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Responding to World Crises through Higher Education: The case of Syria and beyond

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In Grateful Acknowledgement...

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A Message from IIE President and CEO Allan E. Goodman

[...]In the short term, we at IIE and IIE Network member colleges and universities around the country are working to address cases of personal dislocation and hardship. This is "job 1." [...]

It is equally important for the higher education community to work together to make sure that we provide a welcoming environment in which academic cooperation and innovation can survive and flourish in the long term.[...]

Trends at a Glance – 2015 Review

65.3 million
Forcibly displaced
worldwide

21.3 million
Refugees

40.8 million
Internally displaced
persons

3.2 million
Asylum-seekers

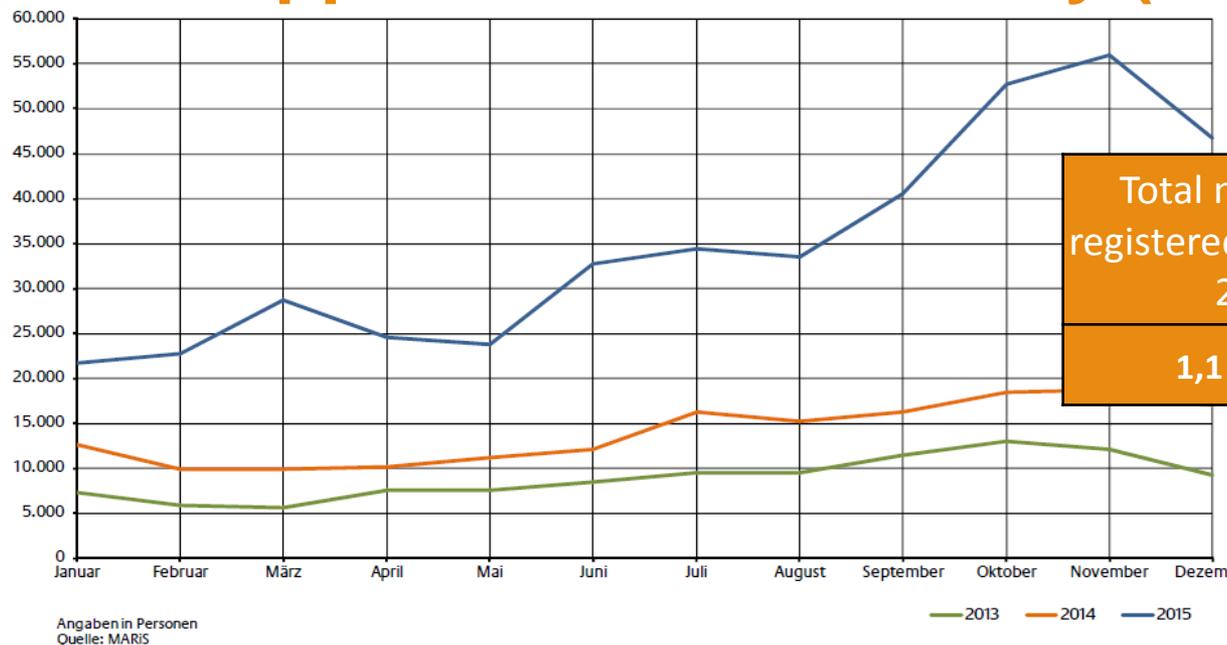
TOP hosting countries

1. Turkey (2.5 million)
2. Pakistan (1.6 million)
3. Lebanon (1.1 million)
4. Islamic Rep. of Iran (979,400)
5. Ethiopia (736,100)
6. Jordan (664,100)

Source: UNHCR, 2015



Development of the number of asylum applications in Germany (2013-2015)



Total number of registered refugees in 2015

1,1 million

Total number of applications for asylum in 2015

477.000

Germany continues to be the largest single recipient of new asylum claims among the group of industrialized countries.

2016: More than 745,000 applications for asylum.

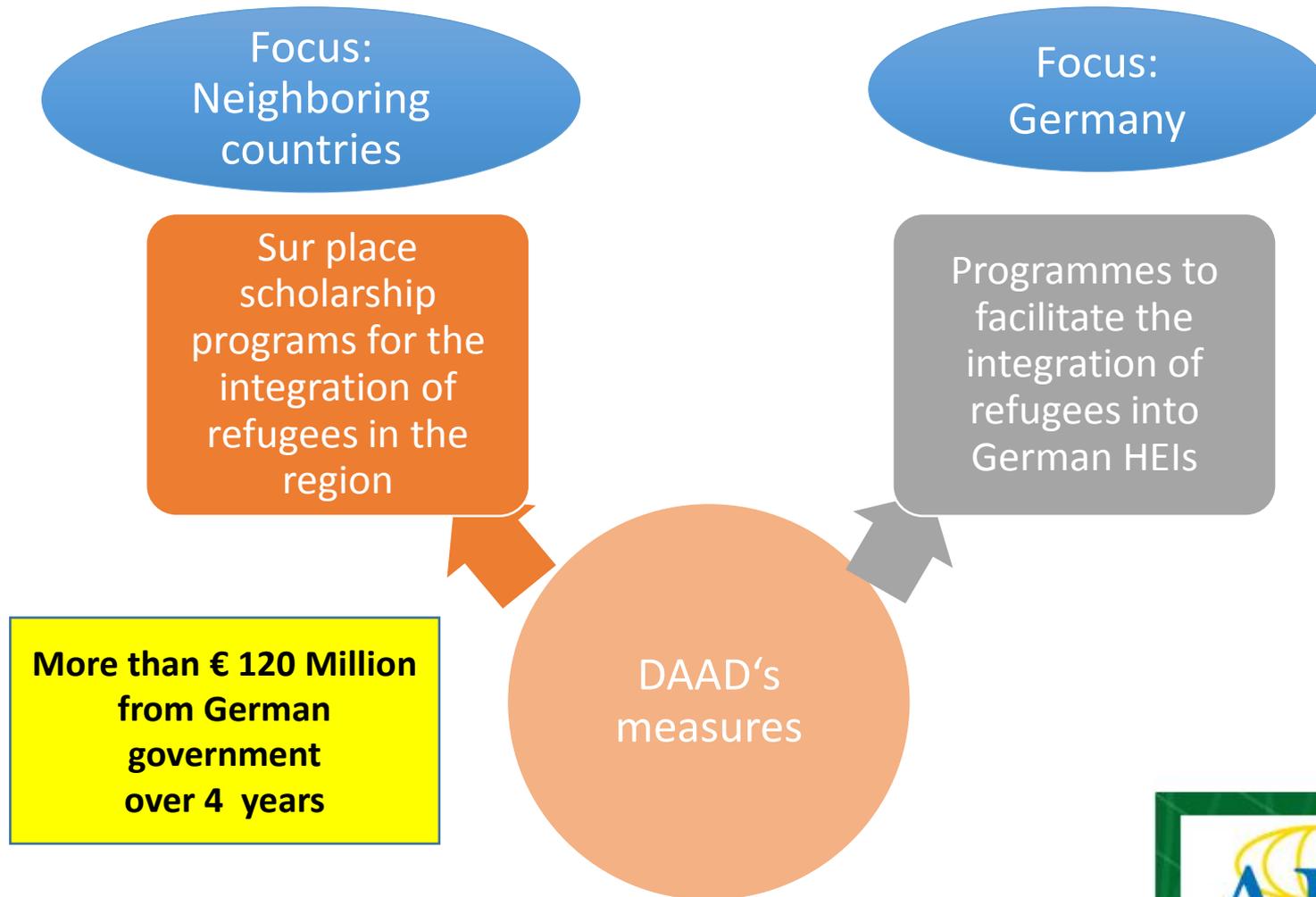
36 % of applicants were from Syria.

Between 2011 and 2016, 18,007 Syrian refugees were resettled in the USA.

Source: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016;
Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2017



DAAD's measures to respond to the refugee crisis in Germany and in neighboring countries



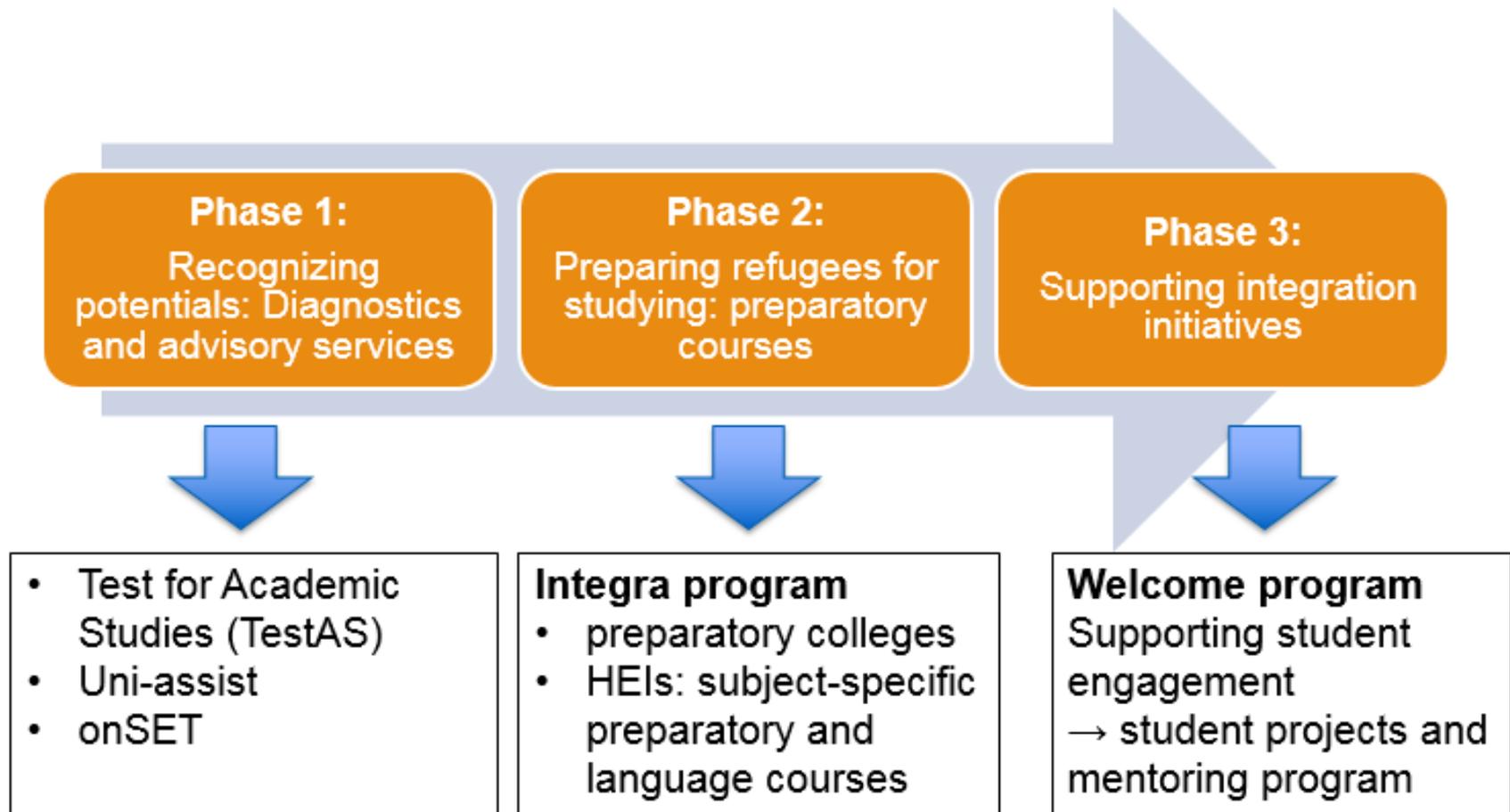
DAAD's measures to respond to the refugee crisis in Germany and in neighboring countries

More than 1 million refugees in Germany –
estimated 30.000-50.000 eligible for admission to a HE programme



DAAD sees its responsibility in supporting the German universities by providing programmes to facilitate the integration of refugees into German HEIs

DAAD's measures in Germany: overview of funding lines



Welcome to Freie Universität Berlin

With its "Welcome to Freie Universität Berlin" program, Freie Universität offers qualified prospective students who have had to leave their homeland an opportunity to attend selected courses and participate in selected additional offerings free of charge starting in the 2015/2016 winter semester, thereby preparing to start a degree program.

"We welcome people who have fled to Berlin to our university and offer them an opportunity to prepare to start a degree program at Freie Universität Berlin or to continue their studies with us." (Prof. Peter-André Alt, President of Freie Universität Berlin)



Offerings for Refugees

To attend lectures or seminars, it is necessary to prove that you have adequate basic German or English language skills, depending on the language in which the course is taught. Prospective candidates who do not have sufficient German language skills can participate in a German language course.



Academic Advising

For information about studying at Freie Universität, prospective students should contact the Student Services Center on Illtistr. 4 near Dahlem-Dorf. The Language Center of Freie Universität is also holding special office hours for advising refugees.

[▶ Student Advising](#)



Volunteer Activities

Many students, employees, scholars, scientists, and researchers are already involved in volunteer activities to support refugees and help them settle in and get used to life in a foreign country. The "Welcome to Freie Universität Berlin" program also gives members of the Freie Universität Berlin community a chance to participate

Commitment to Persecuted Scholars

Freie Universität Berlin: First German university to become a member of Scholars at Risk Network in 2011

With support of SAR and Scholar Rescue Fund (SRF) Freie Universität hosted 5 scholars (usually for two years); 3 come from Iran, 2 from Syria

Participation in Philipp Schwartz Initiative 2016: Hosting of senior scholar from Syria from summer onwards for two years

Establishment of “Adopt an Academic”, a mentoring program for refugee scientists in September 2016



- In 2015 Freie Universität Berlin adopts a comprehensive program to help refugees integrate into the university.
- The program is open to all disciplines.
- It comprises language courses, access to regular seminars and lectures and a student buddy initiative.
- The main goal is to prepare refugees so that they can apply for admission to a regular study program.



Program Participants



- Until September 2016 more than 600 people have registered for Welcome@FUBerlin
- 80% of the participants come from Syria (other nationalities include Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Eritrea)
- In the beginning 90% of the participants were men, now we note a steadily increase in women (around 20% currently)
- Very heterogeneous group including participants
 - without study experience
 - students who had to interrupt their studies
 - graduate students
 - graduates with professional experience who seek recognition of their degrees

Welcome@FUBerlin Program (1/2)

For Refugees	Number of places
Intensive German language training (A1-C1)	72 in 2015/16 100 in 2016/17
Preparatory courses / Studienkolleg	20 in April/2016 80 in Sept/2016
Access to regular lectures and seminars	Unlimited (120 registered)
General counseling & special counseling in Arabic and Farsi	Unlimited (700 since April/2016)

Welcome@FUBerlin Program (2/2)

For Volunteers	Participants
Buddy Program	100
Volunteer language teachers receive crash course in teaching German as a foreign language	40
Arabic teachers offer introduction courses into politics and culture of the refugees' home countries	20
Language Tandems	Around 40



Challenges



- Financial situation and living conditions of refugees: Due the absence of tuition fees, access to the university is relatively easy. But especially disadvantaged status groups need financial support.
- Most refugees are interested in study programs with limited access (medicine/pharmacy), where only a small number of international students is admitted.
- Especially the language training is very time consuming

Lessons Learned

Welcome@FUBerlin

- The welcome program won't be a short term program but will need time to deliver its results.
- The program relied on ad hoc coordination and good will with all parties involved.
- Special programs do not only have to deal with the language barrier, but with different expectations due to the study system in the refugees' home countries.
- Programs need to include intensive counseling and mentoring opportunities (including psychological support).
- There are also opportunities for the university with respect to internationalization:
 - new multilingual counseling
 - new structures for language training
 - new role for the preparatory courses/Studienkolleg



Which Emergencies? What Can We Do?

- There are many possible modes of response to many different crises – there are zones of conflict and economic instability around the world
- Consider your institution's mission, capacities and commitments – align action with institutional strengths
- Plan but be aware that planning can lead to paralysis: simple actions on a limited scale can still benefit students at risk



Thoughtful Responsiveness

- Identify Partners: for example, IIE Syria Consortium for Higher Education in Crisis and the Platform for Education in Emergency Response

Through participation in the IIE Syria initiative, I helped to welcome (at last count) 27 Syrian undergraduates to study in the States, most recently, in January, 2017, to Knox.

- Education USA and Education USA-Syria

Monica Ibrahim, the EdUSA-Syria advisor, serves as a resource for students applying for admission and to me as I reviewed transcripts and baccalaureate diplomas

- IIE Scholar Rescue Fund and Scholars at Risk

Some institutions may wish to concentrate on students; some on scholars and artists – some may explore ways to support both students and scholars

- Offer Scholarships; offer a position to a Scholar at Risk; consider on-line outreach if you offer online education.
- Make your commitment clear on your admissions website.



Knox College – IIE Consortium Member

- Campus-wide commitment (membership in the IIE Syria Consortium; membership in Scholars at Risk)
- Financial support in place for full-tuition scholarships for international students from Syria and other conflict zones
- Admission support in place – warm, supportive, continuous outreach is VERY important
- Student Life support in place to welcome students (with peer mentors, host families, orientation programs and more)



Admissions: Clear, Continuous, Encouraging Outreach

- Personal response to initial application – encourage continuance, explain the process
- Help students think through difficulties of visa acquisition, travel, costs and academic documentation
- Give them a glimpse into the life of students on your campus – reach out! (I use social media: I want students to have some sense of who I am, where I live, what college is like at Knox)
- Persist in outreach – some students take more than one admission cycle to get their records, finances and personal plans in order.



Transforming Community

- My campus communities are the stronger, more vibrant, more resilient for inclusion of students from conflict zones.
- In my experience, Syrian students are exceptionally academically well prepared and highly motivated to succeed in class and to become immersed in life at a small, residential liberal arts college.
- Language skills improve quickly; many Syrian students have become campus leaders – in residence life, Greek and other student organizations, music ensembles, honor societies, research teams and sports.



Resources

- IIE Syria Consortium for Higher Education in Crisis (<http://www.iie.org/Programs/Syria-Scholarships#.WloNVVUrKUk>) and Consortium Resource Page (<http://www.iie.org/Programs/Syria-Scholarships/Resources#.WloGWFUrKUI>)
- IIE Platform for Education in Emergency Response
- IIE Scholar Rescue Fund (<http://www.iie.org/Programs/Scholar-Rescue-Fund>)
- IIE PEER (<https://www.iiepeer.org>)
- Scholars at Risk (<https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/>)
- AACRAO webinars on Syrian educational documents (<http://www.aacrao.org/resources/resources-detail-view/supporting-syrian-refugee-access-to-u-s--higher-education>)
- EducationUSA (<https://educationusa.state.gov/>)



Resources

- NAFSA Resources on Resources for Obtaining Credentials for Displaced Persons (http://www.nafsa.org/Professional_Resources/Browse_by_Interest/International_Students_and_Scholars/Network_Resources/International_Enrollment_Management/Resources_for_Obtaining_Credentials_for_Displaced_Persons)
- WES (<http://wenr.wes.org/2016/12/refugee-crisis-higher-education-access-credentials>)
- Jusoor (<http://jusoorsyria.com/>) and other independent humanitarian organizations dedicated to educational outreach to students in crisis
- Refugees at German universities (<https://www.study-in.de/en/refugees>) and How the DAAD is helping (<https://www.daad.de/der-daad/fluechtlinge/infos/en/43153-refugees-at-universities-how-the-daad-is-helping>)
- The HOPES program (<https://www.daad.de/der-daad/fluechtlinge/infos/de/46510-hopes-higher-and-further-education-opportunities-and-perspectives-for-syrians>)

