniR[20] have created a new specially adapted procedure which ensures the same treatment in every university (DAA - Demande d'Admission Adaptée).

CREATION OF "ONE-STOP SHOPS"

These "shops" could be either virtual or physical spaces and would enable exiled students, either at university or city level, to find all the information they need in one place, and benefit from personalised assistance.

GUARANTEE ACCESS TO LANGUAGE COURSES

Linguistic policies for refugees in HEIs vary according to admission requirements but all partner universities have implemented host language courses (and English language where classes are available in English). Legislation varies according to the country which may differentiate the number of hours given depending on status. For example, in Lithuania the number of hours ranges from 180 hours of Slovenian to 400 hours and in France, asylum seekers cannot benefit from automatic French classes whereas those with refugee status are granted free access to French classes until level A1 or A2 if requested.

Guaranteeing the right to language courses beyond basic communication and unconditional access to academic or professional training for new arrivals was seen as a key factor in refugee integration and the promotion of inclusive HEIs.

FOCUS 8. *the SUCRE project*

Knowledge of previous research projects enabled us to confront our own conclusions with those of other reports and once again find common denominators. Indeed, many of our findings reflect and confirm those that went before us. One example is the SUCRE* research project which was launched in 2016 by the Aristotle university of Thessaloniki. It was one of the first, multi-European research projects in the field of student refugee integration in Greece and it set the path for other Greek Universities. The project focused on the necessary training programmes and processes required beyond academic support to ensure academic success and so it looked at psychosocial integration and support and the need for clear information on legal and health issues. The project emphasised:

- the importance of solidarity among universities and adherence to the principles of academic freedom as a universal right;
- systematic collaboration is essential for effective support;
- all programmes and networks need to work together and share best practices;
- diversification of sources of funding is needed;
- national schemes ensure quality, coherence and sustainability while facilitating the work of staff by providing a tested framework;
- government support for creating Bachelor and Master programmes in English.

* https://sucre.auth.gr/en

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[20] https://www.uni-r.org/

Conclusion

Promoting exiled students' integration in HEIs in Europe remains a complex issue that very much depends on individual government policy with regard to welcoming exiles. For all the partner countries of the AGILE project, the success of refugee integration cannot rely purely on individual commitment but must be institutionalised by national policy, which means an immigration policy where rights and access to HEI are specified and guaranteed for all. This requires funding and is a highly political subject. Without political backing welcome procedures will remain dependent on each HEI and, as is the case now, individual commitment.

The development of programmes like the Bridge Diploma in France would allow HEIs to improve their institutional support system and so lighten the load of individual members of staff. The presence in each university of an advisor or contact person trained to welcome exiled students and implement new projects and procedures at university level would be also salutary. The French Bridge Diploma is a highly transferable programme capable of ensuring coherence and providing a sustainable response to welcoming exiled students.

A post-bridge diploma programme or knowledge-levelling course was also seen as an important factor in helping exiled students successfully integrate national degrees, reducing the gap between a simple language course and the methodology and prerequisite knowledge necessary for a degree course.

Whilst academic programmes are vital for language acquisition, it was also widely recognised that these programmes must include a support system that works with social partners, charities, associations and other local organisations.

We can thus conclude that for the integration of exiled students to be a success, both from an academic and a social point of view, a holistic support system able to adapt to each individual is necessary. Sustainable housing, grants, financial aid, professional social and psychological help and specialised advisors to facilitate study and are all key factors as explained in our report.

To improve reactivity and resilience in times of crisis, the AGILE team has used all these findings to produce a set of guidelines for European HEI's to develop and improve their curricula for refugees so as to reduce social and academic barriers, make courses more inclusive and increase success rates. The guidelines deal with both long-term initiatives and short-term, emergency responses.

Perspectives for the future: going beyond the AGILE project

Finally, with a view to ensuring long-term commitment to the development and improvement of existing practices, two distinct propositions emerged from the discussions and activities organised in Work Package 2.

The first idea favoured the **creation of a European expert group**, for both students and researchers at risk, to facilitate policy dialogue between EU institutions, member states and stakeholder organisations and to coordinate the design and implementation of possible European funding and support instruments.

The second suggested the **creation of a national or European charter** to **facilitate a coordinated response to incoming refugees.** The best practices in place would be shared and HEIs would commit to:

- the training of specialised administrative staff;
- the development of standardised responses in times of crises;
- the development of long-term welcoming policies;
- the development of shared data and assessment of programmes so as to ensure continuous improvement of responses.

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Appendix N° 1: Bridge Diploma structure at Bordeaux Montaigne University

Bridge diploma for exiled students wishing to pursue their studies

Courses to be followed according to language level	Student hours	Observations
Language level (CERF) A2	**192**	
Written module	**78**	
▶ Reading comprehension	**24**	Each HEI can of course use the language programmes already in place for international students
▶ Written expression	**54**	All the language modules correspond to what is taught in French as a foreign language department in France
- *Writing exercises*	*24*	Content and options vary, groups are limited to 20 students
- *Grammar and spelling*	*30*	
Oral module	**78**	
▶ Phonetics	**18**	
▶ Listening comprehension	**36**	
▶ Oral production	**24**	
Culture	**36**	
▶ Learning about France	**18**	
▶ Cultural codes	**18**	

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Courses to be followed according to language level	Student hours	Observations
Language level B1 (CERF)	**246**	
Written module	**78**	
▶ Reading comprehension	**18**	
▶ Written expression	**18**	
▶ Grammar and spelling	**42**	
Oral module	**60**	
▶ Listening comprehension	**18**	
▶ Oral production	**18**	
▶ Phonetics	**24**	
- General phonetic practice	*12*	
- Sounds and spelling	*12*	
Culture	**54**	
▶ Civilisation	**18**	
▶ Options (French and the media, tourism, business, theatre, cinema…)	**36**	
Understanding social and cultural aspects of the host country	**54**	
▶ Sport/cultural activities on offer at the HEI	**24**	
▶ Understanding social and cultural aspects of the HEI and host country	**9**	3 outings of 2 hours each are organised. Examples of visits: local clothing, food and furniture charities, some of which are specifically for students; visits of the campus (sports department, social worker, libraries, career orientation service, student health service, student computer rooms) + 3 hours at the beginning of each semester to present the diploma and its specificities, explain the need for regular attendance, help with activating university student access (for institutional mails, timetables, information about activities and cultural activities
▶ Discovering the local and national heritage and culture	**6**	1 outing (theatre, exhibition, cinema, visits) including briefing/debriefing with students
▶ Language support	**15**	
- Tutoring	*12*	(5-10 bridge diploma students of the same level and 1-2 tutors). The tutors receive 8 hours of coaching and training (what is an exile, how to position oneself etc.) before helping the students for 2 hours a week for 6 weeks. So as to give exiled students time to adapt to all their French classes we decided to start tutoring in week 7 of each semester as students really need to get used to university life and when we began the tutoring at the beginning of each semester

			students were too exhausted and so tended to skip the tutoring (due to a lack of classrooms, tutoring takes place between 17H30 and 19H30).
- Social workshops		3	Workshop 1 "your health": presentation of existing services (possibility of discussion groups set up by local hospitals, social workers and their role, how the social security system and health service work).

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Courses to be followed according to language level	Student hours	Observations
Language level B2 (CERF)	**198**	
Written module	**66**	
▶ Reading comprehension	**18**	
▶ Written expression	**24**	
▶ Grammar and spelling	**24**	
Oral module	**60**	
▶ Listening comprehension	**18**	
▶ Oral production	**42**	
- Phonetics	*24*	
- Oral expression	*18*	
Culture	**72**	
▶ Civilisation	**18**	
▶ Options (French for academic purposes level 1, theatre, cinema, literature, history of France, French for tourism, French for business …)	**48**	The option "French for academic purposes level 1" is compulsory for all students enrolled in the bridge diploma

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Courses to be followed according to language level	Student hours	Observations
Language level C1 (CERF)	**198**	
Written module	**66**	
▶ Reading comprehension	**18**	
▶ Written expression	**24**	
▶ Grammar and spelling	**24**	
Oral module	**60**	
▶ Listening comprehension	**18**	
▶ Oral production	**42**	
- Phonetics	*24*	
- Oral expression	*18*	
French culture	**72**	
▶ French society	**24**	
▶ Options (French for academic purposes level 2, theatre, cinema, literature, history of France, French for tourism, French for business…)	**48**	The option "French for academic purposes level 2" is compulsory for all students enrolled in the bridge diploma
Understanding social and cultural aspects of the host country	**42**	

▶ Understanding social and cultural aspects of the HEI and host country	**9**	Support system: a visit of Bordeaux town hall is organised (3h), + the sports department, the career orientation service, the library and the legal advice association that we work with + 3 hours to present the organisation of the semester in the bridge diploma
▶ Discovering the local and national heritage and culture	**6**	1 outing (theatre, exhibition, cinema, visits) including briefing/debriefing with students
▶ Tutoring and workshops	**27**	
- Tutoring	*12*	(5-10 bridge diploma students of the same level and 1-2 tutors). The tutors receive 8 hours of coaching and training (what is an exile, how to position oneself etc.) before helping the students for 2 hours a week for 6 weeks. So as to give exiled students time to adapt to all their French classes we decided to start tutoring in week 7 of each semester as students really need to get used to university life and when we began the tutoring at the beginning of each semester, students were too exhausted and so tended to skip the tutoring (due to a lack of classrooms, tutoring takes place between 17H30 and 19H30).
- Building career and further study plans	*9*	3 workshops of 3h each: cover letters, CVs, preparing for an interview (this is done in small groups and each student can then send their CVs and letters to career advisors for correction). Individual appointments are also possible for every student in the bridge diploma. This is incredibly important, as it's the moment when students realise that their choice will be difficult/long and so they begin to look at other careers rather than wanting to do exactly what they had planned to do in their homeland.
- Studying in France, what you need to know	*6*	Presentation of the stages involved in continuing one's studies (calendars, procedures, etc.).

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Courses to be followed according to language level	Student hours	Observations
Language level C2 (CERF)	**196**	
Students choose one of the two majors below	**46**	
LITERARY MAJOR		
▶ Literary methodology	**22**	
▶ Literary methodology	**24**	
ECONOMICS MAJOR		
▶ Economics methodology	**22**	
▶ Economics seminar	**24**	
Linguistics	**102**	
▶ Written expression	**54**	
- Creative writing	*18*	
- Grammar	*18*	
- Stylistics	*18*	
▶ Oral	**48**	
- Phonetics	*24*	
- Listening comprehension and oral production	*24*	
Culture: Understanding social and cultural aspects of the host country	**48**	
▶ Understanding social and cultural aspects of the HEI and host country	**9**	3 outings of 2 hours (associations helping refugee students)
▶ Discovering the local and national heritage and culture	**6**	1 outing (theatre, exhibition, cinema, visits) including briefing/debriefing with students
▶ Tutoring and workshops	**33**	
- Task-based projects	*12*	*Tutoring (see above)*
- Building career and further study plans/internships	*9*	*3 workshops of 3h each: cover letters, CVs, preparing for an interview (this is done in small groups and each student can then send their CVs and letters to career advisors for correction). Individual appointments are also possible for every student in the bridge diploma. This is incredibly important, as it's the moment when students realise that their choice will be difficult/long and so they begin to look at other careers rather than wanting to do exactly what they had planned to do in their homeland.*
- Classes taken in the future field of study	*12*	Taking classes in the course the student wishes to follow after the bridge diploma

Appendix N° 2: Teacher training

1. Module "knowing your audience"

3 hours	Migrants in the Bordeaux metropolitan area
4 hours	How to deal with the reality of intercultural and precarious situations
4 hours	Understanding of assessment

2. Module "diversifying your teaching methods"

4 hours	Theatre-inspired practice for oral expression
4 hours	Choosing documents and creating teaching activities for oral expression
7 hours (4h + 3h)	Pronouncing French well: how to help learners
4 hours	Fun activities to practise speaking
4 hours	Helping migrant parents with their children's education
3 hours	Planning a lesson based on a cultural outing

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[21] Courstesy of the teachers in charge of the training programme, Yamna Chadli and Cathrine Boutaud de la Combe.

Appendix N° 3: Survey

Questionnaire: Sociolinguistic and academic integration of students in exile enrolled in Higher Education.

Dear (former) student,

Thank you for participating in this survey, which is conducted by the team of the Erasmus+ project AGILE (Higher education resilience in refugee crises: forging social inclusion through capacity building, civic engagement and skills recognition) coordinated by Paris 8 University.

With this questionnaire, our team wants to learn more about the sociolinguistic and academic integration of graduate students in exile into the university of their host country. Our projects' aim is to assess the efficiency of Higher Education Institutions' crisis mechanisms from a student perspective by understanding the trajectories that students in exile follow. We also aim to compare different Higher Education Institutions and their strategies in order to better learn from each other's welcoming structures.

We are particularly interested in learning about the challenges and support systems that students from different levels (Bachelor degrees, masters degrees, PhD candidates, vocational/technical studies students or former students) experience in their host countries in order to improve the welcome provided and ensure student success.

We have translated this questionnaire into all of our partner languages. You can choose the language you wish to use in the box above. However, for part 6 of the questionnaire, you may answer the question in whichever language you prefer (including your first language).

We work in accordance with the ethical requirements and General Data Protection Regulation. The publication of research results will take place in anonymous form and will not allow conclusions to be drawn about individual participants. In the questionnaire, only the following data will be collected: personal data such as home and host country, university affiliations and subjects, languages, gender and age along with data regarding language and academic courses and university support systems. This information will be used to analyse the different factors and their influence on the different study paths.

The personal data will be stored and protected thus ensuring that only the AGILE research team will have access to the data.

At any time, you may obtain information about the personal data stored by us. You can also request this data to be corrected or deleted at any time. You have the right to request a restriction of the processing of your data or to object to its further processing. If you refuse participation or revoke or restrict consent, you will not suffer any disadvantages as a result. In any case, your participation in our study is voluntary.

The web application "EUSurvey" is an online survey management system hosted at the European Commission's Department for digital services. You can find more information here: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/home/about.

If you think that we have not complied with data protection regulations when processing your data, you can file a complaint with the supervisory authority, which will examine your complaint. Your declarations regarding the assertion of your rights must always be addressed in writing to the person responsible for data protection.

The data collected in the framework of the Erasmus+ AGILE project will be kept for a period of 5 years before destruction.

Your rights: The personal data collected in the framework of this project is processed by its operational manager, Mrs Léa Meunier, international Office of the University Paris 8. The University of Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis is legally responsible for all processing.

The project concerned has been subject to a legal framework in accordance with the regulations on the protection of personal data.

In accordance with the law n°78-17 of January 6, 1978 relating to data processing, files and freedoms, modified by the law n° 2018-493 of June 20, 2018 relating to the protection of personal data and in application of the

General Data Protection Regulation of May 25, 2018 (RGPD); You may at any time request to modify, rectify or withdraw* the data provided by contacting: international@univ-paris8.fr.

For legal questions related to the processing of your personal data, you can contact the Data Protection Officer at the following addresses

➤ By e-mail to: dpo@univ-paris8.fr,
➤ By post to:
Data Protection Officer
Direction Générale des Services
Université Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis
2 rue de la Liberté
93526 SAINT DENIS CEDEX

NB: The Data Protection Officer (DPO) of the University of Paris 8 is your only contact for any legal request to exercise your rights regarding this processing.

Complaint to the CNIL: If you feel, after having contacted us, that your data protection rights have not been respected, you may submit a complaint to the CNIL (Commission Nationale Informatique et Libertés www.cnil.fr)

* Limitations to the various exercises of rights will be studied in application of article 89.2 of the RGPD relating to exceptions.

☐ I hereby consent to the above-mentioned data collection and processing.

Choose your profile:

☐ I am still studying at my host university

☐ I have already finished my studies at my host university

Part 1: Personal background

In part 1, our aim is to learn more about your personal background: your age, gender, home and host country, university and language(s).

1. Age: ____
2. Gender: ☐female ☐male ☐diverse ☐no comment
3. Home country: _____
4. Host country: _____
5. Name of university in the host country (optional): _____
6. List your first language(s): _____
7. List the other languages you speak: _____
8. How many languages do you use daily?
☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5   ☐ more than 5
9. What are those languages? (You can choose several answers.)
☐ Language of host country   ☐ Language(s) of home country ☐ English
☐ Other(s): _____

Part 2: Academic background

In part 2, we want to learn more about your academic background: if and where you finished high school and university and whether or not prior diplomas have been accepted in your host country.

10. Where did you finish high school?
☐ Home country   ☐ Host country ☐ Other: _____
11. If you obtained your high school diploma in another country, has your graduation certificate been accepted in your host country?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
12. If no, can you explain why? _____

13. Did you already study at a university in your home country?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
14. If yes, for how many years did you study at the University in your home country?
_____ years
15. If yes, what did you study? _____
16. Did you obtain a degree in your home country?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
17. If yes, which level?
☐ Bachelor degree   ☐ Master degree   ☐ Doctorate/PhD
18. If yes, has your degree been accepted in your host country?
☐ Yes, with further requirements   ☐ Yes, without further requirements
☐ No
19. If no or with further requirements, please explain:
_____

Part 3: Language courses

In part 3, we want to know if and which language courses you have taken at your host university.

20. Was your level of language sufficient to follow courses in your host university when you enrolled?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
21. What was your language level (in the course language) when you enrolled?
☐ I don't know   ☐ No prior knowledge
☐ A1   ☐ A2   ☐ B1   ☐ B2   ☐ C1   ☐ C2
22. Did you take any language courses to enable you to continue or start your studies in your host country?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
23. If yes, name the language courses you have taken.
_____
24. If yes, how long did these language course(s) last?
☐ Less than 6 months   ☐ Between 6 months and 1 year   ☐ More than one year
25. If yes, when did you finish your language course(s)?
☐ I am still in the course   ☐ In the last year   ☐ 1-2 years ago   ☐ 2-3 years ago
☐ More than 3 years ago
26. If yes, what language level have you reached?
☐ I don't know   ☐ No level   ☐ A1   ☐ A2   ☐ B1   ☐ B2   ☐ C1   ☐ C2
27. What level is required to study in your host university?
☐ I don't know   ☐ No level   ☐ A1   ☐ A2   ☐ B1   ☐ B2   ☐ C1   ☐ C2

Part 4: University support system

In part 4, we want to learn more about the help or support that your host university offers for students in exile.

28. Does your university offer support for all foreign students?
☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ I don't know
29. Does your university offer support for students in exile, in particular?
☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ I don't know
30. If yes, for which study phase does the university offer support? (You can choose several answers.)
☐ Welcome program before beginning studies
☐ Support throughout the entire study program
☐ Support at the end of studies (e.g. finding a job)
☐ Other: _____
31. If yes, what kind of support is offered? (You can choose several answers.)
☐ Academic counseling
☐ Additional courses, tutoring
☐ Administrative help
☐ Buddy program, language tandems

☐ Community based offers (associations, social integration, kindergarten)
☐ Courses in university methodology/academic culture
☐ Financial support (e.g. grants, transport, food, living costs)
☐ Housing
☐ Initiation into research (university libraries)
☐ Language courses
☐ Legal advice for students in exile
☐ Links between students and the job market
☐ Medical support
☐ Mentoring (peer help during studies)
☐ Psychological counseling
☐ Technological support
☐ Technology (Computers or Mobile phones)
☐ Other(s): _____

32. Did you use any of the above?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
33. If yes, which kind of support did you or do you use? _____
34. If yes, which kind of support did you or do you find the most useful? Can you explain why?
_____
35. Do you feel like you need more support from the University?
☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ I don't know
36. If yes, what would you like to suggest?
_____
37. Are there associations for students in exile in your host country or university?
☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ I don't know
38. If yes, have you been in contact with them during your studies?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
39. If yes, how was it helpful?
_____

Part 5: Academic courses

In part 5, we want to learn more about your study program: what courses do you take, in what language(s) are your courses, how do you communicate with professors and peers.

40. Are you currently taking academic courses at your host university?
☐ Yes   ☐ No, not yet.   ☐ No, I have already finished my courses.
41. Which degree are you studying for? / Which degree did you study for?
☐ Bachelor degree   ☐ Master degree   ☐ Doctorate/PhD
42. What subject are you studying? / Which subject did you study? _____
43. If you studied in your home country before, did you change your subject?
☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ No prior studies
44. If yes, why did you change? (You can choose several answers.)
☐ My prior courses were not accredited
☐ Prior subject not available in new university
☐ New subjects available
☐ Different subjects accessible
☐ Changed context (e.g. national law, language not taught…)
☐ Financial issues
☐ Changed career prospects
☐ Changed priorities/interests
☐ Loss of interest
☐ Course language
☐ Modality of the courses (e.g. online option)
☐ Family situation

☐ Health issues
☐ Other: _____

45. What are/were the language(s) of the courses you take/took in your host university? (You can choose several answers.)
☐ Language of host country   ☐ English   ☐ Other(s): _____

46. In which language(s) do/did you communicate with your professors/teachers? (You can choose several answers.)
☐ Language of host country   ☐ English   ☐ Other(s): _____

47. How often do/did you ask your professor(s) for help with the content of your courses?
☐ Every week   ☐ Every other week   ☐ Once a month
☐ Less than once a month   ☐ Never

48. How often do/did you ask your professor(s) for help with regard to administrative questions?
☐ Every week   ☐ Every other week   ☐ Once a month
☐ Less than once a month   ☐ Never

49. In which language(s) do/did you communicate with your peers? (You can choose several answers.)
☐ Language of host country   ☐ English   ☐ Other(s): _____

50. How often do/did you ask your peers for help with the content of your courses?
☐ Every week   ☐ Every other week   ☐ Once a month
☐ Less than once a month   ☐ Never

51. How often do/did you ask your peers for help with regard to administrative questions?
☐ Every week   ☐ Every other week   ☐ Once a month
☐ Less than once a month   ☐ Never

Part 6: General feedback

In part 6, we are interested in your general impression of your host university. What was helpful and what challenges did you face?

52. Can you give two positive aspects of studying in Higher Education in your host country?
_____
_____

53. What two things helped you in your academic integration?
_____
_____

54. What two things do you miss most from your high school or university in your home country?
_____
_____

55. What are/were the main challenges you faced during your studies in Higher Education in your host country?
_____
_____

56. What ideas do you have for improving the integration of students in exile into the university?
_____
_____

57. Would you be willing to help other students in exile in the future?
☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ I don't know

58. If yes, what form could this help take (in an association, mentoring, volunteer work...)?
_____
_____

59. What are your plans for the future (settling in host country, returning to home country if possible, moving to another country...)? Please explain why.
_____
_____

Acknowledgements

Author

Linda Lawrance

Assistant lecturer, Linda LAWRANCE is a lecturer in English. She was vice chancellor of Bordeaux Montaigne university from 2010 until 2020 and head of the French language department from 2017 until 2023. In these roles she was able to initiate the very first welcome programmes for exiled students and was responsible for coordinating their development and the regional projects which were vital in financing them. She has presented the different initiatives in place both at a local and international level and still works to improve curricula and student engagement through a variety of projects at the university.

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