

Initiatives for Refugees

As part of the International Society of the Performing Arts (ISPA) Congress Leeuwarden-Friesland taking place in June 2018, a panel will discuss the fate and integration of refugee artists. This short paper, written for the ISPA Congress, aims to present a general background on the current global refugee situation and to present a brief overview of existing initiatives helping refugee students, scientists, and artists.

Who are refugees?

Refugees are people who have fled their country of origin because of feared persecution, conflict, violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order, and who, as a result, require ‘international protection’. They are protected under international law, and the legal definition of a refugee can be found in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. According to Article 1(2), a refugee is a person “...*who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.*”¹ Refugees have the right to ask asylum in a different State, which is stipulated in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.² Countries must give refugees the chance to ask for asylum, and have to abide by the obligation of non-refoulement: a refugee cannot be sent back to his country of origin, since this could have deadly consequences.³

Some key numbers on refugee migration

The UNHCR keeps detailed data on the global situation of refugees. As can be seen in the first table on the next page, there were 65.6 million displaced people in 2017, amongst whom 22.5 million refugees and over 40 million internally displaced persons.⁴ The two other figures also show that the majority of the world’s refugees come from Syria, South Sudan, and Afghanistan, and are received in the neighbouring countries: Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey for Syria; Uganda and Ethiopia for South Sudan; and Pakistan and Iran for Afghanistan.⁵ Armed conflicts are still ongoing in many of the source countries of refugees, which impedes them from returning safely.

¹ United Nations General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, UN Treaty Series vol. 189, p. 137, Article 1(2).

² United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, Resolution 217 A (III), Article 14.

³ *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Article 33.

⁴ Figure taken from: UNHCR, “Figures at a glance,” 19 June 2017, accessed at: www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html.

⁵ Figures taken from: UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016,” 19 June 2017, p. 15-17.

Figure 5 | Major source countries of refugees

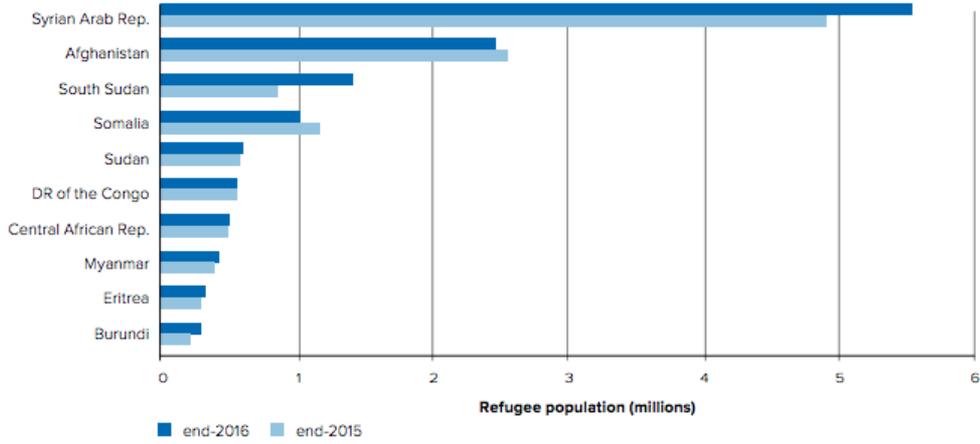
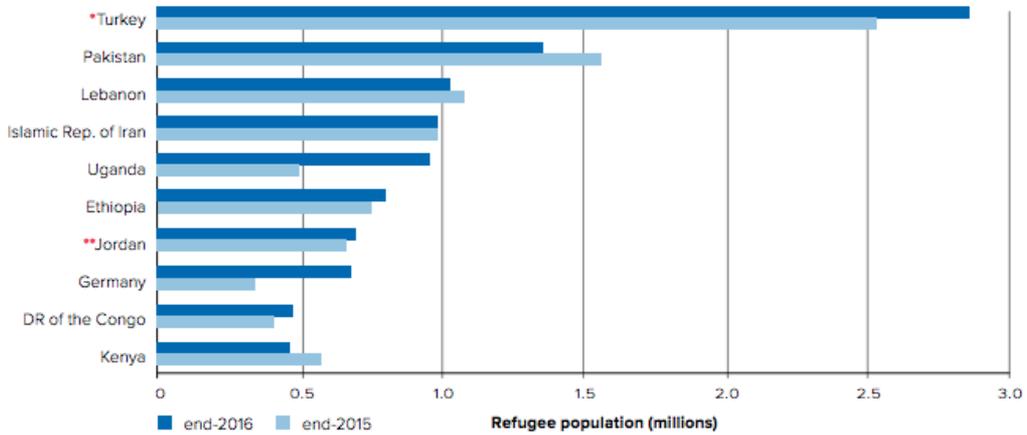
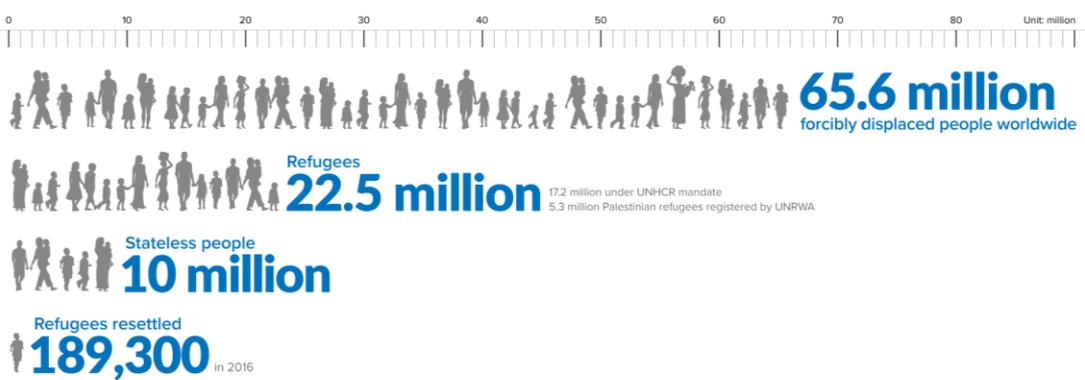


Figure 4 | Major refugee-hosting countries

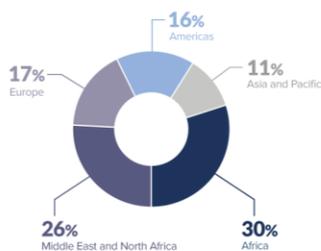


* Refugee figure for Syrians in Turkey was a Government estimate.

** Includes 33,100 Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR in Jordan. The Government estimated the number of Iraqis at 400,000 individuals at the end of March 2015. This includes refugees and other categories of Iraqis.



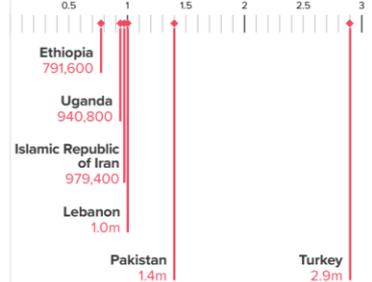
Where the world's displaced people are being hosted



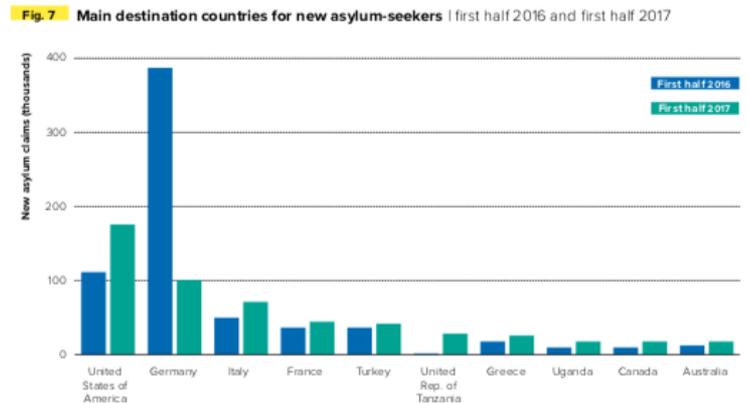
55% of refugees worldwide came from three countries



Top hosting countries



In the past years, new asylum-seekers have primarily lodged their claims in the United States and Germany.⁶ The US receives many applications from nationals of Central and South American countries, and Germany has received many from Syrians, subsequent to Angela Merkel's 2015 declaration that she would not apply the Dublin regulation that obliges asylum seekers to lodge their claim in the first Member State of the European Union that they arrive in.



Refugees and education

Of the 22.5 million refugees who fall under the UNHCR's mandate, half of them are under the age of 18. Even though education is a right documented in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁷ it has proven more challenging to turn this right into a reality. The UNHCR reports that while 91% of children worldwide attend primary school, only 61% of refugee children are enrolled in primary education, and that number drops even lower to 50% in low-income countries.⁸ At the secondary education stage, 84% of adolescents are enrolled globally, compared to a mere 23% of their refugee counterparts.⁹ Furthermore, in low-income countries, who host nearly a third of the world's refugees, only 9% of the refugee children attend secondary school.¹⁰ Lastly, refugees are barely present in tertiary education; whereas global enrolment is 36%, only 1% of refugees continue to pursue their studies in higher education.¹¹ Since tertiary education can be regarded as a gateway to employment and positions of power to influence global policy, the absence of refugees does not bode well for their future.

What are the most common misconceptions about refugees?

The terms 'refugee', 'migrant', 'displaced person', and 'asylum seeker' are often conflated in public discussions and in the media. This has been especially common with the terms 'refugee crisis' and 'migration crisis'. Refugees cannot return to their country of origin safely and enjoy special protection under international law.

The broader term migration designates a voluntary process, describing a person who has crossed an international border and resides outside of his or her country of origin. Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for one year or more. Examples of migrants: people who search for better economic opportunities in a different country, students who pursue higher education abroad.

⁶ Figure taken from: UNHCR, "Mid-Year Trends 2017," 9 March 2018, p. 16.

⁷ United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, Resolution 217 A (III), Article 26.

⁸ UNHCR, "Left Behind: Refugee Education in Crisis," 2016, p. 5.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

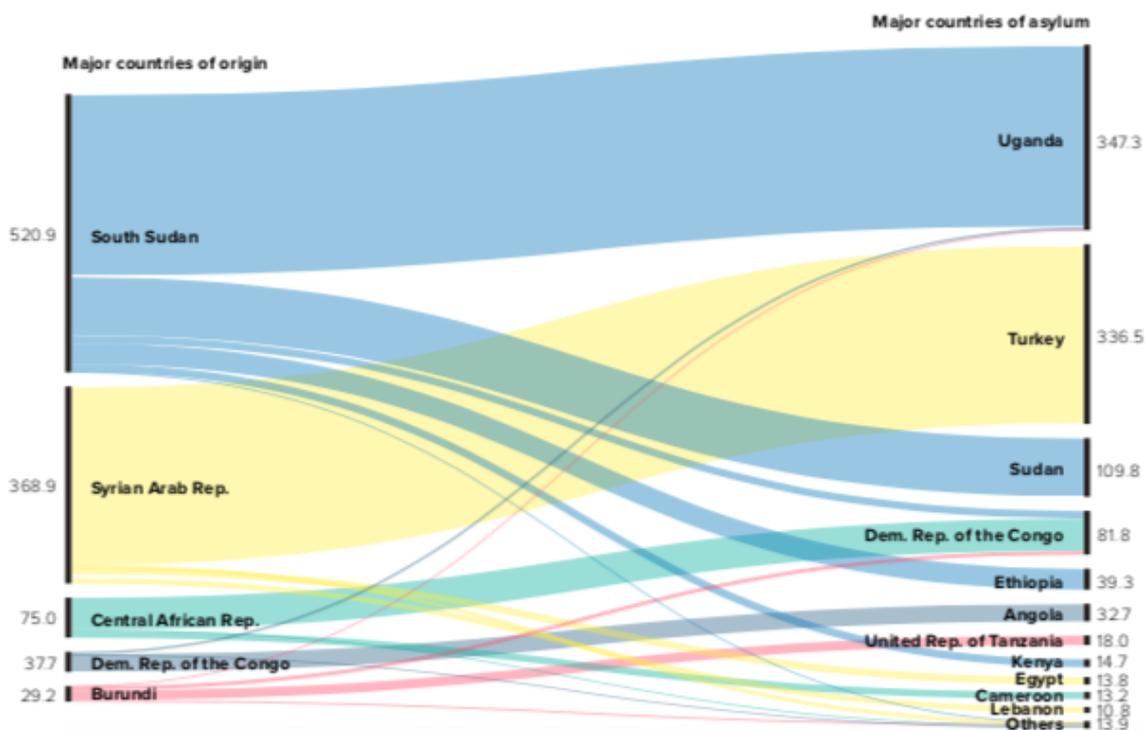
A distinction is also made between refugees, who cross international borders to seek protection, and internally displaced persons, who are displaced from their place of residence but remain in their country of origin.

An asylum seeker is a person who is going through the legal process of obtaining international protection. The result of this process can be refugee status, if the person fulfils the conditions of the 1951 Refugee Convention, or a different status such as subsidiary protection, if the person does not fulfil the particular conditions of the Refugee Convention but is still in need of protection (e.g. a Syrian civilian who does not fear persecution based on his or her political opinion, religion, race, nationality, or membership of a social group, but does fear for his or her life as a result of living in a territory where an armed conflict is present).

Another misconception is that Western countries bear the brunt of refugee migration. The opposite is true. As can be seen in the figure, the majority of refugees seek shelter in neighbouring countries in the developing world.¹²

Fig. 4 Major Refugee Influxes during first half of 2017
(No. of refugees in thousands)

More than 1.1 million people fled their homes to another country during the first half of 2017, the overwhelming majority of whom sought protection in neighbouring countries or elsewhere in their immediate region



¹² Figure taken from: UNHCR, “Mid-Year Trends 2017,” 9 March 2018, p. 12.

Initiatives for refugee students, scientists, and artists

This part of the research contains a study of existing initiatives that aim to help refugees. It includes initiatives targeting students, scholars and scientists, as well as artists, in a variety of countries. The results have been obtained through desk research and an informal survey launched within the cultural field on social media. However, due to the current absence of a comprehensive overview of existing initiatives helping refugees, and in particular the group of refugee artists, the following study must be considered as a non-exhaustive scan of the situation.

In order to accompany the growing numbers of refugees, several initiatives have been launched across different countries.

France

In France, the programme “PAUSE” (Programme national d’Aide à l’accueil en Urgence des Scientifiques en Exil) was set up in 2017. The government uses financial incentives to encourage leading higher education institutions and research centres to assist exiled scientists in their integration and to continue their professional activities.¹³

Furthermore, in the summer of 2017, an atelier for exiled artists was opened in the 18th arrondissement of Paris, providing a structure that accompanies artists in pursuing their professional objectives while simultaneously aiding them with regard to housing and integration. The French Ministry of Culture supports this initiative, and the fate of exiled artists, in several ways. It provides funding to support the structure, and gives artists the opportunity to display their work in the Palais Royal.¹⁴ The Ministry also funds the Nora Artist-in-residence programme from the Réseau européen des Centres culturels de rencontre, which since 2016 has received artists, researchers, and culture professionals from the Near and Middle East and from Africa who have received a refugee status in France. According to the programme, the goal is to develop projects within French Heritage Site Centres for Arts and Creation (Centres culturels de rencontre), with the support of their team, and to gain a practical knowledge of French cultural, artistic and intellectual networks and to build long-term connections and partnerships.¹⁵

Germany

In Germany, several notable initiatives are underway. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation has launched the Philipp Schwartz Initiative, which assists threatened researchers.¹⁶ The programme supports scientists and scholars who seek a safe haven in Germany from war and persecution in their own countries. With the help of the German Federal Foreign Office, the Philipp Schwartz Initiative puts German universities and research institutions in a position to host threatened foreign researchers for two years so that they can continue their work.

¹³ www.college-de-france.fr/site/programme-pause/index.htm

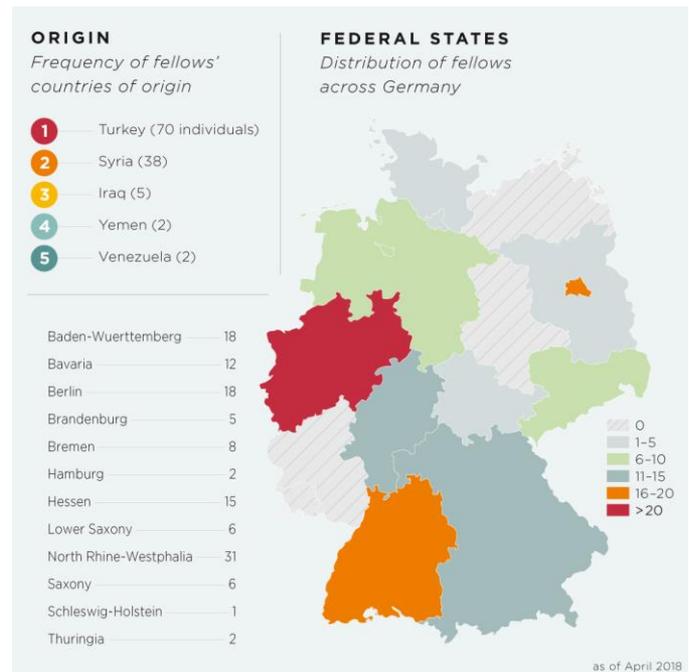
¹⁴ www.lemonde.fr/arts/article/2018/01/31/francoise-nyssen-offre-une-vitrine-aux-artistes-migrants_5249614_1655012.html#BDGSSIIA1QIOWCkf.99

¹⁵ www.accr-europe.org/index.php/latest-news/news-en/nora-artist-in-residence-program-call-for-projects-2018/?lang=en

¹⁶ www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/dossier-philipp-schwartz-initiative-en.html

Following the selection of 24 researchers in summer 2016, the number of new recipients increased to 44 in the second round. In the third round in the summer of 2017, 41 universities were selected to receive funding to enable them to take in 56 Philipp Schwartz Fellows. In comparison with the first call, the fellows' home countries have changed: whilst the majority of fellows in the first selection round came from Syria, most of the fellows in the second and third selection round are Turkish.

The DAAD (the German Academic Exchange Service) aims to support academically qualified refugees and provide them access to higher education in Germany. In collaboration with universities and partner organisations, the DAAD is developing various programmes to promote integration of refugees at German universities.¹⁷



Furthermore, Syrian musicians have a chance to continue their activities through the Syrian Expat Philharmonic Orchestra (SEPO). SEPO is the first official symphony orchestra for Syrian professional musicians who live in the European Union as a "Syrian Exile Orchestra". It was founded in September 2015 by Raed Jazbeh, and its goal is to unite Syrian exiled musicians in order to save Syrian music and perform other classical pieces.¹⁸

United Kingdom

The Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) has been coming to the aid of academics since the Nazi regime started dismissing academics from German universities on racial and political grounds. It assists academics in immediate danger, those in exile, and those who continue to work in their home country despite the dangers associated to it. Furthermore, the Council also supports higher education institutions whose work is at risk.¹⁹

British universities have also launched initiatives to support the academic integration of refugees. For example, the University of Glasgow has partnered with CARA to provide scholarships to and waive fees for asylum seekers. Furthermore, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Sussex, and the University of Warwick also provide scholarships for refugee students.²⁰

The UK has also seen several exciting initiatives focusing on refugees and art in recent years. In late 2017, the Good Chance Theatre put on a production about the

¹⁷ www.daad.de/der-daad/fluechtlinge/en/

¹⁸ www.sepo-philharmonic.com/

¹⁹ www.cara.ngo/what-we-do/

²⁰ www.mastersportal.com/articles/1940/how-are-universities-in-europe-giving-a-hand-to-refugee-students.html

residents of the “Calais Jungle”, casting three professional artists from Iran, Ethiopia, and Sudan who lived in Calais but have since received a refugee status in the UK.²¹ The production will now move to West End in London. Moreover, Refugee Week is a yearly festival, taking place in the week around World Refugee Day (20 June), and presents an opportunity for individuals and organisations to host arts, cultural and educational events that celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK in order to encourage a better understanding between communities.²²

The British Council is an important partner for refugee artists, and regularly offers grants to individuals and organisations to support their initiatives. For example, its ‘Grants for Syrian Artists’ fund has awarded several thousand pounds in grants to Syrian artists living in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, and Iraq in order to raise awareness and solidarity among host populations or foreign audiences regarding the experience of Syrian refugees, to record and preserve Syrian culture and/or the Syrian refugee experience, and to build networks for Syrian artists and refugees. Furthermore, it has also cooperated with other actors to facilitate the ‘Queens of Syria’ production; a theatrical adaptation of Euripides anti-war tragedy, *The Trojan Women*, put on by a cast of female Syrian refugees.²³ It was first staged in Amman, Jordan, before embarking on a tour in the UK in 2016.

The Netherlands

Dutch initiatives to assist refugees focus on scholars as well. The Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) recently launched a pilot programme to encourage refugees to pursue their scientific career.²⁴ The programme finances appointments to junior or senior research positions with scientific institutions for persons who have fled their home country and have received a refugee status in The Netherlands. They must have at least a Master’s degree in order to participate in the programme. The 750.000 euros enable the appointment of 8-15 refugees for one year. Universities have also stepped up their efforts to welcome refugee students and scholars, offering preparatory programmes and guidance.²⁵

The foundation New Bees connects refugees to companies and organisations in order to stimulate integration through work experience.²⁶ In the arts sector, one notable example is the initiative taken by the Dutch National Ballet to support Syrian dancer Ahmad Joudeh by offering him a four-year training to pursue his dance and choreography career in Amsterdam.²⁷ After the Dutch news documentary focusing on his life as a dancer in the Syrian war created publicity for Ahmad, the director of the Dutch National Ballet set up a foundation “Dance for Peace” in order to provide Ahmad with the opportunity to come to The Netherlands. Moreover, comedian Claudia de Breij invited Syrian saxophone player Nader Issa, who has a refugee status, to join her theatrical tour in 2016, including an ‘end-of-year’ performance watched by over 3 million spectators.

²¹ www.goodchance.org.uk/ensemble-the-jungle

²² <http://refugeeweek.org.uk/about-us/>

²³ www.queensofsyriatour.com/

²⁴ www.nwo.nl/actueel/nieuws/2018/05/nwo-start-nieuwe-pilot-vluchtelingen-in-de-wetenschap.html

²⁵ www.hsleiden.nl/opleiden/bacheloropleidingen/voorbereidend-jaar-leiden/index

²⁶ www.new-bees.org/

²⁷ www.operaballet.nl/en/node/5444

Furthermore, the Catching Cultures Orchestra connects refugee musicians to Dutch-born musicians. The orchestra makes its own productions, which it performs across the country. It also organises frequent activities in refugee housing centres in Utrecht, in order to facilitate encounters between residents and other Dutch people, thereby aiding the integration process while enjoying the music.²⁸ The orchestra also plans to collaborate with the choir JIP in June 2018. This choir aims to overcome divisions in society and actively includes refugees in its productions. For example, in 2016, it organised concerts with roles for artists and poets who have fled their countries, providing them with an opportunity to present their work.²⁹

A network called 'De Werkelijkheid', which consists of artists with a refugee background who live in The Netherlands, allows the artists to participate in small and large projects and connects them with other artists and institutions.³⁰ Moreover, the 'Cultuurkantine' organises a programme in refugee housing centres, connecting experienced artists to young refugees in order to create joint projects focusing on arts and culture.³¹

The Buddy Film Project was founded in 2017 by the actress Dewi Reijs, director Dennis Overeem, and producer In-Soo Radstake, and connects refugees who are professionals from the film industry to their Dutch counterparts. Through offering workshops, film projects, and professional guidance, the projects aims to help the refugees settle down, integrate, and find paid work in The Netherlands.³² 80 film makers and their Dutch 'buddies' are currently shooting a feature film set to play in theatres in 2019.

New Dutch Connections is a foundation set up in 2004 by Bright Richards, who fled from Liberia to The Netherlands in 1991, and Margriet Stuurman. It creates theatrical productions and actively partners with young asylum seekers while guiding them with their integration into the country and the Dutch society.³³

The Hague Orchestra for Peace is a recent initiative wherein musicians from different countries, some with a refugee background, come together and play a wide variety of musical pieces. It is currently directed by Amer Shanati, a Syrian-Palestinian refugee musician who fled to The Netherlands and who has continued his musical activities since his arrival.³⁴

Belgium

Cinemaximiliaan is a pop-up cinema made for and with newcomers in Belgium.³⁵ Volunteers started an improvised refugee camp at the Maximiliaan Park in Brussels with daily film screenings. The initiative then quickly developed into a vast network of volunteers, mainly filmmakers and artists, amongst them many refugees. Cinemaximiliaan shows films in various remote asylum centres around Belgium on a

²⁸ <https://catchingculturesorchestra.nl/>

²⁹ www.kamerkoorjip.nl/project/jip6-op-doortocht/

³⁰ <http://werkelijkheid.com/about/>

³¹ www.cultuurkantine.nl/kunstkameraden-info/

³² www.buddyfilmproject.com/

³³ www.newdutchconnections.nl/geschiedenis-en-ontstaan-ndc/

³⁴ www.amershanati.com/; <https://editie070.denhaag.nl/nl/editie-no-21/zo-klinkt-vrede-in-den-haag/>.

³⁵ www.cinemaximiliaan.com/

regular basis, where there is a need for distraction and cultural exchange. The network also organises events, film screenings in cinemas and at people's homes, music and dance performances, debates, lectures, and exhibitions, all to welcome newcomers into the Belgian cultural scene. Furthermore, Cinemaximiliaan has started to develop short film productions in Molenbeek, to act as a bridge between newcomers and film professionals.

Global initiatives

An EU-backed initiative connects local artists from Poland, Latvia and Sweden to artists who recently arrived in Sweden as refugees, with the aim of creating new insights into what integration really means.³⁶

Given the low number of refugees that climb the education ladder, providing access to higher education institutions has been reinforced as a priority for the EU in recent years. The project “inHERE”, co-funded by the EU’s Erasmus+ programme, is concerned with providing opportunities for refugees to participate in the European Higher Education Area. The project aims for knowledge sharing, peer-support and academic partnership to facilitate integration and access of refugees in European universities.³⁷ Cooperating with the UNHCR and the DAAD, the EU is awarding 400-600 scholarships to Syrians to pursue higher education; an initiative that started in 2016 and that will last until 2019.³⁸ The European University Association has created a map that includes several hundred initiatives concerning access to higher education for refugees.³⁹

Furthermore, both the Scholars At Risk network and the Institute of International Education Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF) support academics in need of assistance with their global networks.⁴⁰ They protect scholars by arranging teaching and research positions in higher education institutions, as well as by advising the scholars on their options. Since 2002, IIE-SRF has placed nearly 750 scholars from 58 different countries at over 375 host universities in 43 countries over the world. The World Academy of Sciences, a UNESCO programme based in Trieste, Italy, also offers its support to refugee scientists, especially those from developing countries.⁴¹

Many refugees are concentrated in the Arab region, with Lebanon and Jordan hosting a large proportion of predominantly Syrian, Iraqi, and Palestinian refugees. The Lebanese Association for Scientific Research offers scholarships to Syrian and Palestinian refugees, allowing them to continue their education and to pursue Master’s degrees and PhDs.⁴²

The UNHCR has implemented the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee in Jordan for several years, representing an important gateway to tertiary education for Syrian refugees residing in the country. The programme addresses key barriers to

³⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/news/20171027-refugee-artists-provoke-new-visions-past_en

³⁷ www.inhereproject.eu/project/about

³⁸ www.daad.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2016/en/49525-daad-eu-and-unhcr-provide-higher-education-scholarships-for-syrian-refugees-in-turkey-and-the-middle-east/

³⁹ www.eua.be/activities-services/eua-campaigns/refugees-welcome-map

⁴⁰ www.scholarsatrisk.org/; www.scholarrescuefund.org/

⁴¹ <https://twas.org/>

⁴² www.asfarifoundation.org.uk/lebanese-association-scientific-research/

higher education and opens doors for the refugees to complete their bachelor's degree in Jordanian universities. Undergraduate refugee students are provided with scholarships that cover tuition fees, study materials, transportation, and other allowances. The refugee scholars also receive additional support through monitoring, academic preparatory and language classes based on students' needs, as well as psychosocial support, mentoring and networking opportunities. Currently, 698 students are pursuing their higher education through the initiative, and 438 of them were selected in 2017 including 27 students from other nationalities including Iraqis and Yemenis.⁴³

Additionally, in Jordan, the organisation Artolution has partnered with the International Rescue Committee to support Syrian refugee artists in the Azraq camp through an arts-based mentorship programme, and with the Syrian artist collective Jasmine Necklace in the Za'atari Camp to provide workshops and opportunities to pursue artistic endeavours.⁴⁴ The UNHCR and the IKEA Foundation also partnered to encourage artwork produced by Syrian refugees.⁴⁵

Moreover, universities all over the world also launch initiatives to receive refugees in their programmes. For example, Northwestern University in the United States created an artist-scholar programme, hosting a "nationally or internationally recognised media maker, screenwriter, playwright, theatre artist, and/or scholar with refugee status or pending refugee status".⁴⁶ Furthermore, a coalition of 60 American universities have committed to providing scholarships to Syrian refugee students in order for them to pursue their studies in the United States, and in Japan, 150 Syrian students have received funding to continue their academic education.⁴⁷

Conclusions

- Initiatives for refugees largely focus on refugee scholars and scientists. Many of the aforementioned programmes and organisations focus on facilitating the reception of exiled students and scholars into university programmes. Governments are often involved in setting up and supporting these initiatives.
- Programmes supporting refugee artists are mostly set up privately, while governments do often offer their support. We can also see many artist-to-artist initiatives that are launched without the financial support of governments.
- Most programmes seem to be concentrated in Europe and North America. The Arab world is also a focal point for initiatives helping refugee students and artists due to the large presence of refugees in the region. The European Union is especially forthcoming on initiatives and programmes to assist refugees with their integration into higher education structures. Meanwhile, there seem to be fewer initiatives originating from South America, Africa, and Asia.

⁴³ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62241>

⁴⁴ www.artolution.org/syrian-refugee-art/

⁴⁵ www.jordantimes.com/news/local/refugee-artists-release-hopes-and-suffering-canvas

⁴⁶ www.arabculturefund.org/bulletin/article.php?id=785&genre=4

⁴⁷ www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/05/25/world/social-issues-world/u-s-colleges-taking-syrian-refugee-students-picking-tab/#.Ww2TVVOFO2K

- The United Nations is an important partner and creator of initiatives targeting refugees. The most important actor in the organisation is the UNHCR. The initiatives supported by the UNHCR generally focus on providing education to refugees but at times offer new opportunities for refugee artists to express themselves and advance their professional capabilities.
- In general, we can conclude that initiatives targeting refugees are flourishing, whether in the domain of education or art. We do see a larger focus on providing access to higher education for refugees, which is part of a more organised effort by governments, especially when united in the European Union. Meanwhile, projects targeting refugee artists are mostly launched by private actors, and sometimes get financial support from governments. Artists and cultural organisations are passionate about the cause of refugee artists and try to reach out and build bridges with the newcomers by focusing on their joint passion.

6 June 12018

About the author

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Videos

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBFgI4D8eEM UNHCR Global Trends Report (June 2017). One of the most recent comprehensive overviews of the global situation and it includes some statistics, though these are mostly focused on the year 2016.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ct5OesIJi3U UNHCR – A Global Refugee Crisis (2017). This video is more personal and includes stories of interesting and innovative practices relating to refugees, but it is less informative of the global situation.

www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=53&v=GvzZGplGbL8 UNHCR – Who is a refugee? (2017). This video gives a brief explanation of who can be considered a refugee. It is a theoretical video and it does not include statistics on the global situation. It is part of a series of videos made by the UNHCR that explains some basic concepts such as refugee rights, who helps refugees, asylum seekers (www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9g_yp_6cf6rO6P9WuoS1ArPG1qkDVkXb)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=r17C4wUckuA United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi explaining some of the issues we are facing currently. Very recent video (April 2018) but it is an interview and the video is a bit longer (7 minutes).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVZGyTdk_BY Interesting trailer for a documentary made by Ai Weiwei about the global refugee crisis.