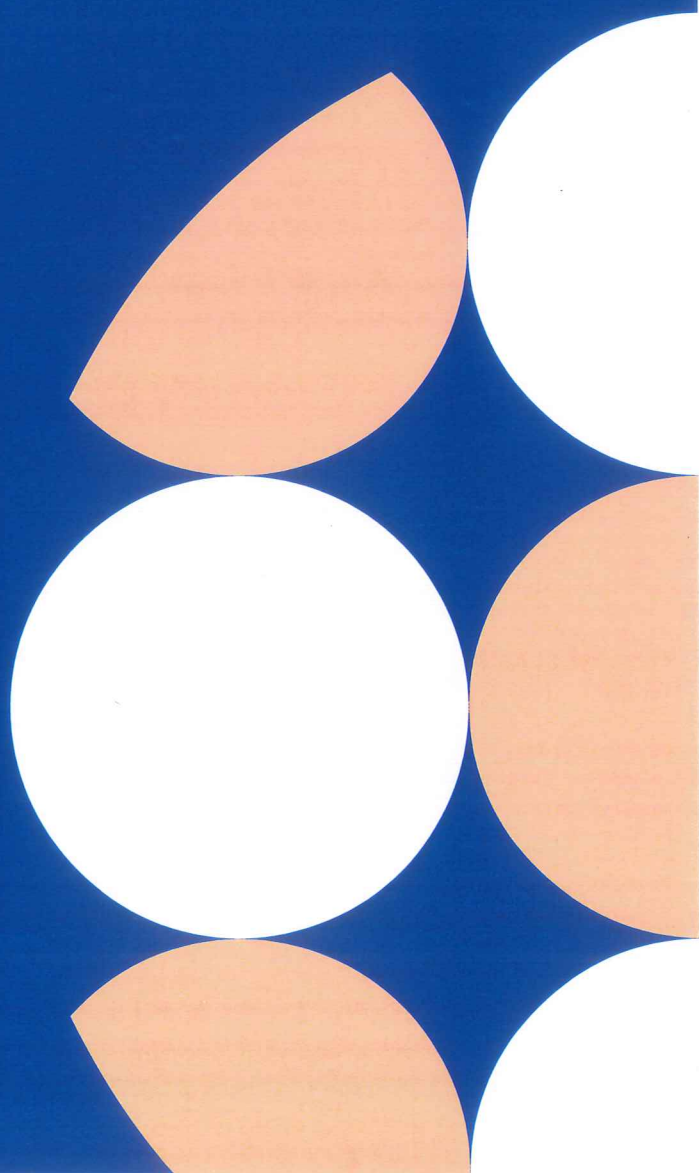




Advanced Thematic Forum on
International Refugee Protection
Complementary Pathways

Manifesto for Third Country Education Pathways

North Macedonia



Foreword¹

As Chair of the Secretariat of the Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network (GAIN) ["the Network"] since its foundation in summer 2020, it is my pleasure and privilege to write this foreword, having participated in the Pilot Advanced Thematic Forum on International Refugee Protection ["the Forum"], and to present on the role of academia in furthering the Guiding Principles and Objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) ["the Compact"]. Advancing education and research on refugee protection and showing solidarity with forcibly displaced persons show the synergies between the Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network and the Refugee Law and Migration Center of the "Iustinianus Primus" Faculty of Law of the "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University ["the Center"], the Representation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in North Macedonia ["UNHCR"], and the International Institute for Humanitarian Law of Sanremo, Italy ["the Institute"].

The Compact was affirmed by the General Assembly in December 2018. Paragraph 5 sets out the Guiding Principles as seeking *"to operationalize the principles of burden- and responsibility-sharing to better protect and assist refugees and support host countries and communities"*. Two of the Objectives in Paragraph 7 are to *"enhance refugee self-reliance; [and] expand access to third country solutions"*. The traditional durable and sustainable solutions for forcibly displaced persons are resettlement, voluntary repatriation, and local integration. As well as those three, the Compact includes in its section on Solutions, *"Complementary pathways for admission to third countries"*. In many ways, complementary pathways, although they had been recognised for decades, epitomize the fundamental approach of the Compact: they enhance refugee self-reliance and recognise refugees' autonomy; they also expand third country solutions, ever more important given that resettlement has not grown at a pace that provides fairer and more predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing. Thus, all forms of complementary pathways need to be promoted.

Paragraph 43 of the Compact provides that a:

"Global academic network on refugee, other forced displacement, and statelessness issues will be established, involving universities, academic alliances, and research institutions, together with UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders, to facilitate research, training and scholarship opportunities which result in specific deliverables in support of the objectives of the global compact."

The Network was launched at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019. Recognising that academia is a relevant stakeholder that is called upon in Paragraph 3 GCR to provide *"a basis for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing"*, complementary pathways for displaced students and scholars is an important task for universities and research institutes, as we approach nearly 100 million persons under UNHCR's mandate.

In relation to students, when degree programmes or the start of tertiary education are interrupted by conflict or persecution, it is a major interference in one of the most important transitions in a person's life. The ability to pick up those studies in another country that recognises the qualifications and studies so far is one of the best ways to *"better protect and assist refugees"*. It allows the refugee to retain control of their own life decisions and will enhance their skills for resettlement in the country of study, or for their country of nationality if voluntary repatriation becomes possible, or for the hosting country and community if they return there after their period of study. For academics who are displaced, the waste of talent cannot be questioned, and it has to be possible for all scholars at all stages of their careers to contribute through a complementary pathway – there is no better way to give them the autonomy to create their own solutions going forward.

¹ Professor **Geoff Gilbert**, Professor of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, University of Essex; Chair of the Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network Secretariat

Ultimately, there is nothing good about forcible displacement and whatever measures that are put in place are a response to what should never have happened in the first place. However, with so many persons of concern to UNHCR, steps need to be put in place to alleviate the damage done by displacement. The GCR is a major development in all regards, expanding the relevant stakeholders, setting out clearly that the guiding principles for responding to protracted displacement are fairer and more predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing to better protect and assist refugees and host communities and hosting countries – 86% of persons of concern to UNHCR are in low- or middle-income countries – and enhancing refugee autonomy through complementary pathways. Universities and research institutions are part of this framework for support that benefits the refugee, the country providing the pathway, the host community and, hopefully, the refugee's own country of nationality if voluntary repatriation becomes viable.

Introduction²

On occasion of the Pilot Advanced Thematic Forum on International Refugee Protection organized by the Law and Migration Centre at the "Iustinianus Primus" Law Faculty, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, in cooperation with the UNHCR Representation in North Macedonia and the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in Sanremo, distinguished experts and an international audience of academics and practitioners came together to draw on their experience to produce recommendations for expanding complementary education pathways.

Conflicts, terrorism, the pandemic, socio-economic and financial instability continue to disrupt ways of life around the world. They continue to threaten human rights and freedoms, provoking humanitarian disasters of high magnitude and unprecedented numbers of refugees, persons in need of protection, as they flee persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership to a particular social group, or political opinion.

States have the prime responsibility when it comes to refugee protection and human rights. Therefore, we should lead in holding up the commitments made by the Global Compact on Refugees and for the Global Refugee Forum ["the Global Forum"].

As a party of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees ["the Convention"], and through its long-standing cooperation with UNHCR, North Macedonia has shown solidarity with refugees through many conflicts in recent history. From the wars across the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, to hundreds of thousands who passed through the country in 2015 and 2016, to hosting Afghan and Ukrainian refugees fleeing their countries most recently, we have worked incessantly to provide protection to those people and remain a strong supporter of responsibility sharing globally.

While the COVID-19 pandemic challenged our ways of life in many manners and, at the same time, pushed us to reconsider our attitudes towards many aspects of life, under no circumstances should we allow the pandemic to serve as a justification for the lack of solidarity. Through these years of challenges, we need ever stronger and deeper partnership and solidarity. To this regard, this Manifesto wishes to motivate academia in North Macedonia, as well as other counterparts – including the government - to take initiative and to collectively work towards the expansion of complementary education pathways, thus providing refugees and asylum seekers with an opportunity to further their education and rebuild their lives. Universities, Governments, Civil Society, the Private Sector and the International Community are called to action to offer refugee students protection and solutions in third countries through higher education scholarships and opportunities.

I hope we will see the fruits it bears at our universities very soon.

2. Address of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia, H.E. Mr. **Stevo Pendarovski**, at the Pilot Advanced Thematic Forum on International Refugee Protection: Complementary Pathways (January 2022)

Executive Summary³

Building on the established cooperation among the Refugee Law and Migration Center at the Iustinianus Primus Law Faculty, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius-Skopje [the Refugee Law and Migration Center], the UNHCR Representation in North Macedonia and the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in Sanremo, the Pilot Advanced Thematic Forum on International Refugee Protection [The Forum] was developed as a specific advocacy-oriented convention on specific topics relevant to the protection situation in North Macedonia, where recommendations can be gathered from international practitioners and academics to advise the pursuit of advocacy objectives in the country.

As organisers and conveners of the Forum, together with the signatories of this Manifesto, the Center, the UNHCR and the Institute hereby pledge to jointly work towards the creation and expansion of tertiary education pathways for refugees in North Macedonia and facilitate the involvement and support of other interested entities from government, academia and civil society, both in the country and abroad.

This Manifesto is an open invitation to relevant stakeholders from the country to publicly pledge to turn high education opportunities for refugee students from third countries in North Macedonia into reality.

Preamble

Considering the need to expand complementary pathways (particularly higher education pathways) to facilitate admission of refugees to third countries;

Considering the commitments made by the Republic of North Macedonia on the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees by the UN General Assembly in 2018;

Bearing in mind that the Pilot Advanced Thematic Forum on International Refugee Protection: *Complementary Pathways* [hereinafter: the Thematic Forum on Complementary Pathways] held on 26 January 2022, identified key avenues to explore and thereafter implement, with the sole purpose of achieving the goal of establishing education pathways for refugees into North Macedonia;

Noting that addressing the need for access to higher education in all stages of humanitarian response, including protracted refugee situations, and to expand and facilitate access to durable solutions is a necessity in the contemporary refugee context;

Particularly turning attention to the rapidly escalating situation throughout the world in relation to people fleeing their countries;

Striving, in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees, to further strengthen the ties between the governments, universities, and civil society towards achievement of the goals set within this document;

In hope to create conditions to support the arrival of students, to continue their education and rebuild their lives and futures;

The organizing parties and participants of the Thematic Forum on Complementary Pathways have agreed to proclaim the following:

³ Refugee Law and Migration Center, "Iustinianus Primus" Faculty of Law; UNHCR Representative in North Macedonia; Department of International Refugee Law and Migration Law, International Institute of Humanitarian Law of Sanremo, Italy

MANIFESTO

The hereby undersigned institutions, individuals and entities pledge to work together towards expanding complementary pathways (particularly higher education pathways), which would facilitate the admission of refugee students from third countries to higher education institutions in the Republic of North Macedonia.

It is within such scope that the following main avenues are to be considered:

- To identify stakeholders that may facilitate or support the process across different sectors, including state institutions, universities and other academic institutions, civil society and host community capacities, the international community and the donor community;
- To address the need for access to higher education at all stages of the displacement cycle, including particularly in protracted refugee situations;
- To increase the quality of refugee education, focusing on outcomes that could lead to durable solutions, including, but not limited to, employment opportunities;
- To gather data to better track achievement and improve program delivery;
- To develop existing and new standardised educational programs that would allow for refugee students to easily integrate into higher education systems in the Republic of North Macedonia and to facilitate further study abroad to improve durable and sustainable outcomes;
- To focus particularly on marginalised groups such as women and girls, as well as those with special needs, to increase their access to higher education.

The implied legal considerations, economic justification, feasibility, social orientation, individual tailoring all need to be matched in a single puzzle to achieve the required objectives, through concerted action and by providing compelling answers to all questions and dilemmas that arise.

Why?

Conflicts and other drivers of forced displacement significantly disrupt the lives of vast numbers of people around the world. They represent a threat to our belief in human rights and liberties, as well as the lives and freedoms of persons who flee persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion.

Modern societies cannot afford to make distinctions between foreign nationals, and their citizens. In the 21st century, knowledge is ubiquitous. However, in order for it to be effectively used to improve the quality of life of refugees, there is a need of its formal recognition.

According to UNHCR, in 2022 the world passed the mark of 100 million forcibly displaced persons around the world. UNHCR's Global Trends Report informs that at the end of 2021, there were 31.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers, 41% of whom are at school age. As of 2021, only 5% of refugees are enrolled in higher education institutions, distancing them from the process of decision making for their own futures.

The right to education is a recognized and one of the basic human rights, as outlined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Refugee Convention. The latter also refers to States according to refugees' access to higher education in circumstances as favourable as possible, including regarding access to studies, recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, remission of fees and charges, and the award of scholarships.

This process yields many benefits:

- Education in the recognized system leads to reduced risks of forced recruitment, child labour, sexual exploitation and other ill treatment of refugees.
- It provides a place for refugees to have socially desirable surroundings, with their peers, within the normal routine of an education facility. Such surroundings both strengthen community resilience and provide students with the knowledge and skills to find long-term durable solutions, which in turn empowers them with the knowledge and skills to live productive, fulfilling and independent lives.
- Education helps refugees to become self-sufficient, enabling them to learn about themselves and the world around them, as they strive to rebuild their lives and communities.

Who?

Unlike in the past, when the responsibility to protect refugees was mainly sought from state institutions and relevant international organizations, today international cooperation and a whole-of-society approach are key elements in the quest for solutions. It is one of the principles promoted by the Global Compact on Refugees from 2018. The Compact accounts for the potential contribution toward finding solutions and sharing of responsibility from a variety of actors, including the academic community, civil society, the private sector and many other stakeholders.

Therefore, the effective solution of the problems of refugees implies the need for a broad alliance of stakeholders, who will jointly pursue these goals. Each societal actor has their own goals and tasks that contribute to the successful attainment of such solutions.

Numerous universities in the Republic of North Macedonia already admit foreign nationals as students in their programmes, coming through exchange and scholarship programmes. Of course, state institutions play a key role in enabling access to territory, regulating residence and protecting the rights of foreign nationals who pursue their education in North Macedonia. When it comes to refugees, there are specific vulnerabilities at play that imply the need for special support, which gives rise to the role of civil society and international organizations.

Considering the above, the list of actors who can contribute to the establishment of complementary education pathways for refugee students from third countries can include:

- **Universities**, positioned at the very core of the matter, taking initiatives and expressing interest to government and state institutions to establish and develop education pathways and advocating for the removal of legislative and administrative obstacles that may be preventing this. In this manner they will in particular:
 - Expand their offers of courses taught in foreign languages in order to be able to host refugees whose knowledge of the local language or level of English might be lacking;
 - Take the lead in integrating refugees into their communities, while also acting as a bridge between the student and the broader community. This can be accomplished through encouraging refugee engagement in student-led academic, athletic, and social activities;
 - Design and develop programmes that are flexible and mindful of refugee and other non-traditional students' unpredictable and shifting priorities, including in the context of flexibility of documentation requirements, as well as considering short, mid and long-term prospects;
 - Increase and support peer-to-peer activities, which provide refugees with an immediate social network to aid in their integration, language proficiency, and information dissemination;
 - Work on scholarship opportunities for refugee students while providing the continuity of complementary education pathways. Collaborations with the private sector could provide alternatives to fund-raising as well as opportunities for refugees beyond university.
 - Offer psychosocial support for refugee students and the students supporting them in their integration into the Universities in North Macedonia.

- **Governments**, as the condition *sine qua non* for seeing through this idea come to life, shall undertake to:
 - Map and resolve legislative and administrative obstacles that may prevent establishment of education pathways;
 - Facilitate the establishment and expansion of third country corridors for refugees to solutions and complementary pathways as per the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees;
 - Enable integration of refugees, including enrolment of students in local university systems and expand access to job opportunities for non-nationals;
 - Conclude bilateral agreements and enter multilateral arrangements with other States for the recognition of foreign education certifications;
 - Make adjustments to their national legislation and administrative mechanisms to facilitate access of refugee students from third countries to residence and protection mechanisms;
 - Guarantee respect for the principle of *non-refoulement* for refugee students who arrive via a third country education pathway.
- **Civil Society, Private Sector and International Community**, as an essential element involved in projects to promote complementary higher education pathways, including by providing additional funding and supporting the governments' and universities' capacity to implement them and in particular via:
 - Identifying ways in which civil society can support the orientation process of refugee students arriving via education pathways;
 - Exploring opportunities to link education pathways for refugees with labour channels, internship and traineeship programmes across the private and civil society sectors;
 - Considering the models of private (community) refugee sponsorship;
 - Collaborating with humanitarian and development actors in the design, financing, and implementation of novel educational support systems – such as complementary education pathways – for people living in protracted crises;
 - Encouraging new/diverse financial partners to support complementary education pathways;
 - Providing refugees with access to higher education should be a part of long-term budget planning. The international community should provide stable financial support for institutions opening their doors to refugees to support national efforts to include the provision of higher education for refugees in countries' budget planning.

How?

Working in concert, the various stakeholders and key players shall aim to provide education opportunities to refugees, as disadvantaged groups. However, this shall in no way mean that such opportunities shall be segregated from the present system of education. On the contrary, those opportunities shall be within the present higher education framework, exploring opportunities within the present legislation, and utilising existing capacities to the best extent possible.

Answering the question of HOW, the various stakeholders that pledge support to this Manifesto will cooperate to:

- Pool together relevant government institutions with interested universities and civil society organizations, as well as the donor community;
- Establish a cross-sector Task Force that will work together on the establishment of an education pathway into North Macedonia, consisted of universities, government institutions, civil society organizations and other interested stakeholders;
- Conduct research to map the challenges and possible solutions required for the establishment of a pathway in North Macedonia;
- Identify potential source countries from where refugee students would be able to apply to benefit from the established education pathway.

When?

When it comes to education, the question of WHEN becomes one of vital importance. Often, refugees are faced with having their education pathways cut short by war and other misfortunes, without any clear indication on when they might again appear on the horizon. This is particularly the case when there is little left on this education journey, which just amplifies the problem that individuals are facing.

Therefore, the “When” really becomes “As Of Right Now”, and it is within this time a pressuring factor all of us need to work on to find solutions leading to education pathways.

To achieve fastest results, clear action plans need to be designed and created, realistic and achievable deadlines set, to assure that every actor in this process has enough information, motivation and resources to work towards achievement of the common goal. The authors of this Manifesto are of the belief that this can only be done by involving all concerned stakeholders in the paving of the road ahead.

Concluding Remarks

The 1951 Convention states clearly that international cooperation is the only way to reach effective responsibility sharing and facilitating refugees' access to their rights. Building on the same spirit of global solidarity and responsibility sharing, the Global Compact on Refugees from 2018 encourages societies to work together at all levels to facilitate responsibility sharing and generate opportunities for refugees to reach durable solutions.

Any individual, organization and entity that recognizes the importance of the aforementioned goals is therefore welcome to work alongside the current actors, on the same footing and under equal terms, by pledging commitment to the goals and calls to action of this Manifesto.

A bundle of belongings is not the only thing that a refugee brings to their new country. Einstein, too, was a refugee.

Skopje, 26 May 2022

Signatories

Institutions/Organisations:

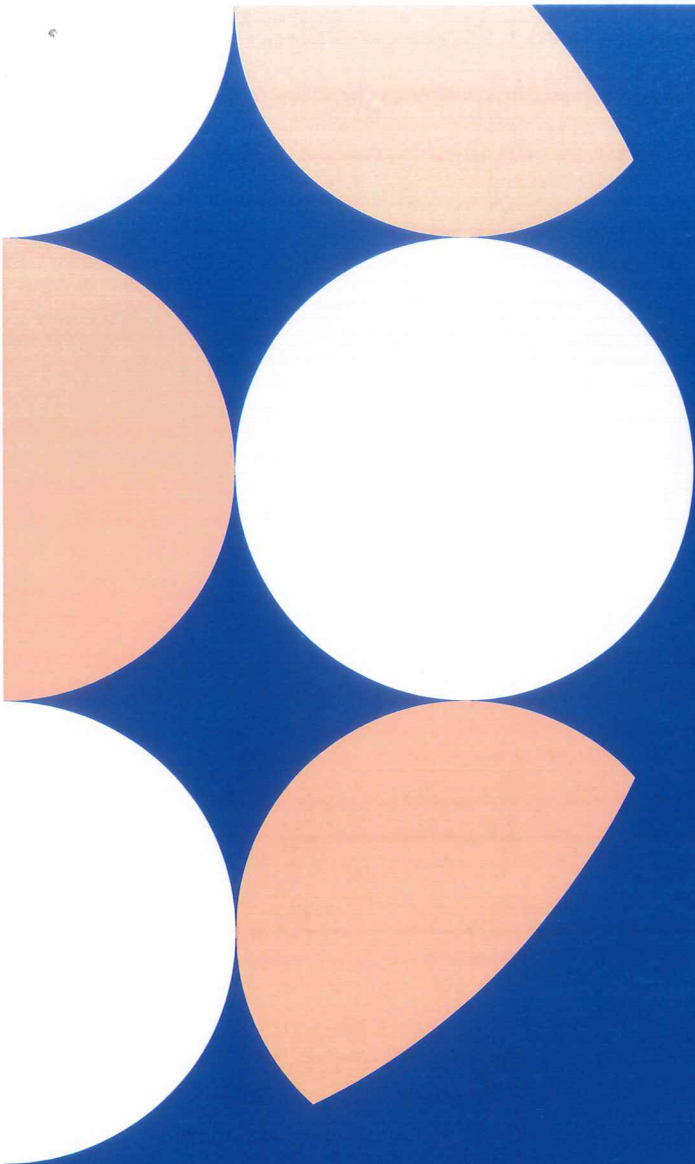
On behalf of
"Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University

Prof. Dr. Sc. Nikola Jankulovski,
Rector



Signature: _____

Date: 15-11-2022



**CENTER FOR
REFUGEE LAW
AND MIGRATION**

 **UNHCR**
The UN Refugee Agency



International Institute of Humanitarian Law
Institut International de Droit Humanitaire
Istituto Internazionale di Diritto Umanitario