



Description of the project:

Horizon académique is an integration program offered by the University of Geneva as part of the Agenda Intégration Suisse (AIS) and [Cantonal Integration Programme \(PIC\)](#). It is a bridge program that prepares students for university. Program participants can either resume their studies at one of these higher education institutions in Geneva: the University of Geneva (UNIGE), the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO Geneva), or the Graduate Institute (IHEID); or find another training program better suited to their needs.

The program is for asylum seekers and refugees (with S, N, F, F or B-refugee permits) and persons holding a permit for family reunification (permit B) and it is also meant for Swiss nationals who have returned from living abroad.

The four pillars of our program are:

- Personal guidance
- Access to university courses and exams
- Language and integration classes (from A1 to B2 french)
- Mentoring program

The duration of the program is between 1 and 4 years maximum

Support provided in the admission process :

- Exceptions to admission from the swissuniversities criteria based on exam results in all faculties except Law at UNIGE
- Exemption from ECUS exam for those aiming studies at HESGE who have successfully finished 1 year of university studies and ECUS is required
- Financial support for translation and authentication of documents, financial support for ECUS preparation, financial support for language exams (for ex.: English (TOEFL, IELTS))
- Discussion, exchange and strong collaboration with admission department for a pre-analysis, information transmission
- Information session organized by the admissions department specifically for our students
- Collaboration with social services for internship placements
- Support session to fill out admission forms
- Exemption for the enrollment fees (65 CHF)

Challenges:

- Fundings
- Coordination between partners

Description of the project:

The *Programme Escabeau* aims to facilitate the integration of individuals within the Swiss asylum framework (holders of refugee B permits, as well as F, N, and S permits). Its primary objective is to support the integration of these individuals into the University of Neuchâtel and, where possible, into Swiss society.

The program includes:

- French language courses (*ILCF*) from A2 level up to B2, which is the minimum required for admission to bachelor's programs
- Facilitated access to Bachelor's programs (*Admission Escabeau*)
- A tool to enhance the value of previously obtained university degrees (*CAS d'intégration*)
- A mentoring program for Bachelor, Master, and CAS students (*Mentorat Escabeau*)
- Occasional financial support in specific cases

Students remain enrolled in *Programme Escabeau* throughout their studies at UniNE, even though some components have defined durations (e.g., *Admission Escabeau* – 2 semesters).

Support provided in the admission process :

- Dedicated email address for requests from refugee and asylum-seeking candidates (escabeau.programme@unine.ch) + personal meetings with candidates if required
- Dedicated admission team members specializing in such requests
- Simplified admission form specifically for refugee and asylum-seeking candidates
- Exemption from the foreign student admission fee (CHF 100)
- Special admission regulations for candidates who do not meet standard requirements, exemption from the ECUS exam
- Collaboration with social services, counselors, and job coaches, if needed, to develop the candidate's study project

Challenges :

- Securing financial support for the program after end of funding from *Perspectives-Etudes*
- Irregular participation in the mentoring program
- Developing collaboration with other academic actors in the region
- Developing inter-institutional partnerships to oversee students' professional integration



hdk

Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
Zurich University of the Arts

Program “access for refugees”

Contact information:

Name : iris meili

Email : zugang.gefluechtete@zhdk.ch

<https://www.zhdk.ch/en/international/access-for-refugees>

Description of the project:

- Offerings are aimed primarily at refugee art students who have begun a corresponding course of studies in their home countries.
- The students can familiarize themselves with the requirements and content of a ZHdK degree program and attend ZHdK courses free of charge for one semester, a free German language course and individual support where needed is also part of the program.
- The duration is one semester; it can be extended for another semester at a maximum.
- The project is an integral part of the ZHdK offering

Support provided in the admission process:

- Advice on the various options at ZHdK
- Facilitate contact into the departments
- Please visit <https://www.zhdk.ch/en/international/access-for-refugees> for further details on the offering

Challenges

- Funding
- Resources

Description of the project:

The Coordination Office for Refugees at Unibas provides services and programs across three main pillars:

1. First point of contact for refugees at Unibas: We consult refugees and asylum seekers who wish to begin or resume university studies through individual guidance on admission requirements, study options or alternative educational pathways (triage to e.g. cantonal career consultation, other refugee-projects at Swiss Universities). We also provide consultations on everyday challenges, social, financial, and administrative matters (e.g. housing, authorities, budgeting).

2. Bridging program (1-2 semester): It is open to refugees and asylum seekers (S, N, F, B refugees, or B family reunification) who are interested in pursuing a degree at the University of Basel and meet the general admission requirements. It includes German courses (intensive and/or semester course), up to three courses as auditors, a mentoring program, social activities organized by students of the Offener Hörsaal, access to the library and Unisport, and student prices at the mensa/cafeteria. The program aims to help refugees improve their German skills, get to know the University, and explore their study options.

3. NEW! Success4refugees (with PgB-Funding): Students with a refugee background are supported throughout their studies and invited to a monitoring check-in once per semester to discuss both their academic progress and personal well-being. If challenges arise, we assist students in finding solutions wherever possible. Additionally, a new Kick-Off Event is regularly offered for refugees enrolled at Unibas. This event provides access to essential information, connects students with internal and external partners and services, and offers opportunities for networking.

All services are free and confidential. The aim is to support refugees build a realistic path toward higher education and integrate individually and successfully.

Support provided in the admission process:

- Non-binding document review (diploma, CV) to check refugee eligibility for University of Basel admission, in collaboration with the Student Secretary, without a registration fee
- Optional support to fill out admission forms
- Exchange and collaboration with social services

Challenges

- The admission criteria at the University of Basel are strict and there are (almost) no exceptions made for refugees
- Study financing for students with a refugee background

Campus Luzern für Geflüchtete PLUS (CLuG+)

Hochschule Luzern, Universität Luzern,
Pädagogische Hochschule Luzern

Contact information:

Name : Garima Sharma und Barbara Stettler

Email : campusgefluechtete@hslu.ch

Webpage : www.hslu.ch/clug

Description of the project:

CLuG+ is an integration programme for well-qualified, recognized refugees (status B (refugees), F, S or N) offered by the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, the University of Lucerne and the Lucerne University of Teacher Education. It offers its participants a modular preparation for a regular study programme at a Swiss higher education institution. Furthermore, it includes a skills centre - the so-called Impact Hub - for cooperation between refugees, authorities, companies and universities.

The modular preparation features the “Taster Programme”, the “Pre-Study Integration Programme” and the “Regular Programme” and address refugees at different stages of their progress. The different levels offer the following:

- **Taster Programme** (two semesters): desired modules as guest auditors, German language course level B2, mentoring, review meetings
- **Pre-Study Integration Programme** (two semesters): modules as specialist auditors in the desired degree programme, German language course level C1, mentoring, review meetings
- **Regular Programme** (duration depending on the study programme): online consultation hours with the Coordination Office as required, mentoring as required

Support provided in the admission process:

- Collaboration with the admission offices of the three higher education institutions for a pre-analysis
- Collaboration with the cantonal integration authorities, if requested
- Assistance with filling out the admission form, if requested

Challenges:

- Fundings
- Different rules and structures of the three universities
- Finding enough mentors among the regular students
- Convincing the cantonal authorities that studying should be an option for well-qualified refugees
- Transition of CLuG+ into the regular structures of the three higher education institutions

Description of the project: AlterEgauZ is an integration program proposed by the School of social Work of the University of Applied Sciences (HETS-FR/HES-SO). It is a bridge program that prepares students for the admission in Bachelor of Social Work. The program is for asylum seekers and refugees (with S, N, F, F or B-refugee permits). Settings

- Auditor status
- Student ID card
- Access to university courses and exams (Virtual ECTS)
- Mentorship between regular students and refugee participants
- Program coordination that supports mentorship, provides individual coaching, and facilitates access to an internship in an affiliated institution
- Provision of a computer
- Access to various HES-SO services: psychological and social counseling (HELP), AAI account for easier access to resources, etc.
- Participation in the transversal module “Co-construction Space for Knowledge and Tools”
- Diverse and individualized French learning opportunities

The Bridge Program lasts one year, and the support system runs for two years (during the first year of the Bachelor).

Support provided in the admission process :

- Support with administrative and academic procedures related to admission to the Bridge Program and, later, to the Bachelor, taking into account prior educational and professional background.
- Development of measures and accommodations for participation in the program and studies (at a later stage).
- Regular meetings – Counseling – Guidance. Some interviews are conducted with the representative of the integration organization, particularly in preparation for entry into the Bachelor.

Challenges

- Sustainable funding
- Inclusion in the academic community

Hérodote Université de Fribourg

Contact information:

Name : Carmen Delgado Luchner & Audrey Bonvin
Email : Herodote@unifr.ch
Webpage : under construction

Description of the project:

Hérodote prepares candidates to study at the University of Fribourg. It is accessible to individuals pertaining to the field of asylum (permits B, F, S or N) who only partially fulfill the formal criteria for admission to university. There are two versions of the programme: “Hérodote” for individuals who fulfill all formal admission criteria except for the required level in the language of instruction (B2), and “Hérodote Plus” for those who do not and cannot fulfill all formal admission criteria but who are at least 24 years old at the beginning of the preparation year and have a profile that would have qualified them to study at university level in their country of origin.

The programmes include language classes, transversal skills classes, participation in certain classes of the desired field of study, mentoring and access to campus activities (UniSport, etc.).

During the programme, participants are considered students and can already acquire some ECTS credits in their desired field of study. At the end of the programme, students need to pass either a B2 language exam (Hérodote) or an admission test (Hérodote Plus).

The programmes last 1 year and can be repeated once (for a maximum duration of two years).

Both versions of the programme are currently implemented, registrations are open every spring, with a second intake only for Hérodote in winter.

Support provided in the admission process :

- Exemptions to certain admission criteria based on the specific [regulations of Hérodote / Hérodote Plus](#).
- General advice year-round regarding admissions for applicants pertaining to the field of asylum, including an exemption from application fees and access to a free pre-assessment of a candidate’s file by the Hérodote team as well as experts from the admissions office (contact address Herodote@unifr.ch).
- General advice and regular information sessions for integration advisors in the Canton of Fribourg (Caritas Suisse & ORS SA) accompanying potential candidates.
- Individual language assessments, selection interviews and support for developing a viable study plan at the University of Fribourg for candidates.
- Strong collaboration with other institutions in the Canton of Fribourg (HES-SO Fribourg: Haute école de travail social, Haute école d’ingénierie et d’architecture, Haut école de gestion), including joint assessment of applications and ability to transfer suitable candidates from one institution to another during or after their preparation year.

Challenges

- Long-term funding
- Multilingualism at the University of Fribourg (currently not enough candidates to offer the programmes in German, which would require doubling every class)
- Awareness raising inside the university and among relevant actors in the Canton

“University preparatory course”
School of Engineering and Computer Science,
Bern University of Applied Sciences

Contact information:

Name : Milena Wegelin; Manuel Insberg
Email : milena.wegelin@bfh.ch; manuel.insberg@bfh.ch
Webpage : <https://www.bfh.ch/en/studies/preparatory-courses/hochschulvorbereitungskurs/>

The Bern University of Applied Sciences offers currently a 15-month university preparatory course at the Department of Engineering and Computer Science.

The program consists of three main components:

1) intensive language course to build academic language skills (3 months); 2) subject-specific courses that provide foundational knowledge in engineering and computer science (3 months) ; 3) a practical internship (9months), which allows participants to gain hands-on experience and better understand the professional environment.

Additionally coaching is provided for the full duration of the university preparatory courses. And if needed, participants can add another one-month preparatory course in mathematics.

In addition, we are currently trying to expand the preparatory program and creating more inclusive pathways for refugees to study programs across additional schools and departments at BFH. At the moment, we are working closely with two schools in this regard: the School of Health Professions and the Business School.

Support provided in the admission process :

- Collaboration with social services to ensure financial support.
- Coaching is provided throughout the preparatory courses for admission to the Bachelor's degree programme, particularly with regard to finding an internship and completing it. Internships in the field of Engineering and Computer Science are a compulsory element of admission to the Bachelor's degree programme.

Challenges

Securing sustainable funding; Curricular specificities of individual Bachelor programs; Showing relevance of a university degree for refugees vis-à-vis social service providers that give financial support to (potential) participants; Increased tuition fees and Classification of participants and potential students as so-called “international students” (Bildungsausländer*innen)

Description of the project:

InclUSlone is a project that fosters the inclusion of people from the asylum sector into USI university community. The target group is all people with recognised refugee status (B), provisionally admitted people (F), people in need of protection (S), asylum seekers (N). It is a preparation programme.

It offers two different paths:

- 1- Direct enrolment to study programmes, for candidates who already meet the admission requirements but need personalized support to complete the application process and begin their journey at USI. We remain available to the students until needed but support is mainly required in the preparation for admission. After that students receive adequate support from their Faculty. Free language courses (Italian, English, French, German) are available to all students and staff member at USI.
- 2- "Programma passerella" (Bridge programme), for candidates who meet the academic requirements but cannot finalise enrolment yet (e.g. Language level not high enough or deadline for regular admission has passed). The bridge programme allows access as auditor to one or two courses in the desired study programme. Moreover, auditors have access to free language courses (Italian and English) and to personalised info sessions about University services. The bridge programme lasts one or two semesters. The goal is to pursue regular admission therefore a motivation letter is also required for admission as auditors and attendance to the courses is mandatory (at least 75% of the lessons).

The programme began with a pilot phase between 2021 and 2024. It is now being implemented with a more structured programme from 2024 to 2026. It will begin the consolidation phase between 2026 and 2028.

Support provided in the admission process :

- Step-by-step support in collaboration with Student Administration and the Study Advisory Service (including pre-evaluation of documents)
- Information sessions dedicated to our students with different services (E.g. IT service...)
- Support in finding funding opportunities and recognized language certificates
- Collaboration with job coaches and social assistants during all the steps
- Personalized support to prepare and fill out admission forms
- Reduced fees (both for full time and auditor students) and exemption from registration fee

Challenges

- Fundings (for students to pay for registration fees and study related expenses and for us to implement all the desired measures, e.g. more language courses)
- Gather and deliver information (rules and relevant actors change often)
- Coordination between all actors involved



Compass UniBE University of Bern

Contact information:

Name : Ann-Seline Fankhauser, project manager

Email : kompass@unibe.ch / ann-seline.fankhauser@unibe.ch

Webpage : [Studies: Compass UniBE – University Preparation for Refugee Students - University of Bern](#)

Description of the project:

- Compass UniBE is a one-year full time university preparation and qualification program for refugees (status B, F, N and S), who are aiming to study at the University of Bern.
- As a minimum, applicants must have obtained a foreign upper secondary school-leaving certificate, have B1 level in German and the consent of the case-managing asylum welfare office, to get admission to Compass UniBE.
- The program consists of linguistic, academic and organizational preparation as well as additional offers to advance social integration.
- After successful completion of the Compass program, participants can be admitted to a regular course of study at the University of Bern (except medicine and sport programs).
- Compass UniBE has 20 places available each year. A selection process takes place when the application deadline has ended.
- Cost of participation: 4200 CHF. In most cases the fee is covered by the case-managing asylum welfare office.
- Compass UniBE exists since 2023 und has currently approval to continue until 2031.

Support provided in the admission process:

- The successful completion of the Compass preparatory year replaces missing admission requirements such as: proof of admission, two years of recognized full-time study, ECUS
- German language courses up to level C1 (admission requirement)
- weekly on-site consultation hours, daily e-mail and telephone support, information sessions
- pre-assessment of application documents
- contact with social workers and with the admissions office of the University of Bern, upon request
- guidance concerning financial support

Challenges

- Increase in tuition fees for foreign students (2550 CHF / semester)
- Cuts in human resources
- No further support services for former participants
- As the program is still relatively new, comprehensive statistics to measure the subsequent academic success of participants are still not available.



**Universität
Zürich** UZH

Explore – Academic Orientation Program for Refugees at UZH University of Zurich

Contact information:

Name : Chantal Marquart

Email : refugees@global.uzh.ch

Webpage : t.uzh.ch/refugees

Description of the project:

«Explore - Academic Orientation Program for Refugees at UZH» is a semi-intensive program at the University of Zurich (UZH) and is aimed at qualified refugees (N, F, S, B permit) who want to improve their German language skills at an academic level and get to know the content and demands of studying in Switzerland. During two semesters, participants attend German courses, academic modules and various information events on higher education opportunities at UZH.

Participants of Explore improve their German language skills with a focus on academic language skills, gain insight into the content and demands of studying at UZH, learn about higher education opportunities, and become familiar with university life at UZH.

Support provided in the admission process :

- Information events on the topic of admission with the Admissions Office
- Networking events with former participants to exchange experiences
- Support and advice in regular personal meetings

Challenges

- Lack of knowledge about admission requirements, study requirements, and the Swiss higher education system among social services and participants
- Pressure for rapid labor market integration
- Cantonal scholarship regulations (see eligibility requirements regarding age and permit)

Contact information:

Name : Christopher Martellet

Email : christopher.martellet@heig-vd.ch

Webpage : <https://heig-vd.ch/formation/avant-les-etudes/programme-intref>

Project description:

The INTREF programme is designed to support asylum seekers and migrants by enabling them to acquire or strengthen the academic knowledge and professional experience required for admission to a Bachelor's degree programme in one of HEIG-VD's engineering disciplines.

- The programme is open to individuals who holding the following residence permits: S, N, F, B or C (refugee status).

- The programme is structured in two phases:

- o Academic phase: Participants attend theoretical modules within an engineering programme as auditing students, either on a full-time basis for one semester or part-time over the academic year. They are given the opportunity to take exams, and any successfully completed modules are recognized upon admission to the first year of the Bachelor's programme.
- o Professional phase: A supervised internship is organised to validate the professional experience required for admission to the Bachelor's degree programme.

- Duration: Two semesters.

- Implemented since: 2022.

Admission requirements and support:

- The admission requirements are aligned with those applicable to international applicants, in accordance with the criteria set by Swiss universities and HES-SO, with the exception of the professional experience requirement. Part of the required professional experience (approximately 20 weeks of the 40 required) must be completed prior to entry into the programme. This requirement may be fulfilled through a full-time internship during the second semester or through part-time placements spread over the academic year.
- Final admission to the Bachelor's degree programme is conditional upon the successful completion of the internship.
- A B2 level of French is required.
- Tailored mentoring: Participants benefit from personalised support provided by HEIG-VD professors and students throughout the programme, with the aim of facilitating academic and professional integration.
- HEIG-VD supports participants in finding internships.
- Collaboration with social services.

Challenges

- Recruiting student mentors.
- Fundings.

Contact information:

Name : MICHEL Marie-Laure

Email : cms-3@epfl.ch

Webpage : <https://www.epfl.ch/education/fr/cms/cms-3/>

Description of the project:

Launched in 2025, the CMS-3 is a preparatory programme aimed at refugees in Switzerland (S, N, F, B-refugee permits) who have completed scientific upper secondary school studies in their home country but whose diploma does not meet the admission criteria for the EPFL Bachelor programme, and who do not have the required level of French to enroll in the regular preparatory year.

This programme, spanning three semesters, is designed to give students the time to learn French, expand their knowledge while becoming familiar with EPFL's teaching methods, and immerse themselves in the campus student culture, so they can begin their Bachelor studies under the best possible conditions.

Initially, particular emphasis is placed on learning French and integration into the EPFL community, before focusing on the fundamental concepts of mathematics (analysis, linear algebra, and analytical geometry), physics, computer science, and chemistry.

Support provided :

- Mentoring and integration programs
- Exemption for the enrollment fees (CHF 780.-)

Challenges

- Fundings

Roadmap to Study HES-SO Valais/Wallis

Contact information:

Name : Amel Mahfoudh

Email : amel.Mahfoudh@hevs.ch

Webpage : [Roadmap to Study](#)

Description of the project:

The University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland (HES-SO) Valais/Wallis's run the ROADMAP TO STUDY programme. This programme welcomes participants from the asylum sector (refugees, those with temporary admission or asylum seekers) who have not been able to continue their tertiary education in their country of origin.

Applicants to Roadmap to study must meet the following criteria:

- Hold a valid N, F, S, or B residence permit (including refugee status).
- Have a minimum language proficiency level of B1 in French or German, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).
- Students are enrolled as auditors (non-degree students). They receive IT access credentials and a laptop (loan).
- The programme lasts two semesters: one semester of theoretical immersion followed by one semester of internship. Modules successfully completed grant virtual credits, which are taken into account at the time of formal admission.
- French lessons:
 - A three-week intensive French course before the start of the academic year in September
 - Four hours of French lessons per week
- The programme is cross-disciplinary and offered across the HES-SO Valais/Wallis Schools of Applied Sciences. Roadmap to Study is a project funded by the Cantonal Office for Asylum as an integration measure.

Support provided in the admission process :

- Coaching to prepare the application
- Support during the application process.
- Follow-up with the academic advisor if prior learning can be recognised (credit recognition).

Challenges

The challenges of Roadmap to Study are finding internships, particularly in the field of engineering.

Contact information:

Name : Léa Moreau Shmatenko
Email : lea.moreaushmatenko@unil.ch
Webpage : in construction

Description of the project:

The program is designed for asylum seekers and refugees (with S, N, F, F or B-refugee permits) living in the Canton de Vaud. Candidates must be identified by CSIR or EVAM.

The four pillars of our program are:

- Personal guidance
- Language and integration classes (starting from A2)
- Access to university courses and exams (up to 15 ECTS can be validated, depending on the Faculty)
- Mentoring and social activities

The duration of the program is 1 year. A pilot phase will start in September 2026

Support provided in the admission process :

- For academic year 26/27, extended deadline for application
- Information session organized for the cantonal authorities and job coaches
- Language evaluation and creation of the candidate's sociolinguistic profile prior enrollment
- Discussion, exchange and strong collaboration with admission department for a pre-analysis, information transmission
- Follow-up of applications with the faculties (if they are required to make a decision)
- Individual guidance

Challenges

- No possible exemptions regarding enrollment conditions
- Mentoring based on a student association with high turnover
- Long term visibility of the programme (also in terms of funding)