



UNICORE  
UNITUS4Refugees  
BRIDGE TRUST

Building up a  
sustainable education  
pathway ecosystem for  
refugee students –  
Lessons learned  
(Italy)

Daniela Vitiello  
**University of Tuscia**  
Daniela.Vitiello@unitus.it



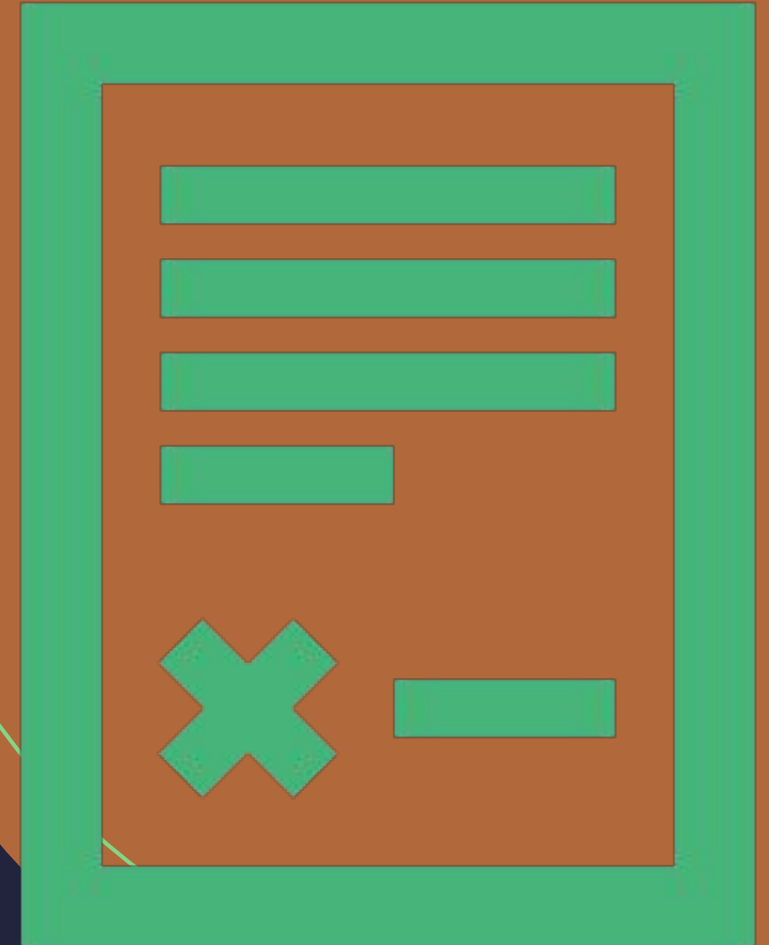
# UNICORE PROGRAMME IN ITALY (2019-2023)

- Launched by UNHCR and UNIBO in 2019 (5 refugees)
- 5 EDITIONS (UNICORE 5.0)
- 41 Italian Universities participating over the years
- 307 courses offered
- 202 scholarships provided



# PRE-REQUISITES FOR LEGAL ENTRY & STAY

- STUDY VISA
- declaration of value (often required)
- 1 YEAR RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR STUDY REASONS, RENEWABLE
- NB: The refugee status, requested in Italy, cannot be cumulated with the residence permit for study reasons



# COUNTRIES OF DEPARTURE

Ethiopia (UNICORE 3.0)

Cameroon, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe (UNICORE 4.0)

Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe (UNICORE 5.0)



# Consortium

---

41 Italian universities

---

Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

---

Italian Ministry of Interior (informal participation)

---

Caritas Italiana, Diaconia Valdese, Centro Astalli, Ghandy Charity, Communitas Consortium

---

Banca IFIS, Banca Etica, the Canadian Embassy in Rome and the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in Sanremo



# OPERATIONAL PHASES (1)

## Design

- Identification of CoD
- Identification of universities, partners
- Drafting national protocol
- Drafting university calls
- Dissemination in the country of first asylum
- Creation of local partnership

## Selection

- Publication of UNICORE calls for proposal
- Eligibility screening and short-listing
- Interview and selection
- Publication of the winners

## Pre-Departure

- pre-enrolment procedures
- Request for travel document and visa
- Online Italian language courses
- Pre-departure information
- Online student/univ. /local partnership meeting

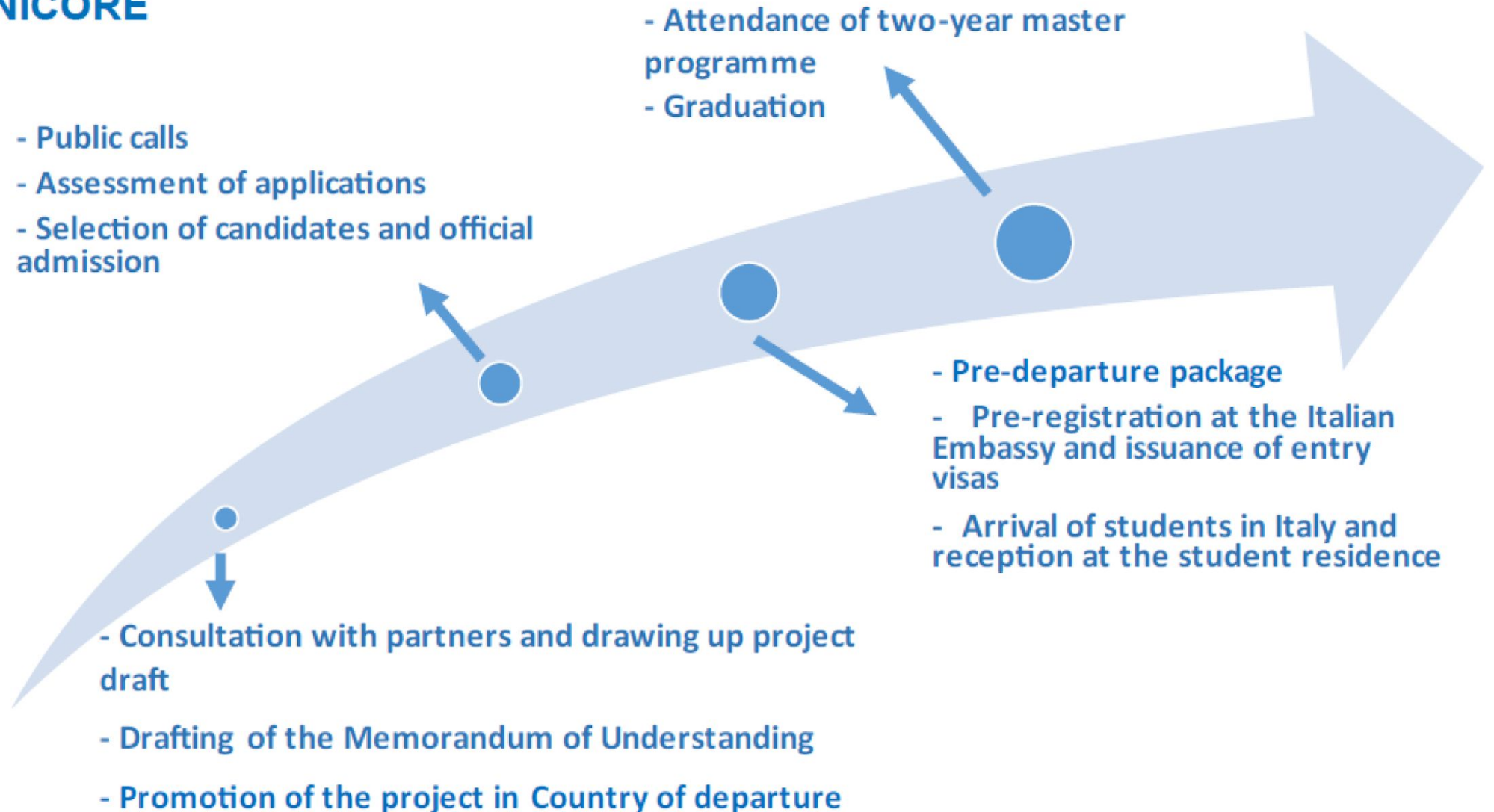
## Arrival and Stay

- Arrival and reception
- Finalization of university enrolment
- Application for residence permit/tax code/SSN registration/bank account opening



# OPERATIONAL PHASES (2)

## UNICORE

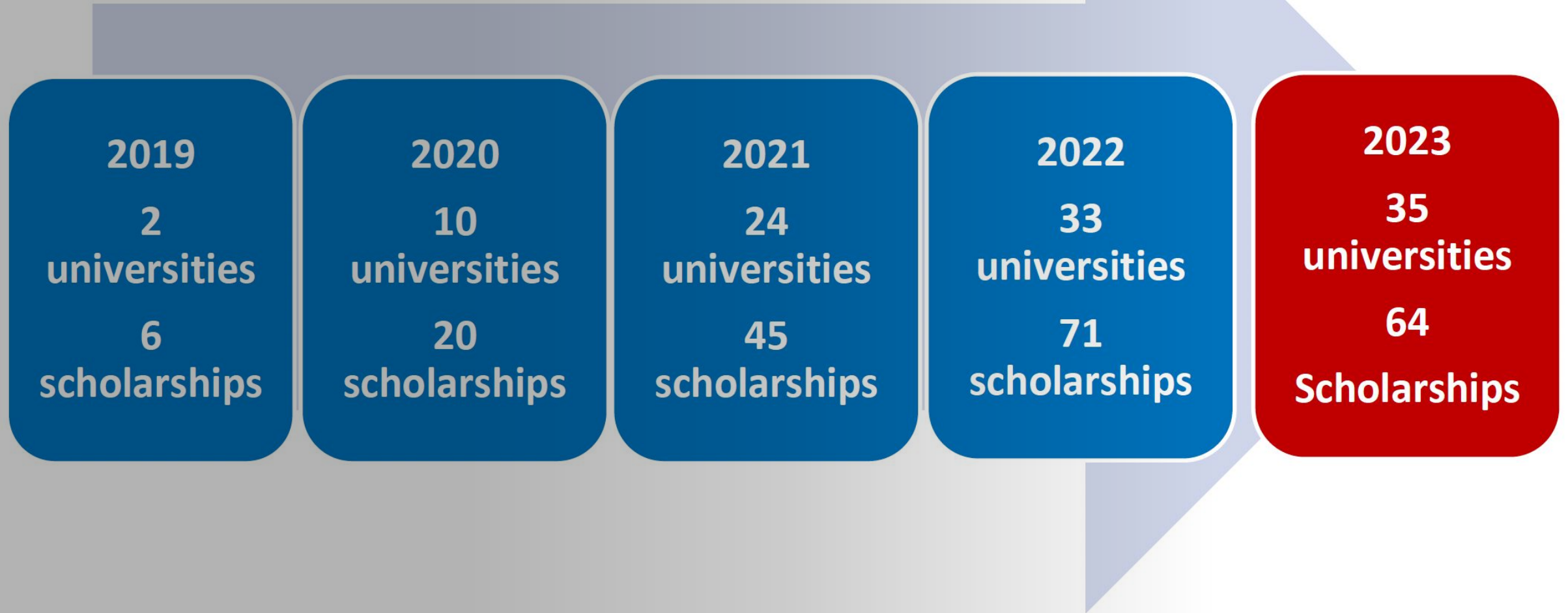


# UNICORE Timeline (selection and pre-departure)

Pre-departure activities	January	February	March	April	May	June	July/August	September
Identification of universities and partner organizations	■	■	■					
Preparation and finalization of the national protocol		■	■	■				
Preparation and finalization of the announcement		■	■	■				
Dissemination in the country of first asylum			■	■	■	■		
Publication of the announcement				■	■	■	■	
Selection						■	■	
Publication of the selected candidates						■	■	
Pre-enrollment procedures						■	■	■
Travel document and visa application							■	■
Pre-departure information							■	■
Online meeting between student/university /local partners							■	■
Departure								■



# THE EXPANSION OF UNICORE (1)



SOURCE: UNICORE EVALUATION REPORT 2023

*Figure 1. Number of partner Universities and scholarships per A.Y. (Source: UNICORE)*

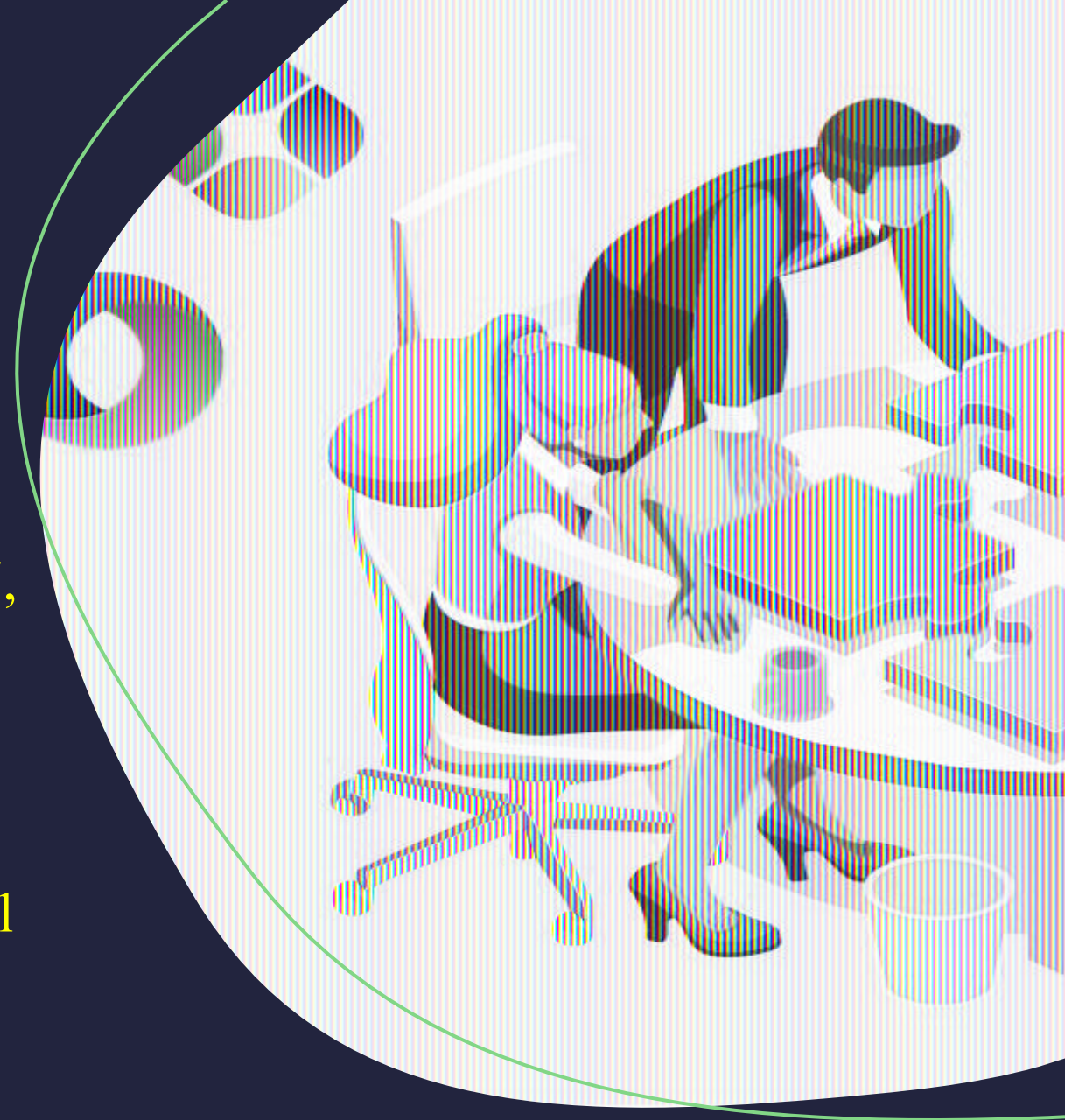
# THE EXPANSION OF UNICORE (2)

UNICORE	Received Applications	Eligible Applications	Shortlisted for interview	Admitted	Scholarships
UNICORE 1.0 (2019-2021)	30	n.a.	13	6	6
UNICORE 2.0 (2020-2022)	100	n.a	n.a	20	20
UNICORE 3.0 (2021-2023)	491	370	176	45	45
UNICORE 4.0 (2022-2024)	356	179	76	50	71
UNICORE 5.0 (2023-2025)	557	265	136	52	64

SOURCE: UNICORE EVALUATION REPORT 2023

# THE WAY AHEAD: future concrete actions 2023-2027

- Provide at least 200 full scholarships
- Select refugees from 10 Countries between Africa and Middle East
- have at least 150 refugee graduates by 2027, of which at least 30% female
- Consortium: at least 45 HEI's, 3 CEOs associations, 2 banks and 5 other private sector entities engaged as partner at national level
- replicate this model to at least 4 EU MSs

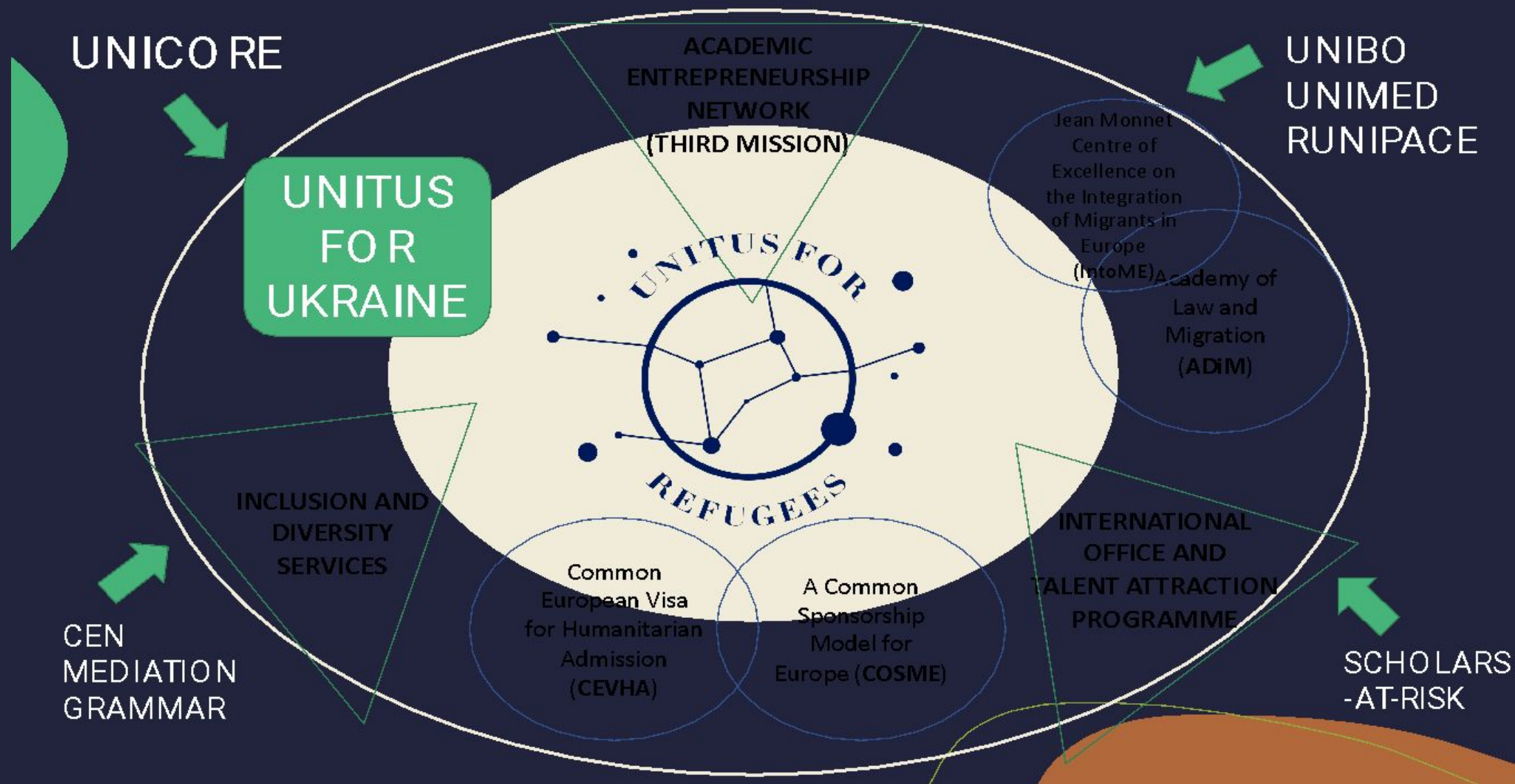






UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DELLA  
**TUSCIA**

# #UNITUS4REFUGEES AS A GOOD PRACTICE IN UNICORE EVALUATION REPORT





UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DELLA  
TUSCIA

# #UNITUS4Refugees: A university-specific and impact-driven whole-of-society project

## Beneficiaries

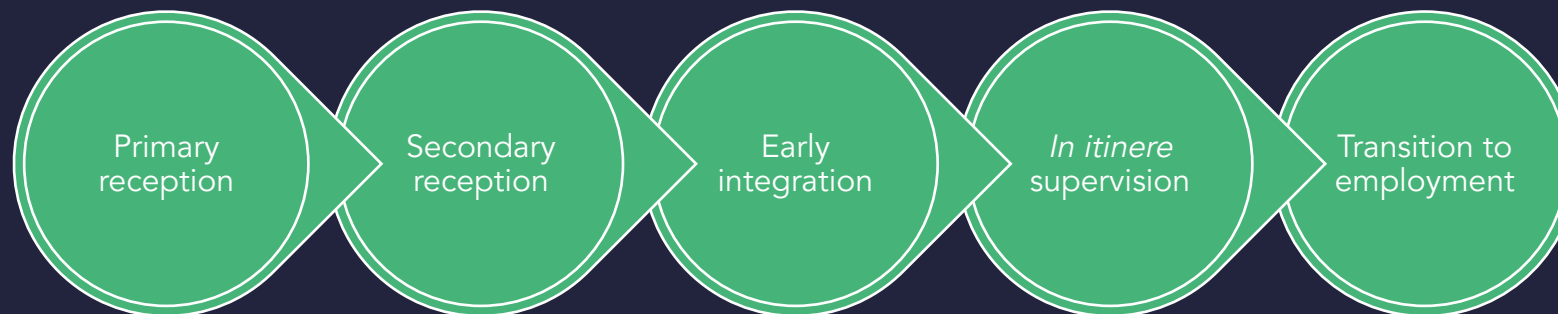
- Refugee students
- International students
- Italian students at risk



# COSME

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP  
FOR MIGRANTS IN EUROPE

## The reception-integration *continuum*





UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DELLA  
TUSCIA

# #UNITUS4Refugees: A crowdfunding network based on community engagement

## Funding

- Regional scholarship (public)
- UNITUS grants (public)
- UNITUS4Refugees (ALUMNI & Student associations)

## Activities (examples)

- **Student prizes and competitions** (Creative writing competition on integration and peace, “Falling in Law” video contest, video contest on “the meaning of peace”), awarding prizes sponsored and funded by private entities
- **Student-led Cultural aperitifs** (e.g. Multicultiuni / role of STUDENT ASSOCIATION)
- **Awareness raising events** fighting toxic narratives around migration (Have your say / Roundtables)
- **Summer Training Schools** (free of charge for refugee students)
- **Outreach activities and webpages** (UNITUS in Law)
- **Dedicated library services**
- **Mentorship** (PhD students), **orientation grants and buddy/peer-to-peer programmes**
- **Free language courses** (language acquisition and additionality of the grants)
- **Simultaneous translation of all events in Italian**
- **Support to placement**: linguistic and cultural mediation / HR (Tribunal / Semi di pace)





UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DELLA  
TUSCIA

# UNITUS4Refugees: The sustainability challenge

## *Diversifying Funding, Sharing Responsibility, Distributing Risks*

### Innovative Financing

- dedicated fund for primary reception (meeting immediate specific needs)
- student-led crowdfunding campaigns
- partnering with locals as service providers (e.g. housing)

### Strategic sustainability principles



#### Empowering

Students, Student associations and ALUMNI as "sponsor groups"



#### Partnering

partnership agreements for internships with Champion sponsors



#### Unlocking potential

dedicated structures and programmes for networking, capacity building, awareness raising

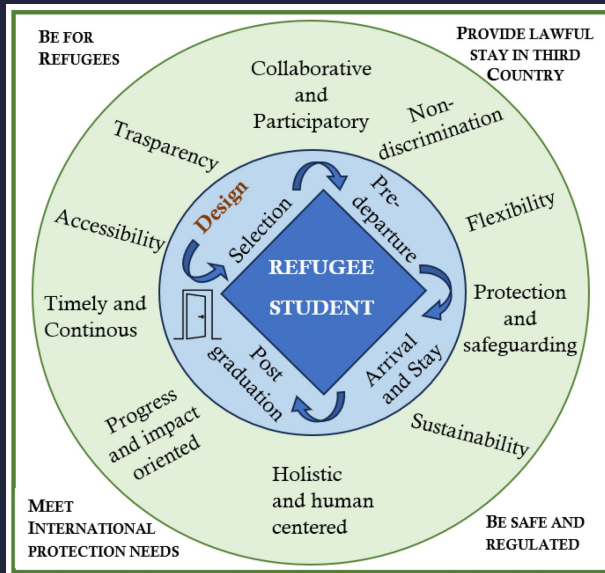




UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DELLA  
TUSCIA

# UNITUS4Refugees: The sustainability challenge

## Sustainability from the students' perspective



FINANCIAL SUPPORT



RELIABILITY OF  
ACADEMIC  
INSTITUTIONS



PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT  
(UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATIONS  
/BUDDIES)



LANGUAGE ABILITIES



MOBILITY  
CHALLENGES



FRIENDLY LIVING  
ENVIRONMENT



CO-CREATION OF THE STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT  
TRAJECTORIES

## Transition to employment

- *language as a tool for the enjoyment of rights* (nexus between language – access to services – human rights enforcement)
- *study courses which maximise refugee students' specific expertise* (e.g. linguistic skills for cultural mediation)
- *ongoing supervision and support* (including in handling legal status issues)

# THE BRIDGE TRUST: A PEER-TO-PEER INITIATIVE AND SUPPORT MODEL

- ❖ The Bridge Trust is an initiative by UNITUS international students who seek to work with refugee children and vulnerable people in the local community
  - Advocacy
  - Fundraising
  - Engagement
  - Content creation
  - University as a "Knowledge Broker"



**Lorenzo Quinn's Giant Stone Hands  
Venice Art Biennale 2019**



# BRIDGE TRUST – Christmas / Epiphany donation campaign

❖ Donation for 19 children ranging in age from 7 days to 14 years old | Reception centre (Balletti Park Hotel) | Viterbo (Italy)

*"Through our collective efforts, we were able to gather a significant amount of funds that allowed us to purchase Christmas and New Year's presents (new educational and interactive toys and treats) for the children. The drive behind this donation was to promote the idea of social responsibility embedded in us all to assist the less privileged in our communities by showing empathy, love, time, and our resources."*

Joshua Wishye Kabelu, SHR international student,  
Bridge Trust Founder and CEO







UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DELLA  
**TUSCIA**

**Thank You for your  
attention!**

**Daniela Vitiello**  
**University of Tuscia**  
**[Daniela.Vitiello@unitus.it](mailto:Daniela.Vitiello@unitus.it)**