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AGILE

Supporting mechanisms for exiled students in Higher Education

FRANCE

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Deliverable Factsheet

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Abstract	In this document, we present the supporting mechanisms for exiled students at HE institutions in France, according to responses collected through an online questionnaire survey of these institutions. The analysis also mentions the most common difficulties experienced by institutions in their work with this specific audience, as well as their suggestions for more sustainable and continuous work.
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Consortium

	Université Paris 8 (UP8)	France
	Université Bordeaux Montaigne (UBM)	France
	Web2Learn (W2L)	Greece
	University of Ljubljana (UL)	Slovenia
	Polish Rectors Foundation (PRF)	Poland
	Lviv Polytechnic National University (LPNU)	Ukraine
	University of Hamburg (UH)	Germany
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Disclaimer:

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

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

Abbreviations	Description
CROUS	**Centre régional des œuvres universitaires et scolaires** (Regional Center for University and School Projects)
EU	European Union
EUF	**Entraide Universitaire Française** (the french university mutual aid association)
FEI	**France Education International** (France International Education)
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LIEnS	**Lieux et Instants d'échanges solidaires** (Places and times for solidarity exchanges)
MenS	**Migrants dans l'Enseignement Supérieur** (Migrants in Higher Studies)
UEE	**Union des Étudiants Exilés** (Union for Exiled Students)
UNiR	**Universités et Réfugié.es** (Universities and Refugees)
VAPP	Validation of Professional and Personal Experience

List of Figures

List of Tables

Executive Summary

In this document, we present the supporting mechanisms for refugee[1] students at HEI in France, according to responses collected through an online survey of these institutions. The domains covered by the survey relate to skills recognition, capacity building and civic engagement. The analysis also mentions the most common difficulties experienced by institutions in their work with this specific population, as well as their suggestions for more sustainable and continuous work. In this particular national context, while the dimensions of skill recognition and capacity building seem to have already been developed and implemented in the universities surveyed, there are still gaps in terms of implementing civic engagement mechanisms.

The AGILE project

This publication is a result of the EU-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 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.

The project is coordinated by the University Paris 8. 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) who specializes in open recognition systems and social learning.

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[1] In this report, we will refer to students as exiles or refugees.

1. Introduction

1. Introduction

This report was created as part of Work Package 5 (WP5) of the AGILE project, called "Implementation of Intervention at European universities offering refugee education". This WP addressed the specific objective of "using digital innovation, social participation and impact assessment to build strong academia-society cooperation for resilience and sustainability" (as stated in the project proposal). It specifically focused on the impact of refugee crises on European HE systems in order to learn from them and take measures to increase resilience of HEIs in Europe during refugee crises in the future.

In order to reach our goal, the AGILE consortium created a questionnaire, which was filled in by HE actors across the member countries. After the questionnaire was produced in French (by the partner institutions in Paris, Bordeaux and Hamburg), it was translated into English and into the national languages of the partners involved in the AGILE project. The online implementation was done through the EU survey tool (https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/home/welcome/runner) in the different languages. The target groups were then contacted by the national coordinators of AGILE and invited to answer the questionnaire in one of the languages of the project. A maximum of 4 answers from 4 different stakeholders per institution were allowed.

The questionnaire was structured in three parts (Table 1): skills recognition, capacity building and civic engagement. It included open and closed questions. The length of each part was variable.

Section	Description
skills recognitions	8 questions regarding the mechanisms and tools developed by universities to recognize previously acquired competences (academic, linguistic or other) and the challenges in their institutional implementation.
capacity building	8 questions about the mechanisms and tools developed by the institutions to support exiled students before, during and after their academic lives in the host institutions. It also included answers related to challenges in the implementation of such mechanisms and tools by the staff of the university. So, in this questionnaire, capacity building targets both students and staff.
civic engagement	7 questions on how universities encourage and support exiled students to participate in academic, civic and community life.

Table 1. Structure of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was introduced by a short text stressing the context of data collection (and protection) and its aims:

> "This questionnaire, designed as part of the Erasmus+ Agile project, aims to gather information on the strategies and practices put in place at your university to support exiled students and make it easier for them to be welcomed and included, both academically and in socio-linguistic terms: recognition of their skills, capacity-building for university staff and facilities, and support for students' civic engagement.
>
> This questionnaire is intended for managers and coordinators of courses for learning the language of the host country (DU Passerelle in France), Vice- rectors/presidents for International Relations, Campus Life Department officers, people responsible for the Validation of Professional and Personal Experience (VAPP), and any person working in a

Higher Education Institution responsible for welcoming and supporting exile students".

We obtained a total of 141 answers, distributed as follows: 38 responses from Poland, 35 responses from France, 27 responses from Germany, 21 responses from Ukraine, 7 responses from Greece and Slovenia each, and 6 responses from Lithuania.

In the case of France, potential participants in targeted HEIs through different networks, such as the MEnS Network, were contacted first in December 2024, with reminders and the additional participants following in January and February 2025. The emails were sent directly to HEIs' staff dedicated to support exiled students, asking them to circulate the questionnaire to other colleagues within their institution also involved in welcoming and supporting refugee students.

As a reminder, the MEns Network, founded in 2017, has the objective of "implementing actions to promote the academic integration of exiled people". With this in mind, the MEnS network has set up a university diploma ("DU passerelle"), enabling refugee students to resume their studies in France while gaining access to grants based on social criteria. The network has also forged closer ties with the Collège de France, as part of the PAUSE program, which works to welcome and employ researchers in exile (Réseau MEnS, s. d., [our traduction]). In 2025, the MEnS network will have 42 Passerelle diplomas, 56 member establishments, 11 institutional partners and 12 member associations. The 42 Diplômes Passerelle welcomes 1,800 exiled students every year.

35 answers were obtained (written in French and English, even though the questionnaire was in French) in 26 different universities (14 universities located across the provinces and 12 located in the Paris region), given mainly by coordinators of DU Passerelle, French as a Foreign language teachers and International Offices, meaning that they have a specialized knowledge of the local realities they work in. We emphasize that these responses represent 26 universities in France, i.e. around 35% of all universities in France (France Universités, 2024).

In this report, we will only present the answers obtained in the context of France. All the answers were anonymized. To see the responses from other countries and an overview including the responses from all AGILE members, we suggest consulting the reports available at: https://agileproject-erasmus.eu/ (section: Results).

2. Results

2. Results

2.1 Skills recognition

For the first question: Does your university have procedures for recognizing the qualifications acquired by exiled students before arriving in the host country? Out of 35 responses, 24 respondents said that their institutions have procedures for recognizing refugee students' previous qualifications, 9 participants stated that they did not and 2 respondents signaled that they didn't know. These procedures are mainly related to the recognition of foreign diplomas (19 answers). 14 institutions declared that they have a platform for specific applications for refugee students. 11 carry out interviews with the candidates and 6 institutions declared they have testing procedures. Some of these mechanisms are present in concomitance, with universities declaring one to four mechanisms of recognition of previous qualifications.

To better understand these results, it should be remembered that France is a signatory to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Convention, 1997, Council of Europe et UNESCO, 2017), article 7 of which states:

> Each Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its education system and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence (p. 9).

It is therefore up to each institution to put in place systems to assess the progress of exiled students who do not have their diploma and this should in no way block their enrolment. This text may (although as we are well aware, not always) enable you to support your request on behalf of the students. It may also be possible to turn to the Validation of Professional and Personal Experience (VAPP) procedure.

Regarding the question "Do exiled students who enroll in your university's various courses continue their studies where they left off, or do they generally have to repeat one or more years?", apart from 1 participant who declared they don't know, 4 participants declared that the students could continue at the year/level at which they left off and 6 participants explained that refugee students usually have to repeat their studies one or two years, while the remaining participants declared that it would depend. The reasons provided by participants who declared "it depends" are very diverse, but they are usually related to:

- language proficiency level (students must have at least a B2 level in French),
- disciplinary specificities,
- specificities of the Bachelor-Master transition,
- curricular and internal organization of the course at the host university,
- the already acquired credit points that can be recognized by the European Network of Information Centres – National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENIC-NARIC).

Important aspects to consider when recognizing the previously obtained skills are:
- Is the home university recognized in France as a HEI?
- Is the degree in the home university recognized in France?

In terms of requirements for a refugee student to be enrolled in a French university, the figure 1 below shows the distribution of the answers:
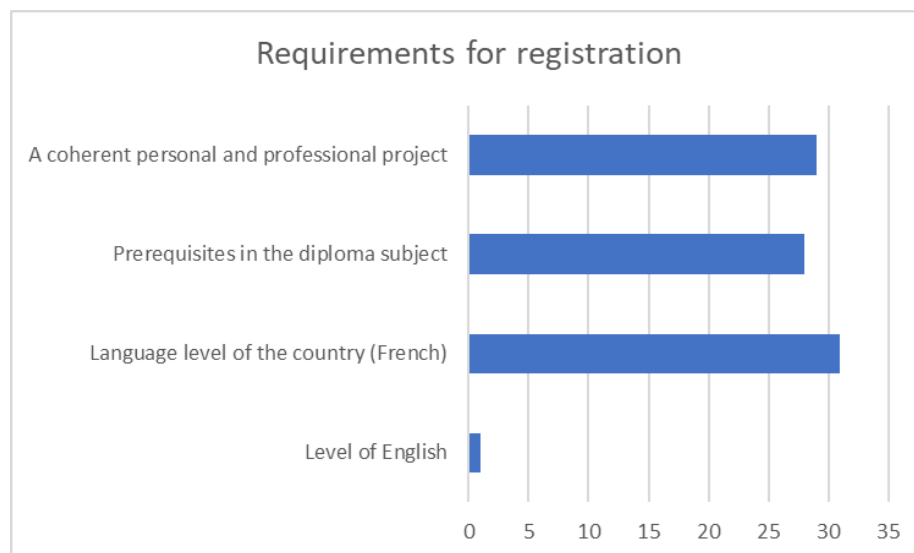

Figure 1. Requirements for registration in French universities.

As we can note, linguistic skills play an important role in the registration process. 31 participants declared that the recognition of those linguistic skills (in French) is done through a diploma or language certificate, usually the Diploma in French Language Studies (Diplôme d'études en langue française, DELF) B2 level, issued by France Education International[2] (FEI).

In terms of recognition of skills acquired outside the university, the figure 2 shows the distribution of the answers:
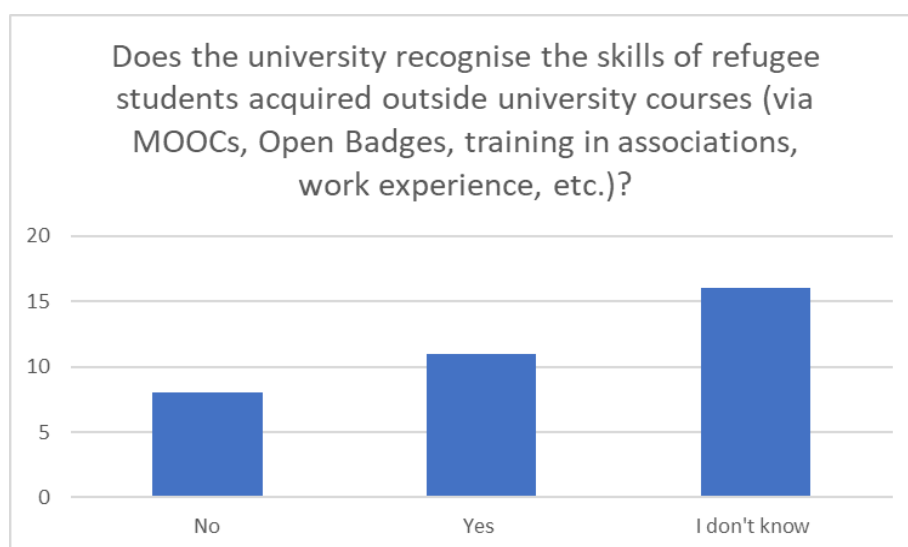

Figure 2. Recognition of skills acquired outside the university.

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[2] FEI is the public operator in charge of the DELF diploma for the French Ministry of Education and Youth. The ENIC-NARIC France centre is also attached to FEI.

Out of 35 responses, only 11 recognized the skills of refugee students acquired outside the university courses. Even though, the Council of Europe in 2012, highlighted the value of validation of non-formal and informal learning for promoting employability and mobility, particularly for the socio-economically disadvantaged with few qualifications. In fact, the Council invited all EU countries to establish validation systems that would allow individuals to obtain recognized qualifications on the basis of non-formal or informal learning. The results obtained to this question show the need of creating recognition systems for non-formal learning in French HEIs.

Figure 3 shows that difficulties are found by most of the institutions who answered our questionnaire on the recognition of the skills of exiled students.
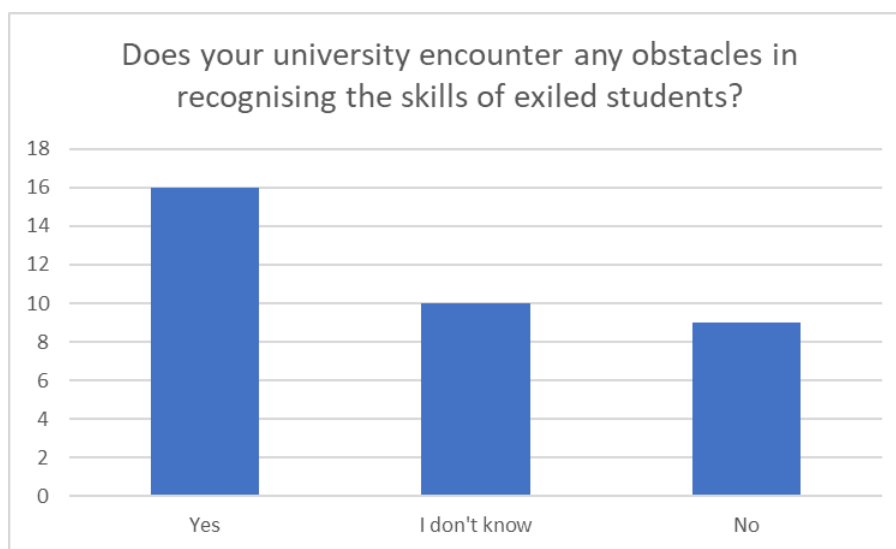
Figure 3. Number of obstacles in the recognition of skills.

These difficulties are very diverse, but are usually related to incomplete documentation due to missing and/or lost documents (usually because of war scenarios).

> *"Absence de documents sur lesquels s'appuyer pour évaluer le niveau du candidat"*
> *[Translation: "No documents on which to base an assessment of the candidate's level"]*

Other times, as one institution declares, "Recognizing skills that are not part of an academic career path", represents an obstacle because they are difficult to prove.

2.2 Capacity building

As we can see in Figure 4 below, when asked about training for the welcoming of refugee students, most of the institutions do not offer courses or training sessions to prepare their staff members.

Figure 4. Training courses for staff.

The results showed that 16 participants stated that in their institutions there is no offer of training courses for the staff to prepare them to welcome exiled students. In contrast, 13 participants referred to a positive response. According to participants' responses, 3 institutions offer training courses in partnership with the Migrants in Higher Education Network (MEnS), one specified that;

> *"We are members of the MEnS French network (Migrants in Higher Studies) that offer specific training for both administrative and teaching staff. We also have a specific office for students in exile at the Direction for International relations, with a dedicated administrative staff."*

Based on the information presented on the MEnS' website, the themes of these courses are usually related to intercultural themes but also to administrative procedures such as the right for asylum, the rights of exiled students, career guidance and recognition and the academic and social downgrading of exiled students.

In terms of specific support mechanisms to help exiled students navigate the French academic culture and environment, Figure 5 presents 5 support instruments, related to languages, administration and academic life.
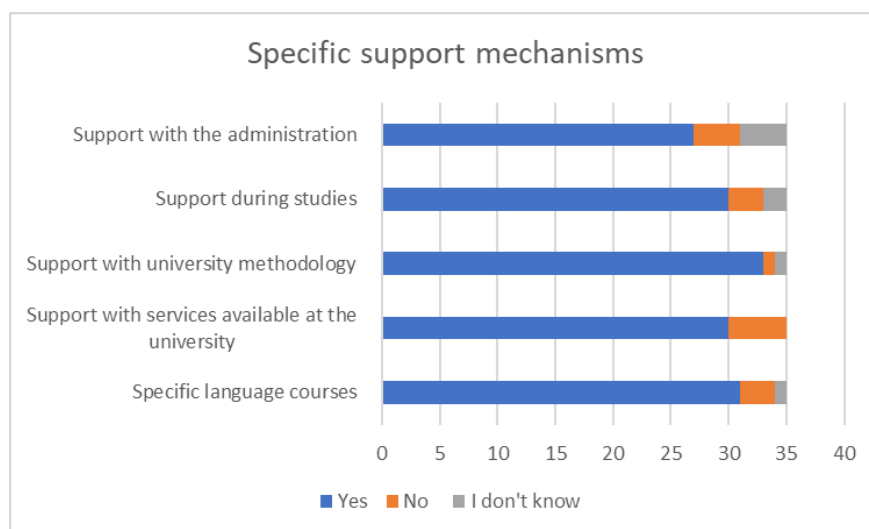

Figure 5. Specific support mechanisms related to academic life.

Most services are aimed at international students (i.e. those on international mobility programmes, Erasmus students and exiled students). Exiled students have access to a range of support services designed to help them navigate university life, from enrollment to academic success and integration, according to the answers provided by participants. In certain universities the "Direction des Relations Internationales" (International Relations Department) implements a Service/Contact Person for exiled students. In some others, the "bureau d'accueil international" (International Welcome Office) and the Centre régional des œuvres universitaires et scolaires (Regional Center for University and School Projects, CROUS) assists all international students with enrollment, insurance, accommodation, and scholarships. Additionally, one of the participants explained that the International Welcome Office from their institution provides guidance through a special programme called "Colibri[3]" for those exiled students interested in studying before they enroll in the university.

The International Welcome Office offers services for international students, including exiled students. At the same time, the staff of the DU Passerelle is in charge of supporting exiled students enrolled in this programme. Additionally, there are also sometimes partnerships with associations that specialise in welcoming refugee students (e.g. SILLAT[4], former UEE - Union des Étudiants Exilés, *Union for Exiled Students* or UNiR - Universités et Réfugié.es, *Universities and Refugees*). These associations provide exiled students with assistance in administrative formalities, offer internships and information on how to take part in cultural and/or artistic activities.

It is important to note that, depending on the university, international students are most often managed and welcomed by the international relations department, whereas exiled students are managed by the campus life department (Vie de Campus). This is an interesting point because it means that exiled students, once they have enrolled at the university, even just to learn the French language, are considered to be students in their own right.

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[3] https://colibri.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/
[4] SILLAT is not an acronym: The name 'SILLAT', means 'bridges', 'links' or 'strength' in different languages. https://sillat.org/qui-sommes-nous/

According to the answers provided, 30 participants (representing 20 universities) declared providing support mechanisms during the period of study. Indeed, exiled students benefit from a variety of academic, social, and administrative support services aimed at fostering integration and success. Table 2 sums up the provided support as reported in the questionnaire:

Type of support	Examples
Financial support	• Scholarship programmes for students with a refugee background (exemption from tuition fees, social aid, accommodation, tickets for food, hygiene items, etc.) Organisms in charge of scholarships: • CROUS • University scholarships office: monitoring the university careers of students on scholarships. This office is in charge of applications for exemption from / or reimbursement of university tuition fees. • The Entraide Universitaire Française[5] (EUF, the French university mutual aid association)
Academic and faculty-based support	• Subject-specific mentoring schemes • DU Passerelle (French language courses, mentoring, and advising) • Faculty-based mentoring programmes and initiatives. For example, one university proposed the LIEnS[6] (Lieux et Instants d'échanges solidaires, *Places and times for solidarity exchanges*) programme. It aims to promote the use of the French language, to share moments of life with students in exile and to create links to help them integrate into university life.
Academic life support	• The International Relations Department, the Welcome Office, and the CROUS which provide administrative support and guidance • Student organizations and initiatives, including interpreter groups and tutorial programmes
Further support	• Buddy programmes to help students integrate into university life • Legal advising for students needing assistance with administrative or residency matters • Counseling and workshops addressing both academic and personal challenges (social worker) • Preventive medicine service

Table 2. Support mechanisms for exiled students during their studies at French universities.

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[5] EUF https://entraide-universitaire.fr/
[6] LIEnS programme, Université de Lille
https://www.univ-lille.fr/universite/connaitre-les-engagements-qui-nous-guident/faire-de-la-solidarite-notre-priorite
/accueil-et-amenagement-des-etudes

When asked about if there is a system in place to welcome exiled students and introduce them to the various student life services available at the university, 31 participants (representing 21 universities) answered positively.

In terms of available services introduced to exiled students by this system, Figure 6 shows its frequency according to the 31 participants. From the numbers of items reported, it is possible to assert that most of the HE institutions offer a combined offer of scheme to inform of several services available at the university.
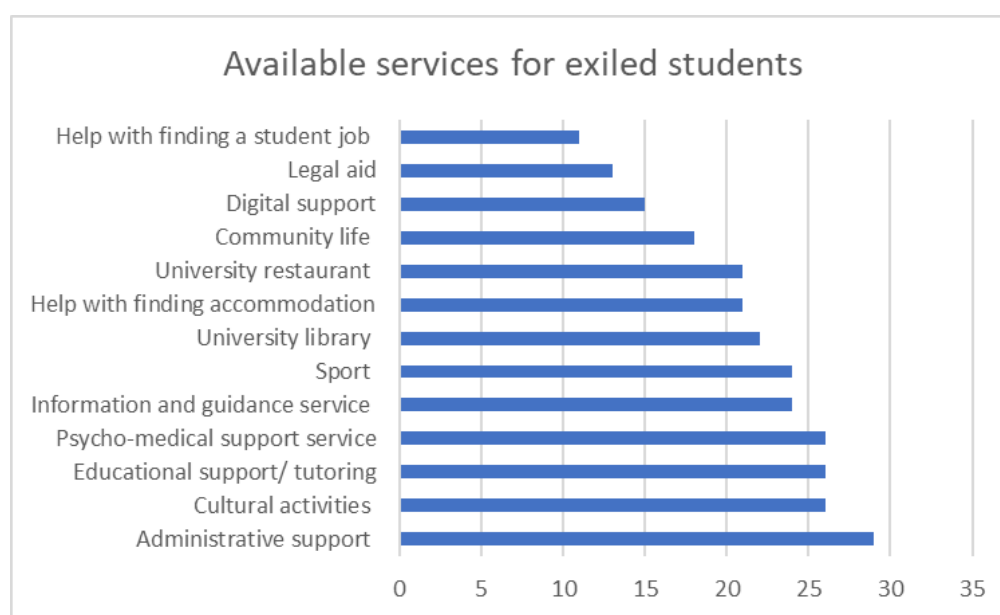

Figure 6. Services available for exiled students.

It should be noted that the facilities covered by this scheme are available to other students (such as university libraries and restaurants) and are also made available to exiled students. Administrative support services, psycho-medical services, cultural and sport activities are the most present in the majority of French HEIs who took part in our survey. Specific services, related to legal aid, help with finding a student job and digital support are less frequently named by the participants. In any case, these services meet some of the needs listed by exiled students who participated in the AGILE questionnaire (see Melo-Pfeifer, Brinkmann & Gerwers, 2024).

Concerning the question: Does your university face any obstacles in setting up support systems for exiled students? 11 participants declared no difficulties. The other participants referred to several constraints, particularly: financial (18 answers), related to human resources (16 answers), organizational (4 answers), and political (3 answers). One participant provided an individual account of other difficulties:

> "the precarious administrative situation of many exiled students means that they do not have access to a number of student services (accommodation, scholarships, etc.)"

This information reveals that support structures and mechanisms face several challenges to meet exiled students' needs, namely financial and administrative.

The last question of this section was related to follow-up mechanisms developed by universities after they finished their studies. 20 participants (representing 14 universities) stated that they still do not have these follow-up mechanisms and structures, and 9 participants responded positively. 6 participants selected the "I don't know option".

This means that most universities do not have a student follow-up policy, even though they have invested a great deal in initial student support. Also, as most of the people (in the case of French universities) who participated in this questionnaire are in charge of the DU Passerelle for learning French to enter university, having no follow-up mechanisms means that once students have enrolled in the various degrees, they have no support systems to help them stay on course. In fact, the B2 level in French required in France for entry to a Bachelor's degree indicates that skills are still fragile, particularly in academic language and university work methodology. One of the challenges for the coming years will be to support post-DU Passerelle students to help them adapt to the French university system.

2.3 Civic engagement

To the question "Does your university inform exiled students about the possibility of getting involved in civic and/or community life?" 6 participants answered negatively and 23 positively. The rest declared not knowing about it. In addition, 16 participants declared that civic engagement was recognized in the academic career (open badges, internships, bonus points, certificates, optional/open courses, etc.), 11 participants stated a negative response, while 8 declared not knowing about mechanisms to recognize such engagement.

To understand these results, it is important to know that in France, the Decree no. 2017-962[7] on the recognition of student involvement in community, social or professional life, published on 10 May 2017, extends the recognition of student involvement to all higher education institutions. The decree stipulates that HEIs must implement a system guaranteeing the validation, in order to obtain a degree, of the skills, knowledge and aptitudes acquired by their students in the exercise of associative, social or professional activities. Despite the existence of this Decree there are still some universities that don't recognize civic engagement perhaps due to a lack of systems recognition as is shown in the results.

To the question whether or not there is an association or collective of exiled students or for exiled students at the university, just 9 participants answered positively, while 5 did not know. The majority of the participants (21 answers) in the questionnaire reported negatively. In terms of the presence and/or representation of exiled students in the university's decision-making bodies, 9 participants declared not knowing about it. Just 2 participants declared that refugee students were represented in decision-making bodies, while 24 answered negatively.

The lack of representation in both associations/collectives and in the presence of exiled students in decision-making is worrying because even if there's a lot of investment from the university informing the exiled students of their existence, maybe there is insufficient follow up or guidance in order to create these associations or explain how to participate in decision-making bodies.

In the answers to the next question, related to collaboration with external organizations: "Does your university work with external organizations (companies, NGOs, associations) to promote civic engagement and/or socio-cultural inclusion of exiled students?". Figure 7 shows that the majority of the HEIs work with these third parties.
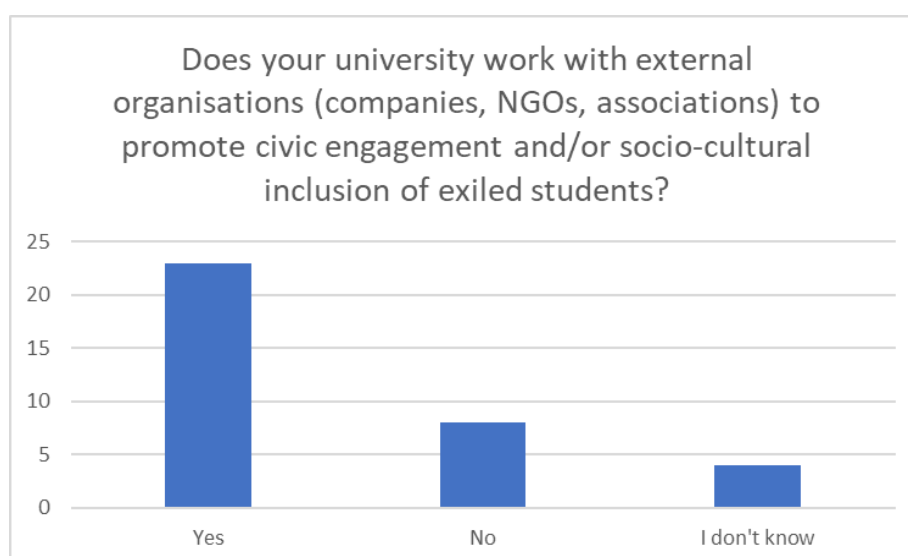

Figure 7. Work with external organisations.

Associations such as UNiR, SILLAT, Réseau MEnS and many others, work with universities in order to propose internships, socio-cultural activities and volunteering. These are opportunities for the exiled students to meet new people (and so create social networks), to share their knowledge in different aspects (cultural, professional, personal) and learn from the others out of the university context.

Finally, the participants were also asked about their support of cultural and artistic projects conceived and developed by students in exile. The majority of the institutions answered positively, as shown in Figure 8.
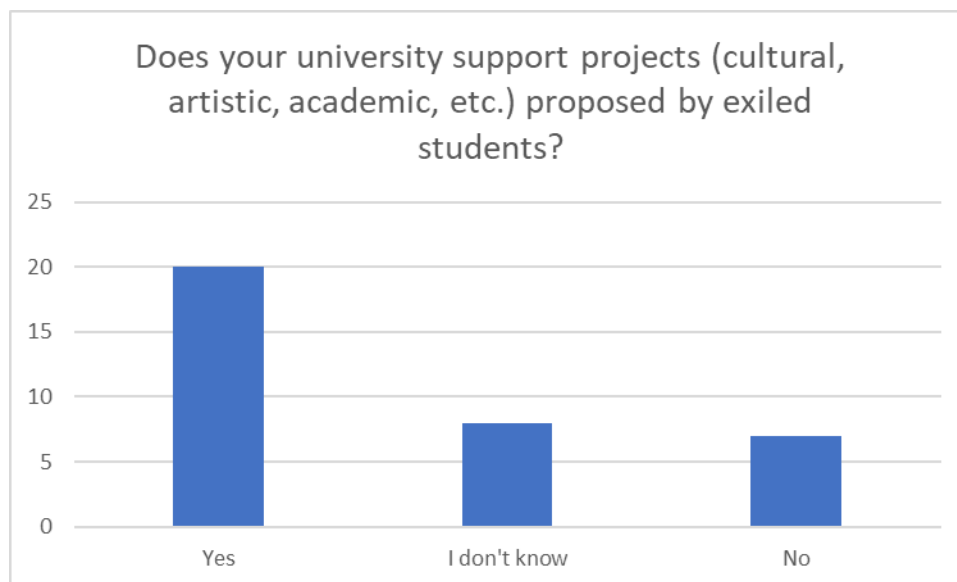

Figure 8. Support of cultural and artistic projects developed by exiled students.

As exiled students, the university supports them like any other student with their art, social or cultural projects. They help through communication and dissemination of the events, even if some institutions also provide logistical and financial support, as shown in figure 9.
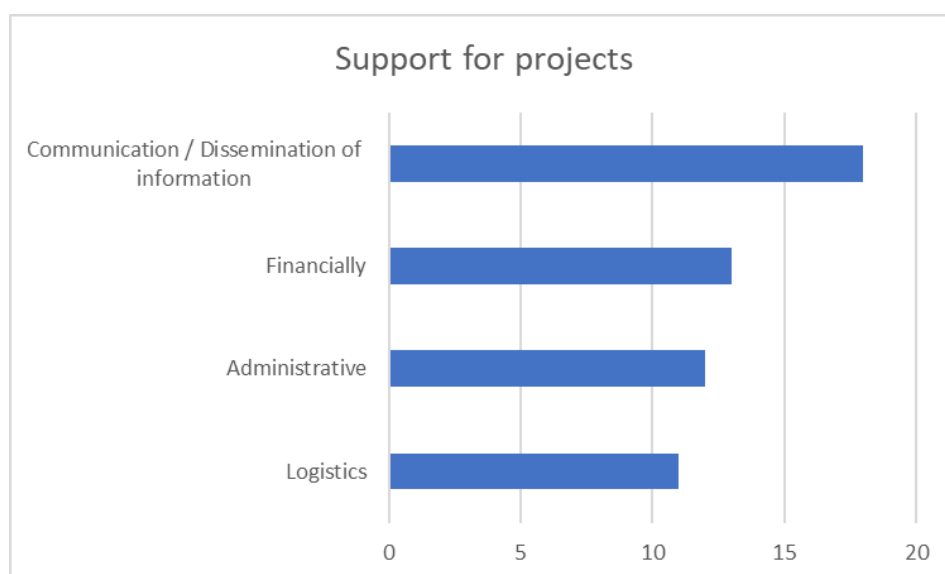

Figure 9. Support of cultural and artistic projects developed by exiled students.

3. Key insights

3. Key insights

One main conclusion to draw from this report is that HEIs in France have developed a diversity of mechanisms to support exiled students. They are mostly related to facilitating entering the institution (through skills recognition), supporting their continuity (through capacity building) to interact with the society at large (through civic engagement), rather than helping them transition to the job market. This can be explained by the fact that HEIs go from the individual to the collective, from primary needs to academic and societal inclusion.

In terms of support mechanisms in the three phases of HE entrance and permanence (see Melo-Pfeifer, Brinkmann & Gerwers, 2024), we can observe that most of the support mechanisms in place are oriented towards the immediate accommodation of this student population and few follow-up measures or actions are named (in terms of diversity and frequency of their presence). Indeed, just nine participants responded affirmatively to the question of the existence of follow-up mechanisms.

If we take into consideration a whole-university approach (Friedrich et al, 2021), we could observe that HEIs make efforts to cover the different dimensions of the academic life of exiled students (Figure 10).

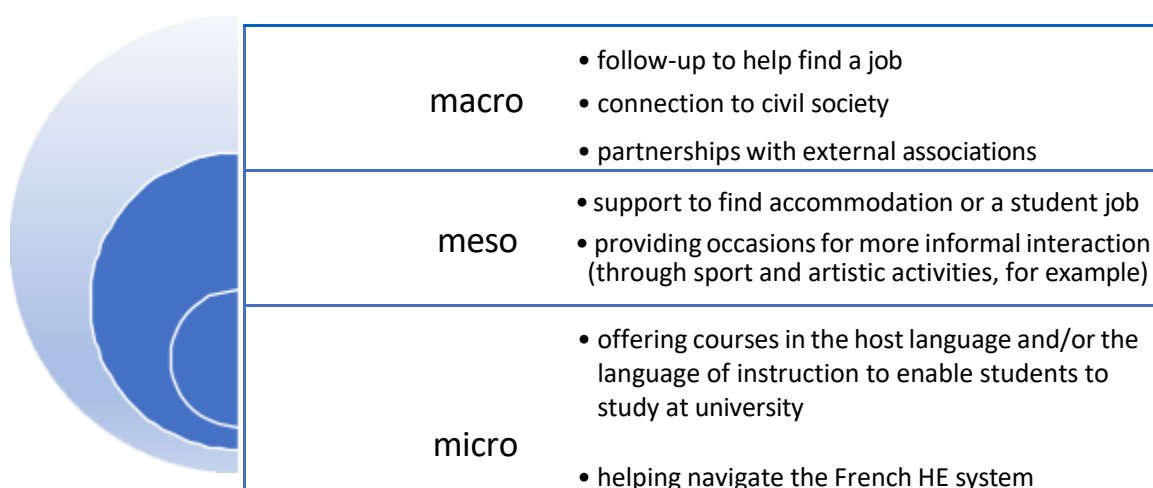|		
macro	• follow-up to help find a job	
	• connection to civil society	
	• partnerships with external associations	
meso	• support to find accommodation or a student job	
	• providing occasions for more informal interaction (through sport and artistic activities, for example)	
micro	• offering courses in the host language and/or the language of instruction to enable students to study at university	
	• helping navigate the French HE system	

Figure 10. A whole university approach in HEIs.

Furthermore, several participants highlighted certain challenges, allowing us to assert that sustainability is a fundamental factor in the effective design and implementation of support mechanisms for exiled students. Indeed, while initial assistance programs, such as language courses and workshops, may be established, their long-term maintenance can prove challenging due to the continuous need for financial and institutional commitment, as well as human resources. This issue is further compounded by financial and staffing constraints, which may lead to the downsizing of existing support initiatives. Such reductions risk causing a loss of institutional knowledge and expertise, potentially undermining the institution's ability to respond effectively in the future. The progressive depletion of resources underscores the importance of viewing and managing existing support systems not as temporary solutions to immediate and short-term challenges, but as enduring commitments requiring sustained investment.

The responses regarding the challenges suggest that these support structures are often perceived as temporary and, at times, dispensable. However, if sustainability is essential to their effectiveness, they must be reinforced through long-term strategic planning, supported by stable funding sources and a skilled workforce that is regularly updated and professionalized. To ensure a long-term perspective for these structures, greater involvement from advocacy groups and policymakers is required, along with the integration of exiled students into decision-making processes—an approach that, according to respondents, remains scarcely implemented in universities in France.

4. Suggestions

4. Suggestions

This section of the current report is based on the recommendations and suggestions made by the respondents in the last question of the survey. The formulation of the question was: "Based on your experience, what suggestions would you make to improve the responsiveness of universities in receiving exiled students?". This formulation was chosen to address issues of sustainability and resilience of the structures already in place, an issue that is at the center of the AGILE project.

According to the 31 participants (out of 35) that proposed suggestions, to improve the inclusion of exiled students in HEI and in the French socio-cultural space as a whole, universities must take targeted and sustained action. The following critical areas to improve sustainability and resilience of HE institutions were mentioned:

- **Securing adequate financial resources** and, especially the recognition of exiled students' programmes by the universities in order to reach sustainability.

  "*We need to secure funding as well as the institutional recognition of all the programmes dedicated to students in exile. Until now, all these programmes have relied on the investment and energy of people who want to get involved. Anchoring these programmes in the university's mission statement would make them more sustainable.*"

  Another participant expressed :

  "*La volonté de l'université et de l'équipe d'accueil est forte, mais nous sommes limitées dans l'accueil par manque de personnel et de financement…*" [*translation: The will of the university and the hosting team is strong, but we are limited in hosting due to a lack of staff and funding...*]

- **Expanding language support, in the host language and/or language(s) of instruction**. One participant stated: "Offering more language courses, better recognition of the diplomas and backgrounds of exiled students"

- **Enhancing advisory and support services clearly designated for this purpose**, prioritizing the unique challenges faced by refugee students. About this, one participant referred to the need for "dedicated staff to inform and welcome students". Some participants suggested that it would be better to have one specific office coordinating all the exile students' demands. This could help students to cope with stress and linguistic insecurity:

  "*I think it's important to have a one-stop shop (office) that coordinates all the services that will have to respond to the needs of exiled students, and that they are welcomed and understood. [...] Many exiled students don't necessarily speak the language of their host country very well. The experience of exile is already a traumatic one, and the resulting linguistic insecurity (fear of not understanding correctly/fear of not being understood correctly) is a major source of anxiety. Added to this is the multiplication of interlocutors and administrative complexity, which can seriously disrupt their settling in at university and their ability to invest in the content taught.*"

- **Activism and awareness campaigns conducted to educate university staff and students** on the specific challenges refugees face ("*Dedicated staff to inform and welcome students, raise awareness among staff and offer training*"). One participant stated the importance of training staff to be empathetic in face to exiled students' requests and particular situations:

  "*The other suggestion is to systematically train administrative staff to receive exiled students whose requests are sometimes complex and ambivalent. **It's important for them to meet kind and empathetic people**.*

- Funds to **provide exiled students with a contact person who will accompany and guide them** as they settle in:

  "Prévoir également une personne référente dans les composantes dédiées à l'accueil et au suivi des étudiants exilés" [translation*: "There should also be a contact person in each department dedicated to welcoming and monitoring exiled students."*]

- **Establish a national policy for the compulsory reception of exiled students.** One participant referred:

  "If a real national policy was set up (by the ministry of higher education for example), it would make the welcoming of exiled students mandatory and it would not only be on the shoulders of some colleagues sensitive to this issue."

The recommendations from the respondents underscore the necessity for continued advocacy and institutional commitment to ensuring access, support, and success for refugee students. As universities evolve to meet these challenges, they must invest in sustainable solutions that uphold long-term resilience in HEIs.

5. Conclusion

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This document outlined the support mechanisms provided to exiled students at French HEIs, based on responses from an online questionnaire developed by the AGILE project. The survey focused on three key areas: skills recognition, capacity building, and civic engagement. Our analysis identifies the common challenges these institutions face in serving this specific audience and compiles their suggestions for creating more sustainable and continuous support systems. While the surveyed universities have made notable progress in developing and implementing skills recognition and capacity building initiatives, significant gaps remain in establishing effective civic engagement and follow-up mechanisms.

The recommendations left by the respondents to the survey in France highlight key areas for improvement of HEIs support mechanisms for exiled students, including securing and expanding adequate financial resources, maintaining and increasing advisory and support structures, awareness campaigns conducted to educate university staff and students, and provide exiled students with a contact person who will accompany and guide them. Additionally, implementing national policies to welcome exiled students in order to involve all members of the university including staff and students.

All in all, sustainable support for exiled students requires long-term financial, institutional, and human resources commitments. The French experience shows that, while initial programmes and structures can be established, they often face scaling down due to financial and human resources constraints, risking the loss of institutional and human expertise. To avoid treating these initiatives as temporary fixes, universities need stable funding, strategic planning, and greater involvement of exiled students in decision-making.

6. References

6. References

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