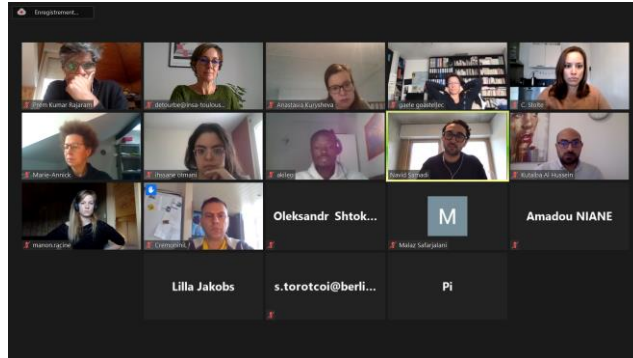


European Universities – Critical Futures Refugee Access to HE Working Group Nov 13, 2020 Webinar



The aim of this webinar series is to open a space for students, practitioners and researchers to engage together in issues related to the inclusion of students with a refugee background into higher education (HE) structures. What brings the participants together is their wish to understand further the dynamics at play, not only the obstacles but also the opportunities in widening access, from multiple perspectives. We believe a diversity of voices should be heard to support the idea that higher education can provide a range of answers and opportunities for people undergoing forced migration in all their diversity; and to support further action to improve access to HE. And we decided that the first voices that should be heard is that of the students themselves.

In this first session, Kutaiba Al Hussein, Akileo Mangeni and Navid Samadi accepted to share their experience of access into higher education in different countries. The questions that guided their talks were the following:

- How did you come to plan your entry into HE?
- Which situations made it difficult for you to access HE?
- Which issues did you face after accessing HE, during your university/classroom experience?
- What or who did you feel help/made a difference?

The link to the recorded webinar is here (minus the introduction as agreement to record from the participants had not been asked):

https://zoom.us/rec/share/C99yFAjKWlfdgrdkBGRSiSACnBhpmobFjjM60_SsQyM2JY_lvu_u5wxiqvhN-os.zcXyOG8ka8FuZwk5

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- **Kutaiba Al Hussein** is a legal and business advisor at an international law firm and a volunteer at Central European University's Open Learning initiative (OLive-WP) in Budapest. He earned his Master's degree in legal studies from Central European University through OLive University Preparatory Program (OLive-UP) as a refugee from Syria.

- **Akileo Mangeni** is a Finance consultant at Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (Shared Services Centre) in Budapest. He is a student mentor and volunteer with the Open Learning initiative (OLive-WP) at Central European University in Budapest. He graduated with Master's degree in Public Administration from Central European University and he holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Social Administration.
- **Navid Samadi** is an undergraduate student at University of Lausanne (UNIL). Originally from Afghanistan, he has lived in Switzerland since 2016 as a refugee. He is co-president of UNIL Without Borders association, and an elected student representative at the University Council.

Brought together, the stories of Kutaiba, Akileo and Navid recall the importance of several dimensions as central for access and success in pursuing HE studies in their respective European countries of residence:

- The existence of previous individual educational capital to aspire to, construct and obtain access
- The existence of access programs, as vectors of academic socialization, educational catching up through the auditor status, and to receive adapted information to engage in a new degree programme.
- The importance of sometimes random encounters to identify these programs but also to build adequate social networks
- The importance of administrative categorization of refugees and the rights they open up or close.

Additionally, difficulties are especially important:

- The temporality of access: constructing access in a new country, in a new language, takes years and also implies economic resources.
- The languages of studies available make it more or less difficult, and being able to study in English can make it easier.

This touches upon the issue of the universities' social responsibility. The next webinars will explore this further.