

***From Camp to Campus Fall School:
From Unrecognized Talent to Shared Prosperity: Social Investment in Refugees and Newcomers
through Higher Education***

16-20 November 2026 (Leuven, Irish College and UCLL Campus Hertogstraat)

DAY ONE 16 November – OPENING: The Camp to Campus project and the Social Investment Theory (Irish College)

The opening day of the From Camp to Campus Fall School introduces the purpose of the project and frames the week through the lens of Social Investment theory. That is, the week is framed through a social investment perspective, asking how higher education can benefit both individuals and society. It invites participants to reflect on how higher education can respond more effectively to the talents, ambitions, and needs of refugees and newcomers, not only as a matter of individual opportunity, but also as an investment in society as a whole. Many refugees and newcomers arrive with valuable skills, experiences, qualifications, and aspirations, yet these often remain unrecognized or underused, contributing to what is commonly described as “brain waste.” This means that their existing skills, qualifications and experience is either underused or overlooked. From Camp to Campus starts from the idea that removing barriers to recognition, access, participation, and belonging can help transform this unrecognized talent into shared prosperity. Through welcome remarks, keynote reflections, discussion, and informal exchange, the opening day creates a common foundation for the Fall School. The day is meant to encourage participants to consider how universities, policymakers, practitioners, and communities can work together to build more inclusive higher education pathways and contribute to a stronger, more cohesive, and more prosperous Europe.

DAY TWO 17 November – The Past explains the Present: Background, Status Quo and Future Challenges (Hertogstraat Campus)

Day Two of the From Camp to Campus Fall School provides participants with the necessary background knowledge and intellectual framework to understand the current position of well-educated refugees and newcomers in Flanders and Europe. As a “school,” this day is designed to build a shared foundation by clarifying key definitions, legal categories, and policy frameworks that shape the lives and opportunities of refugees, asylum seekers, beneficiaries of temporary protection, and other migrant newcomers. The day situates these issues within the broader historical and political context of migration to Europe, beginning with the dramatic inflow of refugees in 2015 through to the more recent displacement of persons seeking refuge from Ukraine, bringing about new forms of protection, solidarity, and policy responses. At the same time, it invites critical reflection on how legal status, access to rights, public attitudes, and institutional responsibilities have changed over time, particularly in light of shifting political landscapes and restrictive policy considerations, as well as growing pressure on welfare, education, and integration systems. By asking whether the “age of goodwill” is over, the day encourages participants to examine both the opportunities and tensions that define the current moment in which higher education institutions must operate. There is a continued need to recognize and invest in the talents of refugees and newcomers, despite the increasingly complex political and legal environment in which we currently operate.

DAY THREE 18 November – Access to Higher Education in Real Time (Hertogstraat Campus)

Day Three of the From Camp to Campus Fall School focuses on the programmes, mechanisms, systems and policies that shape actual access to higher education for refugees and newcomers. Building on the broader legal, historical, and political context introduced earlier in the week, this day brings together the themes of admissions, recognition of prior learning and qualifications,

foundational and preparatory programmes and Dutch language acquisition. Particular attention is given to language as an ongoing condition for belonging and success. While general Dutch language courses support general integration, they might not provide the academic vocabulary and skills needed for higher education. The day also explores the role of English-language programmes as potential access routes, while recognizing the continuing importance of Dutch language acquisition for academic progression, social participation, internships, employment, and long-term integration in Flanders. Its objective is to examine how access is organized in practice: how refugees and newcomers move from ambition to application, from existing skills and qualifications to recognized educational pathways, and from language acquisition or preparatory learning to meaningful participation in higher education. At the same time, the day critically addresses the barriers that continue to limit access, including complex admission procedures, fragmented systems, implicit institutional barriers, unequal institutional practice and or barriers. By combining practical examples, institutional experiences, and critical reflection, Day Three invites participants to consider how higher education institutions can move beyond formal openness toward genuinely accessible, fair, and supportive pathways that are genuinely accessible, fair and supportive.

DAY FOUR 19 November- From Integration to Belonging : Student Support, Wellbeing and Study Success (Hertogstraat Campus)

Day Four of the From Camp to Campus Fall School focuses on the student services, support structures, and care responsibilities that are essential for refugees and newcomers not only to enter higher education, but also to remain, participate, and succeed. This day examines the practical, social, emotional, and academic challenges that students with a refugee and newcomer background may face once they are admitted, including financial insecurity, housing difficulties, mental health concerns, experiences of discrimination, administrative complexity, and the need to navigate unfamiliar institutional cultures. This is a day where actual student voices can be heard and encounters arranged. By bringing together students, service providers, educators, and institutional actors, Day Four invites participants to consider how higher education can move from fragmented support toward more coherent, inclusive, and student-centred systems.

DAY FIVE 20 November - Towards a Shared Future - Improving Fairness, Transparency and Efficiency of Admission Systems (Hertogstraat Campus)

Day Five of the From Camp to Campus Fall School looks toward the future of higher education and its capacity to recognize, value, and develop the talent and potential of refugees and newcomers for the benefit and prosperity of society as a whole. Building on the themes of the previous days, this final day asks how higher education systems can move beyond fragmented policy initiatives and short-term responses toward more sustainable, transparent, and inclusive structures that make fairer and more transparent for all students, while also making it more efficient for admissions systems operating under financial and staffing constraints. Diversity is approached as a source of greater innovation, creativity, and long-term growth. By examining some practices from neighbouring countries, including UCAS in the United Kingdom and Studielink in the Netherlands, participants will explore and discuss how different shared systems and coordinated policies may help reduce barriers, improve transparency for all students, but also improve efficiency and stress for staffs. These are models for discussion not a blueprint for implementation. The day concludes with a reflection on how higher education can transform insufficiently recognized talent into shared prosperity.