



**S.U.C.R.E.**

Supporting University Community Pathways for Refugee Students and Migrants



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**Beyond Access:**  
**Supporting Refugee Students for**  
**Academic Success in HEIs in Europe**



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# INTRODUCTION

## The S.U.C.RE. Project

The Key Action 2 (KA2) Erasmus+ project "Supporting University Community Pathways for Refugees-Migrants" (S.U.C.RE.) began in 2016 as a joint project focusing on the response of universities to the needs of refugee students and scholars. S.U.C.RE. is carried out by the University of Cologne, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Greek Council for Refugees, and is coordinated by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. This project analyzes the current refugee situation in the context of higher education institutions and explores five main areas called "Intellectual Outputs". These outputs are Admissions Procedures and Preparatory Programs (IO1), Institutional Support for Refugee Students (IO2), Institutional Support for Refugee Scholars (IO3), Psychosocial Support (IO4) as well as Health and Legal Support (IO5).

## Definition of Terms

In 1951 the United Nations<sup>1</sup> defined the term "refugee" as someone who has a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race<sup>2</sup>, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (...)"<sup>3</sup> and has therefore been forced to leave their home country and is unable or, on the basis of those fears, unwilling to return.

In comparison, the definition of the term "migrant" by the United Nations Convention on Migrant's Rights from 2003 is closely connected to labor migration. A "migrant" is described as someone who leaves his country "in search of better socioeconomic perspectives", because of "extreme poverty" or in order to enable "their relatives to live better lives".<sup>4</sup>

However, the strict distinction between a refugee and a migrant is fluid and difficult to pin down. Migration can still be forced even if it is not caused by war, political or ethnic prosecution but by poverty and a lack of life choices. Another definition of a migrant is simply someone who moves between places internationally, without the indication of significant reasons<sup>5</sup> other than a desire to migrate; such is the case for many international students. Even though international students face a variety of challenges similar to those refugee students have to deal with, the context of their migration and the legal and social realms surrounding it are entirely distinct which is why international students are considered to be a distinct category separate from that of refugee students. Throughout

This article addresses the topics established in Intellectual Output IO2: Institutional Support for Refugee Students. The S.U.C.RE. project identified that while there are many initiatives across Europe to help Refugee students access higher education, the programs to ensure support during their studies, are only now being created. Hence, this project will critically analyze the different factors that play into academic success and student well-being, as seen through the student and university staff perspective. It will also present different possible actions that can be taken when designing support programs. The main interest groups for this study are refugee students, enrolled at higher education institutions across Europe and the institutions themselves, who seek to support students and ensure their holistic well-being.

In this article the terms "higher education institutions" (HEIs) and "universities" will be used interchangeably, both also addressing HEIs that may not officially be called universities (e.g. Fachhochschulen, Technical Colleges, etc.)

Other terms which will also be used in this publication are "academic success" and "student success", to be used interchangeably. The term academic success is so widely used in educational literature that it has become a construct which is difficult to define, or perhaps it has always been one difficult to define. Although grades are the most obvious and most used tool employed to measure academic success, the focus of this publication does not lie on academic success as defined by grades. But rather looks to more multidimensional constructs.

"Novel definitions are borne out of ingenuity and necessity and often require measures of multidimensional constructs. In part, their emergence is due to the increased complexity of the postmodern world and the need for institutions to be more inclusive of a much more diverse student population. Indeed, greater attention to diversity—race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age—has led to more nuanced, alternative understandings of student success." <sup>1</sup>

“...student success is defined as academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-college performance.”<sup>1</sup>

For the purpose of the S.U.C.RE project, the term student success will be defined as a multi-dimensional construct, which takes student well-being and satisfaction, as well as academic achievement into consideration.

## HEI-Refugee Relationship

In the past couple of years refugee students have helped begin conversations at institutions of higher education in Europe surrounding access, inclusivity, diversity, and equity. Many of these conversations have been long overdue, and some take on new dimensions in the context of the current situation. Refugee students have been arriving at HEIs and challenging admissions procedures, procedures for recognition of study qualifications, methods of evaluation, the organization of university structures, and more generally universities have been forced to ask themselves what role they currently play in integration and creating an equitable playing field for all members of society and what role they want to play.

Refugee students are reshaping our understanding of the role of universities and shedding light on systematic biases. Many universities are not currently equipped to serve a student population that requires more support in their journey from application to graduation. However, if universities are able to understand the needs of these students, all student populations will be able to benefit from the insights. Additionally, universities will find that they too have much to gain from having a diverse student body, which brings a wealth of ideas, perspectives and skills to campus.







## STUDY OBJECTIVE AND METHOD

The objective of this research is to identify the main challenges for refugee students in completing and successfully accomplishing their academic goals. The output should be a framework that describes and analyses these challenges, coupled with best practices to address them, in order to provide a visible and simple network that refugee students can turn to when in need of support. Ultimately culminating in a roadmap for improvement, a plan for universities will be developed on how to establish a support system, and how to evaluate and improve upon existing structures. Furthermore, a map of ideas and inspiration from university staff and refugee students alike will be provided. The impact of the implementation should be that students feel supported and understood and are in a position to take advantage of already existing opportunities at HEIs. The aim is to enable students to make informed decisions about their educational pathway as well as their career beyond their studies. Since social interactions and wellbeing of the students are a key factor for academic success<sup>2</sup>, emphasis has to be placed on building bridges between communities by including European peers in the social integration efforts of refugee students. From the institutional perspective, creating diverse and inclusive programs which foster quality educational experiences for students is an important aspect, and it should be paired with the continuous evaluation of existing programs to improve the support structures at HEIs. This allows universities to have better access to student concerns and wishes.

The S.U.C.RE. team for Intellectual Output 2: Institutional Support for Refugee Students in Higher Education began work in late 2017. This Intellectual Output follows up to the publication on Intellectual Output 1: Higher Education Qualification and Application Procedures for Refugee Applicants. While in the latter, the focus was set on students with a refugee background at the beginning of their educational journey at a European HEI, Intellectual Output 2 accompanies students during their journey throughout university – and beyond.

A key factor for student success at most European institutions are the complementary support systems at faculties and institutions that serve to provide a safety net for the students who might struggle with class, or need more support with feeling at ease in their new academic setting. Examples are Academic Writing Courses, Workshops on Time Management, Career Services, or simply advising sessions<sup>3</sup>. While some universities have a broad support system in place, offers are usually rather general, and lack specialization and knowledge on dealing with students from diverse and or non-academic backgrounds. International students in Germany for example, have significant higher dropout rates than German students or “Bildungsinländer”, students with a German high school diploma<sup>4</sup>.

According to Dr Jörg Rech, the higher dropout rates of international students result mostly from insufficient support of students from different educational systems during their studies, as well as financial reasons<sup>5</sup>. Until now, there is no scientific data yet concerning dropout rates and students with a refugee background. There are, however, many similarities in the needs of refugee and international students, and parallel structures in their educational expectations, and, therefore, overlapping challenges for these two student groups<sup>6</sup>. Nonetheless, refugee students did not start their studies „abroad“ on a voluntary basis. They had no time to prepare themselves in terms of culture and language, or often in terms of securing necessary documents<sup>7</sup> for a seamless

transition into a new academic setting. All those aspects influence the refugee students' pathway in the new educational environment and have a strong influence on their academic success. Therefore, dropout rates might be even higher than for international students.

Institutional support has a large impact on students' success rates for students with non-traditional educational pathways, as Rech explains. Institutional support even influences institutional integration, i.e. the degree of orientation within the academic system of the higher education institution. This may involve the provision of appropriate information, introductory events, language courses and support options.

Therefore, questions arose about the role of complementary support structures at HEIs feeding into the successful curricula of university students. How could those structures be improved to contribute to the academic success of all students, without neglecting the special needs of students with non-traditional educational pathways, or students from foreign learning environments?

The objective of this output is to categorize the influencing factors that may play a role in academic success for refugee students in Europe. In order to achieve this, two main perspectives: That of higher education institutions (HEIs) and that of refugee students themselves, in comparison to their international and local peers, were gathered.

In order to better understand the current status quo of issues regarding support structures at HEIs in Europe, a desk study was conducted. Over 120 European universities were researched online to find information on current programs that target refugee students. The sample of universities is made up of universities featured in the EUA Refugees Welcome Map, from universities in the Coimbra Group and universities that appear in searches through key words like "European universities, refugees, support structures, programs". An online survey for university staff was also developed, in order to gain insight on their experiences with refugee students, and the ways their institutions cater to this target group. This survey combined open-ended and close-ended questions about university initiatives and contact to prospective refugee students. In-depth semi-structured interviews were also conducted with university advisors that work with refugees to get a deeper insight. In total, initiatives and experiences from over 50 different university members were gathered.

An online survey for students was also designed. This survey combined open-ended and close-ended questions about their experiences at their universities. Additional responses from evaluations of the preparatory programs were also used as data sources in this study. In-depth semi-structured interviews with

students in focus groups were also conducted in order to gain more detailed insight into their experiences at the university. In total, a record of experiences from over 230 students was gathered.

We are aware that the present study does not contain an analysis of long-term data, a long-term survey was not conducted. However, research on student life cycles which will be further elaborated on during this article has been widely discussed in various journals on social science<sup>8</sup>. The data provided serves as an overview over a quite current topic.

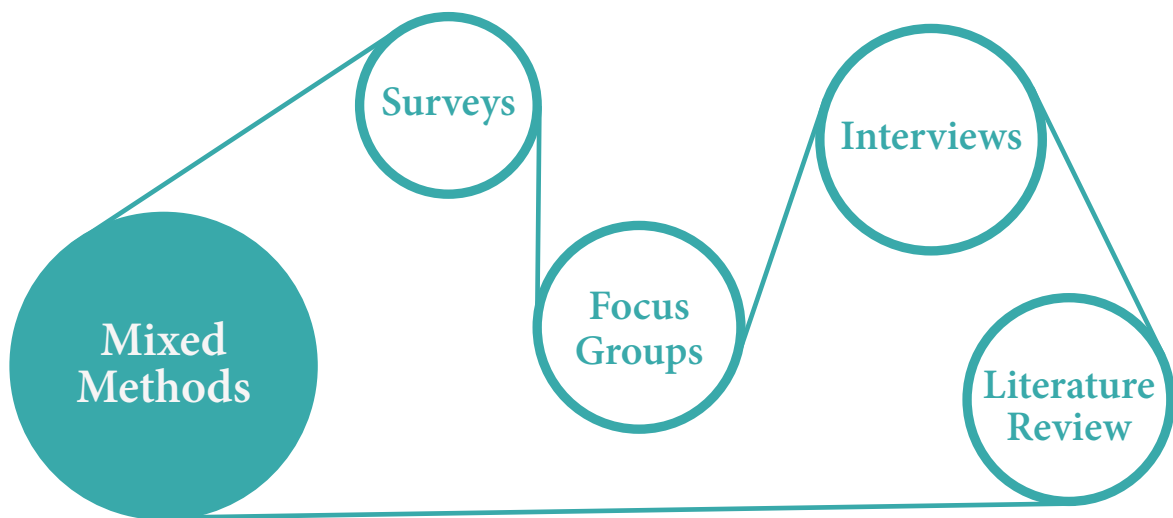


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# DATA OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

The following chapter will provide a theoretical background in terms of a framework describing four factors that contribute to students' academic success. A general overview the data set that was worked with will be provided, including the geographic distribution of students that participated in the survey, and their nationalities. University staff responses

will also be considered as crucial input on the way to find best solutions for improvement of the situation for the students they work with. Due to the perceived newness of the situation, there are few best practice examples at the moment. However, possible interventions will be presented in order to build-on and improve upon the existing programs which we already presented in IO1. This approach will hopefully create quick and successful solutions for both, students and universities.



## Student Data Profile

### Geographic Profile<sup>9</sup>:

The following word cloud is a visual representation of student's home countries as reported by the students in the online survey and by interview responses.



Going through the students' responses, we found that refugee students rate their institutions quite positively in terms of organisation, preparation for working life, and support structures. Additionally, they seem to be satisfied with the status of their academic success and feel confident in the campus environment. However, interactions with local peers seem to be difficult. Thus, despite partly positive ratings, some remarks and contradictions show the difficulties students face in their academic daily life, suggesting their academic success might be at risk.

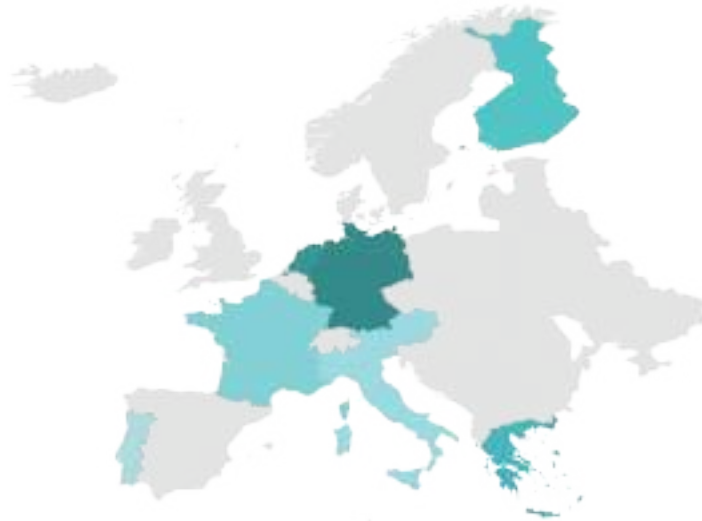
● Our key question here is, what sort of support do refugee students say they need?

## Staff Data Profile

### Geographic Profile<sup>10</sup>:

The following map shows the geographic distribution of the higher education institutions all over Europe we have been in contact with during the research.

Although the scope is relatively broad, the main countries that provided information are Germany and the Netherlands. This distribution influences the kind of stories and information the S.U.C.RE. Project had access to.



- 68,2% feel like they are aware of the special needs refugee students have, while 6,82% don't and 2,27% aren't sure
- 70,6% feel like there is a need to improve support structures for refugee students, while 14,71% don't and 14,71% aren't sure
- 68,18% of university staff thinks the university takes into account possible special needs of refugee student, 22,73% don't
- 32,1% think that The university website is a good information resource for refugee students, 39,3% don't; 28,8% don't know
- 28,8% think that The university has good counselling facilities for refugee students, 50% don't; 21,4% don't know
- 38,6% think that The university actively promotes interaction between refugee students and other students, 40,9% don't, 15,9 % don't know
- 56,3% think that counselling and support structures at their institutions are good, 37,5 % don't

However, as the numbers above show, university staff members paint a mixed picture regarding their perception of the situation for refugee students. University staff members who are responsible for refugee students, experience a variety of difficulties in counselling this specific group. Counselling is much more complex than usual. In addition to typical questions regarding academic and administrative issues within the university, legal matters as well as explicit psychosocial dimensions do make their way into sessions.

Some university staff members are very much aware of the context informing refugee students' perspectives, and are able to take the hardships this particular student group is facing, i.e. in terms of legal matters which affects their well-being, ability to concentrate, and motivation, into consideration. Students, often find focusing on their studies to be difficult while being regularly monitored by authorities, job centers, and immigration offices, or because of life in a refugee camp, in addition to other exacerbating situations. Financial matters

are also often mentioned, even though many universities have scholarships and other funding programs for refugee students, these are often not available to all or they do not provide enough sustenance in order to be able to focus solely on their studies.

Although in situations like this, working a student job might help build social skills, networks and confidence, finding a job seems to be a lot more difficult if you are a refugee (student). In addition, as reported by the university staff all over Europe, mingling with local students is not an easy task for refugee students. Therefore, staff fears that students lack a functioning network on which they could rely on in terms of getting information and support.

Many noticed that students often drop out of courses which might be due to language difficulties and other reasons we want to address in this section.

● **Key question:** What suggestions do HEIs staff members have and what sort of support does staff believe students need?

**Framework**

**Defining the Role of the University**

What is the role of a university? A seemingly simple question which yields a wide array of answers depending on who is asked. Before a university can begin to plan initiatives to support its student it must decide to what extent it is responsible for its students. An indecision over the answer to this question, helps explain the variety of answers as presented by university staff. When planning initiatives and programs both for refugee students and other students universities must decide to what extent they wish to intervene.

**Is this university only responsible for academic performance in terms of grades?**

**What are the university's main priorities as far as students are concerned?**

**What kind of university environment is the university trying to foster?**

**What should our graduates be known for?**

**How does this particular university define academic success?**



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## Factors Influencing Student Success

Research on the topic of refugee students' success in European higher education institutions in the context of the current situation is still being developed. However, students' academic achievements in general and factors contributing to, or hindering their success, have been largely discussed. It is widely accepted that each individual in the higher educational system undergoes a certain cycle, the so-called student life cycle<sup>11</sup>. It is organised in different phases, like "recruitment", "selection", "enrollment"<sup>12</sup>, and so on.

While this study will focus mainly on the phases „academic experience“ and „campus life & career services“. However, the beginning of a student's educational journey should not be overlooked when it comes to its influence on ensuring a successful academic journey. According to Bean & Eaton when students underwent a psychological self-assessment when beginning their studies at a HEI. Students had to respond to the

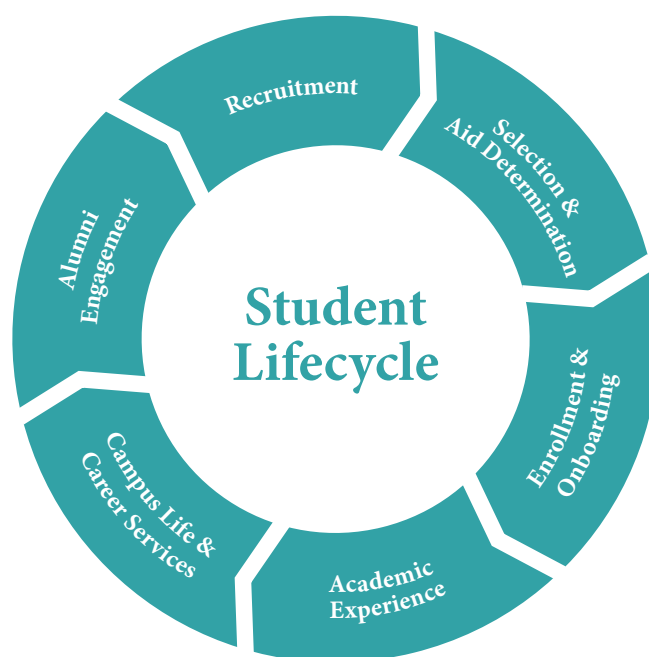


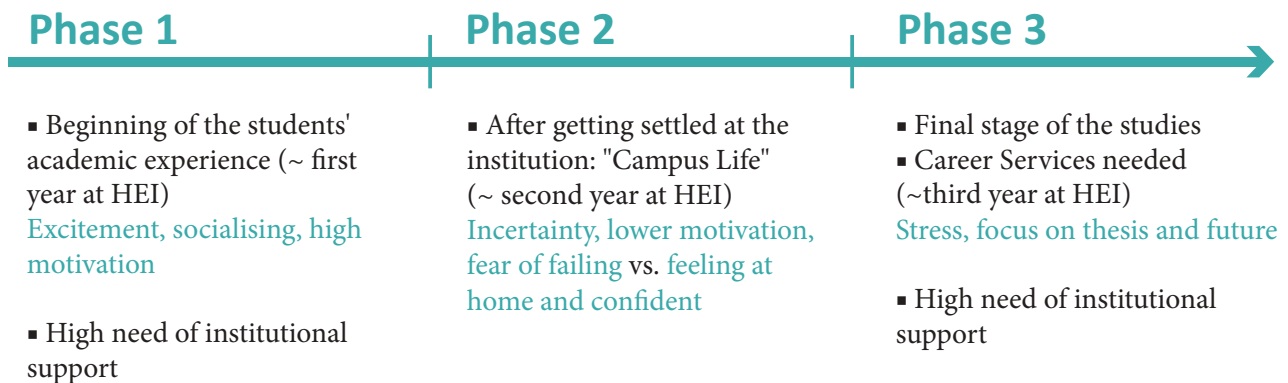
Photo: © Heiwa Wong

following questions: "Do I have confidence that I can perform well academically here?", "Do the important people in my life think attending this HEI is a good idea?", "Do I have the academic and social skills that are necessary to succeed?"

Answers given to this self-efficacy assessments during their first year at the university played a strong influence their academic development and motivation to stay at the institution<sup>13</sup>.

The time that student actually spend at an academic institution happens during the following three phases of the student lifecycle: Enrollment & Onboarding, Academic Experience, and Campus Life & Career Services. It is during these three phases that the university can build the most effective support structures of academic success..

In general, students rely on institutional advising, networks, and other support structures in the beginning and at the end of their studies to a higher extent than in between these stages.



During the **first phase**, students generally begin to establish social networks within the new educational environment, with peers as well as with faculty members and staff. Contacts made during this initial phase are crucial for the students' future, and ties be made with advisors are valuable: "A large part of the impact of college is determined by the extent and content of one's interactions with major agents of socialization on campus, namely, faculty members and student peers"<sup>14</sup>. The creation of a good network of support structures is the most important task at this stage.

The **second phase** is experienced in two different types depending on the student. Either, the student has settled in well, and feels welcomed and confident in class as well as on campus. Or, the student faces difficulties, stagnation of learning curves, and is lacking a sense of belonging. The risk to drop out at this stage is high due to these factors. Safety nets in the form of university advisors regarding subject change, stress management, financial issues, mental health, soft skill

workshops on presentations and academic writing, or peer support, are needed. The better the student is supported by the network developed during the first phase, and the better informed about opportunities they are, the more they are prepared when faced with academic and social challenges, and, are therefore, less likely to drop out. Attitudes towards the institution also influence the student's well-being during this stage<sup>15</sup>.

The **third phase** marks the final steps toward graduation. Career services are of high importance at this stage, and support structures addressing academic writing, time management and stress management are strongly needed by the students preparing their thesis. Students are generally less involved in academic engagement activities due to a lack of time and an altered focus set more on the future.

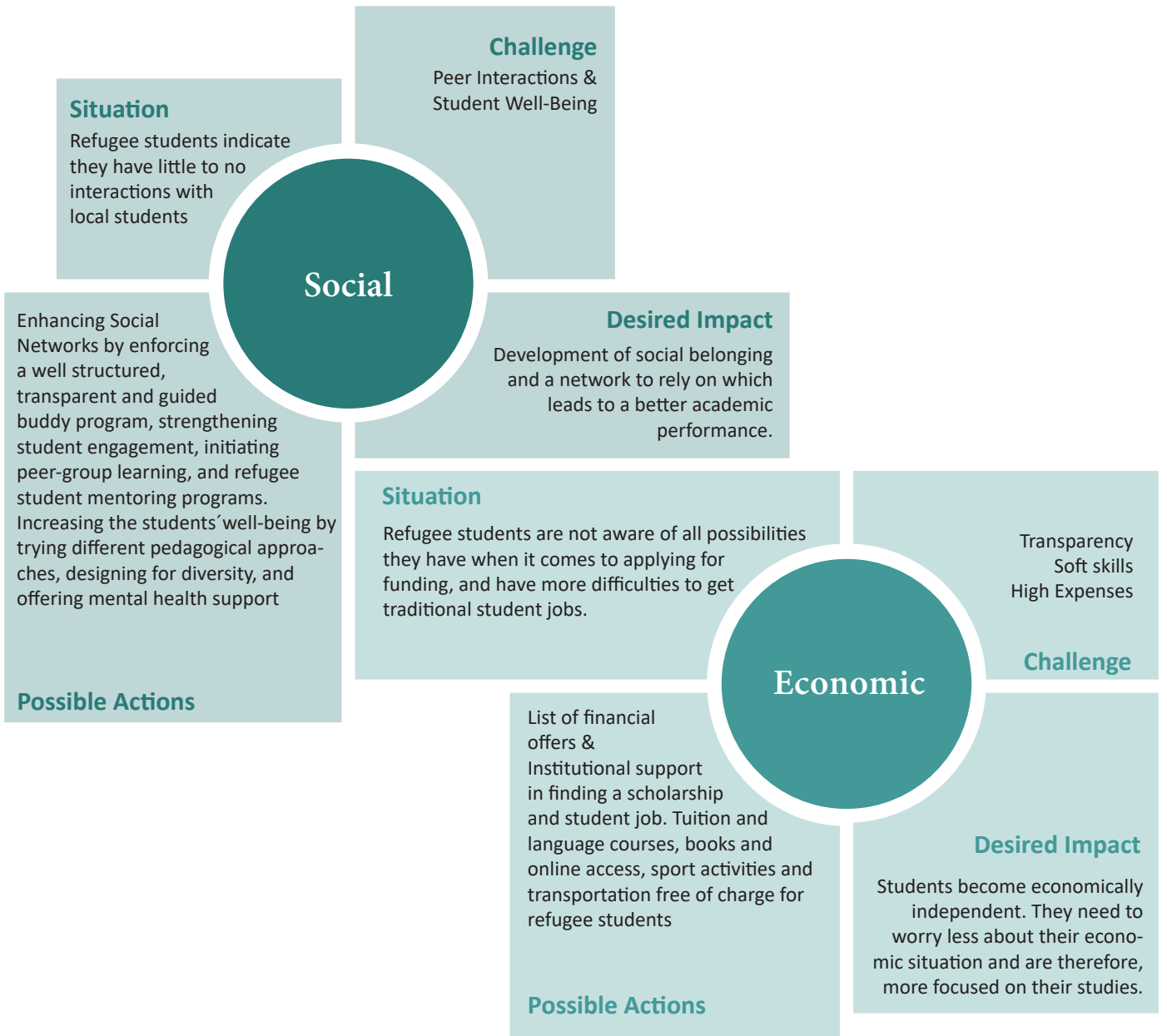
Every semester brings its own set of challenges, as well as every study program. However these three phases can roughly guide specific goals for support structures.

By going through the responses to the surveys, as well as the vast literature about students' academic success, we identified four factors mainly responsible for refugee students academic performance: These factors are either of social, economic, environmental, or educational nature.

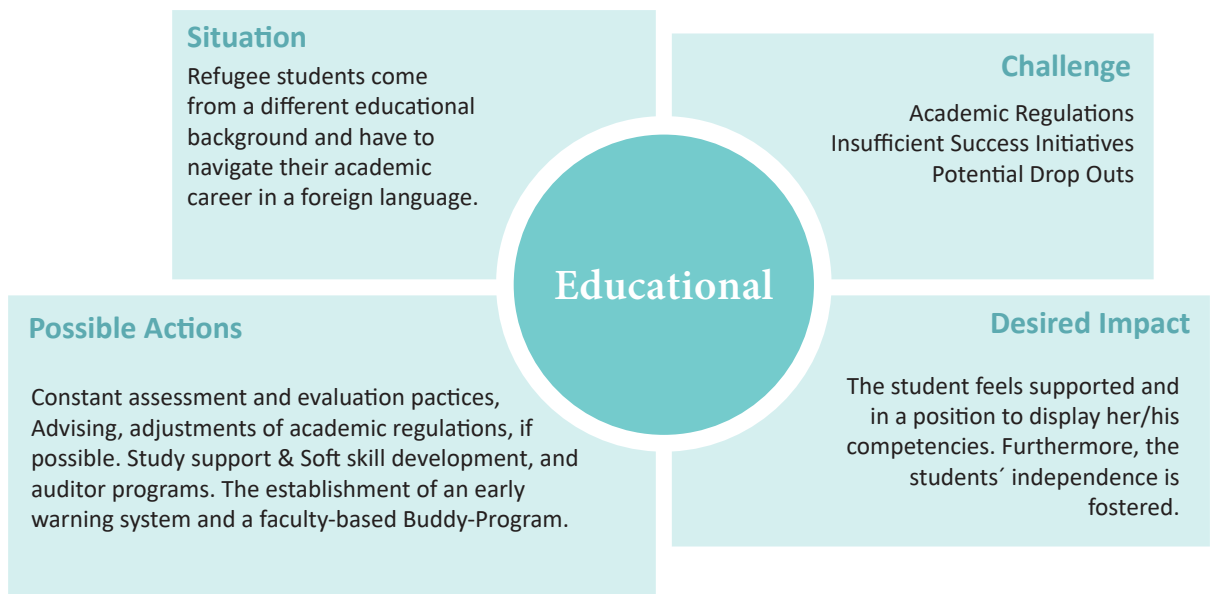
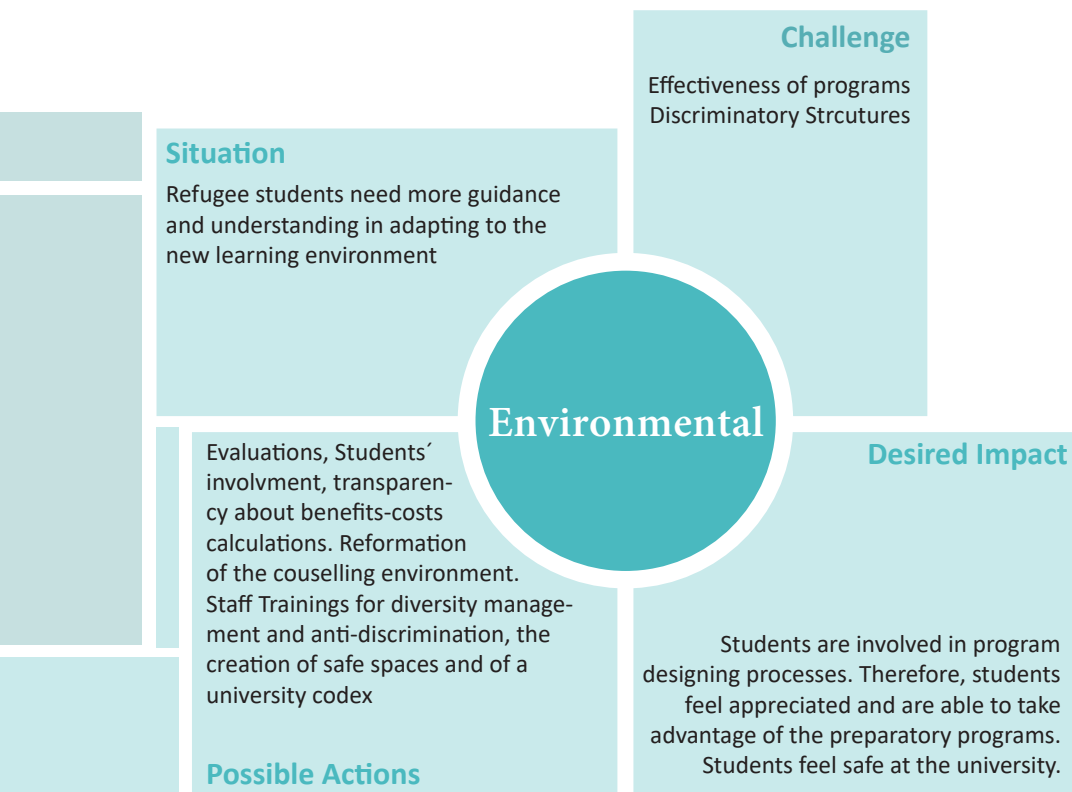
The situation retrieved from the online survey responses, leads to a challenge and culminates in a suggested way to tackle it, called „possible actions“. Since there is no evaluated, long-term empirical research regarding the program and its effects yet, no "best practice examples" could have been provided. Finally culminating in a desired impact on the student, his/her performance, the faculty and the system as a whole, this article serves as a handbook for university policies and staff.

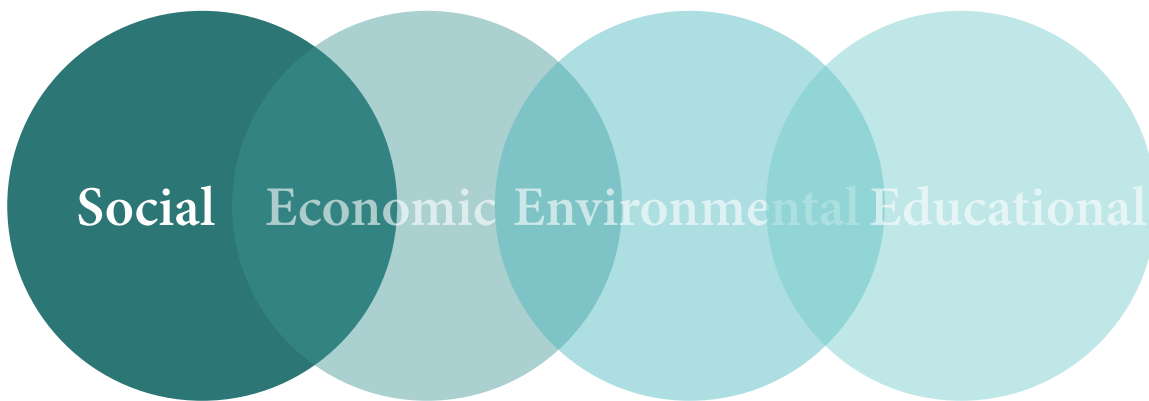
The presented study should present a suggestion, an action plan for institutions and faculties that wish to improve the learning environment for all students with a special focus on refugee students.

It is important to note that the factors themselves flow into one another, as do the challenges, and possible actions, because of the multifaceted and intersectional nature of this problematic. Furthermore, due to the individuality of each student, it is to be assumed that the factors that influence the success of any particular academic journey vary from person to person.









## Background

A students' social life and well-being interfere with their academic success:

“Students who find something or someone worthwhile to connect with in the postsecondary environment are more likely to engage in educationally purposeful activities during college, persist, and achieve their educational objectives. When students belong to an affinity group, develop a meaningful relationship with one or more faculty or staff members, or take responsibility for activities that require daily decisions and tasks, they become invested in the activity and more committed to the college and their studies.”<sup>16</sup>

Students are less likely to drop out if they have good friends in class and/or are engaged in activities on campus. In addition, students get a lot of information (job-related; funding-related; other information concerning lectures and so on) from friends and fellow students. Interpersonal relationships with faculty, staff and peers, both on and off campus play a role in mediating student success by contributing to student satisfaction and academic persistence. This view is consistent with a social network's perspective; social networks, made out of a student's relationships with faculty and staff and peers as well as family, friends, and mentors, are crucial for the academic success of all students. However, the extent to which they support students in their educational activities or present obstacles to academic progress can vary along multiple dimensions: “the students most likely to persist are those whose values, norms

and behavior are already congruent with dominant patterns on campus.”<sup>17</sup>

Hence, various groups of students, like international students, first-generation students, and students with a refugee background, might face challenges in a way that local students from academic households do not. Often times, refugee students cannot rely on the systemic knowledge of family and friends<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, they might need stronger safety nets, provided from an institutional side: “insufficient integration and or regulation may leave an individual without enough support during difficult times or without information needed to deal with problems or who to turn to for help, and they fall through holes in the safety net.”<sup>19</sup>

As Pascarella and Terenzini conclude, “the impact of college is largely determined by individual effort and involvement in the academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings on a campus.”<sup>20</sup>

The discussed social factors belong to an area of student life for which universities have generally not traditionally taken much responsibility for. However, the impact of these factors on academic success cannot be denied. Universities would do well to further assess the situation and adjust priorities when supporting students.

The following quotes were gathered from interviews and surveys and give some insight into the student and university staff perspective of this influencing factor.

### From students

“no interaction with local students at all.”

“Due to the large number of students I do not have much contact with other students. I hope that this will change in the future, because I've never counted among the loners.”

“I am in a class of international environment with fellow students from nearly 50 different countries, easy to interact with others.”

“(Interactions with local students are) Horrible. They act like rich white people. They have a lack of solidarity and experience in life.”

“I don't have much contact with them but I work with them when we have a group assignment.”

“I kind of feel lonely all the time if I don't have one of my friends (who are also from different countries). I just can say that relations between students are not as friendly as I thought it would be.”

“The atmosphere of the class and university is heavy and is difficult to accept with another student. There is no any program for make better”

“Cultural differences and miscommunication. Sometimes locals seem more conservative/closed-minded.”

### From staff

“Academic success (is) only possible if the student is stable. A student needs a stable and safe atmosphere and it is the university's responsibility to provide such an atmosphere at least at the university campus.”

“(The) University is responsible for the well-being of ALL students, but especially the weakest ones, which is refugee students.”

“Handling the trauma students experience (is one of the biggest challenges.)”

“Some students have severe personal circumstances. Therefore, they sometimes lay behind; some students do not have a big network in (the host) society.”

“Their traumas have a big influence on their well-being, and well-being has (a) huge influence on academic success.”

“Cultural barriers in interaction with fellow students and teachers.”

“(They bearing too many burdens: ) starting a new life, while worrying about family members (...) uncertainty about their own status.”

“(We need) stronger mental, psychosocial aids and advisory services specifically for refugees, especially women.”

“There should be more cooperation between the professors and students as majority of them don't cooperate.”

## Situation<sup>21</sup>

- 42% of refugee students say they have good interactions with other students, while 48% say they have little to no interactions with local students at all
- Only 13% are taking part in the buddy system, and 58% do not even know about a buddy system at their institution.
- 15-22% of all refugee students state that they don't feel confident to voice their opinion in class

Finding new friends may be difficult when you are in a new context: you don't know cultural codes, you don't know the language to make jokes or understand colloquial/youth language. Buddy programs are implemented to help newly arrived students to get to know the campus, but also to find friends. Unfortunately, as stated in the online surveys, only a small percentage of the refugee students are taking part in this kind of program, and oftentimes they do not even know about the existence of these programs. Students mostly don't take advantage of the buddy system because of a lack of time, but partly also because of a certain reputation those programs have, as one student confessed in the online survey: „I feel it's only for nerds!“ People taking part indicate to do so because they want to help each other, find friends, succeed in their studies more, and to get out of the comfort zone<sup>22</sup>.

## Challenge: Peer Interaction

The importance of making connections early on with peers and faculty member cannot be overstated<sup>23</sup>. As shown in the responses to the online survey from refugee students, interactions with local students seem difficult regardless of the host country.

## Possible Actions<sup>24</sup>

### A well structured, transparent and guided buddy program:

- Evaluate existing offers and programs! Is the structure good as it is? Is the target group aware of the program and its benefits? Are they taking part? If not, why not? Ask the students!
- Prepare the local students taking part in the buddy program with the necessary tools (legal, financial, administrative information) – this person will be the first contact for the refugee student to turn to! The local counterpart should be as prepared as possible, or at least know where to find the right information to answer the new student's question.
- Meeting days have to be fixed in the beginning of each semester (once a week or every two weeks minimum)
- Give accreditation in form of credit points to the local students taking part! That way, continuous and useful meeting sessions are secured

## Desired Impact

A student's interaction with peers can positively influence overall academic progress in terms of knowledge acquisition, analytical and problem-solving skills, and self-esteem by fostering learning through, among others, discussing course content, working on group projects for classes, participating in sports, socializing with someone from a different ethnic group, class, etc<sup>25</sup>.

Peer teaching and support in buddy programs also have a positive impact on the personal development for those who do the „work“, the local students signing up for being a buddy. Moreover, such students become more actively engaged with the complex legal and residential matters other students have to deal with, and therefore become more aware of their own privileges. That way, they might use them in a constructive way and help to create anti-discriminatory structures within the society. Peer interactions are also important to social integration because students are more likely to stay in the HEI chosen when they feel comfortable and connected to other students with similar interests and aspirations.

## Challenge: Student Well-Being<sup>26</sup>

Although frequently overlooked, satisfaction is a variable that determines the overall well-being of the student. Well-being represents a sense of belonging to the institution, and is highly correlated with engagement, persistence, and academic performance.<sup>27</sup>

The first phase of the student life cycle is particularly important for the student's satisfaction. If the student feels comfortable during the application procedures, and acknowledged during the first weeks and months of lectures, they will more likely develop a sense of belonging to the institution and express their loyalty. This variable interacts with the first challenge Peer Interactions, since „the more interaction students have with their peers and with faculty, the more satisfied they are overall with the college experience.“<sup>28</sup>

### Possible Actions<sup>29</sup>

#### Strengthen Student Engagement<sup>30</sup>

Make taking part in educationally effective practices attractive, like student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning.<sup>31</sup> At institutions where faculty members use these practices, students are more engaged overall and gain more from college.<sup>32</sup>

#### Peer-Group Learning

- Bring together students from different backgrounds: refugee students, first-generation students, international students, so that they share experiences and help each other
- Evaluate the students' experiences on your campus

#### Refugee Student Mentoring Program

→ By refugee students for refugee students:  
This suggestions might be problematic in an earlier stage of studies, where some students might seek to distance themselves from refugee peer groups<sup>33</sup> in order to avoid being seen as one dimensional or have their identity be categorized as primarily "refugee" and then everything else. However, in the second phase of the students' life cycle, a mentor from the same background might be able to support and understand the students better and share strategies for resilience.

#### Pedagogical Approaches

Institutions that adopt educational philosophies tend to encourage the use of such engaging pedagogies as active and collaborative learning, classroom-based problem solving, peer teaching, service-learning, and various forms of electronic technologies to support learning.

#### Designing for Diversity<sup>34</sup>

- Create systems to achieve equity in educational outcomes for all students
- Using interactive teaching techniques (small group

discussions, role playing, debates, etc.)

- Create a supportive, inclusive classroom climate
- Faculty members who see themselves as learners and reflect on how to use the diversity present among members of the class to enhance learning

#### Mental Health Support

- Establish contacts with clinics, therapists, and religious institutions.
- Create a transparent network for advisors and students.

### Desired Impact

The students feel appreciated and valued; by developing a sense of social belonging, they do not only perform better in social interactions, but also in terms of academic achievement. In addition, a positive impact on the students' mental health can be observed<sup>35</sup>.

### Programs guiding the way:

#### Università di Bologna (UniBo)

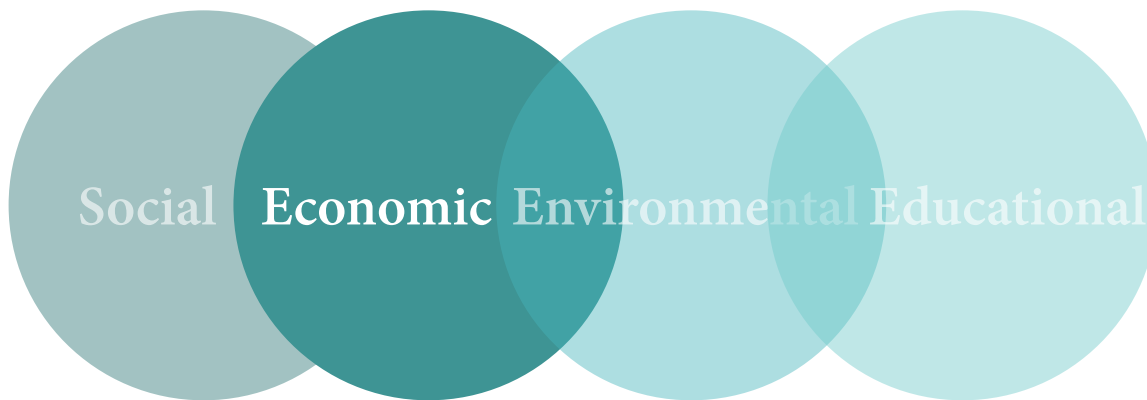
**Peer Interactions:** Organising events at the beginning of the academic year and accompanying students, so that they get in touch. Guided campus tours, cultural activities, concerts, apéro: Interaction between local, international and refugee students is part of the “internationalization at home” strategy. Meetings are held monthly where programs are discussed and evaluated.<sup>36</sup>

**Student Satisfaction:** Mental Health Support. The UniBo established a „psychological support program“ in which staff from the faculty of psychology hold meeting sessions with students. Thereafter, they decide if the respective student needs further psychological help, i.e. due to traumatic experiences, or other issues that might benefit from psychological support. The student will then either be referred to another therapist, or treated within the faculty through stress management workshops, study groups or alternative measures.

#### The University of Cologne (UoC)

**Peer Interaction:** Refugee students are eligible for sports activities at the university where it might be easier to get into contact with peers studying in other faculties. Additionally, refugee students are encouraged to take part in the “Begleitprogramm”, a complementary offer for leisure activities where they can meet new people and learn about the city they live in.

**Student Satisfaction:** The UoC is connected with extern stakeholders in terms of mental health issues<sup>37</sup>.



## Background

Conventional ways to finance studies are usually applying for a scholarship, having a part-time job, or receiving support from family. “Affordability of academic aspirations is a critical factor that determines if the students keep track – or drop out.<sup>38</sup>”

The European higher education landscape varies in many ways. The most remarkable is, however, financing. While many European public universities do not charge their students for other than transportation and activities around the campus, like German public institutions<sup>39</sup>, some countries like Italy or England do have tuition fees<sup>40</sup>. Additionally living expenses differ from country to country and even from city to city within the same nation. At the same time, most countries offer a variety of funding possibilities, political or religious scholarships, loans from the government, and gifts from private institutions, among others. Financial aid appears to play different roles in promoting student success, as Kuh states: „Gift aid in the form of scholarships and grants and work-study as contrasted with loans are associated with higher retention and graduate rates, especially for low-income and minority students (...) Grants have a strong effect on low-income and minority student performance.<sup>41</sup>” For example, in the U.S., providing a student of a minority group with an additional \$1,000 in grant funds decreased the probability of dropping out by 7 - 8 percent.<sup>42</sup>

Another important option is a student job. In Austria, it is quite common that students have a subject-related student job at their faculties, regardless of their parents' income or other funds<sup>43</sup>. These kind of jobs are mainly needed for economic reasons but they are also useful content-wise. Learning methods and tools which will be needed in a future work environment, is not also helpful for the students but also looks good as work experience mentioned in their CVs.

Subject-related jobs even affect their academic performance positively: Subject-related work placements for students „in the third year of study and beyond are particularly beneficial to student persistence and learning when the positions are aligned with students' academic interests and career goals.<sup>44</sup>” Such a position also increases their chances to obtain a desirable job after graduation.

For refugee students, as well as international students, it is more difficult to get such a job opportunity due to many reasons. Language is one of them, but accessibility and transparency also play their roles. Hence, international students work more often than their local peers in jobs unrelated to their subject of study, night-shifts or full-time<sup>45</sup>, all factors which hinder a healthy learning environment.. Unfortunately, jobs like these often times become the reality for refugee students looking to finance their studies. Legal restrictions in terms of work permits might also play a part, freelancing work is usually barred and restrictions create red tape around opportunities. These aspects might present an obstacle to the students' aspiration to economic independence.

Receiving support from the family is, in most cases, no option for students of refugee background. On the contrary, students often bear the burden of supporting family members in addition to affording their own living expenses, since the family still lives in the home country under difficult circumstances. In case the family arrived at the host country at the same time as the student, it is itself adapting to the new environment and, in general, not (yet) able to provide financial support<sup>46</sup>.

The following quotes were gathered from interviews and surveys and give some insight into the student and university staff perspective of this influencing factor.

### From students

“Because of local language issues, looking for a student job or internships is harder to find compared to locals.”

“It is very hard to maintain the expenses.”

“Books for the courses come with high prices. I would prefer if there could be discounts.”

### From staff

“Jobs and housing are a main concern of refugee students. They want to get their lives back as soon as possible.”

“Travel distance and costs due to housing (are a big challenge).”

“(Many students feel) pressure because they have to support their families **and** get a diploma.”

“They have to arrange a lot for their families and for themselves.”

### Situation<sup>47</sup>

- Out of the 41% who have taken advantage of the existing support structures, the majority (61%) asked for financial counselling.

Finding a part-time job or a scholarship is more difficult for refugee students due to language, citizenship and age restrictions. Depending on the country, students need a part-time job to finance their studies. In the best case, they find a subject-related job at the university or other academic institutions. Those jobs are harder to find without a residence permit or sufficient language skills (i.e. in Austria, students usually work at the university which is only possible with excellent language skills). In some countries, financial support from the government is linked to age and stops as soon as the student reaches their late twenties (i.e. at age 27 in Austria, at 30 in Germany). Since many refugee students have had to put their studies on hold – because of the journey from their home country to the host country, or language courses in the host country – they are more likely to find themselves in that category: “(...) my background is weak because I left studying for 3 years (...)”. When subsidies support ends, a student has to earn all they need by themselves, which in most of the bigger European cities is almost impossible without a full-time job.



### Challenge: Transparency

Oftentimes, there is no transparency or adequate information about costs and support offers.

Students might underestimate the costs of their studies. They need to be provided with the exact numbers regarding the amount of tuition fees, transportation fees etc. In addition, the “financial ecosystem” is not clear for young adults (especially when coming from a different system), so that the students are not aware of all possibilities they have when it comes to finances. Without those information, a costs- benefits – calculation might be impossible, or inaccurate.

#### Possible Actions<sup>48</sup>

##### List of financial offers

- Create a list of financial offers at your institution and update it on a regular basis in order to provide the students with all information regarding funding possibilities
- Create a list of costs and fees which has to be checked by the students before enrollment (tuition fees, student tickets, financial restrictions and so on) and update it on a regular basis in order to make sure that the students are aware of all costs
- See (and update) "List of stipend possibilities in different European countries" on page 35.
- Create a financial ecosystem chart

#### Desired Impact

The students are well informed about their educational costs and long-term benefits. If students are well aware of the investment they are making, and the student „perceives that the cost of staying in school or becoming involved in a certain activity—such as orientation, a first-year seminar, internship, or study abroad—outweighs the return on investment, they will forgo the opportunity and leave college prematurely.<sup>49</sup>”

They also know where to search for funding possibilities and become more independent.

### Challenge: High Expenses

Students have many expenses. Especially refugee students usually have, in addition to the regular expenses for housing, nutrition, books, laptops, and other materials, the responsibility to provide for a family, which lives either in the home country under difficult circumstances, or in the host country also adapting to the new environment. Being relieved from any extra costs, no matter how small the amount, might make a big difference.

#### Possible Actions

##### Improved access for refugee students in need of aid

Make tuition and language courses, books and online access, sport activities and transportation free of charge for refugee students in need. If that is not possible, try subsidized prices

#### Desired Impact

Students need to worry less about their economic situation and are therefore more focused and concentrated on their studies. This will lead to a better academic performance.

### Challenge: Soft skills

Many students have no experience in writing motivation letters, and CVs. They do not know where and how to ask for a letter of reference. Support is needed in assembling the necessary documents for an application as well. In some countries, the scholarship landscape is broad, and knowing which funding agency is the right one for one's individual track is a difficult task.

#### Possible Actions

##### Institutional support in finding a scholarship & student job

- Support in assembling the necessary documents
- Provide counselling in case of questions regarding the application process
- Offer CV and motivation letter writing courses
- Help students get recommendation letters
- Give instructions on which websites to search for job vacancies and on other tools to use in order to find a (student) job

#### Desired Impact

Students possess the key competences for their future careers. In the same time, they become economically independent by knowing how to apply for student jobs and scholarships during their studies.



## Programs guiding the way:

### The University of Cologne (UoC)

**Transparency:** BAföG<sup>50</sup> - Consulting at the UoC provides the students with all necessary information on how to apply for the federal student loan.<sup>51</sup>

**Expenses:** The „Flüchtlingsfonds“, a stipend program at the UoC, provides fast and unbureaucratic financial support in times of trouble. The program is based on private donations and serves as a short-term financial aid which does not need to be paid back<sup>52</sup>.

### Technical University Munich (TUM)

**Transparency:** The Integreat-App created by students of the TUM has many useful features for refugee students, among others, support in finding either subject-related side-jobs or full time jobs after graduation. In addition, information about further financing and websites for jobs are collected.<sup>53</sup>

### Università di Bologna (UniBo)

**Expenses:** Refugee students may apply for scholarships for Bachelor students (800 Euro/year for successful applicants for 3 years); if their application is not successful, and they are not applicable for state-funded loans, they will be granted free accommodation, and exempted from tuition fees (2000-3000 Euro per year). They also have the possibility to apply for a refugee study award.<sup>54</sup>

### Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF), Netherlands

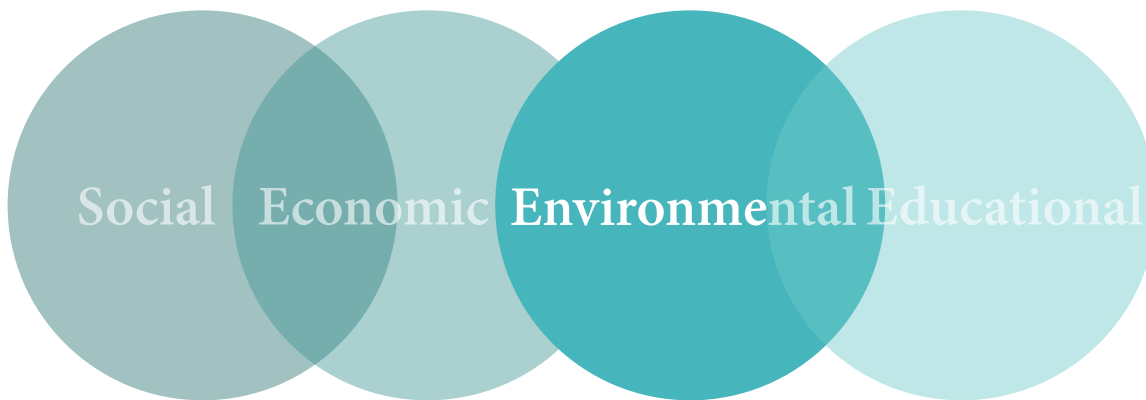
**Transparency | Expenses | Soft Skills:** Since 1948, the UAF supports and counsels highly skilled refugees in the country. It is an independent fund raising organisation providing students with information on how to find a job or a scholarship (called “support scan”), and loans for study-related costs. The UAF also helps in creating study plans, language improvement, and assembling application documents<sup>55</sup>.

### Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf

**Transparency | Soft Skills:** The program „Uni2Jobs“, designed for international students, prepares the students in their final phase for the German job market by counselling, developing of key competencies, and application support. In addition, Uni2Job also offers information about financial support during the studies<sup>56</sup>. This program might also be very useful for the target group of refugee students.



Photo: © Heiwa Wong



## Background

Refugee students find themselves more or less alone in a new learning environment, handling new cultural codes and different administrative processes: “Not only are most prospective university students transitioning into adulthood, but the traditional support structures that would usually guide them through (...) universities and taking on more responsibilities generally (such as trusted teachers, parents or guardians), are either not present, or do not possess enough knowledge about the system to provide necessary guidance.<sup>57</sup>” Hence, many refugee students need to acquire more tools to effectively navigate European academic environments.

Academic and social integration are complementary processes by which students adjust to university life, which is why this factor is feeding into social factors.

In addition to the process of adaptation to the new learning culture, refugee students might be at risk of facing various kinds of discrimination, based on ethnicity, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, income background, amongst others. U.S. studies found that first-generation students and ethnic minorities at predominantly white institutions are especially prone to struggle academically and socially during their studies which is due to experienced (institutionalized) discrimination<sup>58</sup>. In Germany, the #MeTwo movement<sup>59</sup>, initiated to share stories about racism and discrimination against people of colour in Germany, brought the discussion about discrimination on all levels, in the academia as well, back on the table<sup>60</sup>. The discriminatory structures are oftentimes unconscious and institutionalized, students are struggling with finding out what is necessary to survive and thrive in the institution they are in. Some regulations about credit point accumulation might for example involuntarily discriminated against refugee students. In some federal states of Germany, regulations demand a certain amount of CPs

after two semesters, while these two semesters are the most challenging for refugee students in terms of adapting to the new learning environment, adjusting in terms of language and terminology difficulties in their lectures, and so on. „But sometimes, discrimination or racism can be ingrained in an ostensibly merit-based system which maintains longstanding implicit practices, in which the system doesn’t recognize that minorities need support to level the playing field with the established majority.<sup>61</sup>” Students should not be left to manage and resolve these differences on their own.

Student perceptions of the institutional environment and dominant norms and values influence how students think and are related to their achievements at the university. They are less engaged in academic activities, feel less connected to their (local) peers and are not in a position to take advantage of their university’s resources for learning and personal development<sup>62</sup>. „one never achieves a sense of ownership or feeling like a full member of the academic community. These students are lonely and do not perceive that faculty, staff, and administrators are interested in their well-being and academic success. Institutional structures and processes that are thought to affect student performance“ positively are not reaching out to them, and have „significant negative effect on student persistence.<sup>63</sup>”

Environmental factors are varied and multifaceted, but they are usually related to opening and improving systems that are often unwillingly rigged against students with non-conventional academic pathways, or students who might not fit the imagined standard of who a student is or can be. The goal is to adjust and open systems in order to make all students the imagined standard.

The following quotes were gathered from interviews and surveys and give some insight into the student and university staff perspective of this influencing factor.

## From students

“I understand the difference between the education systems and quality; however I can't see the difference between students as big as universities here think.”

“Maybe the university can tell the teachers that I don't live for a long time in the country and it's difficult for me to study in Dutch and English. That would help because they know my situation. I feel embarrassed when I have to do a presentation with my poor language (for every subject the students and teacher of the workgroup changed).“

“(I need more) Advice or sometime an extra explanation because sometimes I cant follow the Prof and then I will miss a lot, plus my background is weak because I left studying for 3 years also my life is so difficult because I live alone and I have no one to help me.”

“The valuation of our previous studies and diplomas is not entirely fair. A pharmacist refugee for example is considered a bachelor student here while European ones are treated as master holding students.”

## From staff

“University should be much more involved.”

“(We need a) better networking of offers, so that the offer is on the one hand more efficient and on the other hand more transparent for the refugees.”

“(We need) extra guidelines for refugee students like explanations about the university system, support in the learning process, language support and mental support.”

“People are willing but not sure what is the best way to help and what is possible within the (university).“

“Students don't know about other opportunities like i.e. apprenticeships.”

“For counselling much more time is needed and it is found that many refugees have difficulties to get information about what options are offered to choose a career in addition to studying in Germany.”

“Increase intercultural competences of staff and teachers.”

“Combination of awareness and support in their success, especially for refugee students who have experienced a lot, is definitely one of the responsibilities of a university.”

“(We need a) fundamentally more open structure for diversity in teaching and learning to better accommodate diversity.”

“Coping with a completely different education environment and culture, new academic methods; ICT related problems, everything is digitalized”

“Expectations of staff and students are not matching (...) things have to be adjusted (...) you always have to ask yourself: Is the program in place useful? Is it matching the students' needs?”

“Profs and staff is ignorant towards refugee students life circumstances, they have no clue what it is like to be refugee.”

## Situation

- 33% of refugee students do not know what a student advisor does and where to find one
- 51% of refugee students do not know what the student representation counsel does
- 54,6% of refugee students have never taken advantage of the support offers at their institution while 40,7% have
- 64% of the students wish for more support from universities' side

Students name more guidance and individual (or peer) coaching programs regarding language skills, and programs for non-native speakers, as crucial steps on their way to better integrate into the university environment. They need more support and understanding for their difficult circumstances and want to have better communication with their lecturers. One student expresses his wish for more “advice or sometimes an extra explanation ... because sometimes, I can't follow the prof and then I will miss a lot (...).<sup>64</sup>”

In the online survey, a third of participating refugee students indicated that they do not know what a student advisor does and where to find one. This crucial information seems simple but can lead to enormous hurdles in the initial phase of the academic career, and beyond. Young adults need to be aware of the range of possibilities they have – for some students, apprenticeship might also be an option. The importance of internships as career springboard needs to be stressed by advisors for students with another background as the local student in case they might not be aware of the benefits of having insight into a company (or the contacts to get in), and getting into contact with possible future employers at an early stage of their academic career. As one advisor put it: „Things that are very 'normal' to us, is many times not 'normal' for our refugee students. More Explanation is necessary in almost all cases.“

### Challenge: Effectiveness of programs

The benefits of preparatory programs, as well as complementary programs, are oftentimes not understood by the students. Considered a waste of time, refugee students, eager to start their academic career, rush through these seminars while waiting for the regular, proper studies to start, as many advisors complained in the survey. Until they find out during their studies how important the key information, strategies and methods given during the programs are.

Furthermore, programs are created for a target group that is not involved in the creation and evaluation process. Consulting members of the target group is not an option – it is a must.

At some universities, the connection between the different departments, administration, and faculty is poor. This leads to opacity of programs, to double-structures and a loss in its effectiveness.

### Possible Actions<sup>65</sup>

#### Evaluate!

- Involve students in the program designing processes
- Evaluate the university's operations: Let students as well as staff give feedback on existing offers and programs, in a further step, also on course contents. Let students evaluate the correspondence between studies and working-life requirements.
- Organise occasions during which refugee students (representatives) meet with respective staff member to discuss

further development of programs

- Get profs and staff to use digital learning management systems (and other) by themselves to find the areas of opportunity in the system and correct them
- Create self-assessment opportunities for students, because learning to be constructive in evaluation and assessment activities will prove useful after graduation, whether it is receiving or giving feedback

#### Be transparent about the benefits-costs-calculation of preparatory programs

- Define the benefits of the lectures students are attending at a very early stage, in the preparatory programs
- Find active ways to convince students of the benefits of the program, via role plays, or other creative methods
- Get help from alumni! They can often present a much more convincing case than staff!

#### Reformation of counselling-environment

- Individual guidance and personal coaching by one personal, „trustworthy“ counsellor
- Update the list of contact persons including the stakeholders outside of the university (for i.e. mental health issues) and make it accessible for counselling staff
- Improve the connection between different institutions at the university level
- Connect with other stakeholders

## Desired Impact

Programs are not considered a waste of time because the long-term results are understood by the students. Students have focused on and will remember at the given time what ways to go when in times of trouble.

Good relations between advisor and student have been established and feed into a trusted relationship in which students feel well-informed and understood.

Therefore, students are able to take advantage of the preparatory programs and a supportive, inclusive climate is ensured.

### Challenge: Discriminatory Structures

Students are discriminated against by institutionalized behaviour, attitudes and regulations.

## Possible Actions

### Staff Training

- Hold intercultural and anti-racism workshops for staff to become aware of eurocentric views and attitudes and how they might be affecting the students they work with.
- Be a partner to the students: build up confidence and trust
- Know the contacts to anti-discrimination offices in your city in case students need more help than you are able to offer
- Reconsider regulations that affect the least privileged member in the system. If possible, change the regulations. If not, search for exceptions and seek support from a higher department

### Create safe spaces

Students need safe spaces to express their personal views without the need to explain (or defend) them, and to connect with individuals who have similar experiences, and explore their identities

### Initiate a university codex

University staff has to sign a codex when signing the contract to avoid reprehensive behaviour and might be held accountable in case of such. This codex contains rules and guidelines that support a respectful relationship between colleagues, staff and students, and beyond.

## Desired Impact

Students feel safe at the university and have tools at hand to deal with such situations in their everyday life on and off campus. University staff understand the importance of avoiding micro-aggressions in order to enhance the students' well-being. The university offers structures for students to turn to if they experience racism or discrimination. The university will increase the good reputation for its diversity management, contribute to a more open and human society, and have a positive impact on the students' performance.

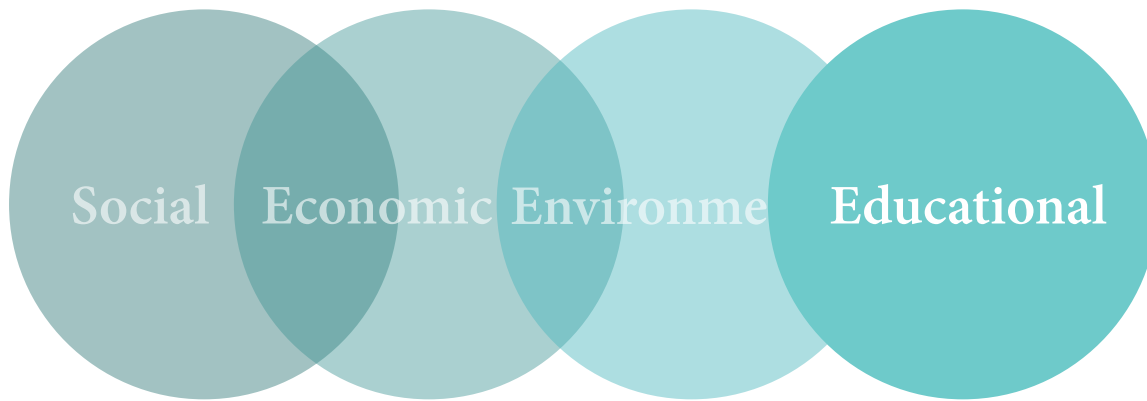
### Programs guiding the way:

#### Utrecht University (UU)

**Effectiveness of programs:** InclUUsion is a program for newly arrived students at the Utrecht University. Students get to know the university structure, staff and advisors from an early stage on. This connection helps them after entering the HEI during their studies, and supports them throughout the academic career<sup>66</sup>.

#### Technical University Munich (TUM)

**Effectiveness of programs:** Tutorial videos and Step-by-Step guides for filling out important documents, application processes, explications about various systems used by the TUM in English, are provided on the free online channel, like i. e. a four-steps-guide for filling in the UNI-assist application form<sup>67</sup>.



## Background

Educational factors feed in a certain way into the environmental context. Nonetheless, a stronger emphasis has to be put on academic engagement and support structures provided by the institution.

To fully develop their abilities and academic skills, students need to have the right tools at hand, and they must be „accompanied by realistic advice (about) what is necessary to succeed.<sup>68</sup>“ This information must be given by university staff in form of a study orientation. Study orientation is helpful for all students; however, refugee students just like international students need more guidance in navigating the new learning and educational system. Study orientation should, in accordance with methods developed in educational science, include deep orientation and social orientation sessions, an ABC for finding information, reading techniques, writing and presentation skills, workshops on taking notes, time management, amongst others<sup>69</sup>. Independent information retrieval, its processing and critical evaluation are an integral part of studies at European HEIs. Students need to know when and what kind of information is required, as well as from where to seek this information. Studies found<sup>70</sup>, that students with this kind of orientation organise their studies well, set timetables and develop successful study strategies: “A deep performance-based orientation (...) combined with independence and a sufficient support structures are traits that lead to study success.<sup>71</sup>” Furthermore, the competence in finding the right information is useful far beyond the university environment. Refugee students do need this kind of support especially in the initial and final phase of their academic journey to minimize the risk of dropping out.

Student engagement and co-curricular activities are equally important for the students' performance and persistence<sup>72</sup>. Since students are more connected psychologically as well as socially to a group that is success-oriented, their wish to

graduate is reinforced<sup>73</sup>. In addition, and this is especially true for students from a foreign learning environment like refugee students, these activities help to develop essential skills and competencies, like language skills, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence.

Language skills specifically become an issue when subject specific terminology and language comprehension is required and being used on a daily basis. Although most students who move on from preparatory programs to study programs have achieved excellent results on language tests. These courses usually focus on more general language skills. Native speakers also display a language curve when learning subject specific terminology, however this curve is more pronounced for non-native speakers. This process can slow students down in their first semesters and leave them feeling defeated or not competent enough. Students should know that these experiences might be in store for them and that they are a normal part of their learning process.

Another issue that is often observed is that many refugee students interest themselves for the same study programs, usually medicine, law, and engineering. These programs seem to have a certain amount of social prestige attached to them. However is the program is not right for the student, and does not entirely correspond to their genuine interests, they will be facing many difficulties as the semesters go on. While choosing the right study program can be supported during the application and enrollment phase, having regular advising during their studies can facilitate seeking alternative routes for students that may have changed their mind at some point along the road.

The following quotes were gathered from interviews and surveys and give some insight into the student and university staff perspective of this influencing factor.

## From students

“(I need) study support, I’m having a hard time not knowing what is important and what is not, and the teachers are not helping much.”

“Studying costs me more time.”

“Language is a big challenge.”

“I have to translate in my head the whole time.”

“(I need) Language support and support to know my rights in the university.”

“I think many teachers are so weak that they could not answer the students’ questions. Some of the teachers want us to read and write as they want without any critical thinking, without any care that we can also put our opinion on some issues! It’s not fair for us..”

“I speak two other languages beside my mother language and learn with the two of them, so I have for sure so much more difficulty with studying than the students that are born here.”

## From staff

“It is not only the information that counts.”

„University should help the students succeed – while supporting them to become independent and able to help themselves“

“Staff needs to understand the student better, understanding takes more time.”

“Refugee students would be lost if left alone, they need this support”

“Next to the existing support structures refugee students emphasis that they would like more facilities regarding support with language skills, academic study skills and academic writing skills, as well as citation and methodology.”

“You have to provide the students with the necessary tools – they can’t make it without those”

“Students who are not already holding a master’s degree are struggling in terms of critical thinking, they have problems in relating to the academic system & thinking”

“Choosing a subject out of other interests than their own leads to drop out.”



Photo: © Heiwa Wong

## Situation

- Almost half of the students struggle with the local language in class: 43% compared to 53,3% who can follow the class easily
- 43% of asked students can't find their study material online.
- 26,7% think that the study load is **not** right, while 12,8% don't know.
- 29% do not know how to study for their exams

Refugee students come from a different educational background. The educational system is unique in every country, and in some countries even varies from state to state, as is the in the federal states of Germany. For individuals who did not grow up in this system by i.e. going to school in the respective country, and cannot count on parental advice or well-established mentors to assist, gathering information and looking for help can be very challenging. Additionally, this search occurs in a language that is not their own. Teaching methods, accreditation systems, campus culture, everything, is new – and yet, still relatable in a way - and doable, as long as there are good institutional support structures in place.

Still, some regulations have to be modified. Allowing the students to focus on the content instead of struggling with the language by using dictionaries during exams and having an extra 30-minutes to read the instructions and correct spelling and grammar mistakes, enables the students to display their academic ability and create more equitable learning environments.

### Challenge: Academic Regulations

Finding the right kind of information is a real challenge. It is hard to decide what information is useful and correct.

Many advisors, though dedicated to their jobs and the students they work with, do not actually have much time for individual students.

In addition, certain academic regulations put obstacles in the refugee students' way by neglecting the fact that this group might need different approaches.

### Possible Actions<sup>74</sup>

#### Constant Assessment & Evaluation

→ Try it yourself: how accessible is your institution's website?

How many languages are available? How easy is it to get into contact with the correct contact person (office hours, consulting via phone or mail, ...)

→ Ask students to "beta" test information channels and structures.

#### Adjustments of academic regulations

→ Evaluate!

→ Consider giving refugee students extra time during exams and allow them to use a dictionary at the beginning of their studies in order to close the language achievement gap.

→ Improvement of programs for connecting refugee, international and local students (s. o.)

→ Provide multiple learning support networks

#### Prioritize Advising

→ More staff: some students need more than the calculated 15-minutes most European HEIs provide for an advising-session. Therefore, with more staff, more time for "hard cases" can be secured

→ Appropriate planning of educational programs and learning goals.

→ Addressing questions of coherence and sequencing of the educational program

→ Encourage students to become involved with peers in campus events and organizations and invest effort in educational activities

#### Desired Impact

Studies found that high quality advising positively affects the students' academic success<sup>75</sup>. Furthermore, the students' independence is fostered, the students are well-informed and able to handle all tools independently.

Advising is in particular important to first-generation students and those belonging to minority groups like refugee students. It positively affects retention and graduation.

As mentioned in the section « Social Factors », campus events and peer-group, educational activities are known to promote student learning and development by contributing to the students' well-being and satisfaction<sup>76</sup>.



## Challenge: Insufficient Success Initiatives

Student success initiatives and courses address issues such as optimal use of university support resources, time management, career and skill development, and advice. Many students, not only refugee students, lack these kinds of soft skills which are crucial for a successful academic performance.

### Possible Actions

**Study support & Soft skill development** (open for all students but with a special focus on refugee students)

- Support in making a study plan
- Workshops on time management
- Free and flexible extra language courses
- Academic writing
- English writing courses, also in non-English speaking countries
- Subject-specific language
- E-mail writing courses
- Presentation workshops,

### Lecture Auditing Programs

- Visiting lectures during preparatory program to get used to jargon and terminology
- Does the study program the student want meet their expectations? Being better informed can prevent study program change in the future.

### Desired Impact

Studies have shown, that „these courses have been credited with helping students learn effective study skills and improve retention of course material.<sup>77</sup>“ The adaptive skills fostered in these kinds of complementary courses have direct and indirect influences on persistence and performance. Student success initiatives also support underrepresented students adjustment: By participating in academic support courses and programs, students develop a stronger sense of belonging.

Furthermore, „students who use these skill centres for are much more likely to persist and get higher grades than peers who do not.<sup>78</sup>“

## Challenge: Potential drop outs

Refugee students might be at risk of higher drop out rates than the average student for reasons discussed above. Specially designed academic support programs that provide early

intervention to prepare and assist students “at risk”, like i.e. those belonging to minority groups. These alert systems that incorporate a network of individuals, including administrative staff, advisors, mentors, academic support units, and peer support groups, are most effective at helping students address difficulties<sup>79</sup>.

### Possible Actions

#### Establish an Early Warning System

- Specially designed academic support programs that provide early intervention to prepare and assist and support students “at risk”, i.e. those belonging to minority groups.

#### “Faculty-based” Buddy Program

- Located and managed by faculties, in order to connect locals and refugees with the same academic interests.

### Desired Impact

The students are not left alone, and drop-out rates are lowered through the warning system employed.

Faculty-based buddy programs could help refugee students to find a learning partner with the same academic interest and therefore, the persistence of those programs is secured.

## Programs guiding the way:

### Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

**Student Success Initiatives:** Language support is provided throughout the studies to ensure academic achievements by the Modern School of Greek Language<sup>80</sup>.

### Vrije University Amsterdam

**Academic Regulations:** Refugee students get extra time during exams and are allowed to use a dictionary . This simple adjustment enables the students to focus on the content and display their abilities.

### Université Paris | Panthéon-Sorbonne

**Academic Regulations:** By follow-up sessions with students in order to accompany through a longer period after admission, and individual counselling sessions with the same advisor.<sup>81</sup>

# CONCLUSION

This study shows that the European community has been very active in striving to create new programs and to overcome challenges that stand in the way of refugee students' successful navigation of higher education in Europe.

While this is commendable and inspiring, the challenges outlined in this publication show that there is still much work to be done, and are indicative of both policy and institutional shortcomings. Although the results of this study are largely influenced by the perspective of HEIs in Germany, working on this research and speaking with diverse European stakeholders has shown that there is a similar need for new and improved strategies, and a wealth of information to be found across Europe.

These programs need to be invested in if their impact is to be broadened and be sustainable. It would not be realistic to expect universities to address each and every challenge with their initiatives, however by cooperating with other HEIs and stakeholders, creating a network of comprehensive expertise, initiatives can become more holistic. Social, economic, environmental and educational factors influencing student success need to be taken into consideration when addressing students' academic performance.

A sense of social belonging should be fostered. Language support with specific educational goals in mind needs to be provided continuously, so that students find support when struggling with terminology and other linguistic hurdles. Advisors must be adequately trained and be provided with enough time and resources to properly respond to student concerns. Information about funding possibilities for students need to be adequate and accessible. Social discrimination can be fought with trained staff and an informed and aware student body.

Creating an inclusive, diverse and international academic community should be in the interest of all stakeholders involved in education, be it HEIs, NGOs, refugee initiatives, and, most importantly, refugee students themselves. Achieving this goal is challenging, yet rewarding. As a group of competent individuals, prospective refugee students can enrich HEIs and the European academic community. Although intercultural and administrative challenges are inevitable, these must not prevent the European academic community from striving to be an inclusive and excellent academic society. It is precisely

this interdisciplinary, intercultural and academic exchange that can break down bureaucratic barriers and lead to innovation in the content of research, educational strategies and in administrative structures. Refugee students who become members of these academic communities will be able to operate as academic, political and cultural multipliers, helping to rebuild their communities and make those in their host countries better. Cooperating with numerous stakeholders for this study has shown that all of the parties involved have valuable expertise in the areas of higher education, migration, and refugee policy.

This publication hopes to inspire more stakeholders to contribute to overcoming the challenges for refugee students to accomplish HEIs in Europe and to encourage further dialogue between other stakeholders. Finally, supporting fellow human beings in need is the moral and social responsibility of the international community. With education being the key to generating insight, exchange, understanding, and respect, it serves as the foundation of any multicultural society.

## ADVICE FROM AROUND EUROPE

Equity is not only a fairly new concept, but also difficult to realise. Sensitivity is required to handle public discourse.

Simplification of advisory structures.

Staff needs to understand the student better, understanding takes more time.

Women support groups could be helpful.

Refugee students almost always have many problems and I try to help them find their way, feeling at home, help them in their studies and with the language. i wish there was more support for this particular group.

University is responsible for the well-being of ALL students, but especially the weakest ones, which is refugee students.

Think outside the box!!

The age of traditional educational pathways is over. Students are not only children of college educated parents. We have to adapt. We have to do something!

You have to provide the students with the necessary tools – they can't make it without them.

More staff

Refugee students need to relax a bit when it comes to study success: they are too stressed, work too much, and will get burned out if they continue like this.

Academic success only possible if the student is stable - mentally, financially, safe,... a student needs a stable and safe atmosphere and it is the university's responsibility to provide such an atmosphere at least at the university campus.

Workshops on work-life balancing, well-being and relaxation would be great!

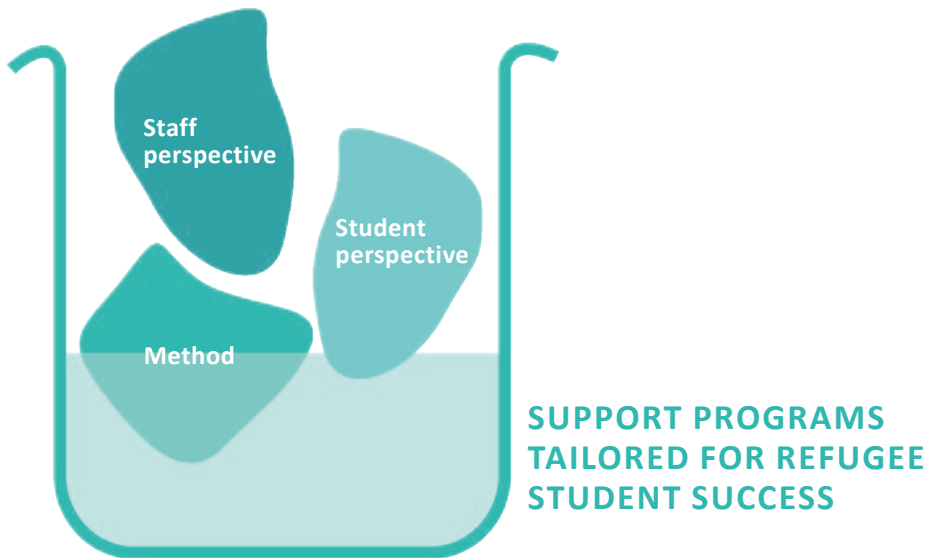
(We need a) fundamentally more open structure for diversity in teaching and learning to better accommodate "diversity".

No duplications! No new, temporary projects, but an increase in the jobs that have existed for a long time.

Politicians need to be involved. Universities need more support and have to be heard by the government - Universities cannot do all alone.

# ROADMAP FOR IMPROVEMENT

## IV. Program Design: Taking Action



The key to creating significant and meaningful programs is to take the specific context of the university at hand, the country, political system and opportunities, and the distinctive student population into consideration. The programs developed need to make sense for both institution and students, because when they don't they will quickly become non-sustainable. When designing new initiatives for your institution do not forget to take the institutional perspective and the student perspective into consideration, when combined with a good method these can yield good results.

V. Step-by-Step Guide for Program Design



### 1. Write a Blueprint

Establish specific goals and learning objectives for your program. Ask:

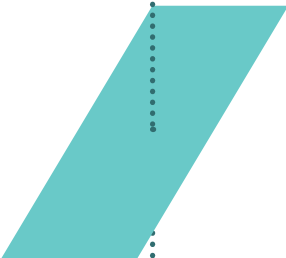
What do we as an institution want for our students?



### 2. Make a Storyboard

Map out the student life cycle

Semester	1	2	3	4	5	6
Students challenges						
Planned Activities						
Desired Outcome						



### 3. Create a Prototype

Create a concept with specific actors and situations



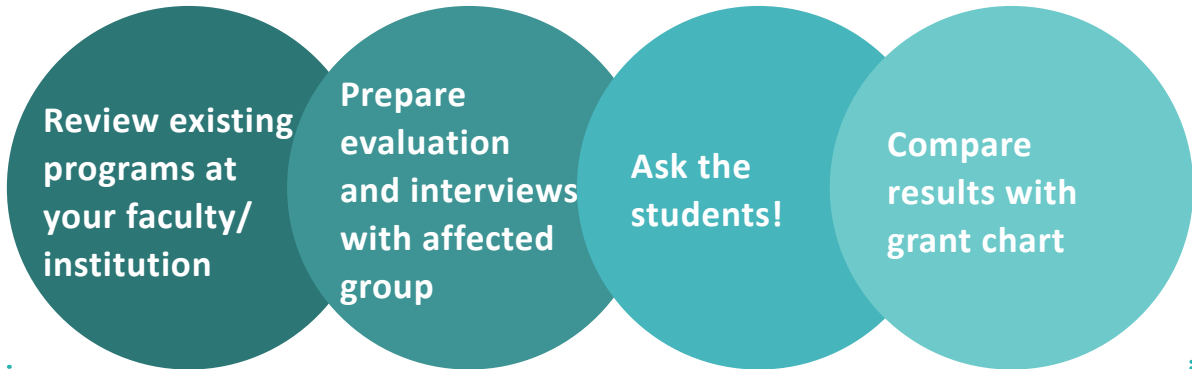
### 4. Check Reality

Get feedback from colleagues and students

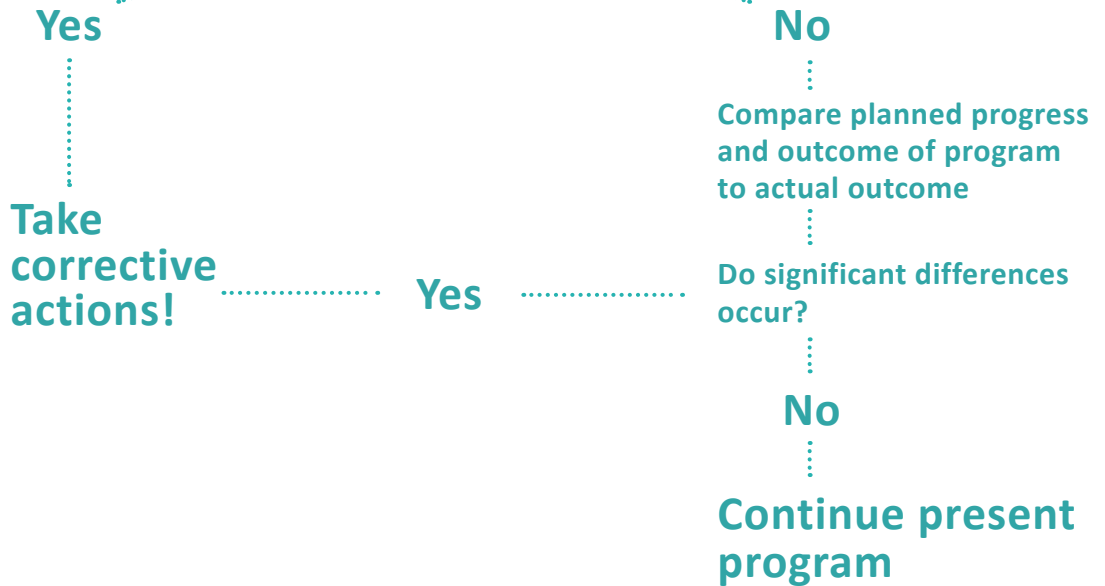


## 5. Review and Adjust

Adjust your concept accordingly



Do significant differences occur?



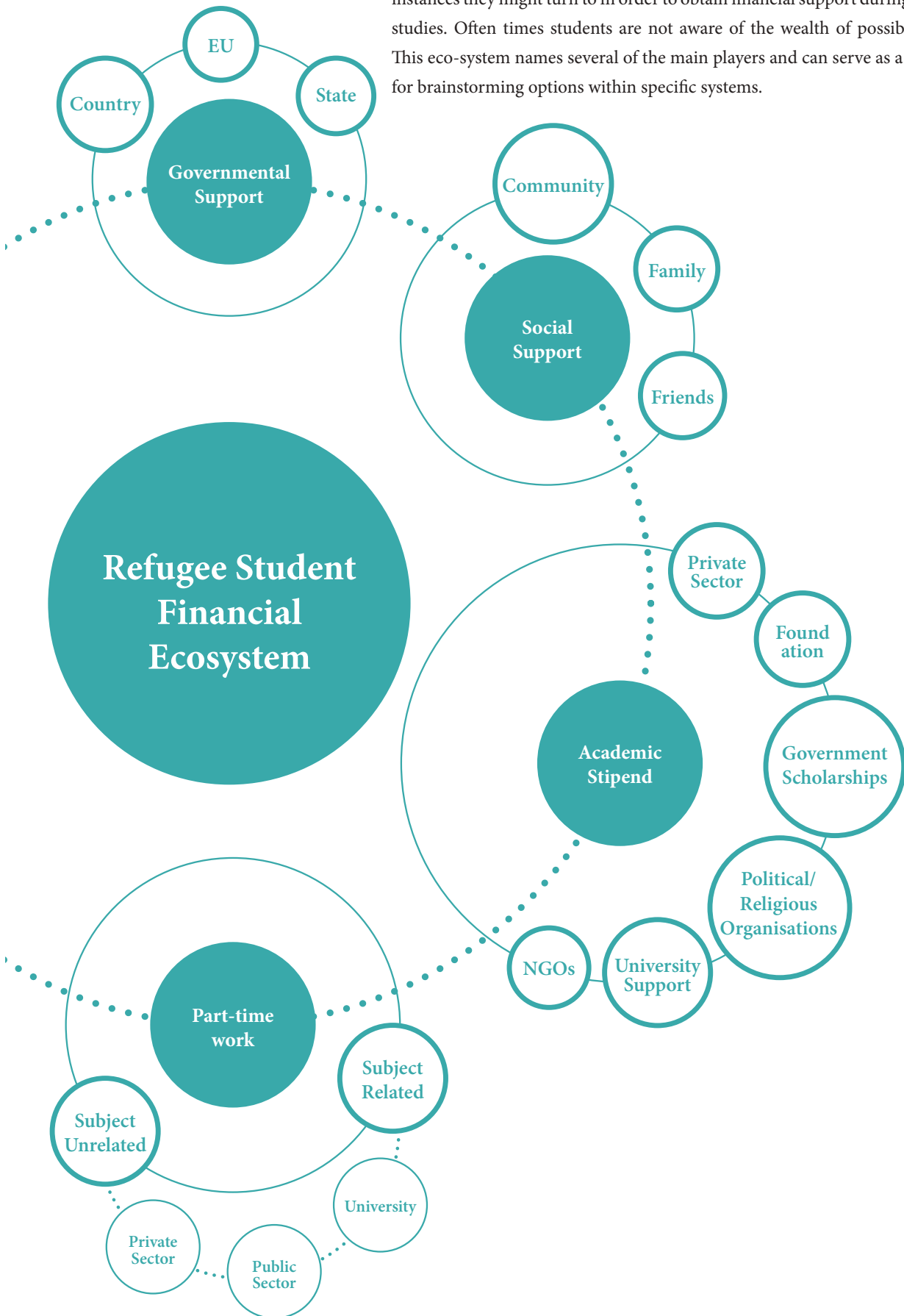
## 6. Plan Your Next Steps

What's next? (New concepts, evaluations, etc.)



Financial Support Guide for Students

The following eco-system is a guide for students to consider the different instances they might turn to in order to obtain financial support during their studies. Often times students are not aware of the wealth of possibilities. This eco-system names several of the main players and can serve as a guide for brainstorming options within specific systems.



## Financial Ecosystem: Stipend Opportunities

The opportunities mentioned in this section are current offerings which students can access. Universities should feel free to provide their students with both this list and to add to it with opportunities of their own.

### The University of Cologne, Germany

„**Flüchtlingsfonds der Universität zu Köln**“  
*stipend fund with donations from private donors to help refugee students*

Steffen Beuys, Referent Stabsstelle Universitätsförderung  
+49(0)221-470-1857 | steffen.beuys(at)uni-koeln.de

<https://www.portal.uni-koeln.de/index.php?id=10660>  
[https://www.portal.uni-koeln.de/stiftung\\_studium\\_und\\_lehre.html](https://www.portal.uni-koeln.de/stiftung_studium_und_lehre.html)  
<https://www.portal.uni-koeln.de/12092.html>

### TU Darmstadt, Germany

„**Hessen-Fonds**“  
*Funding for refugee students, PhD students and researcher by the Hessen Ministry for Science and the Arts*

*Umfang der Förderung: Studierende: 300 Euro,  
Promovierende: 1.150 Euro, Wissenschaftler/-innen:  
2.000 Euro/Monat*

info@fluechtlinge-an-hochschulen.hessen.de  
Pressekontakt:  
Hessisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst  
Referat für Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit  
+49 (0)611 - 32 3230 | pressestelle@hmkw.hessen.de  
[http://www.fluechtlinge-an-hochschulen.hessen.de/front\\_content.php?idcat=348](http://www.fluechtlinge-an-hochschulen.hessen.de/front_content.php?idcat=348)

### Die Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz (Federation of Austrian Universities), Österreich

„**MORE Initiative**“  
nansen.scholarship@hhl.de

*The 21 universities in Graz, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Leoben, Linz Salzburg and Vienna offer a certain amount of courses to MORE students, some of which are especially tailored for the refugees offers, some are part of a degree program.*

*Semester packages of €50 each for tickets and books*

Nadine Shovakar | +43(0)1-3105656-31 |  
nadine.shovakar@uniko.ac.at  
<https://uniko.ac.at/projekte/more/>

### Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna, Italy

„**Unibo for refugees: Study Grants**“  
International Desk  
+39 051 2088101 | internationaldesk@unibo.it

<http://www.unibo.it/en/services-and-opportunities/study-grants-and-subsidies/exemptions-and-incentives/unibo-for-refugees>

### University of Antwerp, Belgium

„**Preparatory one-year programme: Dutch as a Foreign Language in an Academic Context**“  
Christa Huygen, christa.huygen@uantwerpen.be

Stadscampus  
Kleine Kauwenberg 12  
2000 Antwerpen  
Tel. +32 3 265 57 52

<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/centres/linguapolis/academic-dutch-english/one-year-dutch-programme/scholarships-for-refugees/#>

### University of Bristol, UK

„**Sanctuary Scholarship scheme**“  
*The level of Scholarship funding will be determined by how much UK Government student financial support you are eligible to receive (if any) and whether you study full-time or part-time.*

*You will be expected to apply for and receive all UK Government student financial support which is available to you. This is usually in the form of a loan for tuition fees and living costs*

*If you are not eligible for UK Government financial support, you will receive a Scholarship which will cover your tuition fees and provide you with sufficient support for living costs.*

Kontakt: sanctuary-scholarship@bristol.ac.uk.  
Student Funding Office  
University of Bristol  
Senate House (Ground Floor)  
Tyndall Avenue  
Bristol BS8 1TH  
+44 (0)117 331 7972

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/fees-funding/awards/sanctuary-scholarship/who/>



### Bard College Berlin, Germany

#### „Program for International Education and Social Change“

*Undergraduates: A guaranteed place in University accommodation for the duration of your course, A non-repayable bursary of £1000 per academic year plus £1000 to help with start-up costs and a further £1000 on graduation (a maximum of £7,000 over a 5-year programme including a placement year), and means-tested bursaries and scholarships including the Gold Scholarship programme, the Bath Bursary and Income Related Scholarships, subject to eligibility criteria being met. One Gold Scholarship will be reserved for refugee applicants.*

*Postgraduates: A fee waiver covering the full cost of tuition fees and a £10,000 bursary towards your living costs.*

Ben Goose | +44 (0) 1225 383019 |  
B.S.E.Goose@bath.ac.uk, adm-pg-bursary@bath.ac.uk

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/financial-support-for-refugees/>

### City University of London, UK

#### „Article 26 Scholarship“

*The scholarship consists of full tuition fee support and a grant to help students with the costs of living and studying for Asylum seekers and Individuals with Discretionary leave to remain in the UK*

*Three students per academic year will be awarded a scholarship. This will cover your full fees for all three years of undergraduate study. This would cover a maximum of four years if you are undertaking a foundation programme, integrated Masters or are studying abroad for a year during your programme. The award also includes a grant you do not have to pay back worth £12,102.*

citycaressupport@city.ac.uk  
Financial Advice Team, Student Centre (University Building)  
City, University of London  
Northampton Square  
London  
EC1V 0HB

Website: <https://www.city.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/scholarships-and-bursaries/article-26>

### Leipzig Graduate School of Management, Germany

#### „Fridtjof Nansen Memorial Scholarships“

*Funding for M.Sc and MBA programmes*

*The scholarship covers Tuition fees and living costs.*

nansen.scholarship@hhl.de

### Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK

#### „Cardiff Met Sanctuary Award“

*A full fee waiver for the masters course the applicant holds an offer for, A Met Rider bus pass (valid from September 2018 – June 2019), A daily lunch voucher for use in Cardiff Met's Students' Union catering outlets on weekdays during term time and Personal support to enable students to identify and overcome barriers to achievement on their degree programme.*

sanctuaryaward@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Cardiff Met Sanctuary Award  
International & Partnerships Office  
Cardiff Metropolitan University  
200 Western Avenue  
Llandaff, Cardiff. CF5 2YB

<http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/international/study/applying/Pages/Sanctuary-Award.aspx>

### Edge Hill University, UK

#### „The Sanctuary Award“

*Edge Hill University provides a support package for two eligible individuals (asylum seekers/Refugees) at any one time to help them achieve their Higher Education goals. This is in the form of a tuition fee waiver plus an additional £800 scholarship for the cost of books and travel.*

+44 1695 657122 | [international@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:international@edgehill.ac.uk)

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/international/fees-and-scholarships/?tab=support-for-asylum-seekers>

### Central European University (Budapest), Hungary

#### „Open Learning Initiative - University Preparatory Program (OLive - UP)“

All successful applicants will be awarded a full scholarship which will cover tuition fees and provide a stipend, assistance with accommodation and health insurance.

Students will receive regular and in-depth consultation as they apply to MA programs across Europe and will be assisted in making competitive applications. Successful graduates of the program will receive a non-degree certificate issued by Central European University.

0036 1 327 3000 x2857 | olive\_admissions@ceu.edu, olive@ceu.edu

Nador street 11, 4th floor, room 415  
1051 Budapest  
Hungary

<http://olive.ceu.edu>

### University College London, UK

#### „Access Opportunity Scholarship“

Applicants must fit the following criteria: 1. Holding an offer of a place on a UCL undergraduate programme and; 2. Asylum seekers, children of asylum seekers or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are seeking asylum in the UK OR forced migrants who are based in the UK and have been granted a temporary form of leave as the result of an asylum application or human rights application.

The scholarship will consist of tuition fees and a living allowance of £11,000 per year for the normal duration of your programme at UCL.

[studentfunding@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:studentfunding@ucl.ac.uk)

[https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/scholarships/undergraduate/access\\_opportunity\\_scholarship\\_folder](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/scholarships/undergraduate/access_opportunity_scholarship_folder)

### Further Links

<http://regional.aktion-neue-nachbarn.de/export/sites/aktion-neue-nachbarn-regional/.content/galleries/downloads/koeln/Studium-Gefluechteter-B.-Esser-Stand-28.06.17.pdf>

<https://www.stellenwerk-koeln.de/>

<https://www.deutsches-stiftungszentrum.de/stiftungen/deutsche-universitaetsstiftung>

<https://www.daad.de/deutschland/stipendium/datenbank/de/21148-stipendiendatenbank/?status=&origin=&subjectGrps=&daad=&q=&page=1&back=1>

<https://www.mystipendium.de/>

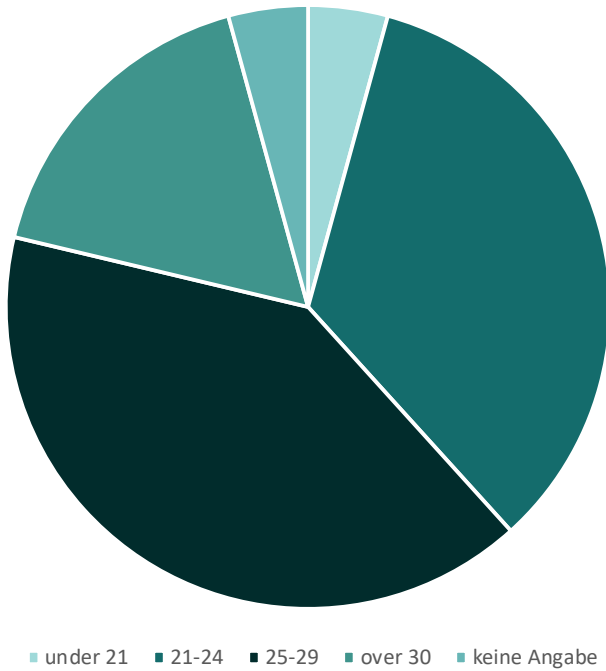
<https://www.stipendienlotse.de/>

# APPENDIX

## International Students

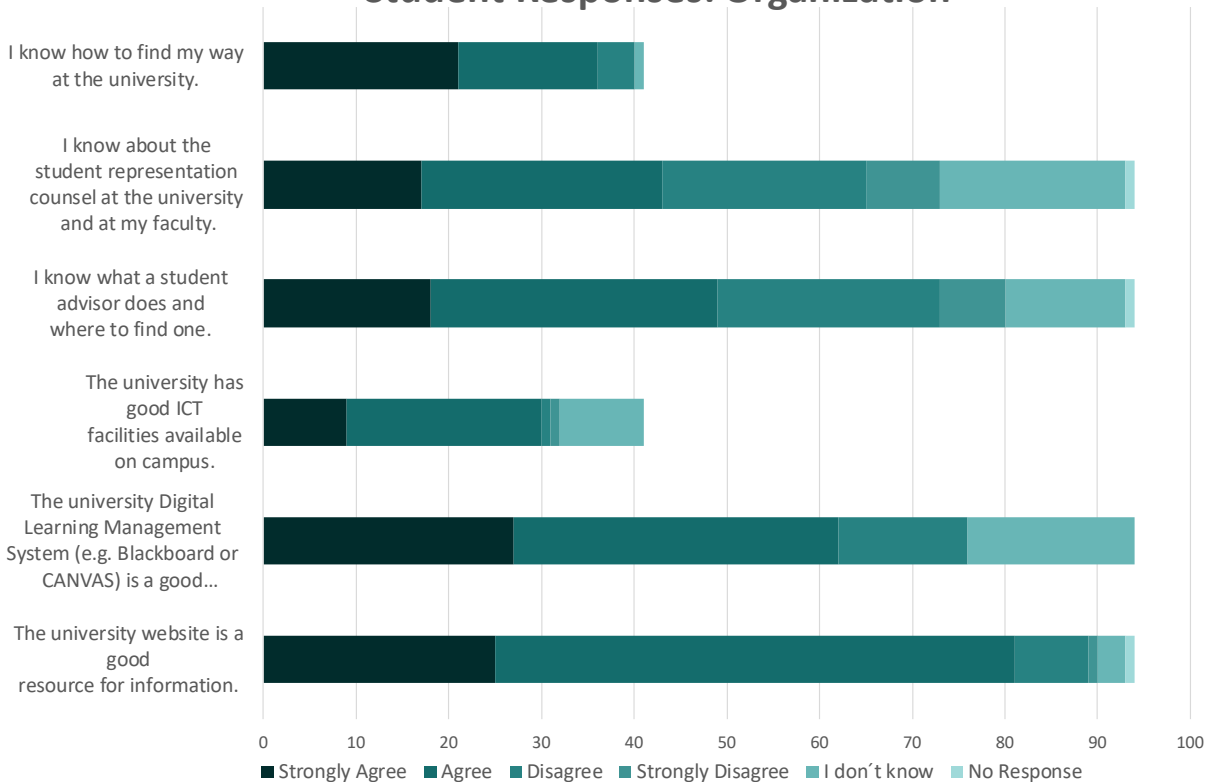
### General information:

Diagrammtitel



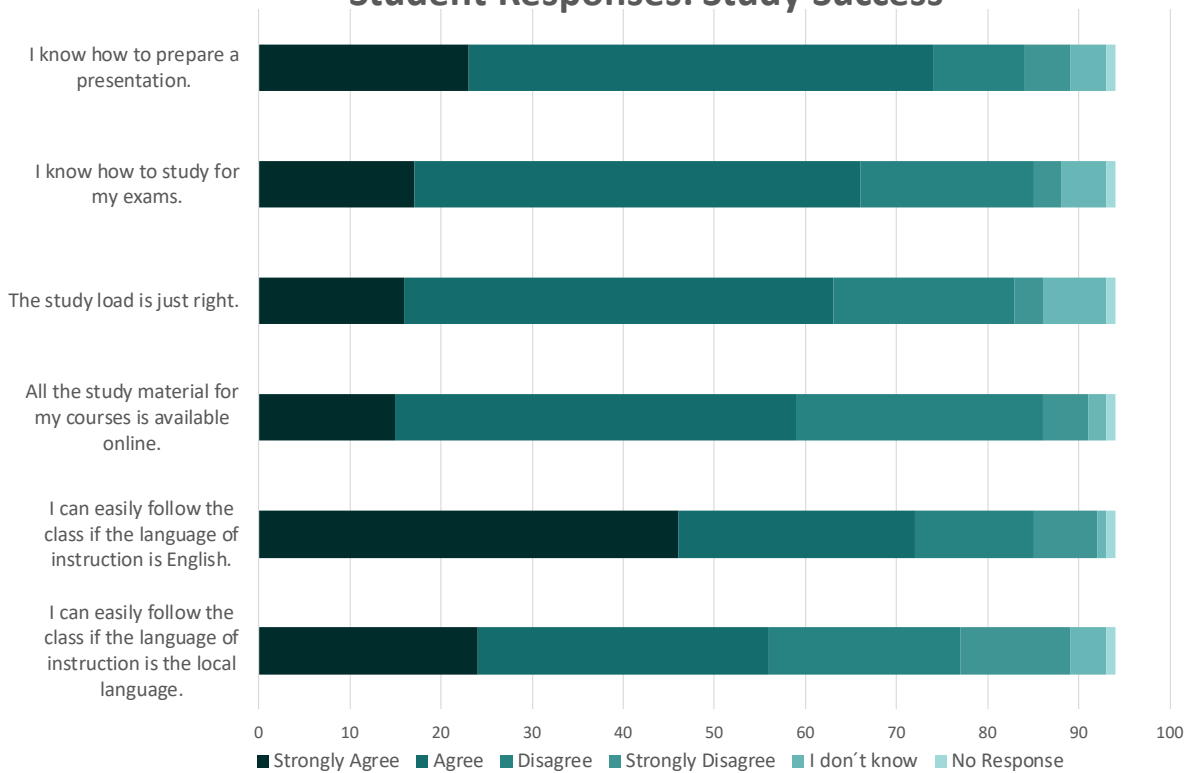
### Organization:

Student Responses: Organization



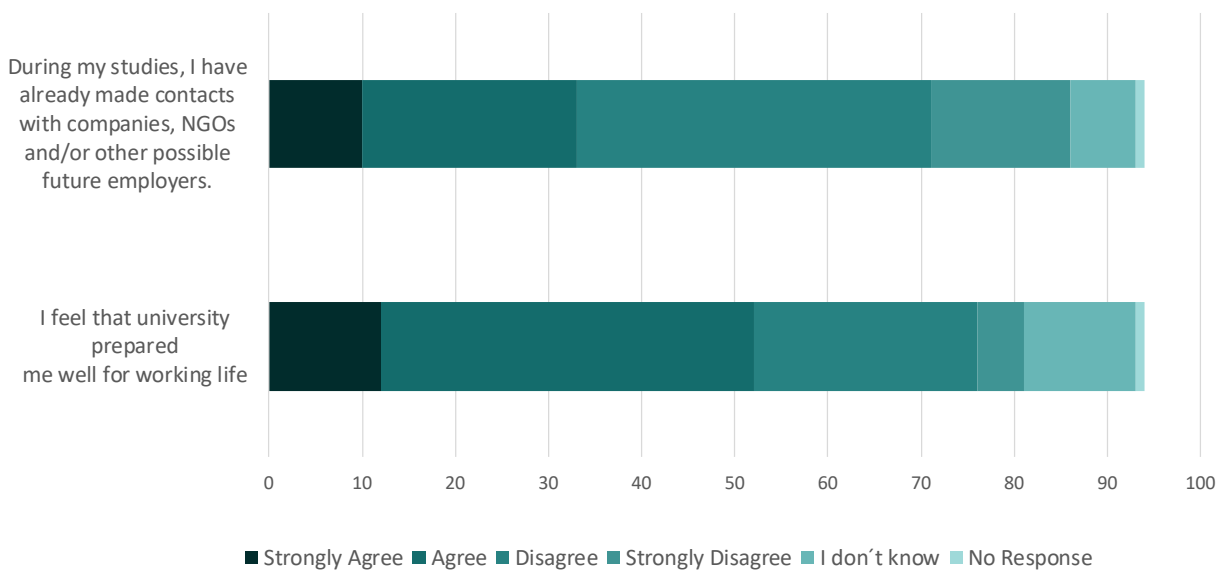
**Study Success:**

**Student Responses: Study Success**

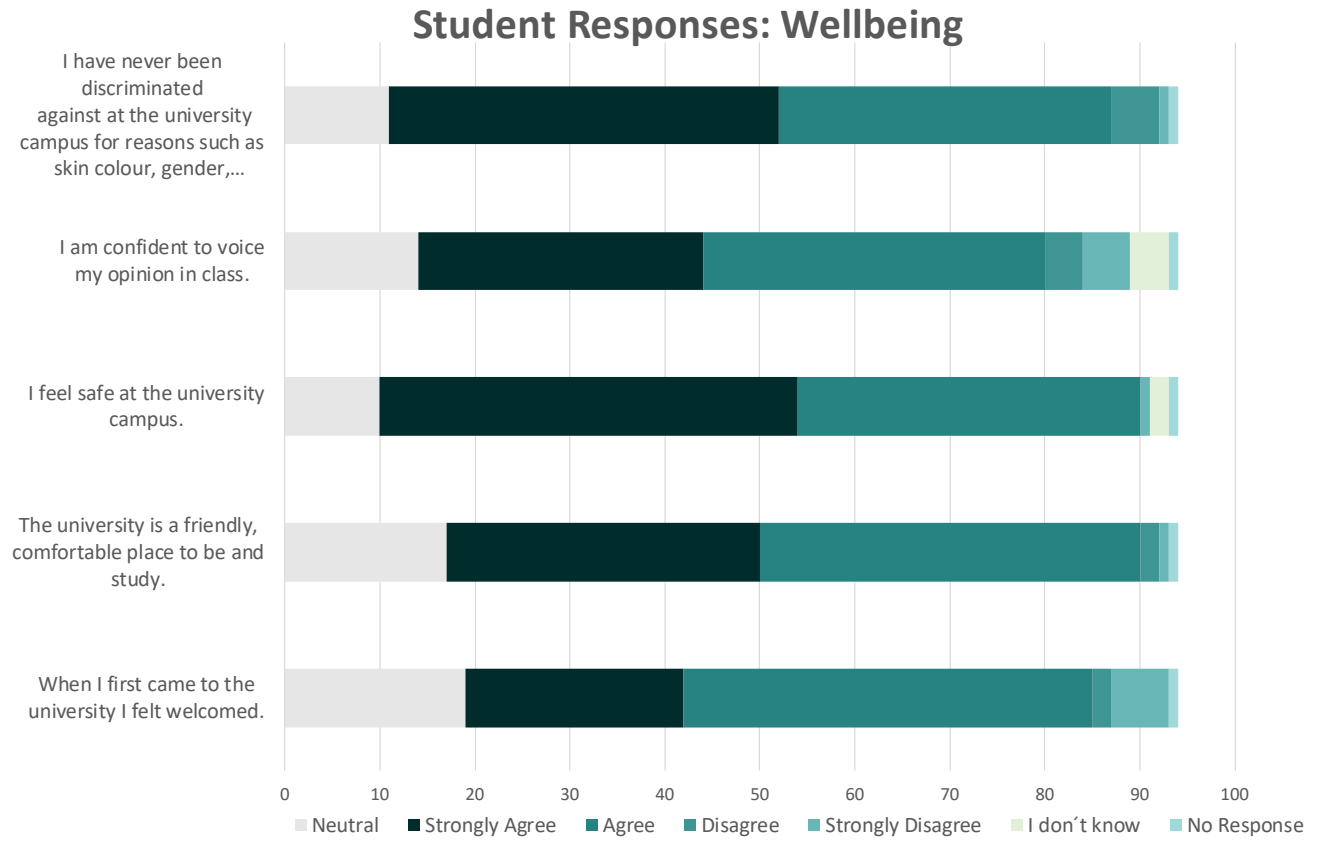


**Working Life:**

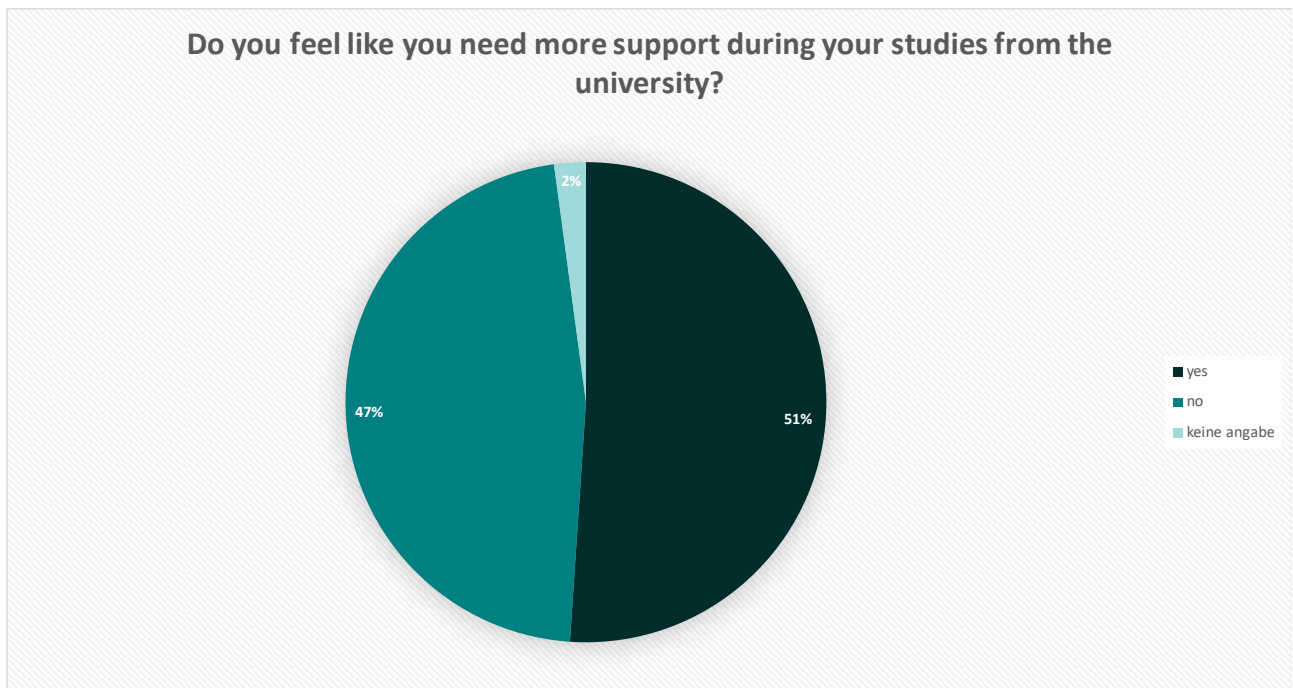
**Student Responses: Working life**

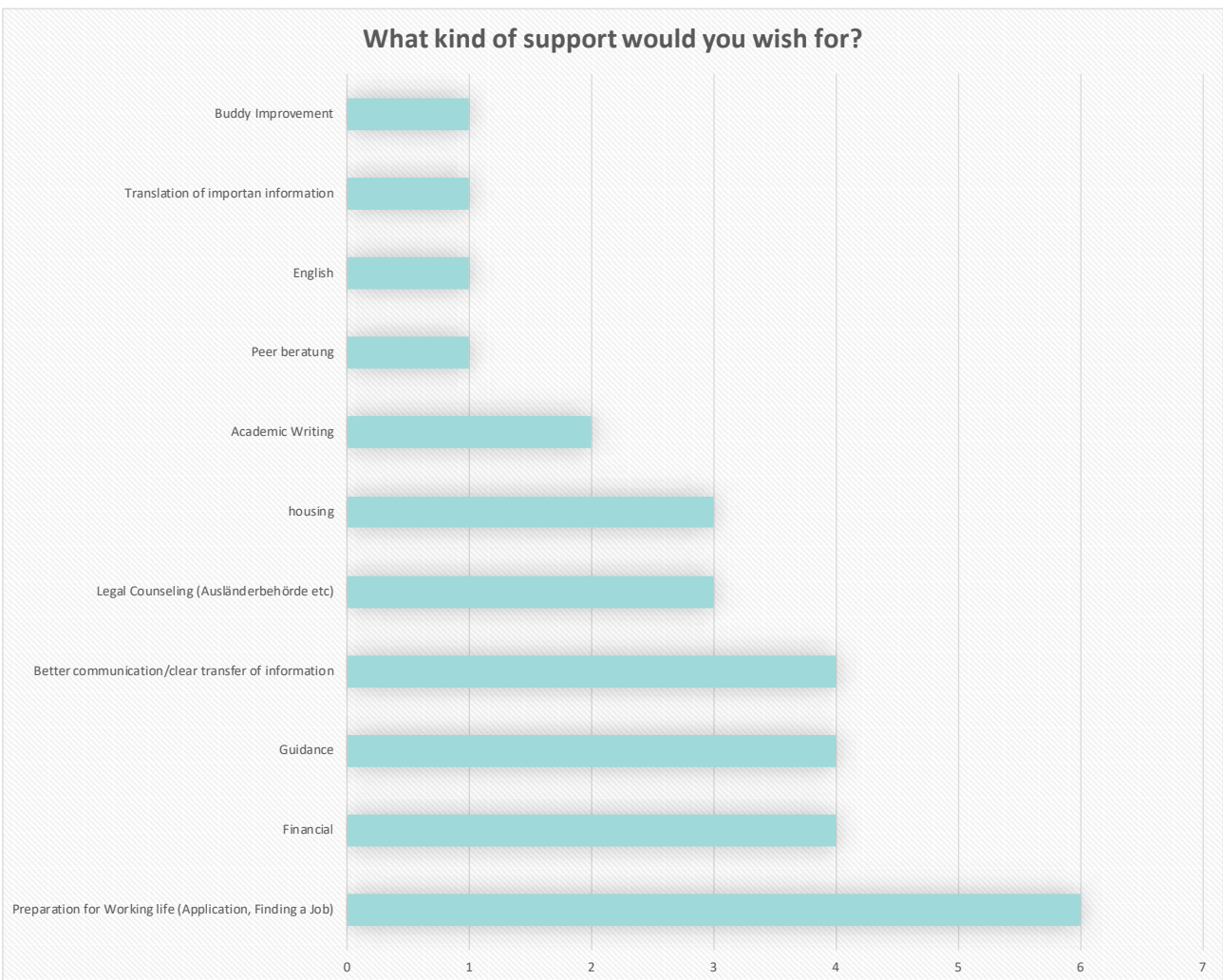
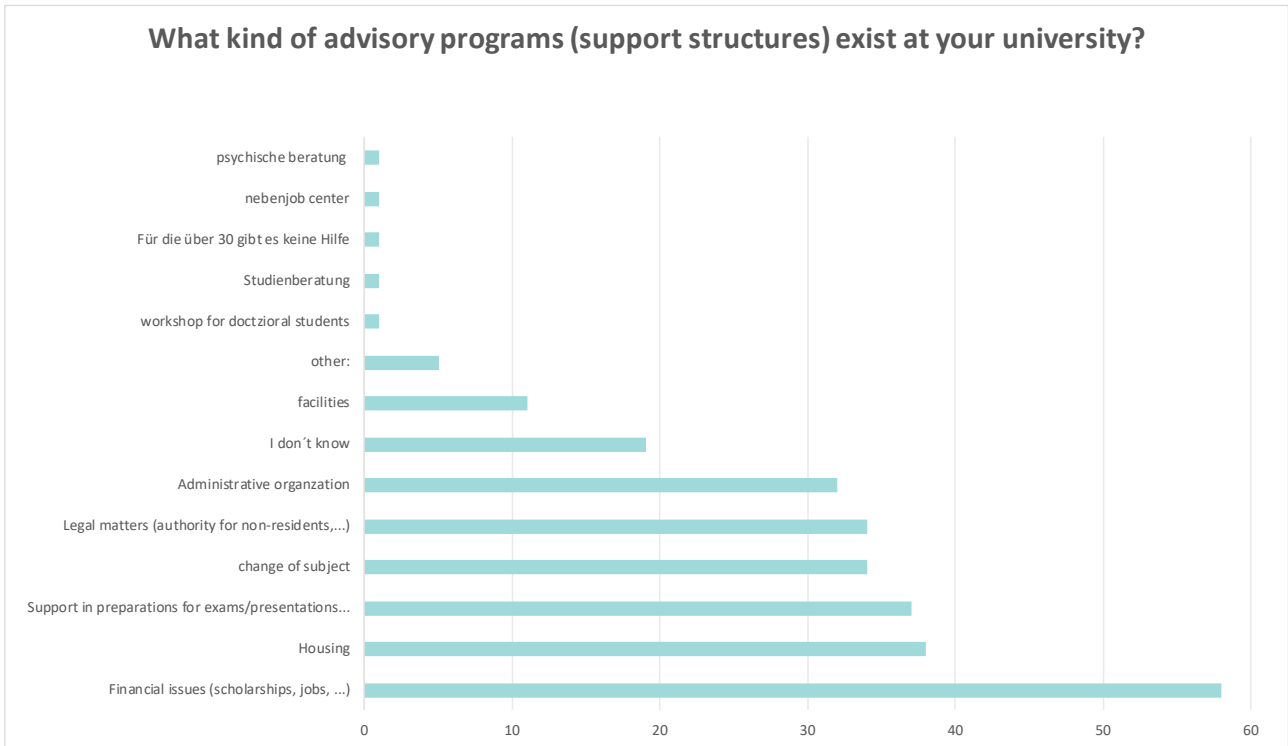


Wellbeing:

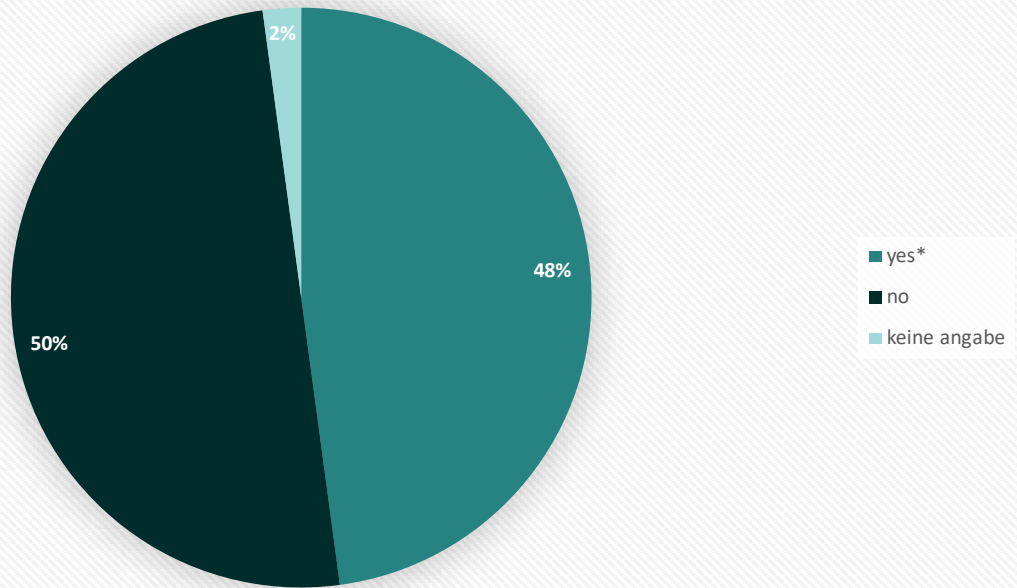


Support Structure:

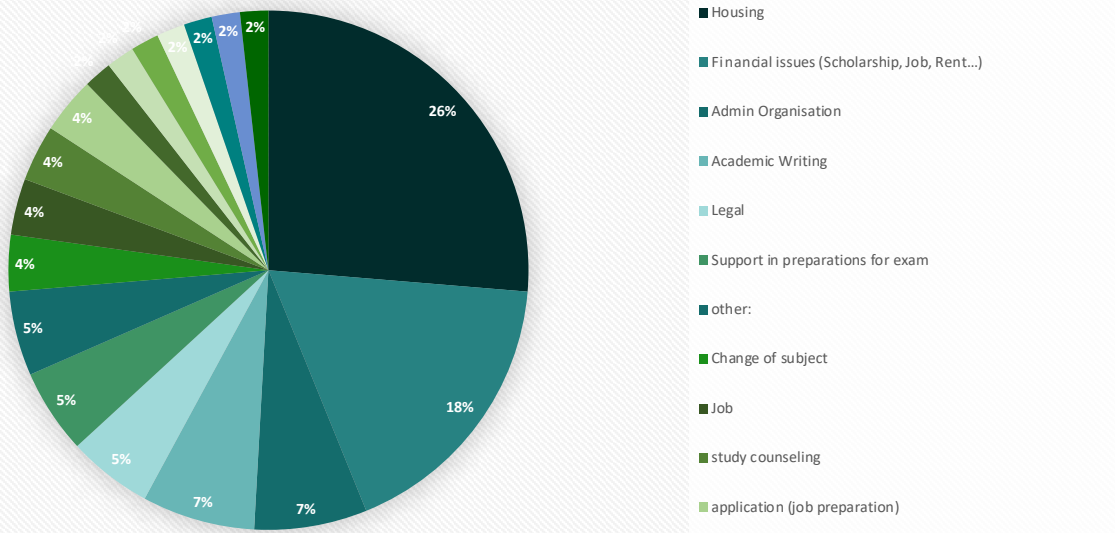




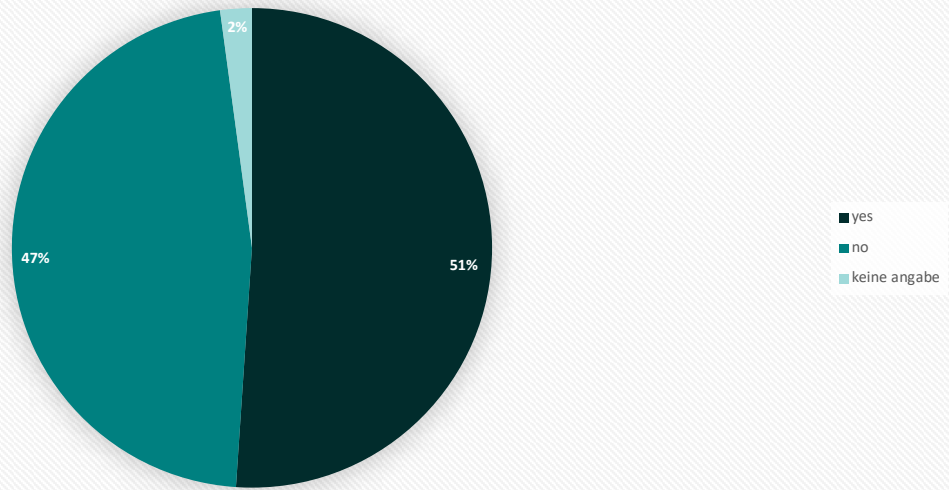
### Have you ever taken advantage of one (or more) of those initiatives in the past?



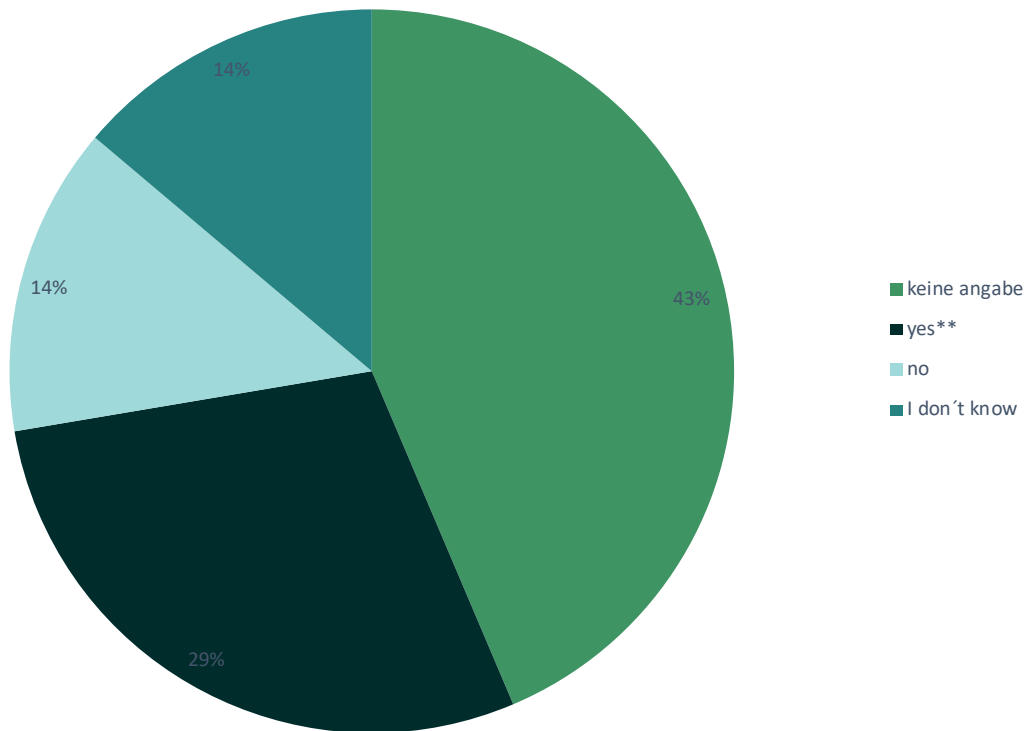
### Which Initiatives have you taken advantage of



**Do you feel like you need more support during your studies from the university?**



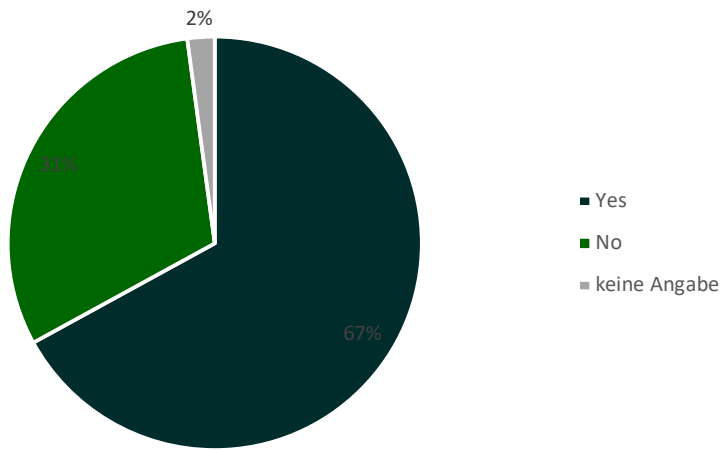
**Do you feel like, as a student of refugee or international background, your concerns during your studies are different from those of fellow students born and raised in the country?**



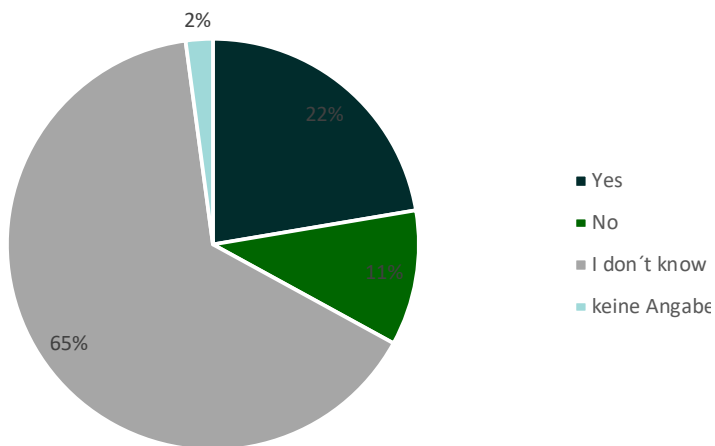


Social activities & interactions

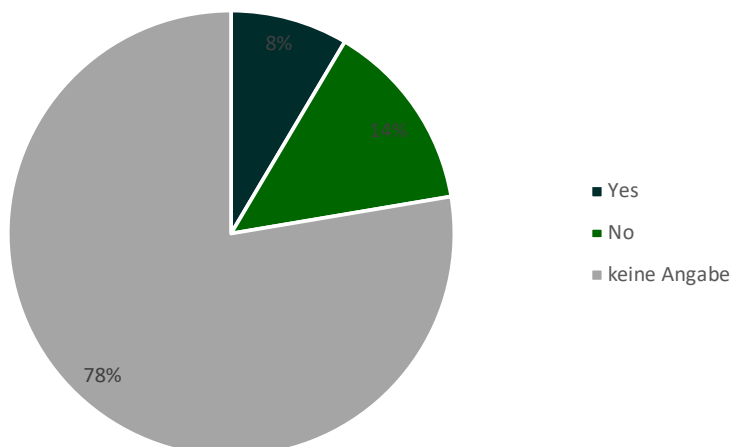
Are you aware of social and/or other events at your university?



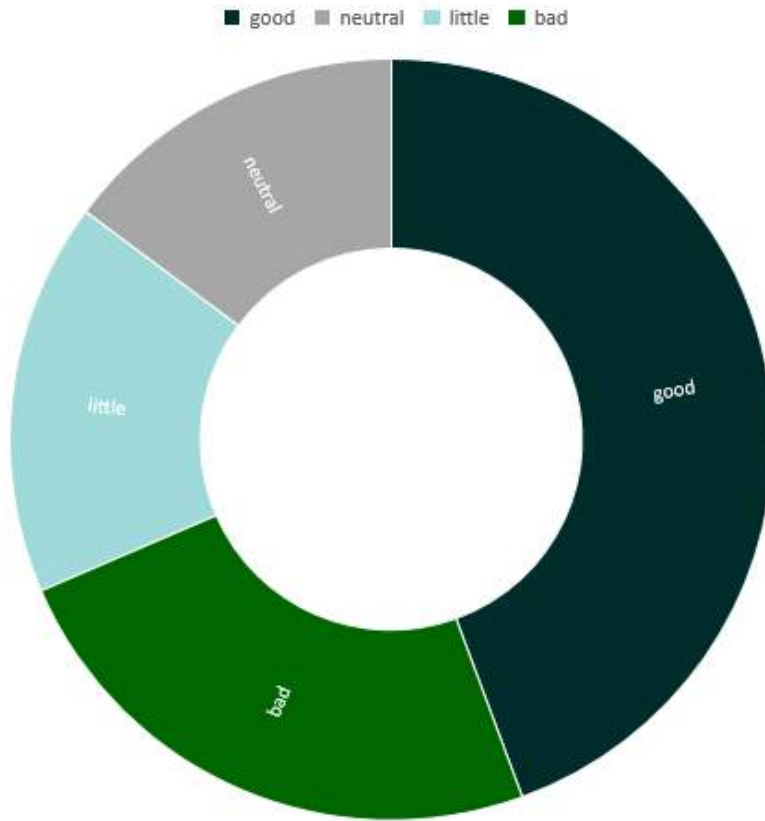
Does your university have a good Buddy system in place?



Are you taking part in the Buddy system?



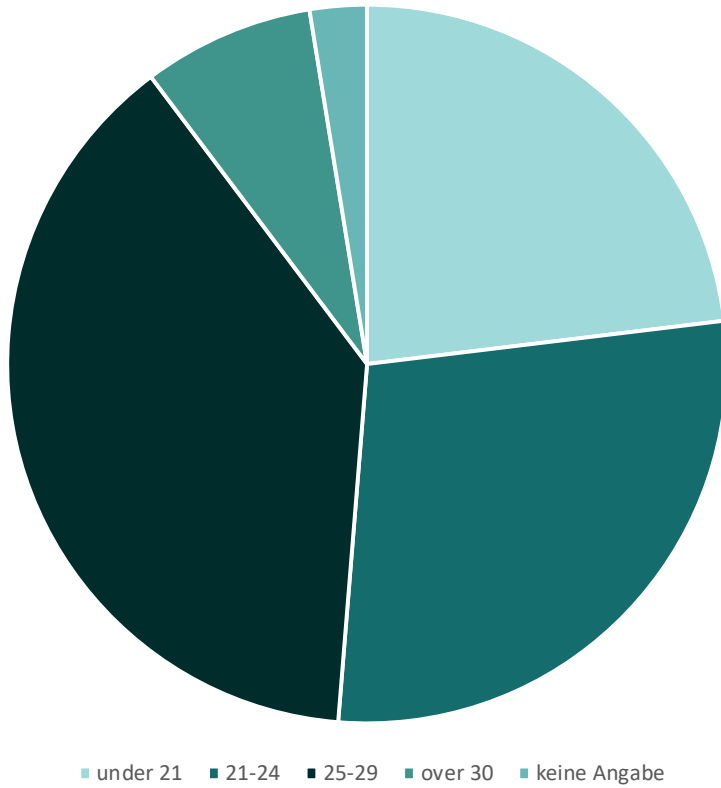
## How would you describe your interactions with fellow students:



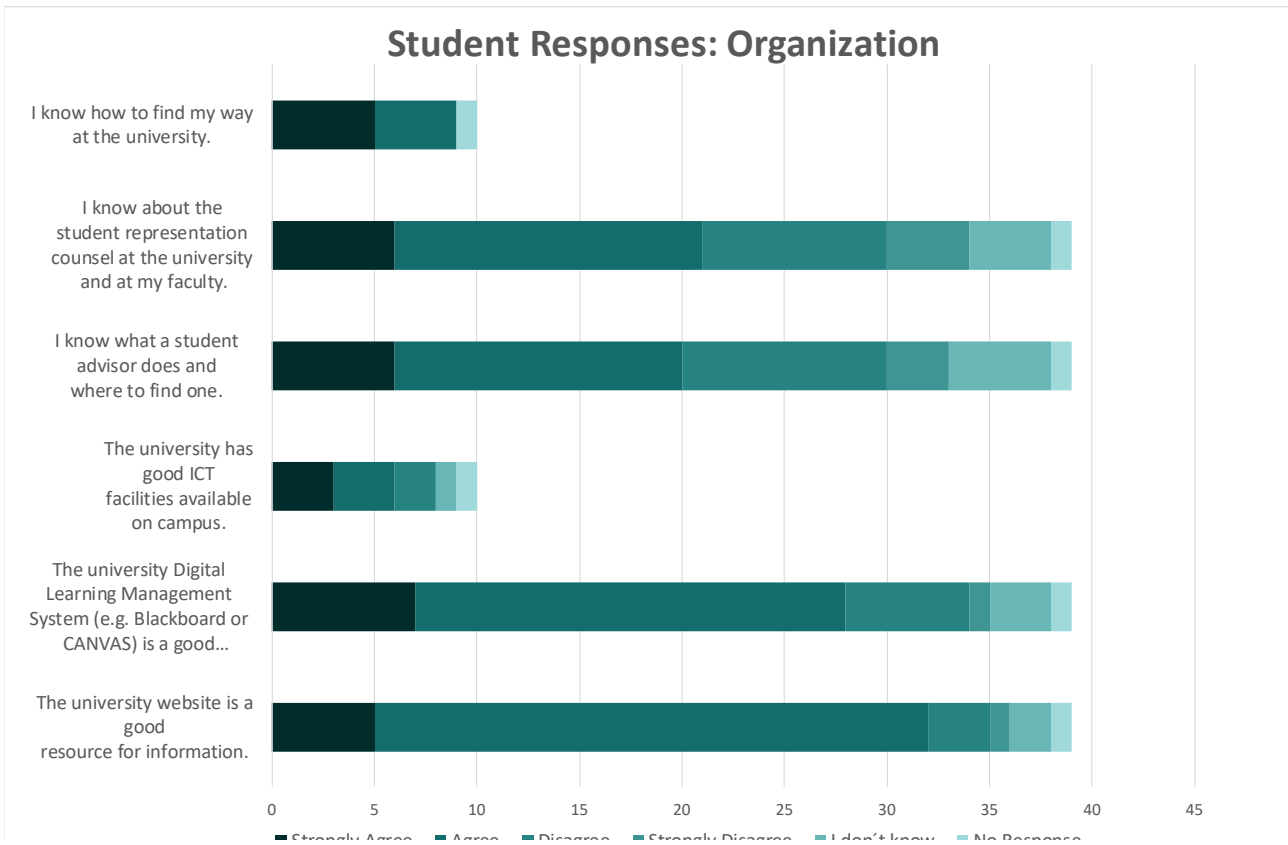
Local Students

General information:

Respondents' Age groups

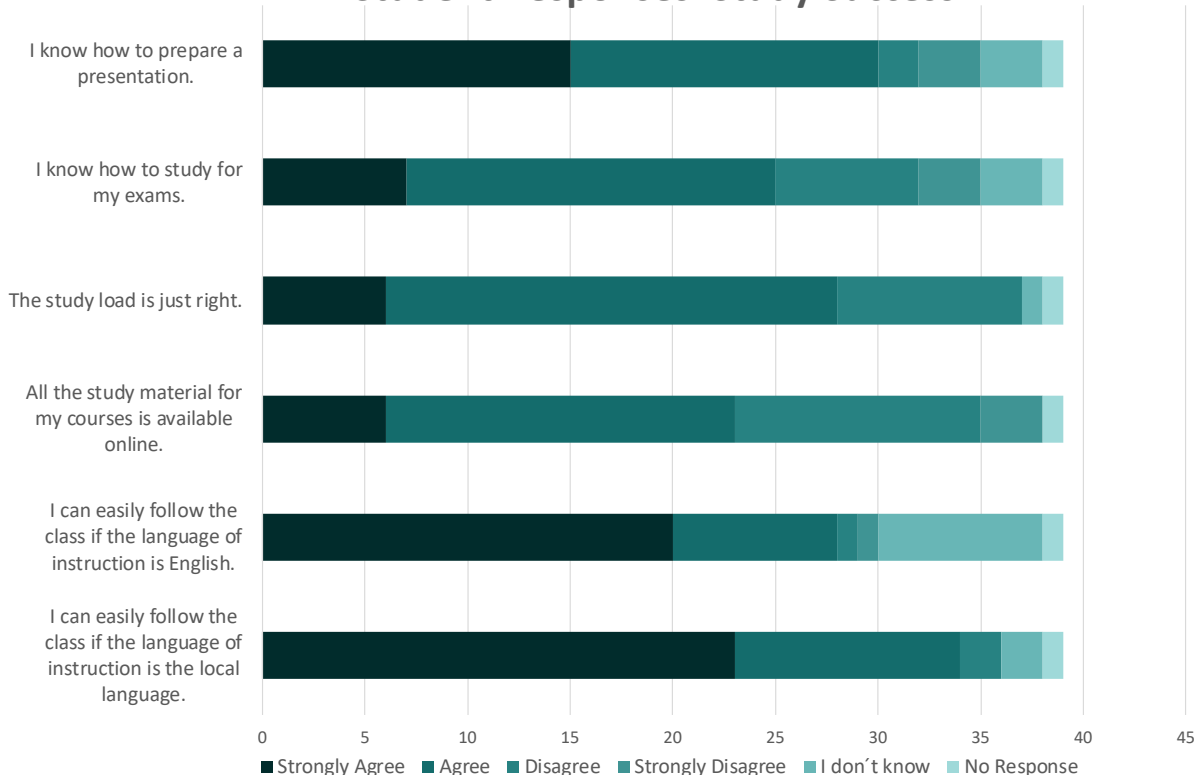


Organization:



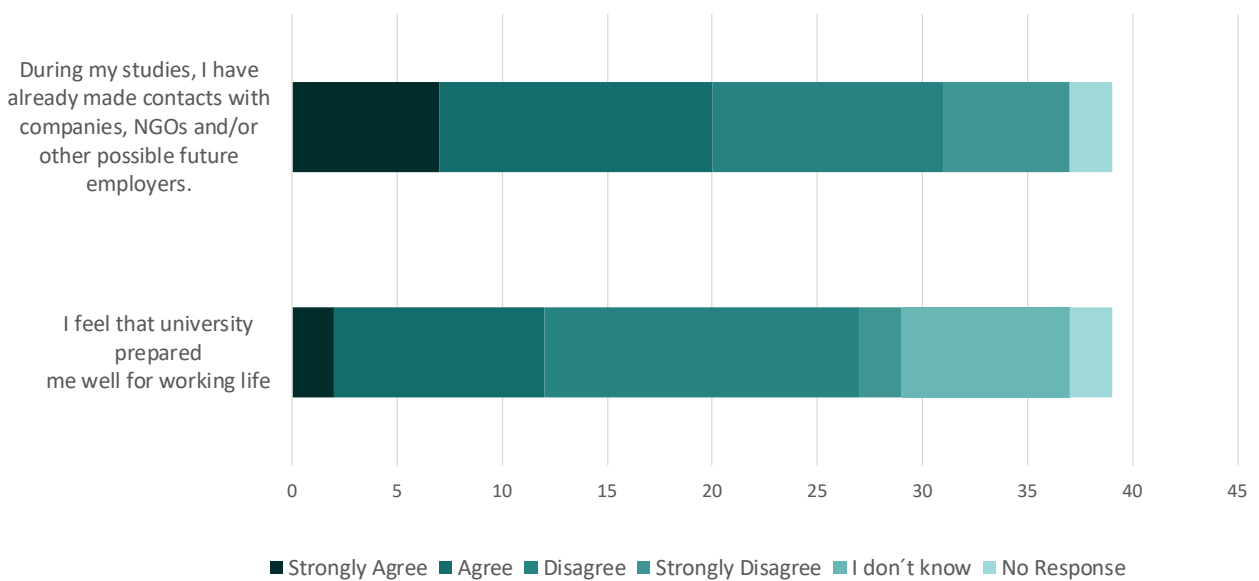
**Study Success:**

**Student Responses: Study Success**

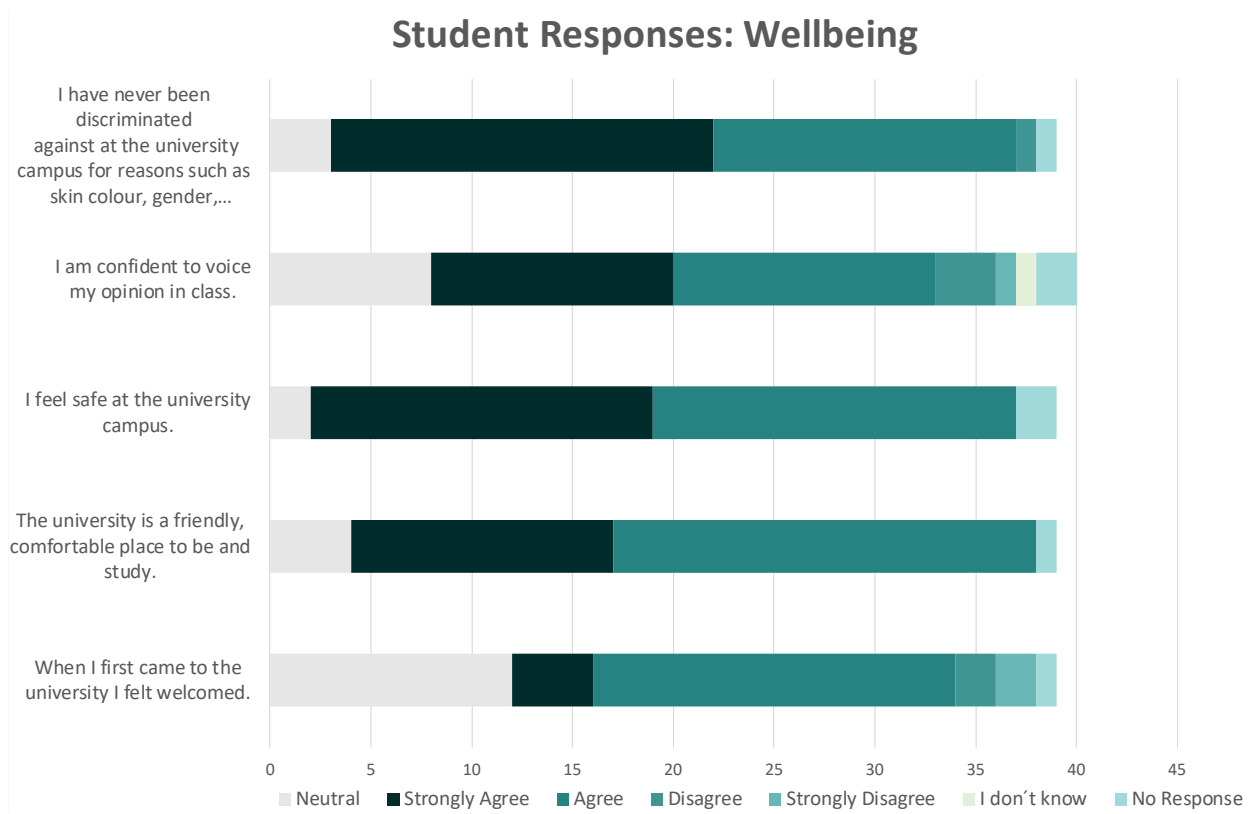


**Working Life:**

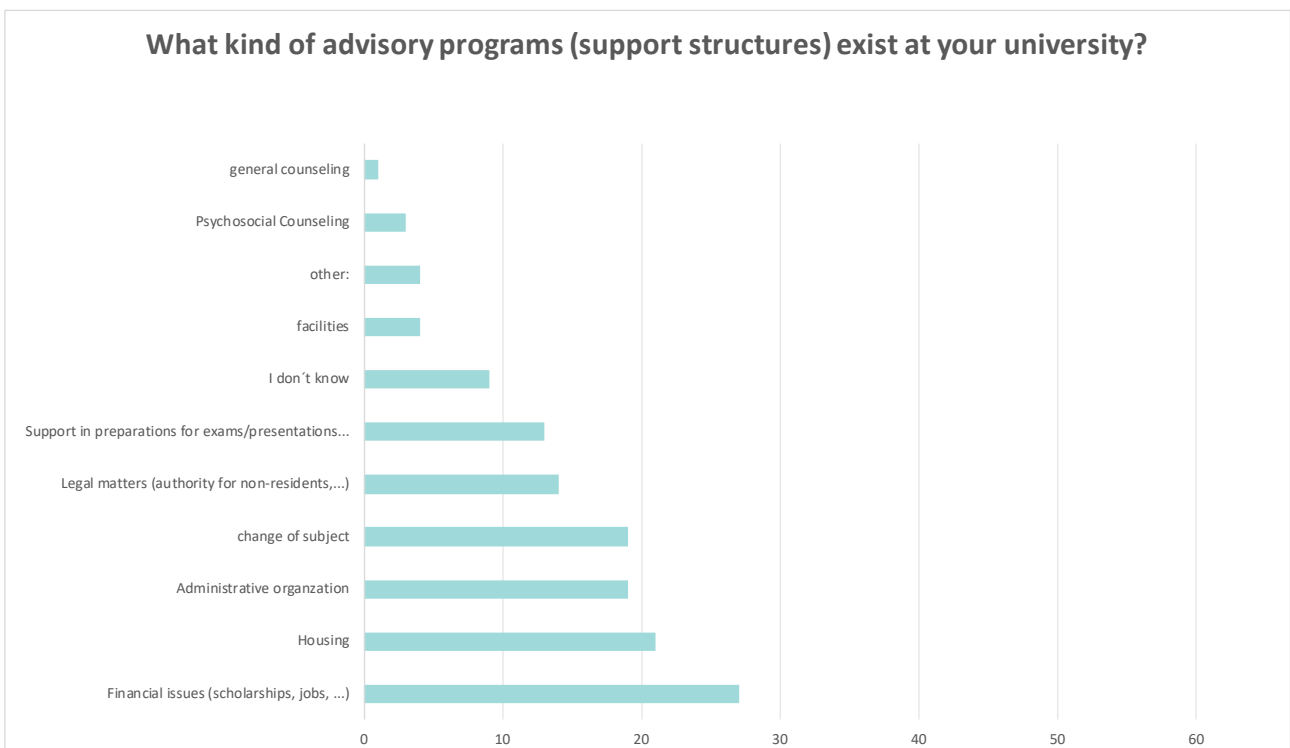
**Student Responses: Working life**

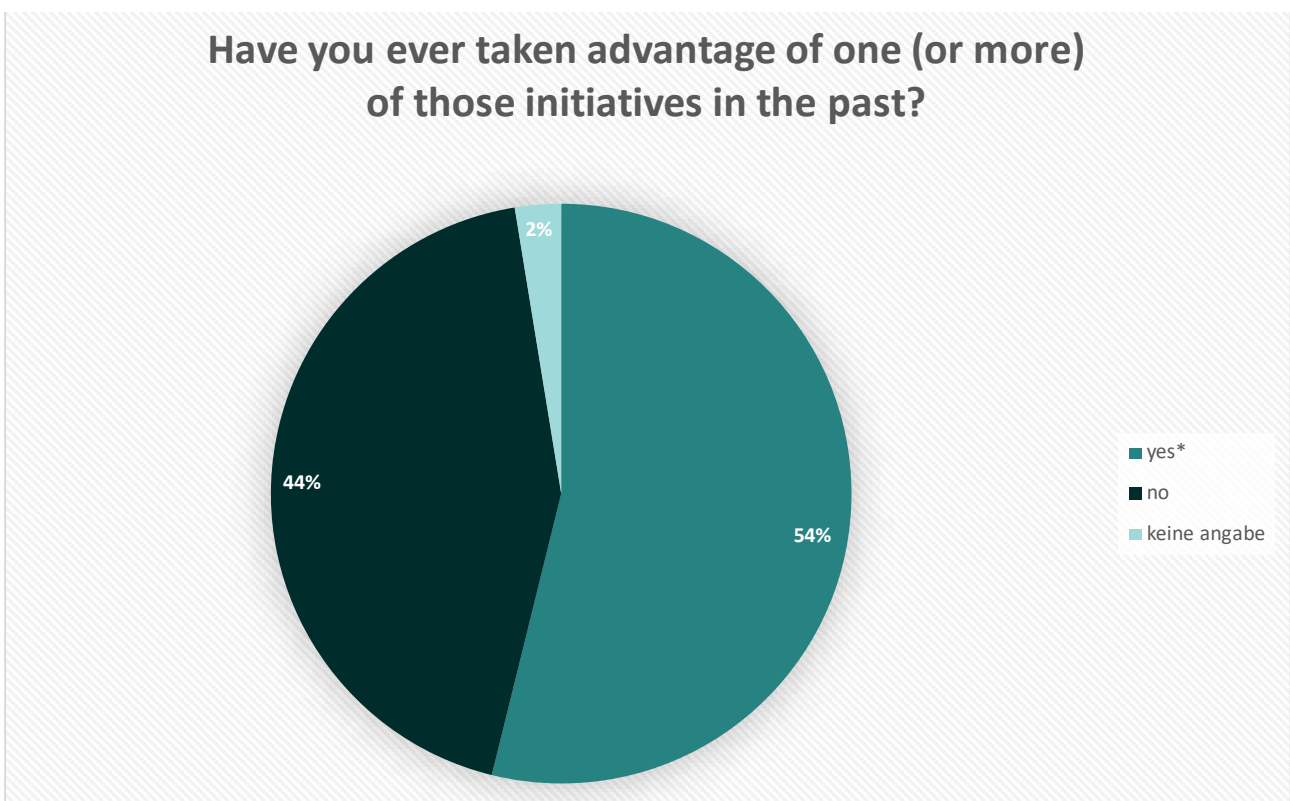
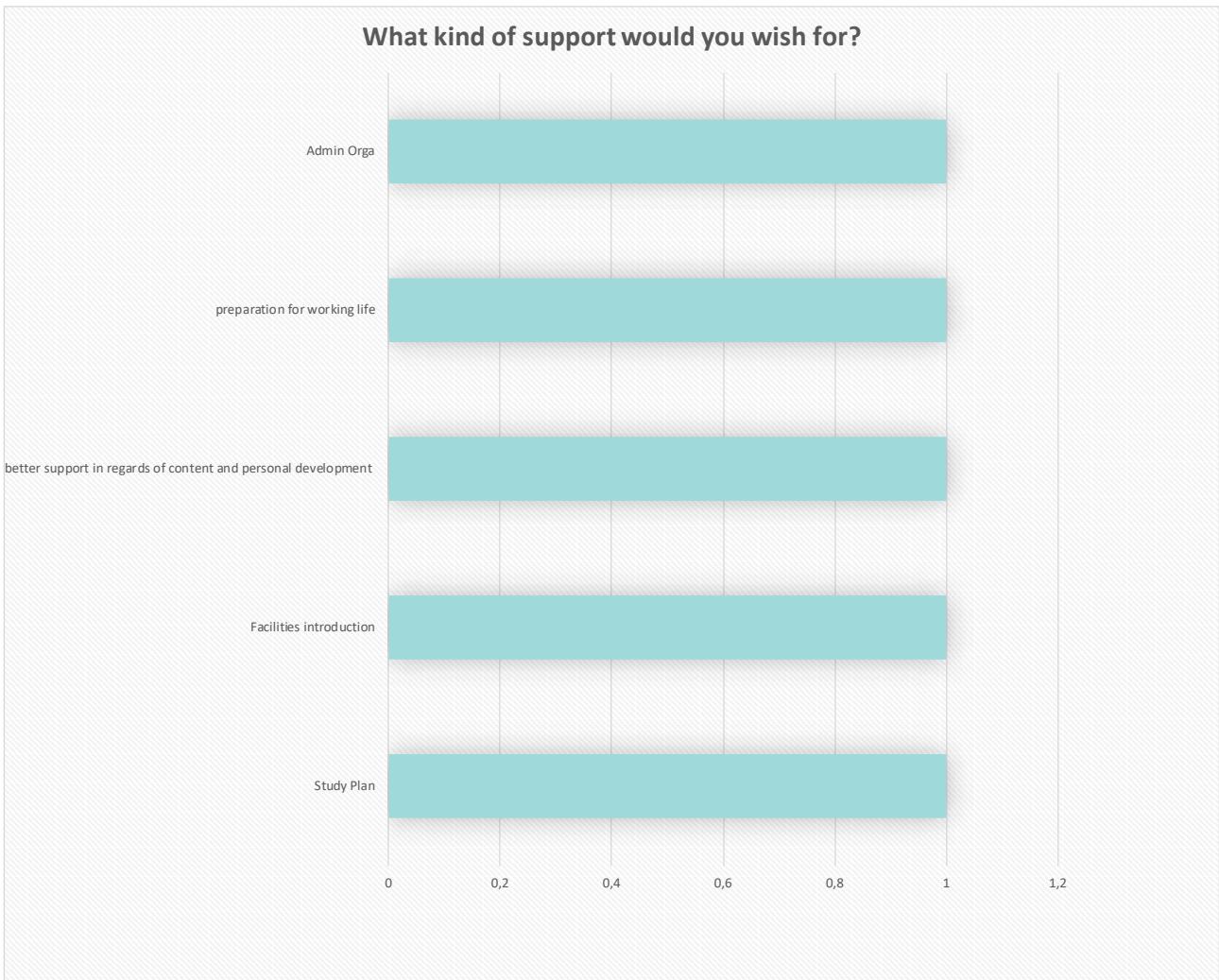


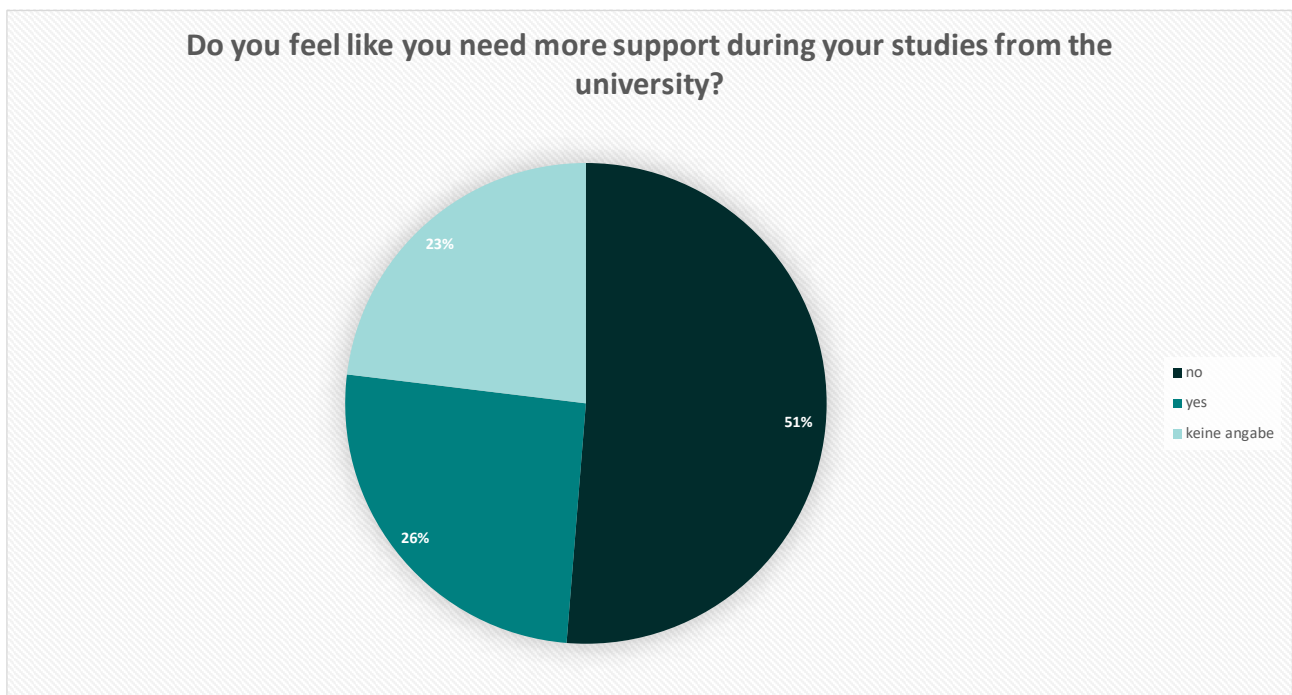
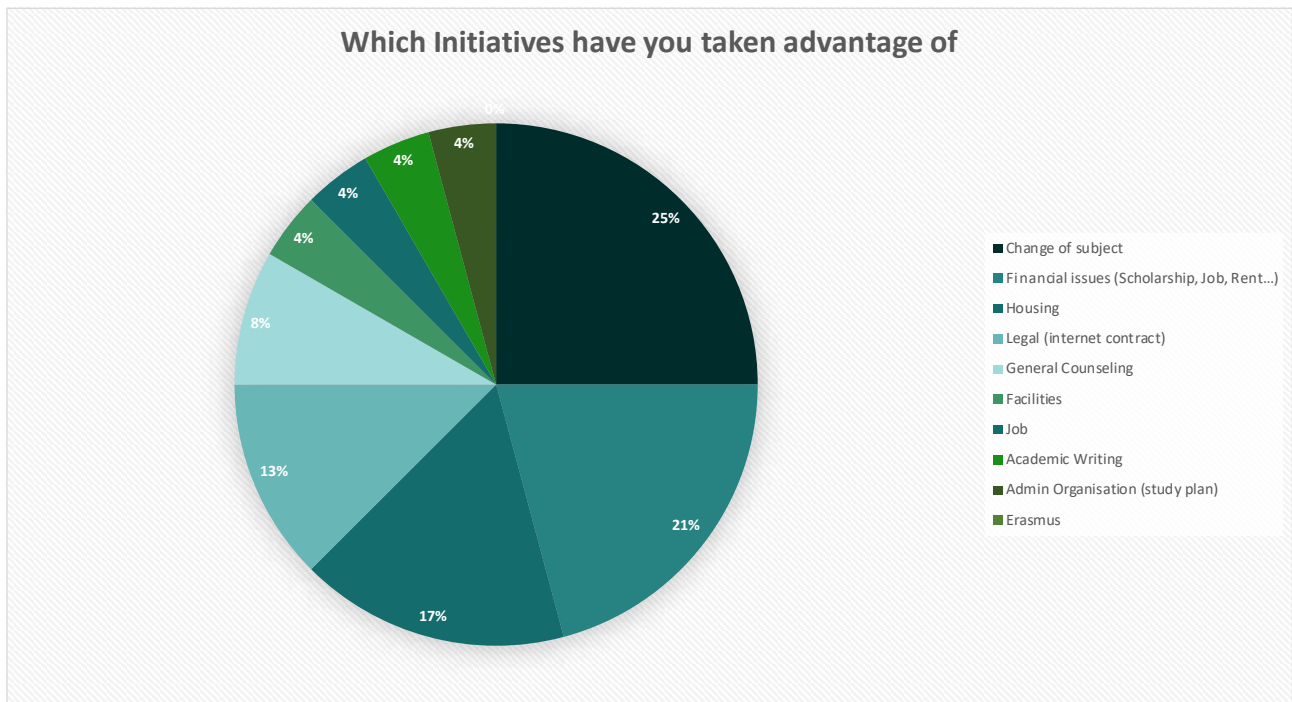
Wellbeing:



Support Structures:

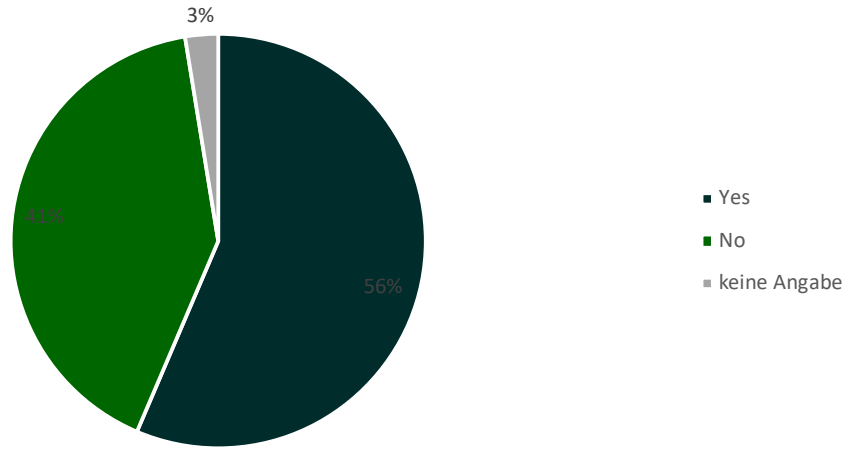




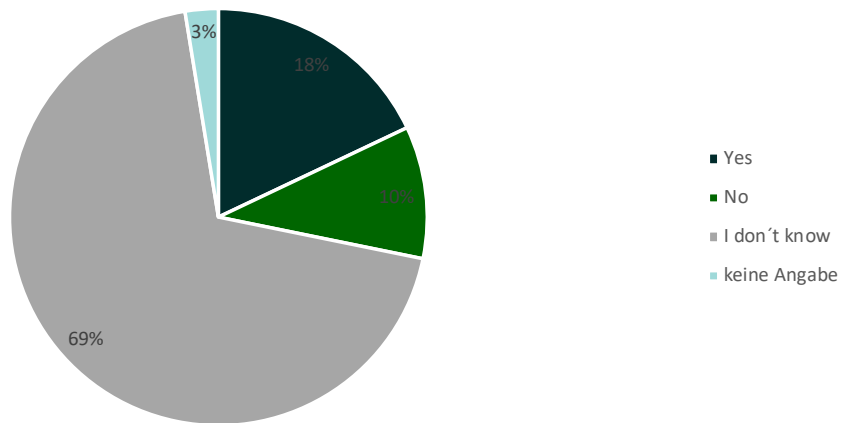


Social activities & interaction

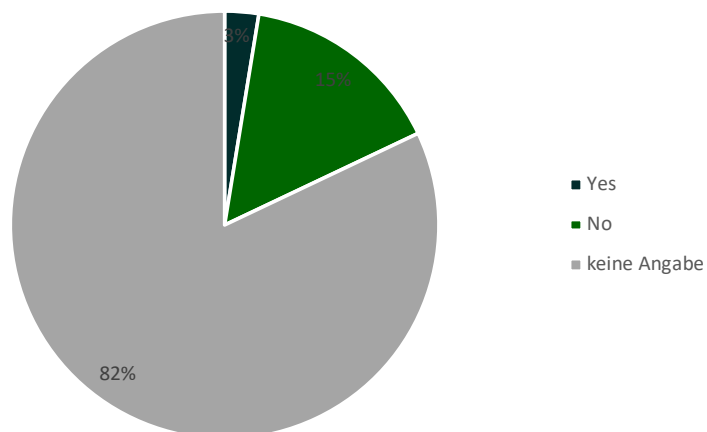
Are you aware of social and/or other events at your university?



Does your university have a good Buddy system in place?

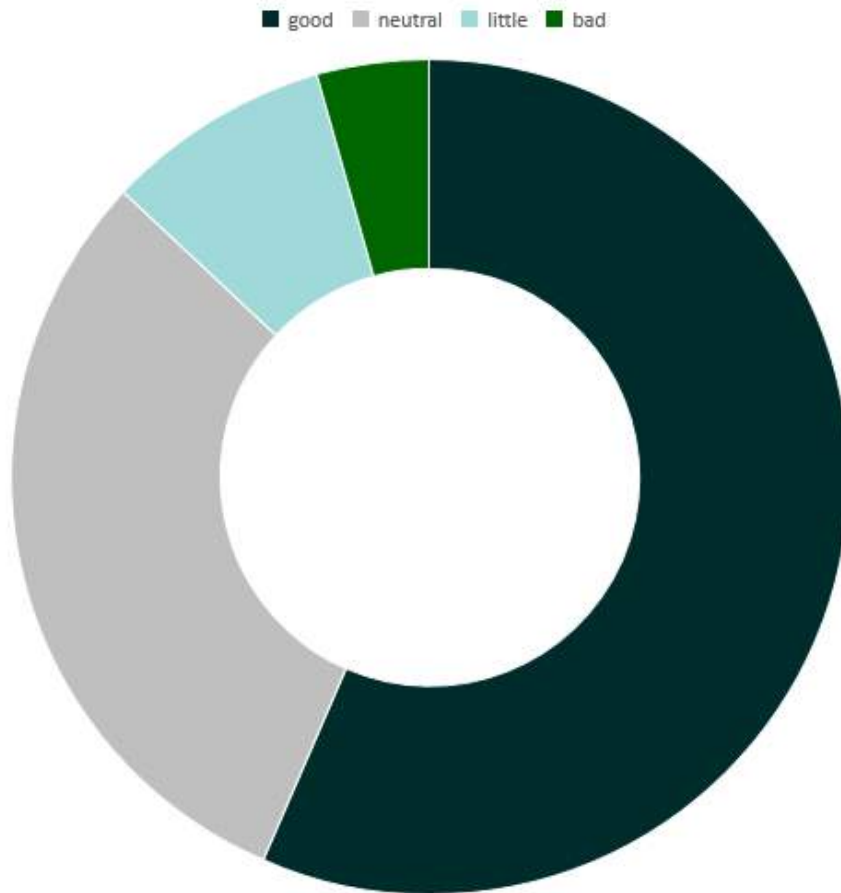


Are you taking part in the Buddy system?





### How would you describe your interactions with fellow students:



# INITIATIVES PROFILE

## KEYWORDS

In this section, we are naming some examples of programs around Europe, including preparatory programs. Although, no university has found the perfect way to design a program, to do our best, we can nonetheless seek inspiration from already existing programs, which are for sure not necessarily yet perfect, but on the right track.

- MORE  
<https://www.wu.ac.at/en/the-university/about-wu/more-programm/>
- Let's Work Together  
<https://letsworktogetherdu.wordpress.com/>
- VINCE  
<http://vince.eucen.eu/>
- S.U.C.RE.: Supporting University Community pathways for REfugees-migrants  
<https://eurep.auth.gr>
- OLS for Refugees  
<http://www.unipi.gr/unipi/en/intl-office-home/item/325%20>
- Project P.R.E.S.S.  
<https://www.eap.gr/en/links/cooperations/project-press-provision-of-refugee-education-and-support-scheme>
- OLS Language Support  
<https://www.uv.es/uvweb/philology-translation-communication/en/faculty-philology-translation-communication-1285848125311.html>
- InclUusion  
<https://www.uu.nl/en/education/inclusion>
- VASVU  
[www.vu.nl/vasvu](http://www.vu.nl/vasvu)
- School of Modern Greek Language (SMG) of AUTh  
The teaching staff of the School of Modern Greek Language (SMG) of AUTh provides refugee students with the following material:
  1. Welcome guide for refugees and migrants
  2. Educational support material
 Web Site and Support Materials: <https://opencourses.auth.gr/courses/ZEUS101/>  
 E-book: <https://joom.ag/4KIW>, <https://joom.ag/wCIW>  
**Greek for Refugees**  
 Link e-book: <http://joom.ag/Km2W>  
 Web online learning portal: <https://opencourses.auth.gr/modules/document/?course=ZEUS101>
- Department of European Educational Programs of AUTh  
<https://erasmusplusols.eu/ols4refugees/>  
<https://eurep.auth.gr/el/node/1256>

## SEE ALSO OTHER INITIATIVES AROUND EUROPE:

- Unibo4refugees  
<http://www.unibo.it/en/homepage>
- TaaleNT2  
<https://www.windesheim.nl/werk-en-studie/opleidingen-en-cursussen/educatie/taal-en-vvto-tto/schakeljaar-anderstaligen-taalent2/>
- "UiB seminar for refugees"  
<http://www.uib.no/en/>
- Global Platform for Syrian Students  
[www.up.pt](http://www.up.pt)
- UCM Refugees Welcome Plan  
<https://www.ucm.es/ucmrefugiadas>
- Discovery Semester for Refugees  
<http://www.int.uzh.ch/en/in/refugees.html>
- FFL Intensive programme  
[www.univ-lehavre.fr](http://www.univ-lehavre.fr)
- Accueil des étudiants réfugiés  
<http://www.crous-reims.fr/actualite/les-institutions-universitaires-francaises-sengagent-pour-laccueil-des-refugies-2/>
- Central Coordination for Refugee Integration  
<https://www.tu-darmstadt.de/international/refugees/index.en.jsp>
- Study Preparatory Courses for Refugees  
<https://www.portal.uni-koeln.de/academicrefugeesupport.html?&L=1>
- Auditor Programme for Refugees  
<https://www.uni-jena.de/en/refugees.html>
- Uni für Alle e.V.  
<https://unifueralle.jimdo.com/>
- InHere  
<https://www.inhereproject.eu/universities/paris-1-pantheon-sorbonne-fr>
- UCL-Réfujiés  
<https://uclouvain.be/fr/decouvrir/soutien-aux-refugies.html>

# ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Kuh, G.D., et. Al. (2006). What Matters to Student Success: A Review of the Literature. Commissioned Report for the National Symposium on Postsecondary Student Success: Spearheading a Dialog on Student Success. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.
- <sup>2</sup> Kuh, G.D., et. Al. (2007). Piecing Together the Student Success Puzzle. Research, Propositions and Recommendations. ASHE Higher Education Report, Volume 32 Number 5
- <sup>3</sup> i.e. at the University of Cologne at the faculties, see for example [https://verwaltung.uni-koeln.de/abteilung21/content/service/termine/anmeldung/workshop\\_ii\\_zeit\\_und\\_lernmanagement/index\\_ger.html](https://verwaltung.uni-koeln.de/abteilung21/content/service/termine/anmeldung/workshop_ii_zeit_und_lernmanagement/index_ger.html)
- <sup>4</sup> [https://www.daad.de/medien/der-daad/analysen-studien/eng\\_blickpunkt-studienerefolg\\_und\\_studienabbruch\\_bei\\_bildungsausl%C3%A4ndern.pdf](https://www.daad.de/medien/der-daad/analysen-studien/eng_blickpunkt-studienerefolg_und_studienabbruch_bei_bildungsausl%C3%A4ndern.pdf)  
see also [https://www.dzhw.eu/pdf/pub\\_fh/fh-201404.pdf](https://www.dzhw.eu/pdf/pub_fh/fh-201404.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> Kercher, J.(2018, July). Academic success and dropout among international students in Germany and other major host countries. DAAD Blickpunkt. Retrieved from [https://www.daad.de/medien/der-daad/analysen-studien/eng\\_blickpunkt-studienerefolg\\_und\\_studienabbruch\\_bei\\_bildungsausl%C3%A4ndern.pdf](https://www.daad.de/medien/der-daad/analysen-studien/eng_blickpunkt-studienerefolg_und_studienabbruch_bei_bildungsausl%C3%A4ndern.pdf), p.9f
- <sup>6</sup> Difficulties with both colloquial and academic German. 2. Cultural distance between own and Germany's learning culture. 3. Cost of living in Germany and lack of financial assistance 4. Social isolation, instances of exclusion or discrimination 5. Uncertainty when dealing with authorities, fear of having to leave Germany before course ends, see Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration (2017). Allein durch den Hochschulschunzel. Hürden zum Studienerfolg für internationale Studierende und Studierende mit Migrationshintergrund. Retrieved from: [https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/SVR\\_FB\\_Hochschulschunzel.pdf](https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/SVR_FB_Hochschulschunzel.pdf), p. 26
- <sup>7</sup> See: Arjona Soberón, M., Reuter, L. & Chibuzor, A. (2017, August). Accessing Higher Education in Europe. Challenge for Refugee Students and Strategies to Overcome Them. University of Cologne. S.U.C.RE. Supporting University Community Pathways for Refugees-Migrants.
- <sup>8</sup> As i.e. Virvou, M. & Tsiriga, V. (2000, July). Involving Effectively Teachers and Students in the Life Cycle of an Intelligent Tutoring System. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, or, Tooley, B. (2016). Transforming Lives, Building Community: Active Engagement in the IIE Consortium Addressing the Crisis in Syria. In: *Supporting Displaced and Refugee Students in Higher Education: Principles and Best Practices* (pp. 41-52). New York: Institute of International Education (IIE), etc.
- <sup>9</sup> See all graphs in the Appendix
- <sup>10</sup> See all graphs in the Appendix
- <sup>11</sup> See for example Bless, J. (1973). Integrating Faculty and Student Life Cycles. *Review of Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 4
- <sup>12</sup> Which were the main focus of the previous publication on IO1, see Arjona Soberón & Reuter & Chibuzor 2017
- <sup>13</sup> Bean, J. P., & Eaton, S. (2000). A Psychological Model of College Student Retention. In: *Reworking the Departure Puzzle: New Theory and Research on College Student Retention*. Nashville, University of Vanderbilt Press
- <sup>14</sup> Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights From Twenty-Years of Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers
- <sup>15</sup> Kuh, G.D., et. Al. (2006).
- <sup>16</sup> Kuh 2006
- <sup>17</sup> Kuh 2007
- <sup>18</sup> Arjona Soberón & Reuter & Chibuzor 2017
- <sup>19</sup> Pescosolido, B. A. (1994). Bringing Durkheim Into the Twenty-First Century: A Network Approach to Unresolved Issues in the Sociology of Suicide. In *Emile Durkheim Le Suicide: One Hundred Years Later*, pp. 264-295. Philadelphia. The Charles Press
- <sup>20</sup> Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass., p. 602
- <sup>21</sup> Online survey results
- <sup>22</sup> Online survey results
- <sup>23</sup> Kuh 2007
- <sup>24</sup> Based on suggestions during online surveys and interviews
- <sup>25</sup> Kuh 2007
- <sup>26</sup> Defined as the cognitive behavioural competence and general positive youth development by Yu, Lu, see Yu, Lu, et. Al. (2018, January). The Influence of Personal Well-Being on Learning Achievement in University Students Over Time: Mediating or Moderating Effects of Internal and External University Engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5767243/>
- <sup>27</sup> Kuh 2007
- <sup>28</sup> Kuh 2007
- <sup>29</sup> Based on suggestions during online surveys and interviews
- <sup>30</sup> Defined as the internal (academic challenge / Learning with peers) and external experience with faculty and campus environment by Yu, see Lu, et. Al 2018
- <sup>31</sup> Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (Eds.). (1987). *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*. AAHE Bulletin, March
- <sup>32</sup> Pascarella and Terenzini 2005
- <sup>33</sup> „Tinto postulates that students first must separate from the group with which they were formerly associated, such as family members and high school peers, undergo a period of transition “during which the person begins to interact in new ways with the members of the new group into which membership is sought” (Tinto 1993, p. 93), and incorporate or adopt the normative values and behaviors of the new group, or college. For Tinto, students who leave college are those who are unable to effectively distance themselves from their family or community of origin and adopt the values and the behavioral patterns that typify the environment of the institution they are attending.“, see Kuh 2007. Although there is a controversial discussion about how to best operationalize various components of the Tinto model, most agree that for students to succeed in college, they must learn to negotiate foreign environments and interact effectively with strangers.
- <sup>34</sup> Kuh 2007
- <sup>35</sup> Walton, G. & Cohen, G. (2011, March 11). A Brief Social-Belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students. *Science* Vol. 331, Issue 6023, pp.1447-1451. DOI: 10.1126/science.1198364. Retrieved from: <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/331/6023/1447>
- <sup>36</sup> <https://www.unibo.it/en/services-and-opportunities/study-grants-and-subsidies/exemptions-and-incentives/unibo-for-refugees>

- 37 [https://www.kstw.de/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=361&Itemid=195&lang=de](https://www.kstw.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=361&Itemid=195&lang=de)
- 38 Kuh 2006
- 39 Tuition is free of charge, but students pay around 200 Euro/semester for the student ticket, which includes transportation, subsidies for the student political representatives, and support structures, see [https://uccard.uni-koeln.de/semesterticket/index\\_ger.html](https://uccard.uni-koeln.de/semesterticket/index_ger.html)
- 40 See <https://www.educations.com/study-guides/europe/study-in-italy/tuition-fees-6662>, see also <https://www.mastersportal.com/articles/405/tuition-fees-at-universities-in-europe-in-2018-overview-and-comparison.html>
- 41 Kuh 2006
- 42 Kuh 2006
- 43 Phone interview with university member of the University of Vienna
- 44 Kuh 2007
- 45 See <https://www.chronicle.com/article/International-Students-Are-at/66051>, see also Kuh 2007
- 46 Arjona Soberón & Reuter & Chibuzor 2017
- 47 Online survey results
- 48 Based on suggestions during online surveys and interviews
- 49 Kuh 2006
- 50 BAföG is Germany's Federal Training Assistance Act for students at secondary schools and universities in Germany. More than 24% of all students in Germany receive financial support via BAföG, see [http://www.kstw.de/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=361&Itemid=195https://www.portal.uni-koeln.de/fluechtlingsfonds.html](http://www.kstw.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=361&Itemid=195https://www.portal.uni-koeln.de/fluechtlingsfonds.html)
- 51 See [https://www.kstw.de/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=361&Itemid=195&lang=de](https://www.kstw.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=361&Itemid=195&lang=de)
- 52 See <https://www.portal.uni-koeln.de/fluechtlingsfonds.html>
- 53 See <https://integreat-app.de/en/>
- 54 See <https://www.unibo.it/en/services-and-opportunities/study-grants-and-subsidies/exemptions-and-incentives/unibo-for-refugees>
- 55 See <https://www.uaf.nl/home/english>
- 56 See <https://www.uni-duesseldorf.de/home/internationales/internationale-studierende-und-studieninteressierte/uni2job-karriere-in-deutschland.html>
- 57 See Arjona Soberón & Reuter & Chibuzor 2017
- 58 Kuh 2006
- 59 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dD17E6FF5jQ>
- 60 <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/uni-dozentin-natasha-a-kelly-rassismus-betrifft-alle-faecher/20255456.html>
- 61 <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/german-schools-quiet-deep-discrimination-problem>, consulted October 29, 2018
- 62 Kuh 2006
- 63 Nora, A., & Cabrera, A. F. (1996). The Role of Perceptions in Prejudice and Discrimination and the Adjustment of Minority Students to College. *Journal of Higher Education*
- 64 Online survey
- 65 Based on suggestions during online surveys and interviews
- 66 <https://www.uu.nl/en/education/inclusion/why-inclusion>
- 67 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xz-1PFoVsG8>
- 68 Rosenbaum, J. (1998, October). Unrealistic Plans and Misdirected Efforts: Are Community Colleges Getting the Right Message to High School Students? Community College Research Center Occasional Paper. New York Columbia University, Community College Research Center
- 69 Paper. New York Columbia University, Community College Research Center
- 70 <http://www.haaga-helia.fi/en/students-guide/welcome-haaga-helia/study-skills-and-learning-how-succeed-your-studies>, consulted October 29, 2018
- 71 Lindblom-Ylänne et. Al. (2003). On Study Skills and Learning. How to Succeed in Your Studies. Haaga-Helia University. Retrieved from <http://www.haaga-helia.fi/en/students-guide/welcome-haaga-helia/study-skills-and-learning-how-succeed-your-studies>
- 72 Kuh 2006
- 73 Kuh 2006
- 74 Pascarella and Terenzini 2005
- 75 Based on suggestions during online surveys and interviews
- 76 Kuh 2006
- 77 Kuh 2006
- 78 Kuh 2006
- 79 Kuh 2006
- 80 See <https://www.auth.gr/en/units/8165>
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