



UNESCO Youth Education for Stability (YES) Initiative

YES: Supporting access of Syrian refugee youth to quality higher education for social integration

Scope: The initiative seeks to respond to the impact of the Syria crisis on higher education by which tens of thousands of young Syrian – inside Syria and in neighboring countries - have seen their higher education disrupted. This situation is not only an educational issue. It is also a potential factor of instability in the region, as inactive and marginalized youth become attracted to violence and extremism. Moreover, securing continuous higher education opportunities for Syrian refugee youth is critical to build human capital that can effectively and positively contribute to future recovery and reconstruction efforts in Syria. By supporting and facilitating access to higher education, this initiative aims at **bringing Syrian students back to quality higher education** by addressing the following challenges:

- The existing information gap on **higher educational needs** resulting from the Syria crisis, as well as on **available learning opportunities within higher education institutions** in neighboring countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt), which are hosting large populations of refugees, as well as in 3rd countries;
- The **strain on universities/higher education institutions in neighboring countries**, facing a rapidly growing demand for higher education from Syrian students;
- Syrian students' **limited access to opportunities in higher education institutions** in 3rd countries;
- **Obstacles to access to HE** due to lack of documentation (certificates/diplomas), disruption of HE studies for prolonged periods, as well as issues of equivalences and accreditation of higher education studies within the Arab region and beyond;
- Overall **leadership and coordination gap**.

These challenges will be addressed through 2 complementary interventions, to be implemented simultaneously at global, regional and national (in countries concerned) levels:

Component 1: Global information-sharing on demands/opportunities for higher education in relation to the Syrian crisis

On-line platform on higher education in relation to the Syria crisis. The platform will: (i) provide updated information on higher education needs, with in particular quantitative and qualitative

data on Syrian students and their profiles; (ii) serve as a source of information for students on higher education opportunities available in host and 3rd countries. This platform will be established and managed by UNESCO.

Outreach to Syrian youth. UNESCO will partner with sister agencies and civil society to reach out to and inform all Syrian youth of higher education opportunities and link them to the information on the platform when necessary.

Component 2: Advocacy for academic solidarity and engagement in favor of Syrian students

Advocacy for access: outreach to potential hosting universities in neighboring/third countries. UNESCO will launch a global appeal and campaign to encourage Ministries of Higher Education and universities worldwide, and specifically in the Arab region, to provide higher education opportunities to Syrian students.

Advocacy for quality: minimum competencies to access higher education

UNESCO will engage in dialogue, and provide technical support to, hosting universities and Ministries of Higher Education to establish standards for competencies/equivalence in studies to facilitate and accelerate enrollment of Syrian students in such universities

Advocacy for funding: set up of new scholarship/student aid schemes under the aegis of UNESCO benefitting specifically Syrian students.