

4.iii - New Initiative - Staff Training on Pathways of Institutional Support for Young Refugees

## Staff Training on Pathways of Institutional Support for Young Refugees' Access to Higher Education, Training and Employment

**Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**

**Contact details**

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### 1. Description of the activity

**Please describe the activity, the reason for the activity and the target group**

**Title:** Staff Training on Pathways of Institutional Support for Young Refugees' Access to Higher Education, Training and Employment.

#### **Activity description**

In the spring of 2019, the Department of European Educational Programmes of Aristotle University aims to organize the second edition of the Utrecht Network Refugee Staff Week (the first one was organized 12-15 June 2018 at Utrecht University). It will be a 5-day training for staff (25-30 persons) of partner universities involved in refugee support and education/training preparatory initiatives and schemes.

The experience of the Aristotle University comes from the program S.U.C.RE., which is a two-year KA2 Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership in the field of Higher Education. The S.U.C.RE. project's main objective is to successfully build the necessary guidelines and training material that will allow practitioners and stakeholders to facilitate the smooth integration of students and scholars in Higher Education and society (more information : <http://sucr.auth.gr/>).

The training will build on the challenges identified during the first edition of the Refugee Staff week in Utrecht. In particular, the training will focus on the challenges that young refugees face on their way to social integration (formal/informal prior learning, social skills, and culture - specific hurdles).

Several Issues will be elaborated such as certification/accreditation of prior learning and/or academic/professional qualifications, entry to HEI/profession (esp. licensed ones) requirements, administrative/financial short-comings, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), on-going and concluded programs and their outcomes (efficiency reports), linguistic/cultural barriers, psychosocial support opportunities in various frameworks.

A special emphasis will also be given on the practical solutions for accommodating and working towards integrating young refugees.

In all, identified pioneer refugee integration project leaders and colleagues from European HEI's, as well as professional experts and workers in the field will be invited to share their experiences and strategies related to an all-inclusive integration policy (recognition of qualifications, preparatory programs, bridging programs).

The training will be a comprehensive approach constituting of plenary sessions and group sessions. It will start with a general introduction to the topic as well as Presentation by the participants of initiatives/programs/studies of their home institution/country.

In the following days there will be 4 workshops (two per day) which will focus on the following thematic fields:

- 1) Administrative processes and support

- 2) Preparatory/language courses
- 3) Psycho-social support
- 4) Link with the labour market

**Invited speakers for each workshop, (taking also into account the results of the S.U.C.RE. programme):**

- University of Cologne: presentation of S.U.C.RE. IO1 outcomes (admissions criteria and processes currently established by European universities). (workshop 1)
- Utrecht University – Presentation of Inclusion Programme, the results of the first staff training week as well as the research project: Making Journeys, building blocks for diversity at Utrecht University (workshop 1)
- AUTH: presentation of SUCRE IO4 outcomes (the development of an educational module for trainers regarding the psychosocial support of refugees), (workshop 3), presentation of School of Modern Greek Language initiative (workshop 2), Department of Studies proposal for a HEI access road map for Greek tertiary education system (centralized paradigm) (workshop 1)
- CEDEFOP: Challenges/Good practices for re-engaging/supporting young people not in employment, education or training as base model for refugees (workshop 4)
- Representative from Professional Chamber and/or Association (any from e.g. doctors, lawyers, engineers): challenges of professional integration (accreditation, license) (workshop 4)
- University of Piraeus (experience of refugee integration and recently coordinator for a refugee integration program): best practices (workshops 1 and 2)
- Greek Ministry of Education, Research & Religious Affairs: PASSPORT project (combined –if possible- with a week of Passport project activities in AUTH) (workshop 4)
- University of Aegean: Research Scholars integration practices (workshops 3)
- ESN AUTH: student network possibilities, buddy-system training expertise (a number of activities and projects within the social Erasmus regarding the refugees, people with special needs etc, cooperation with various NGOs) (workshop 3) A field trip to a camp/shelter will also be organized to assess possibilities for an out-reach program.

The last day of the training will be devoted to reaching final conclusions.

**Reason for the activity**

HEIs' mission for social solidarity and cohesion must be reconsidered and redefined within the ever-fluctuating framework of possibilities and limitations that the refugee crisis currently presents. Values, structures and procedures in Higher Education and in society are being constantly challenged due to the continuing waves of "new" arrivals and the ensuing cultural shock. Utrecht Network members have both an ethical and a practical obligation to reassess and adapt/redesign their academic integration/internationalization schemes in order to successfully and -possibly- a priori respond to the most pressing and dramatic challenge of our times.

Additionally, all participants from the previous related staff training week expressed the desire to organize a follow up meeting in 2019 to see how the integration of refugees into higher education progresses. The refugees' issue is transitioning into a different phase where issues such as integration and participation in society will play a major role. How will HEI's respond to these pressing challenges? What role are they willing to play in the future? These are questions that will be addressed during the second edition.

**Target group**

This training course is designed for academic and administrative staff of all levels, involved in young refugee and scholars at risk projects/initiatives or aiming at establishing one in their home university.

**Please describe the added value for the UN and for its members: ---**

**Aim of the activity**

The training aims to improve the capacity of the Utrecht Network universities to assist young refugees and scholars at risk that reach out to them for support.

Emphasis will be given on identifying current and future challenges/hurdles/set-backs, evaluate established programs, reach a consensus on good practices and work towards drafting a “White Paper” for all EU HEIs. There will be particular focus on facilitating the access to Higher Education for young refugees and helping scholars at risk with reaching a safe academic environment. Issues of principles as well as practicalities will be aptly and amply addressed.

Besides solidifying the forum for exchanges successfully initiated in the first UN staff training in 2017, such a fluctuating situation -as is the refugee crisis- demands constant feedback on country or university specific insights on the key components for building an efficient –thus, flexible- and sustainable refugee inclusion and integration policy. Empowerment of “field workers”, as are the UN member universities’ staff, through regular sharing of accumulated knowledge and experience is also a condition sine qua non of any such approach. Most importantly, the founding principle of UN must be constantly revisited if it is to be sustained.

**Please describe if/how this activity could evolve within the UN (creating a "series" of events, becoming a TF, other)**

As phase 2 of an ongoing training, this training aims at elaborating more on issues that emerged during the first meeting (e.g. facilitation and/or actual admission into HEI) and also expand further into the issue of professional integration via education/training offered by HEIs.

Due to the current situation in Europe, and the lack of similar training events for HEIs’ professionals, this event could ignite a series of different training components amongst the members of UN that faces these issues (eg University of Bologna, University of Leipzig etc). Moreover, it could be the opportunity for setting up a relevant Task Force within the UN, in order to coordinate actions taken by UN members in this context, or forming a consortium of partners that will address these issues through a joint EU-funded project.

## 2. Timing, Budget and Evaluation

**Please indicate when and where the activity will take place**

The activity will take place in the spring of 2019 in Thessaloniki.

**Please describe the provisional budget of the activity and the financial request to the UN**

For the organization of a 5-day training for 25-30 people, the overall budget is expected to reach 9500€ from which we request a financial provision of euro 5.000 which will be used to host key note speakers in Thessaloniki as well as for material costs (including coffee, tea, catering during lunch and a diner).

**Please describe if/how the activity will be evaluated**

Evaluation forms will be sent to the participants in two phases: right after the training and three months after the training in order to evaluate the impact of the staff training on the UN members’ work and policies and to ask for input for future activities.