

How Refugees Are Building New Lives With A Business Education

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Business schools can have a profound impact on refugees, and the opportunity they have to build a ... [+] AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

In February 2022, Europe had a stark reminder of how quickly a massive number of people can be displaced, pretty much overnight. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has forced more than 8 million Ukrainians to flee, both within the country and to neighbouring European countries, with Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic among those opening their doors to these refugees.

Though the Ukrainian refugee crisis garnered much media attention and mobilization from European countries, there are numerous other conflicts, political regimes and natural disasters that have caused the displacement of many people from all over the world in recent years. From Syria and Afghanistan to Sudan and Myanmar, the number of refugees worldwide increased to 35.3 million at the end of 2022, the largest yearly increase ever recorded, according to UNHCR, the UN refugee Agency

Responsibility for ensuring refugees' safety often rests on governments and global organizations such as the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR as well as NGOs and charities such as the International Rescue Committee, Doctors Without Borders and Save The Children to ensure that they are able to evacuate their homes and settle in a safer place, as well as have access to basic needs such as healthcare. But for many refugees, they leave fruitful and rewarding lives in their home countries, moving to new countries, cultures and contexts, and more often than not are simply surviving not thriving in their new environments.

This is where business schools recognize they can have a profound impact on refugees, and there are clearly plenty of opportunities where business schools, and their students and alumni, can play their part to help tackle the global refugee crisis. [...]

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the University of St. Gallen, in Switzerland, has been offering various support measures for refugee Ukrainians. The "[Offers for Migrants](#)" initiative, provides selected executive education programmes free of charge to all refugee migrants with a university degree living in Switzerland. The aim of the initiative is to enable refugee migrants to access high-quality, contemporary executive education so that they can build a better future for themselves, as well as giving them the opportunity to orient themselves professionally and to gain a foothold in Switzerland.

Offering executive education programmes for highly qualified refugees is particularly relevant, important and urgent today, says Christina Vetsch, Corporate Communication Manager at University of St. Gallen's Executive School. "Highly qualified refugees bring with them knowledge, skills and experience from which the entire society can benefit. In the individual programs, they learn and experience how to adapt their existing skills and supplement missing knowledge, thereby increasing and improving their chances on the labour market," she says.

Vetsch emphasizes the importance of business schools undertaking initiatives for highly skilled refugees in terms of social responsibility and equal opportunities. "Such initiatives demonstrate that business schools are taking on social responsibility and contributing to the creation of an inclusive society. At the same time, they promote equality of opportunity by providing skilled refugees with access to education and, subsequently, employment opportunities." [...]



Matt Symonds

I'm co-Founder of some of the most popular business school and university platforms of the last 25 years. With Fortuna Admissions, I work alongside former directors and associates from Wharton, INSEAD, HBS, Stanford and other leading schools. My book "Getting the MBA Admissions Edge" was sponsored by McKinsey, Goldman Sachs, BCG and Bain. I'm Chief Editor of BlueSky Thinking, which shares the insights, research and expertise of b-schools, universities and thought leaders. I was the S of QS Quacquarelli Symonds, publishers of the QS World University Rankings, and launched the QS World MBA Tour. With John Byrne of Poets & Quants we host the CentreCourt MBA and Masters Festival, and I organize Media Conferences to connect schools with the world's media.