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DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst
German Academic Exchange Service

DAAD and UNHCR join forces to provide higher education scholarships for Syrian refugees

DAAD and UNHCR sign Memorandum of Understanding - first scholarships for Syrian refugees in Turkey and the Middle East
Scholarships to be awarded The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The aim is to create new prospects for Syrian refugees through access to higher education in the MENA region and Turkey. The DAAD and UNHCR agreed to pool their capacities to reach a higher impact for their HOPES project (DAAD) and the DAFI (UNHCR) scholarship program.

The EU-funded HOPES project targets Syrian refugees who are eligible to study in Lebanon, Jordan, Northern Iraq, Egypt and Turkey. Scholarships will be provided in order to enable them to assume or to finish higher education. Next to the refugees, also scholarships for students from the host countries are available. 400-600 scholarships shall be awarded during the project's lifespan until the end of 2019.

Since the beginning of the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) program in 1992, UNHCR has awarded more than 8,000 university scholarships primarily to undergraduate refugee students in the country of first asylum. In the light of the civil war in Syria, the German Foreign Ministry, who is the main donor for the DAFI program, has announced to provide additional DAFI scholarships for Syrian refugees in the region.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier: "In 2016, Germany is funding 2,500 new DAFI scholarships mostly for Syrian, but also for Afghan and African refugees. With its commitment to higher education for refugees, Germany creates perspectives for young refugees allowing them to take their future into their own hands and become more self-reliant, hence, also contributing to the well-being of their communities."

Coordination between HOPES and DAFI has intensified considerably since the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding in June. With UNHCR offering to make use of already existing structures, the DAAD was able to reach a quick first impact with the HOPES project and enable students to start or continue their studies already in the upcoming fall semester.

"We are very pleased to join forces with UNHCR in order to really make a difference for young, talented people in the region. By working together, synergies are created and more people will be able to receive funding for their studies," said DAAD President Professor Margret Wintermantel.

DAAD and UNHCR have launched a joint advertisement campaign for their scholarships which has reached a considerable amount of eligible candidates. In Turkey, the largest number of applications was registered. 13,500 candidates applied for a total of 1,500 available scholarships provided by DAFI, HOPES and a local institution. 90 of the scholarships will be funded by HOPES, 750 by the DAFI program. The selection processes and award procedures in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Northern Iraq are ongoing. The decisions are taken by joint HOPES-DAFI selection committees.

Background

Launched in April 2016, the project HOPES is implemented by a consortium led by the DAAD. Partners are the British Council, EP-Nuffic and Campus France. HOPES follows a comprehensive approach to enable Syrian refugees and vulnerable youth to enter the higher education systems in Lebanon, Jordan, Northern Iraq, Egypt and Turkey. The DAAD is responsible for the award of scholarships and counselling. The other European partners offer language courses, funding for short projects via calls for proposals and communication and networking activities. The EU Regional Trust Fund (Madad Fund) provides the funding for the HOPES project.

Since 1992 the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) program allowed thousands of refugee students to pursue higher education in their country of first asylum. In 2016, more than 5000 students have received scholarships in 40 countries worldwide. The program is administrated by UNHCR directly and predominantly funded by the generous support of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.