

## OVERVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIPS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION – Syria situation

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*This note provides an overview of the various sponsorship opportunities currently made available by the international community to facilitate access to higher education for Syrian refugees. It reflects information available to the Education Unit as of November 2013.*

### 1. UNHCR [DAFI](#) Scholarship Programme

- DAFI is UNHCR's main programme for tertiary education, providing more than 2,000 scholarships annually to refugees to study in host countries in 39 operations. The German government extended its contribution in 2013 to support Syrian students.
- More than 40 Syrian students were recruited in October 2013 in Jordan and Egypt where a DAFI programme had already been implemented for several years. There are 19 female and 13 male students, in addition to other refugees already enrolled in the programme. Following consultation with country offices, it is foreseen to open new DAFI programmes in Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon in 2014.
- The DAFI programme is fully integrated within UNHCR's programme cycle and protection activities. Selection and implementation are undertaken in line with UNHCR DAFI Guidelines. The DAFI programme is centrally managed by the Education Unit in the Division of International Protection.

### 2. Other scholarship programmes targeting Syrians students

#### Institute for International Education (IIE):

- The IIE was the first stakeholder to provide support to Syrian students. It builds on extensive experience on education programme management and the Scholar Rescue Fund. Some 100 Syrian students were supported in 2013, through the emergency funds for scholars and through scholarships offered by a consortium of universities in the United States
- At the 2013 Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) in September 2013, the IIE announced an expanded CGI commitment to action through collaboration with the Global Platform for Syrian Students and other partners to raise US\$7 million in support.
- The second round of scholarships offered by the colleges and universities participating in the IIE Syria Consortium will open in January 2014.
- The IIE is now considering support to online learning in Zaatari through the "University in a box approach," giving access to online courses through partnerships with US-based universities. The Education Unit in DIP is in contact with representatives of the IIE.

#### Global Platform 4 Syrians Students:

- This initiative was launched by former Portuguese President Sampaio to provide emergency assistance for Syrian students, in selected host countries as well as overseas.

- The first call for scholarships was launched in September 2013 in Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq. The second call was for Lithuania and Portugal. In total 1,600 applications were received from both refugees and non-refugees. 1000 to study in Turkey, 250 for Lebanon, 35 for Iraq, 200 for Portugal and 80 for Lithuania. Most of the applicants were men, many of whom had already received a higher education degree. Reportedly, scholarships were seen as a way to leave Syria, or leave the current locations where Syrians are. Many applicants were either in or passed through other countries in the region. Many people applying from Egypt in particular highlighted their desire to leave Egypt. IOM will help for transportation out of Syria. The Global Platform (GP) will now look at Jordan, it is foreseen that another call for scholarships will be launched in January 2014. Information will be circulated both locally and through the Education Unit in HQ, who is in contact with the coordinator of the GP. Extensive consultation was also held with the Resettlement Unit.

#### Erasmus Mundus:

- Erasmus Mundus is an EC-funded (DG Devco, implemented by EACEA) European Scholarship Programme which allows students from different non-European countries to study at one of the European partner universities. Scholarships are reserved for refugees and IDPs under Target Group 3. Scholarships cover travel, tuition fees, insurance and a monthly allowance.
- UNHCR is an associate partner in various regional Erasmus Mundus (EM) projects. UNHCR also participated in the Global Coordinators meeting last October to better highlight how refugees could benefit from these programmes. DG DEVCO and the Erasmus Mundus programmes have not specifically defined Target Group 3. UNHCR's participation was greatly appreciated, and was helpful to share the definition of a refugee, UNHCR's mandate, as well as considerations to keep in mind in order to facilitate academic mobility.
- In 2013, the Erasmus Mundus programme of scholarships for study in a European university was extended to all Syrian students, particularly those in vulnerable situations, either inside or outside of Syria. Most Syrians who benefited from EM so far are actually from Syria, and they are not refugees. DG Devco took note of UNHCR's suggestions to look at long term support, not only semester abroad.
- Next calls should be open soon, and information will be circulated both locally and through the Education unit in HQ. The Education Unit in DIP is liaising with regional and global coordinators.

#### Union for the Mediterranean (UfM):

- The UfM has facilitated a round-table of stakeholders providing support to Syrian students, held in September 2013 in Barcelona. All participants highlighted the need to provide skills and vocational training. Three areas currently explored: scholarships abroad, scholarships sur-place, distance learning and vocational training. Linkages with long term development efforts have been highlighted.
- The UfM Secretariat is developing a reflection, to be submitted to the member countries of the UfM, on a joint initiative aiming at providing Higher education support to Syrian refugees. This support would complement other on-going or planned initiatives and would build on the partnerships already existing between the Secretariat and the networks of Higher education

institutions in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. The UfM remains committed to organise another meeting, possibly in Jordan.

#### **Other bilateral scholarship initiatives:**

- The [Swedish Institute Study Scholarships](#) has decided to allocate up to 15 scholarships for Syrian students on an annual basis for two years. The scholarships are for full-time master's level studies in Sweden for the academic years of 2014/15 and 2015/16, i.e. a total maximum of 30 scholarships. Applicants must be students from Syria with a bachelor's degree from a Syrian university, but at the time of application and admission, reside in a country other than Syria, including Sweden. The scholarship is for applicants who have completed bachelor's studies from a Syrian University. Scholarships are granted on condition that the students have been admitted to a master's programme (i.e. not bachelor's) at a Swedish university. However, all admitted students cannot be guaranteed a scholarship. Scholarship application period will be February 3-11, 2014.
- Armenia: Armenian-Syrians students are eligible to receive support through the combined efforts of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, the [Armenian General Benevolent Union \(AGBU\)](#) and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. This support covers direct payment of fees.
- Several opportunities are listed on a dedicated [Facebook page](#) and on [Scholars for Dev](#) website.

#### **Other initiatives on higher education:**

##### **Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins**

- Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins (JC:HEM) is an initiative of the Society of Jesus that brings Jesuit higher education to students who are deprived of meaningful access to higher education. It mobilizes the resources of the Jesuit worldwide network of higher educational institutions, working in collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service to offer online higher education courses to more than 220 refugees and Syrians in Syria and 20 refugees from Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Somali in Jordan.
- While the project in Aleppo/ Syria is experiencing some difficulties due to the current conflict in Syria, a new learning centre has been open in Amman, and plans for expansion in Irbid and Zatari are currently under consideration.
- While UNHCR is not operationally involved in distance learning, UNHCR, JC-HEM and JRS have signed a global MoU in 2013, to expand distance learning in refugee settings, beyond Kenya, Malawi, Jordan and Syria. The MoU encourages sharing of information, joint assessment, support to the development of adapted curricula, sharing of lessons learnt and expertise and joint advocacy.