

“Arqus: Supporting Refugees’ Right to a Qualified and Unique Study Experience”.

Results from the project surveys

The bottom-up initiative “Arqus: an Alliance Supporting Refugees’ Right to a Qualified and Unique Study Experience” aimed to raise awareness and foster dialogue about the situation of refugees within our universities. The nine universities in the alliance are fully aware of the importance of welcoming refugees (a significant amount of work on this topic was done in ARQUS 1), but unfortunately, much remains to be done. The numbers are now staggering: over 120 million people are fleeing wars, persecution, and violence globally (source: UNHCR 2024), with these numbers constantly increasing due to the rising number of conflicts and the devastating effects of the climate crisis.

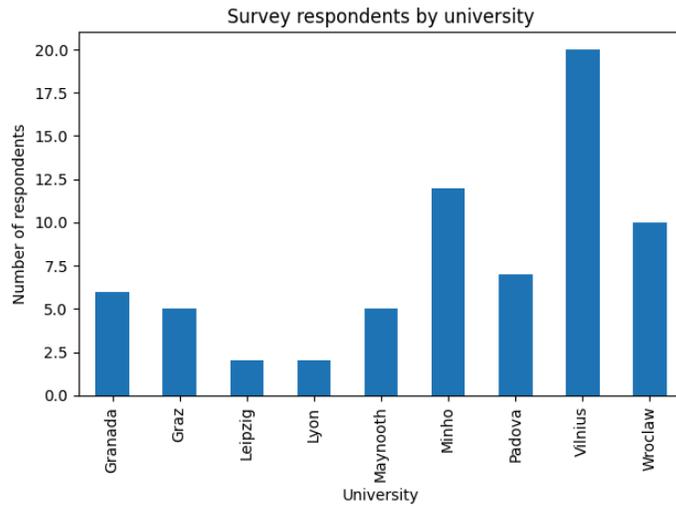
Moreover, the global political climate, increasingly inclined towards closing borders and defending them against welcoming and protecting diversity, can and must be countered with actions that involve young people, the very future of our Europe. Sharing real stories, discussing personal experiences, and sharing what our universities are already doing and what could still be improved are small but significant steps against exclusion and distrust, aimed at creating a welcoming and aware European context.

The project involved nine events, each hosted by one of the alliance’s partner universities, following a shared format: a presentation of research on refugees in higher education by Elisa Gamba (University of Padua), a screening of a documentary on the topic, and a discussion with the film’s director, Leonardo Cinieri Lombroso, alongside staff and students from the hosting university. After each event, an anonymous survey was completed by the participants. The responses are here summarised in a final report, which will be shared within the Arqus community.

1. Profile of respondents

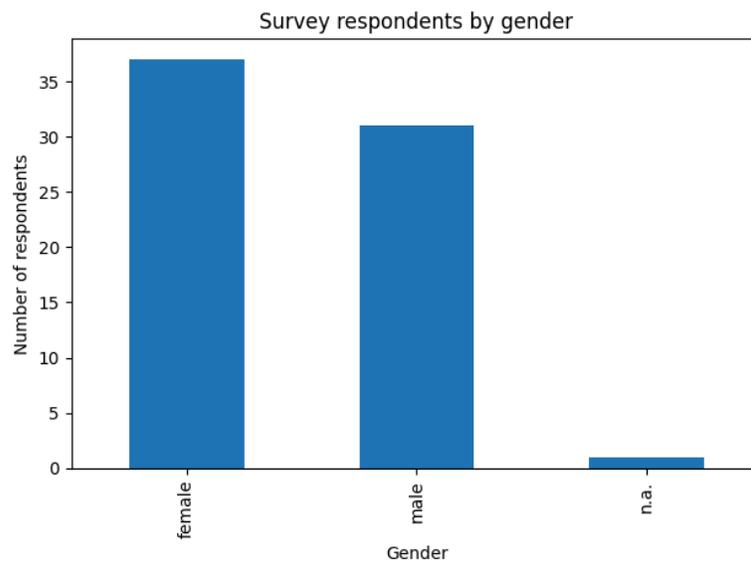
Number of respondents per university

Participants at each event were asked to complete an anonymous online survey. Unfortunately, the number of responses recorded was low in proportion to the number of participants at the events.



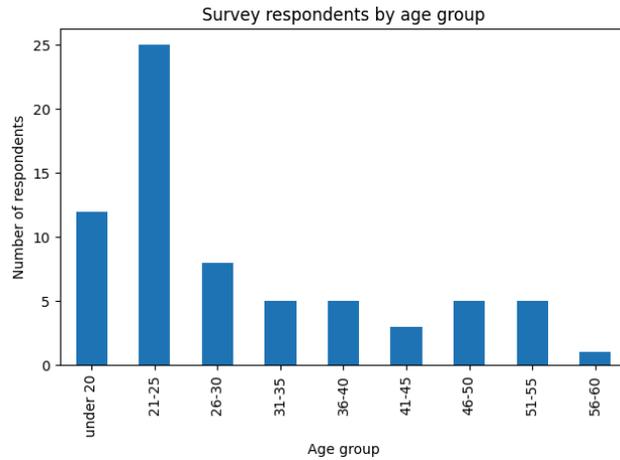
Gender of respondents

The survey reached a relatively balanced gender distribution, with a slight predominance of female respondents:



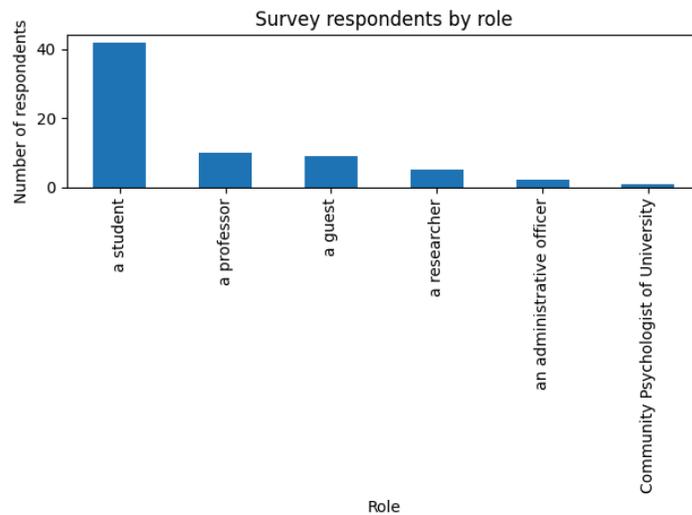
Age of respondents

Age groups are presented in ascending order to reflect the generational distribution of respondents. The age group most represented is consistent with the main target audience for the events: the student community.



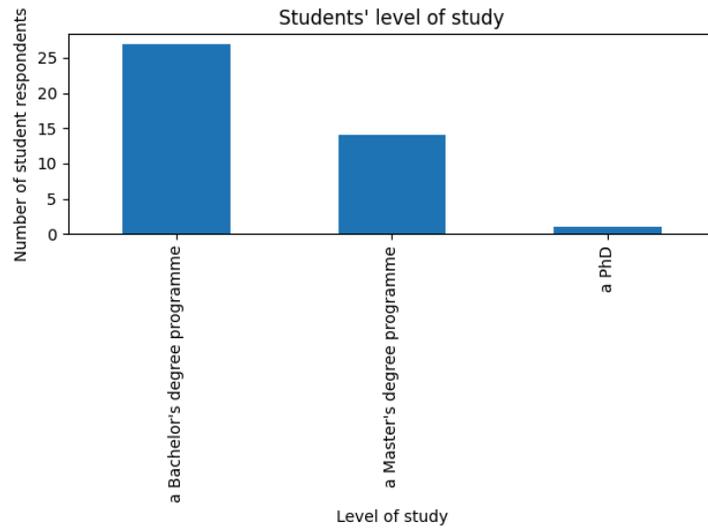
Role of respondents

The role held within the university matches the demographic distribution shown in the previous graph:



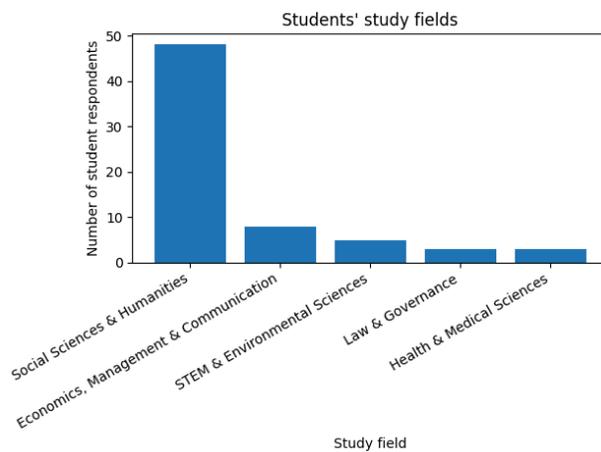
Study level

Most student respondents were enrolled in Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes, with only one PhD candidate participating in the survey:



Study fields

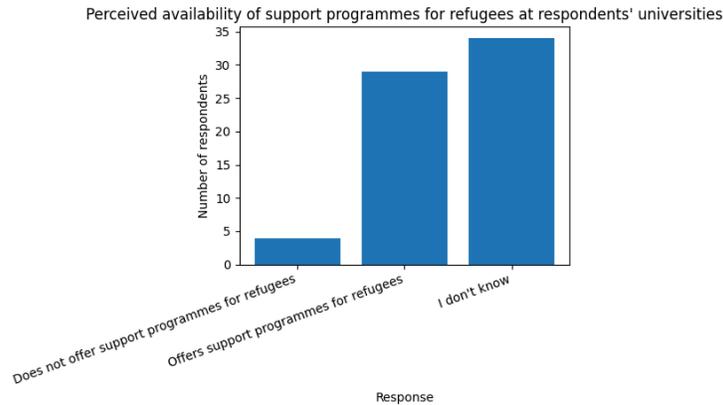
Study fields were grouped into five macro-areas to ensure analytical clarity and comparability across disciplines. The majority of student respondents were enrolled in Social Sciences and Humanities programmes, while smaller groups came from economics and management, STEM-related fields, law, and health sciences.



2. Awareness and visibility of support structures

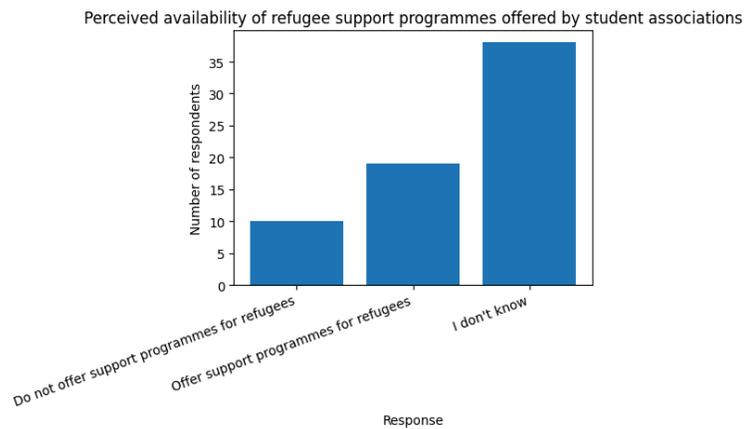
My university support programmes for refugee students

While a significant number of respondents reported the existence of support programmes for refugees at their universities, the largest group indicated that they were unaware of whether such programmes were available:



Student associations for refugees

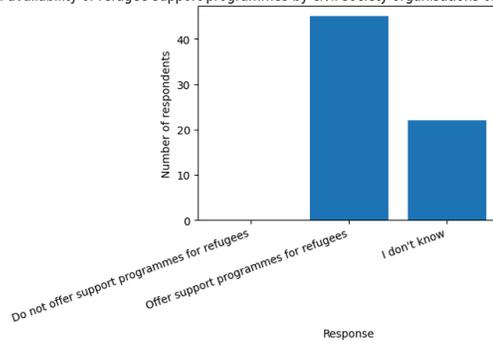
Compared to institutional support programmes, initiatives promoted by student associations are even less visible to respondents:



Civil society organisations or public institutions

Unlike university-level and student-led initiatives, support programmes provided by civil society organisations or public institutions at city level are widely recognised by respondents:

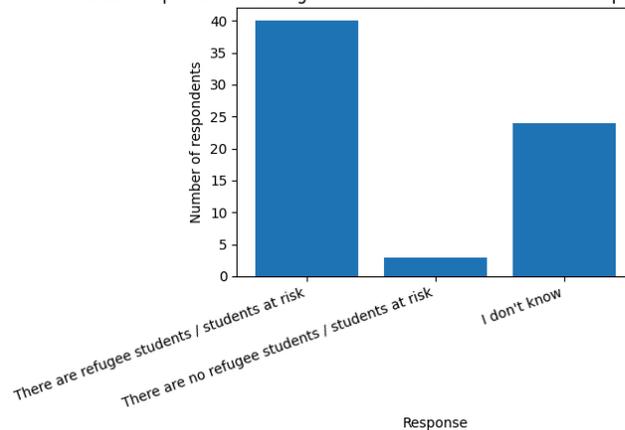
Perceived availability of refugee support programmes by civil society organisations or public institutions in respondents' cities



Presence of students at risk / refugee students

Most respondents acknowledged the presence of refugee students or students at risk at their universities, while only a very small minority denied it. However, a substantial proportion of respondents reported being unaware.

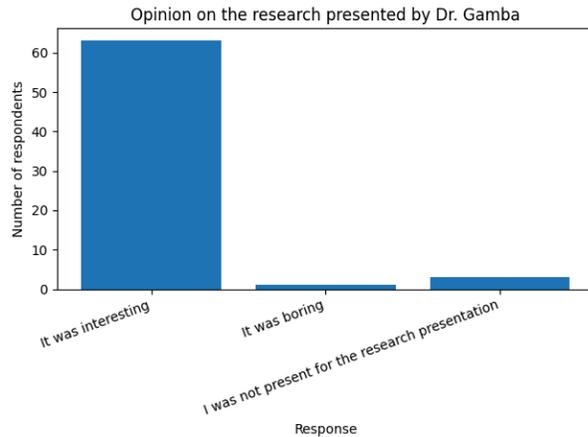
Perceived presence of refugee students or students at risk at respondents' universities



3. Engagement and perception of the event

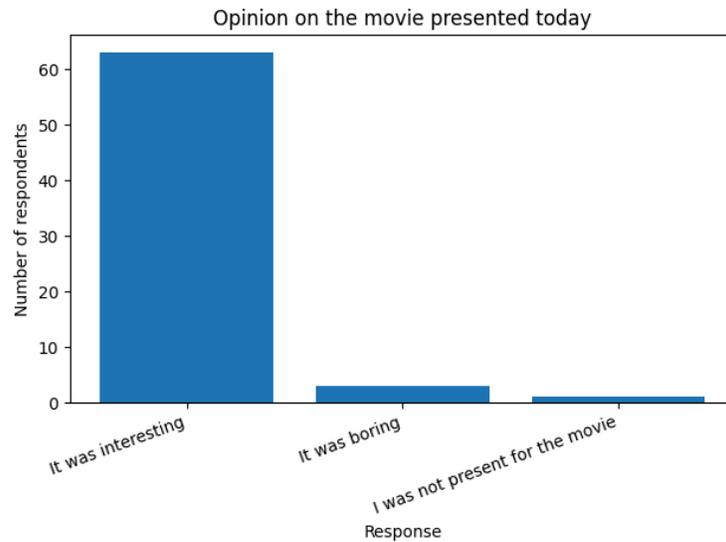
Research presented

Among respondents who attended the presentation, the research was overwhelmingly perceived as interesting:



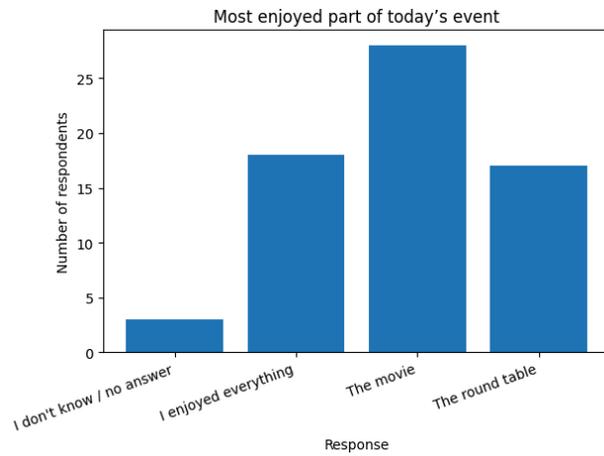
Movie about refugee students

The documentary screening was positively received by an overwhelming majority of respondents:



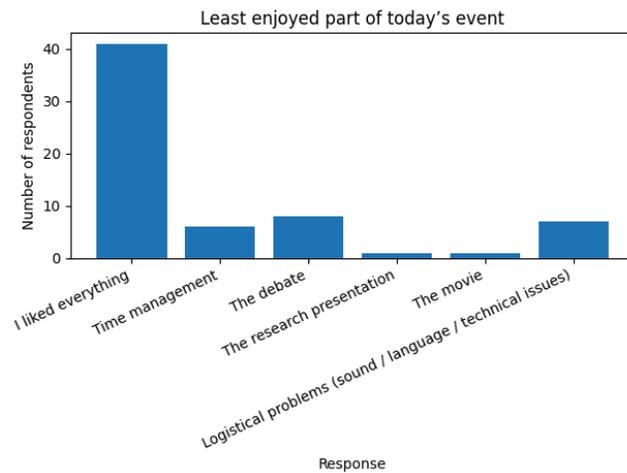
Most favourite part of the event

Results suggest that combining visual storytelling with collective discussion enhances participants' engagement:



Least favourite part of the event

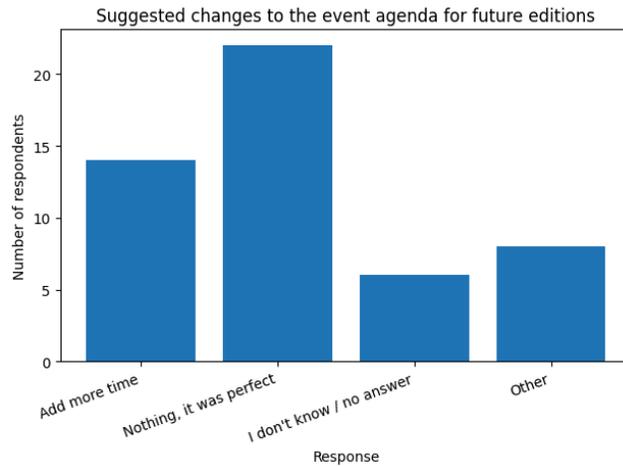
Reported weaknesses primarily concerned organisational aspects, such as time management and logistics, while the substantive content of the event was rarely identified as problematic:



4. Recommendations and future actions

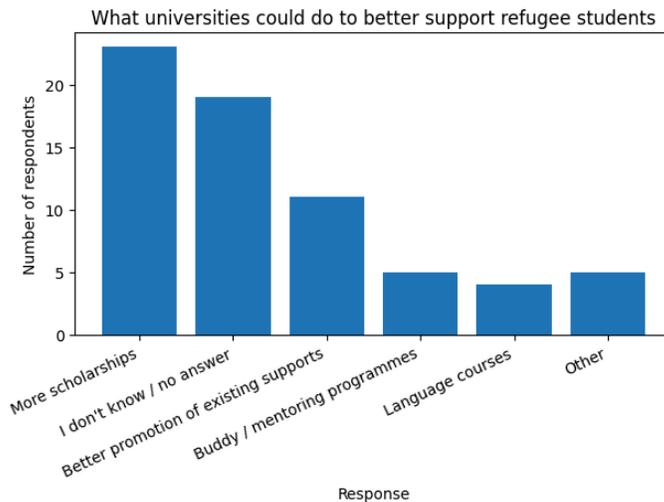
Suggestions for a next edition

Feedback suggests that the event format was effective, with participants primarily expressing a desire for longer engagement rather than structural changes.



Suggestions for the university

Respondents most frequently identified the need for increased financial support, followed by improved communication about existing services:



Suggestions for yourself

Respondents most frequently identified mentoring and inclusion activities as the primary ways in which they could personally support refugee students.

How respondents could personally support refugee students

