

Welcoming researchers at risk to French universities

Mathieu Schneider

President of the MEnS Network

Vice-president of Strasbourg University



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Building a culture of welcome at French universities

An old commitment at Strasbourg University...



2009: Strasbourg University welcomes Pinar Selek, the Turkish sociologist, and offers her to achieve her PhD

2013: President Alain Beretz grants her the right to “academic asylum”

2014: delegates from the university (staff & students) attend Pinar’s trial at Istanbul at Istanbul’s Court of Justice

2016: Pinar is offered an Associate Professor position at Nice University

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... and not only in recent years!



- Sept 1939: exile of Strasbourg University to Clermont-Ferrand (2,000 students & professors fleeing)
- 1943: round-up of hundreds of students and professors in Clermont by the SS ; 134 persons died in prison or deportation
- 1941-1944: anatomic experimentations by August Hirt on 86 Jews gazed in the NS-concentration camp of Natzweiler

Strasbourg University is the only HEI in France to have been decorated with the **Medal of Resistance**

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At Strasbourg University: a global strategy from 2015 on



A new context in 2015: *the Syrian war and a huge migration wave moving to Europe*

Some political **commitments** in France:

- François Hollande appeals for solidarity towards refugees
- The Mayor of Strasbourg calls for an effort by all public and private institutions

The President of Strasbourg University and its board release 100k€ for an emergency programme for refugees:

- Creation of a refugee “help desk”
- Integration of refugees students in the University Diploma for Foreign Students (French courses) → 75 students in 2015-16, 100 in 2016-17
- Dedicated accompaniment (accommodation, grants, financial and social support, psychological and medical help)
- Cooperation with “Alsace-Syrie”, the local association of the Syrian community

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At Strasbourg University: a global strategy from 2015 on



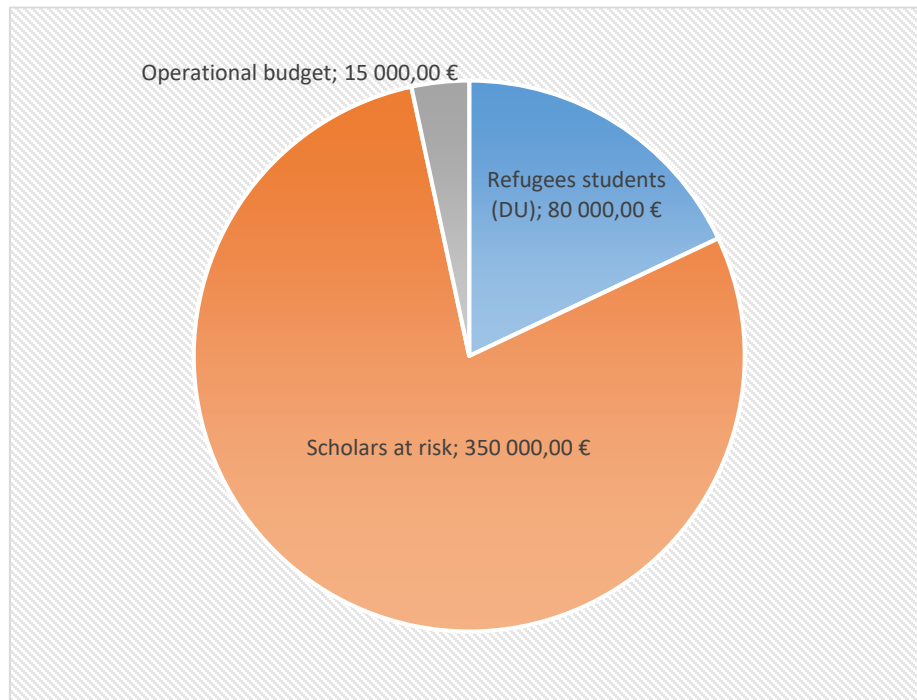
In 2017, the programme for refugee students turns into a **comprehensive policy for students and scholars “in exile”**, including:

- A budget of yearly 60k€ for a specific **University Diploma** for refugees (DU RELIER – Retour aux études par la langue et l’interculturalité des étudiants réfugiés)
- A common **“help desk and resource centre”** for students and scholars at risk with dedicated staff (2.5 persons)
- A **steering committee** including the CROUS (social and student-life department) and diverse stakeholders (incl. local authorities)
- A **fundraising programme** at the University Foundation (15k€ collected donations in 15 days in 2016; 45k€ from 2017 to 2020)
- A **fund for researchers in exile**, coupled with PAUSE, of yearly 100k€ (with an internal commission of delegates from the Research Council of the University)

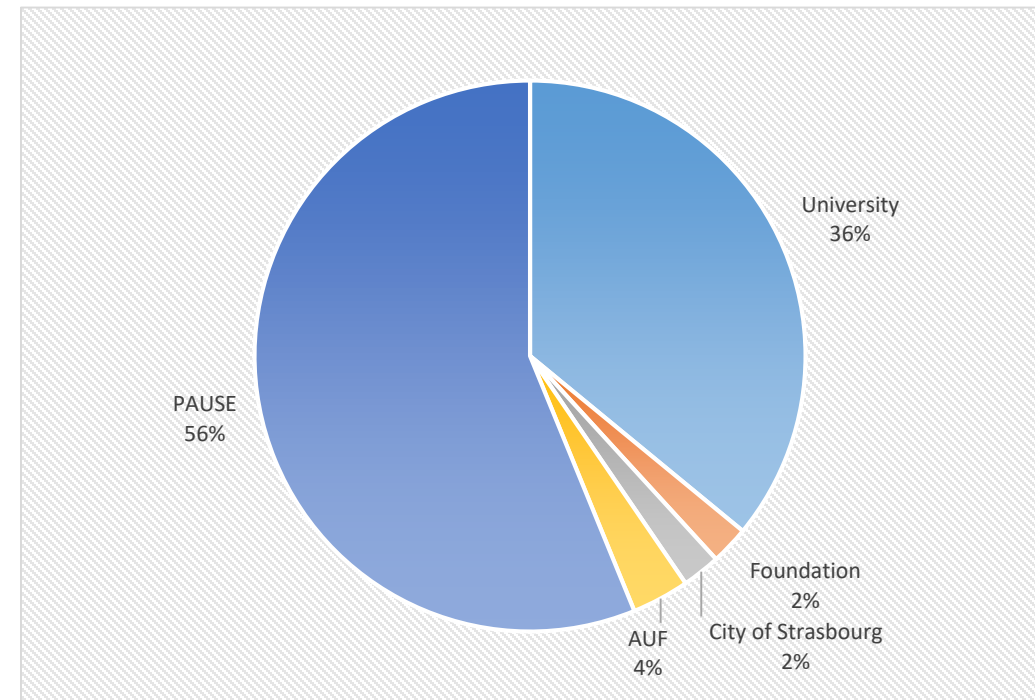
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TOTAL BUDGET: 445,000€ yearly



Expenditure



Revenue

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Some key figures

Refugee students since 2015: **ca. 400**

Scholars at risk since 2017: **9**

Attendance rate of students: **80-90%**

Success rate of students (DU RELIER): **75-85%**

Scholars at risk unemployed: **0**

Scholars at risk on permanent academic position: **0**

Scholars at risk on temporary academic position: **8**

Scholars at risk on a permanent position outside the university: **1**

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Our main stakeholders



Programme national d'Aide à l'Accueil
en Urgence des Scientifiques en Exil

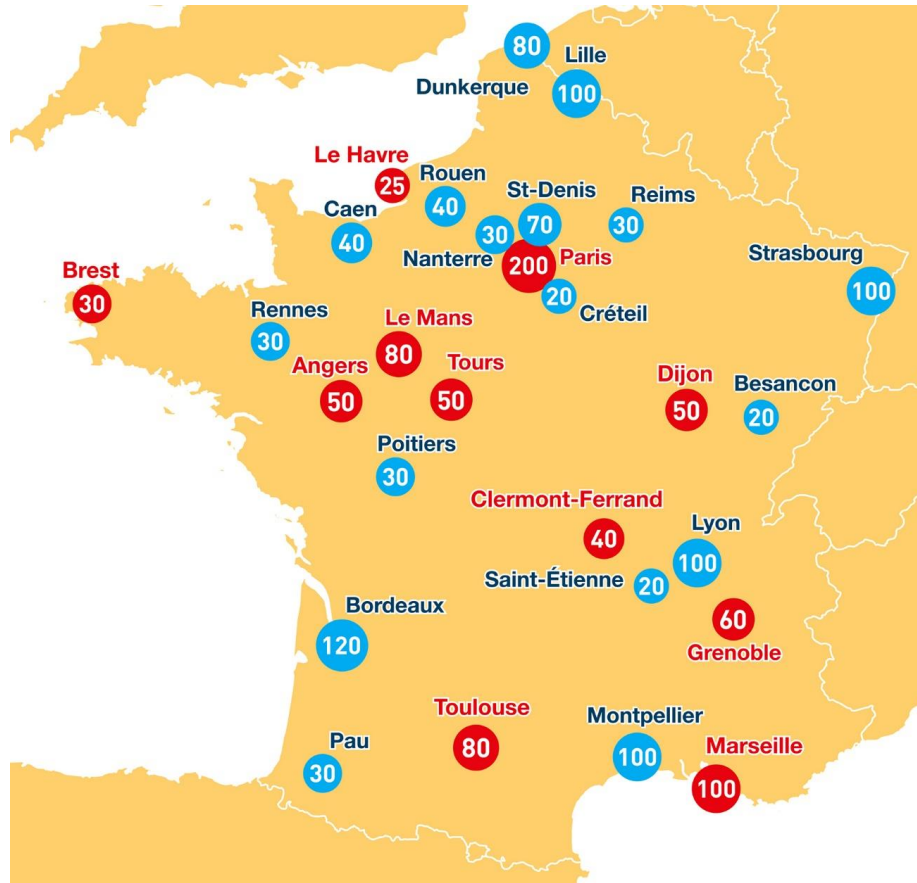


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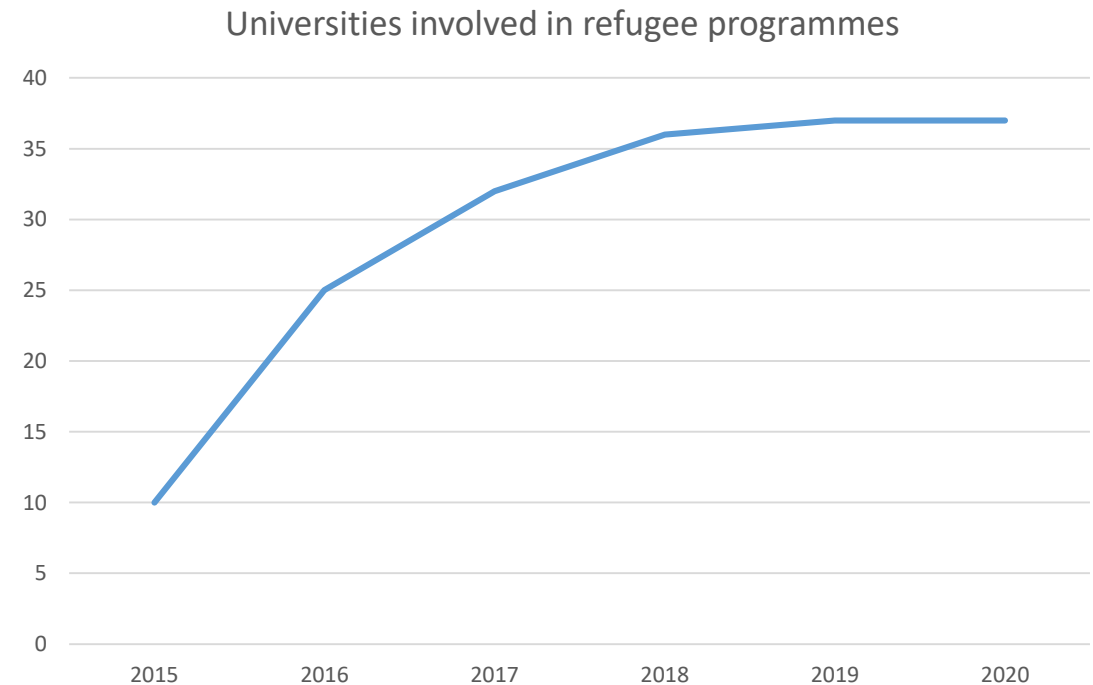


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At the same time, in France, other similar initiatives were taken by other universities



In 2016



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The MEnS initiative, supported and hosted by the French Rectors' Conference (CPU)



Some important milestones:

- 2016: first meeting of universities involved in programmes for refugees at the Ministry for HER
- March 2017: first meeting of the universities on their own initiative
- September 2017: launching of the informal network MEnS
- September 2020: MEnS Network becomes an association



37 universities
10 partners
2,000 refugee students each year
201 scholars at risk (2017-20)

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Our best asset in France: PAUSE

What is done by PAUSE

- Financial support (50-80% of the position) for 2 years
- Training courses
- Meetings
- Advocating

What is done by the universities?

- Position in a research unit
- Taking charge of the position (20-50%)
- Assistance for accommodation
- In some cases: mentoring, French (or English) courses

201 scholars at risk
94 in a second year
78 HEI involved
33% PhD students
44% associate prof. (or equiv.)
23 prof. (or equiv.)



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Challenges and perspectives for scholars at risk in France

3 main challenges:

- Integration in the French academic life
- Social integration (scholar & his/her family)
- Insertion on the labour market after 2 years

And a new one since the Covid-19-crisis:

- What about the borders (and crossing them) in the coming months/years?

Perspectives

- Develop coaching inside the university and the research unit to improve academic skills
- Build up a network of universities in Europe to allow mobility from one temporary position to another
- Forster training sessions for other job opportunities outside the academic world
- Offer scholars the possibility to teach
- Provide mentoring and career advising

... promote together the “dream” of an “College of the world” at European level to disseminate core values of:

- Academic freedom
- European humanism

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Some outstanding issues



- Which sustainable support from the government in France? From the governments in Europe? From the UE?
- Is a global policy on migration in Europe thinkable? Doable?
- How can we develop further cooperation between universities?

One is sure: Commitment and openness in France are obvious!