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Uninettuno University for Refugees: A Model of Network for an Education without Boundaries

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ABSTRACT

In the European countries, and especially in Italy, one of the hardest challenges we are facing these days is the escalating crisis of migrants and refugees coming from the Arab World and Sub-Saharan Africa countries. The history of universities tells us that the first Universities realized a networked model in which students shaped their own study path, moving from one institution to another across Europe in order to attend the lectures by the best lecturers from different Universities. The Medieval higher education system, therefore, acted as a bridge between different cultures, fostering knowledge exchange, sharing and construction based on a networked organizational model, and an educational model promoting discussions and debates (*questio and disputatio*). Nowadays, ICT technologies, and above all the Internet, allow Universities to re-create a network of knowledge and of students and professors, sharing experiences and competences from different social and cultural backgrounds. The International Telematic University UNINETTUNO developed and implemented an internalization model and a psycho-pedagogic model, whose main characteristics are described in this paper, promoting the collaboration among Universities from the United States, Europe, Asia and above all from the Arab World Countries. Through this collaborations, UNINETTUNO developed the first higher education portal in the world which is available in 5 languages (Italian, English, French, Arabic and Greek), enrolled students from 168 countries of the world. The success of these international cooperation activities inspired UNINETTUNO in the creation of an Internet-based portal (The University for Refugees — Education without Boundaries, that will be presented in this paper) allowing refugees and migrants to access the University for free from any place across the world, providing services like: Recognition of the study title, Recognition of Professional Skills, Language Learning courses, Health Services, Mutual Rights and Duties. This initiative, launched in 2016, became a true laboratory of intercultural and interlingual communication that promotes a truly effective model of cooperation and inclusion with refugees and students from different parts of the world.

Key words: distance university, e-learning, migration, social integration, intercultural dialogue

INTRODUCTION

Today, more than ever, in the turmoil of the contemporary world, characterized by a technological revolution, affecting all countries, and by a large migration stream involving, above all, Europe, our society, on its overall, needs to learn a new culture of civil coexistence and the Universities can offer humankind the cultural instruments that help living and acting in more and more globalized and interconnected society. Regardless of their race, religion, social status, in their own lives, all people of the world share common aspirations such as those of living in peace and security, of receiving an education and have a decent job, love their own family and foster their own community, their own traditions, their own values or their own religions. These are the same hopes shared by the whole humankind, in our common home which is our Earth planet. Getting aware of our common belonging is only the starting-point of our undertaking; becoming global citizens, thanks to appropriate educational policies, should be the commitment of humankind in the XXI Century.

In the global squares of the Internet, people from the whole world communicate with each other, but, because of migration, many are the countries whose physical squares are full of populations who are no longer homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and culture. It is a truly landmark revolution that challenges our balances, our certainties, no longer bound to a single country, to a single nation. It is indeed the Universities that must give rise to a new educational model in which, thanks to shared curricula, different cultures are confronted in the purpose of:

- Enlarging knowledge;
- Making cultural, religious and political differences being respected;
- Making a fair use of new technologies and of new languages;
- Developing professional skills and general cultural competences;
- Helping people to successfully cope with the complexity of diversity.

The Universities should made available both their real and virtual spaces, where people of different nationality, religion and culture are able to produce new knowledge through research work and spread it though their teaching activities. Together, they must meet the educational needs of a globalized world, interconnected, though sharply divided. And, when I speak about universities, I mean all universities in the South and the North, West and East of the World. We should not forget the economic, cultural and social value that Universities have had since their origins; it is just from there that Europe's cultural growth began and also in the Arab World Countries where, historically, the first universities were established, such as the University of Fez, in Morocco in 859 and the University of Al-Azhar in Cairo, born in 975. (Garito, 2017).

In the Middle Ages all the universities were open to people of all nationalities and they represented a transnational network. Young people felt that, in order to get a valuable intellectual and scientific education, they needed to attend some universities, and for this reason they faced exhausting journeys on foot or on horseback to be able to attend the lectures of law of Prof. Irnerio at the University of Bologna or the lectures of Saint Thomas at the University of Paris; what moved them was the reputation of the Master, as well as their personal interest in the discipline. For centuries masters and learners have been producing and spreading knowledge, encouraging the rise of new ideas, keeping constantly alive the spiritual unity of Europe; moving from one town to another they contributed to the development of a culture without boundaries. Most of the Universities were born with the aim, which is still prevailing, of creating and spreading knowledge. In the Middle Ages each

University was a separated entity, and all together they made up a European network of students, teachers and knowledge (Garito, 2005).

The Universities have always been the melting pots of international identities and of respect for differences, makers of the most creative chapters of history. And today more than ever, in the turmoil of the contemporary world, the Universities can still play an essential role in the progress of humankind. Global challenges require an equally global response in order to educate all of the citizens and ensure social security in an increasingly interconnected world.

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE XXI CENTURY — A NECESSARY TRANSFORMATION: THE INTERNATIONAL TELEMATIC UNIVERSITY UNINETTUNO

The mission of the University has always been to improve and develop mankind and now, regardless of nationality, race, color or gender, the Internet technology can ensure that everyone can access knowledge and that everyone can contribute to the education of the global citizen. The new places of access to knowledge can be anywhere: on a PC, on smartphones or on tablets, anybody can access knowledge with no limits of space and time. In this new framework, the Universities must be capable of finding a new identity of their own, an identity capable of enriching humankind with the knowledge and learning provided by the institutions that are responsible for delivering them. It is from these beliefs that the International Telematic University was born, replacing the Universities' physical buildings with technological infrastructures that allowed to develop a new psycho-pedagogic teaching model and a new knowledge production and delivery system. The creation of the new model of Digital University required radical transformations of its organizational, teaching and, consequently teaching and learning model.

The UNINETTUNO University had to change the role and functions of the lecturers and of the professors, its physical structures, classrooms, research laboratories, the actual places shared by the students, all its teaching and learning processes. The interactions between lecturers and students and among the students themselves take place in the didactic cyberspace of UNINETTUNO's platform, on [www/uninettunouniversity.net](http://www.uninettunouniversity.net) with over 30,000 students coming from 168 different countries across the world who are enrolled in the 31-degree courses offered by UNINETTUNO and in the many master's courses.

The Didactic Cyberspace makes available nearly 90,000 hours of academic videolessons, digitized and linked to the subjects of the various courses, realized by professors coming from different Universities of the world in many languages (Italian, Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Greek, Moldavian, Georgian). For each issue of the videolessons, the same professors realized texts, multimedia educational materials, exercises, webographies, virtual laboratories for a total amount of 10 million of digital educational materials.

The teaching, organizational and technological model and the Web-based learning environments of the International Telematic University UNINETTUNO are the outcome of more than 25 years of research carried out at international level, related to the application of information and communication technologies to face-to-face and distance teaching and learning processes. The results of these research activities allowed to produce theoretical knowledge and practices promoting a fair balance between technological-engineering and cognitive, methodological, cultural and educational aspects and on these bases we realized the Didactic Cyberspace.

The Internet-based learning environments implemented in UNINETTUNO's Didactic Cyberspace, based on a systemic approach, are constantly evolving as constantly evolving is the technology and, consequently, also the methodologies to be applied to the teaching and learning processes. The design and implementation of the educational processes are focused on the students and on their learning communities. The psycho-pedagogic theories being applied are mainly linked to the theories of socio-cognitive constructivism which allowed to use the Internet to realize constructive and collaborative teaching and learning environments whose main features are:

- Synchronic and asynchronous two-way and interactive communication;
- Student's active participation in the construction of knowledge.

In the Cyberspace students communicate their ideas and thoughts, ask questions, continuously exchange knowledge, which is shared by posting it in forums, wikis, in the interactive classrooms, and in the tridimensional virtual classrooms. Cooperation is the focal point of every interaction among and with all the actors involved (students and professors). The acquisition of knowledge is dynamic rather than static, multimedia rather than linear and systemic rather than systematic (Garito, 2013). The knowledge built by each student is the result of meetings and relations with the professors-tutors within their knowledge virtual space. In the Didactic Cyberspace several learning environments were included, in each of which a training session was realized based on a specific methodology:

- With the videolessons, digitized and indexed by topics, we use a symbolic-reconstructive learning model linked to the teaching classic mode and, thanks to the links to various kinds of training materials, it is possible to study in a multimedia and hyper-textual way;
- With the virtual laboratories it is possible to check and enhance one's own knowledge and skills according to a "learning-by-doing" mode;
- With the forums, interactive classrooms, 3D environments systems, it is possible to promote collaborative learning with teachers and students belonging to different linguistic, cultural, political, religious and social backgrounds.

Within each environment it is possible to simultaneously integrate each single learning mode with the other ones. The learning activity is designed to promote the transfer of knowledge according to different modes:

- From simple to complex (videolesson and smart library);
- From theory to applicative projection (learning by doing in the virtual lab);
- From guided exercises to searching the World Wide Web (webography and bibliography);
- From individual study to interactive dialogue between teacher and students and among students (collaborative learning based on synchronic and asynchronous communication and sharing tools) (Garito, 2015).

Particular importance is given to the collaborative learning activities that are carried out through the system of the Interactive Classrooms as well as in the three-dimensional worlds of the Virtual Classrooms on SecondLife, available on UNINETTUNO's platform.

These two collaborative learning environments both allow to adopt the "flipped classrooms" pedagogic model: students are led to acquaint themselves with the issues related to the planned discussion; then they study the video lessons, the reference texts, books, lecture notes, articles,

essays, thus preparing themselves to face the debate with teacher-tutor, following Socrates' maieutic art. In particular, the 3D Virtual Classrooms' environment, by handling variables such as space, the roles and interaction among the avatars of actual individuals, creates a setting that is characterized by a strong sense of reality. This teaching and learning model interprets, in a modern way, the teaching methodologies of the Medieval Universities: the *questio* and the *disputatio* stimulate a process of learning that arises from dialogue and confrontation; one learns from the others and reflects upon his/her own ideas.

The 3D environments and other immersive worlds allow for penetrating into the digital body to perceive oneself no longer as a person sitting before the screen of a PC, but, actually, as being in a virtual classroom animated by actual teachers and students. In the Island of Knowledge debates and conferences among students, experts and teachers coming from other universities around the World take place. In these virtual spaces, social, entertaining and recreational aspects are experienced by participants; interaction among the different cultures of the world and the respect for differences are not utopia, but a daily and collective exercise for professors and students who actually live in different countries of the world and interact, virtually, with no limits of space and time (Garito, 2017).

UNINETTUNO's psycho-pedagogical model has rapidly become a global model which is recognized at international level. UNINETTUNO, through its satellite television network, UNINETTUNOUNIVERSITY.TV (812 Sky channel and 701 RAI channel), which has a broad geographic coverage, beyond all Europe, even in the North and South of Africa and in Russia, is actually democratizing the access to knowledge by bringing knowledge and learning into the homes of all the citizens. Anybody can attend the study courses to free herself/himself from the slavery of illiteracy and acquire new competences as well as consolidate a system of shared values. Thanks to UNINETTUNO's model, professors and students across the world can not only give an appropriate answer to the needs of internationalization of the educational systems in order to be able to prepare the skills required by the global labor market, but they can also help in transforming the University into an open system, capable of modernizing itself and integrating all the knowledge available on the Web, as well as to achieve a worldwide exchange of knowledge. This organization made it easy for the International Telematic University UNINETTUNO to give a significant contribution to solve the problem of migration by realizing the University for Refugees.

UNINETTUNO'S UNIVERSITY FOR REFUGEES

The background

If we take into account only the data related to the question of migration to Europe, we can immediately realize that if our society is unable to find appropriate solutions to the real needs of the human beings, who are the so-called MIGRANTS and REFUGEES, even our own balances and certainties are challenged.

In Europe, since 2011 migration has been sharply increasing; the reasons lie in many facts:

- Conflicts and political events that since 2011 have been disrupted some regimes of the North African countries (Egypt, Tunisia and Libya), known as the "Arab Spring";
- The worsening of the conflict in Syria and in the Middle East that brought about an extension of the crisis during the years;

- Political and economic instability, violations of human rights and increase of poverty in many South African Countries (Garito, 2016).

A significant increase in migration has occurred since 2013, when interceptions in the central Mediterranean route amounted to 40 thousand; subsequently, in 2014, interceptions more than quadrupled (171 thousand people), the first country of origin of the people landed in 2014 was Syria (42,425) (Frontex, 2020a). If until 2013 the Syrian conflict had almost exclusively produced an exodus to neighboring countries, especially Turkey, the extension of the civil war has pushed more and more people looking for a better future to emigrate to European countries, mainly through the Balkan route (i.e. by land, but also through the Mediterranean route (by sea)).

The highest number of arrivals - 1,015,078 - was recorded in 2015. From January 2016 to April 2020, according to the most updated Frontex database (Frontex, 2020a), 342,347 migrants were intercepted and disembarked in Europe via the Central Mediterranean route, plus 492. 812 coming from the Western and Eastern Mediterranean routes, for a total of 835,159 migrants transited from the Mediterranean to Europe starting from January 2016 although far from the 2015 data, migration did not stop and in the first half of 2020, it reached almost 7,200, which is double the same period of 2019. This is largely due to the higher numbers since the beginning of 2020 compared to the very low figures a year ago. Tunisia and Bangladesh are the most surveyed countries of origin on the Central Mediterranean route in this period (first half of 2020) (Frontex, 2020b).

As for asylum applications, in 2019 there were 612,700 total asylum applications in the 27 member countries of the European Union. Of these, only 38% of first instance applicants have had their asylum application positively accepted (Eurostat, 2020). If in 2013, Syria was the main country of citizenship of asylum seekers in the EU countries in 2019, the number of Syrian asylum seekers for the first time fell to 74,400 from 80,000 in 2018, while the percentage of Syrians in the total fell from 14.6% to 12.1%.

If we calculate ALL Mediterranean routes, the most represented countries are: Syria – 122,555, Afghanistan – 86,420, Nigeria – 57,492, Iraq – 43,102, Eritrea – 31,973, Côte d'Ivoire – 24,897, Guinea – 24,735, Morocco – 24,232, Sudan – 20,176, Bangladesh – 19,165.

In all, migrants who have passed through the Central Mediterranean Route come from 84 different countries. The first 10 countries by number of arrivals through this migratory route in the European Union, in the period considered, are: Nigeria (57,492), Eritrea (31,973), Côte d'Ivoire (24,897), Guinea (24,735), Sudan (20,176), Bangladesh (19,165), Mali (18,606), Gambia (18,161), Senegal (17,060), Tunisia (15,686). On the whole, these are primarily mixed flows: in addition to people and families fleeing war and persecution, there are also those leaving because of social and economic instability. Of these migrants, the different structures in charge of reception often ignore their level of education, their professional skills and their state of health, knowledge that is necessary to start a minimum process of integration. The policies of all European countries involved in the reception are mainly those of providing housing and food.

The problem of forced migration confronts the whole society with the need to find solutions to improve the integration of citizens coming from countries with different cultures, religions and life models (Garito, 2017). National and international institutions immediately agreed on the centrality

of information and knowledge as crucial elements for a correct management of the migration emergency; the Malta summit of November 12, 2015 (European Council, 2015) revealed the need for more information in order to recover the dialogue with Africa and the countries of origin. During the International Conference on Immigration organized in October 2014 by the Arab League in Tunisia, the need to develop integration policies "shared, with the support of new knowledge tools, as well as adequate structures and equally adequate legislative measures" emerged.

We should use more largely technology both to communicate the offers of the various services that refugees can find and to include them in the training services of the hosting countries. In providing services to migrants, it is important to consider the close relationship that refugees have with the smartphone, which is seen as a tool for both bonding and bridging with their countries of origin (UNHCR, 2016a). UNHCR also stressed the strategic importance of ICT technologies in interacting with refugees in the Connecting Refugees report, and in the Refugee Migrant Response Plan for Europe (UNHCR, 2016b), which states that "mobile data collection solutions, information and communication technologies (ICT) and other technological means will be used to ensure that information is provided in different languages and through different channels to enable all refugees and migrants to receive the information they need". In theory, everybody admits that knowledge, know-how and skills of every person are the sources of all other riches and, nowadays, an "intelligent" use of the Internet greatly facilitates the access to education. Therefore, education is the tool by which the citizens contribute to change in a constructive way.

Today all over the world there is a need to build a new model of immaterial capital for development, the capital of knowledge and expertise that can no longer be linked to national states since the global spread of the Internet now imposes the international dimension also to education. The citizens of the XXI Century must know how to interact and cooperate in a reality in which cultural, political and religious differences affect and occupy many aspects of the life of each individual.

UNINETTUNO has therefore continued to work on this issue, trying to create an evolutionary synthesis of the acquired elements: the availability of smartphones in the population of migrants and refugees in Europe; the strategic relevance of digital technologies for the effective management of integration processes; the existing gaps in both information and mutual knowledge. The International Telematic University UNINETTUNO that, since its birth, has been replacing the Universities' physical buildings with technological infrastructures, since 2016 decided to give its contribution to foster a virtuous model of integration of refugees and migrants.

This was made possible thanks to the fact that UNINETTUNO has always based its design work and the realization of its distance teaching courses thanks to the cooperation and active involvement of the best lecturers coming from universities of different countries; each one of these lecturers realized his lessons in his own language. As, for example, in order to realize the videolections and the digitalized and Internet-based contents of the Engineering Faculty in the Arab language, an International Scientific Committee selected the best lecturers of the various Universities of the Arab World possessing an international scientific background. We never translated courses, but we decided to give the lecturers of the various countries the possibility of realizing by themselves, in their own languages, the contents in order to highlight even their cultural differences and compare the different schools of thought thus enhancing their different cultures. Therefore, at present, it is possible to follow engineering courses in Arabic, realized by the best professors of the University of

Aleppo and of Damascus (Syria), of Cairo and of Helwan University (Egypt), of Jordan and of Tunisia, of Morocco.

Dialogue among cultures is not a utopia, but, with the International Telematic University UNINETTUNO, it has become a reality; today we work with the Universities of different countries across the world to create shared Euro-Mediterranean Area to start a path of harmonization of the educational and training paths, to adapt them to the changes produced by the globalized world.

Together, the interconnected minds of teachers and students of the North and South shores of the World create new knowledge and develop a network of skills and expertise, based not on imposing cultural models of the one upon the other, but on comparing cultures and educational models. Together we created a true laboratory for intercultural and inter-linguistic cooperation to help younger generations capable of becoming the protagonists of change, acquire competences and built the future all together. Thanks to this international cooperation, UNINETTUNO made of internationalization an active tool for cooperation and this facilitated the realization of its Internet-based platform, the University for Refugees – Education without Boundaries (www.universitaperrifugiati.it), to enable refugees and migrants to freely access the University anywhere in the world.

The University for Refugees

It is the first Internet-based portal of the world realized in English, French, Italian and Arabic that is aimed at promoting and supporting the academic path of migrants having the status of refugees and at facilitating their professional insertion into the hosting country. In the "University for Refugees" portal, the student will be able to access the following services:

- Enrolment in the degree, master's and vocational training courses offered by the UNINETTUNO University;
- Recognition of study titles;
- Recognition of professional skills;
- Language learning courses;
 - I learn Italian - The Treasure of the Letters
 - I learn Arabic - The Treasure of the Letters
 - OLS language courses for refugees: German, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek,
- Health Services;
- Mutual Rights and Duties.
- News

They are students who also from their refugee camps searched on Google for offers to resume their interrupted studies and to realize their dream of studying despite their refugee status. It is through the Internet that they found the portal of UNINETTUNO where the University for Refugees is included. The goal is to provide refugees and migrants with skills and knowledge that allow them to participate constructively in the social, cultural and economic life of the host countries and to develop a laboratory for true integration, to enhance good immigration, dialogue, peaceful coexistence between peoples and international cooperation.

The International Telematic University UNINETTUNO has made available to refugees with civil protection status, free enrolment in all its 30 degree courses belonging to different faculties: Engineering, Economics, Law, Psychology, Communication Sciences, Cultural Heritage, to the 20 Master's courses and a large number of professional qualification and retraining courses. All this has been done following the European directives issued for the recognition of qualifications in European countries.

Recognition of Academic Qualification for Refugees without documentation

The procedure of recognition of the academic qualifications for refugees without documentation follows the guidelines "Recognize qualifications held by refugees – guide for credential evaluators" issued by the ENIC-NARIC Network (ENIC - European Network of Information Centers in the European Region; NARIC - NARIC: National Academic Recognition Information Centers in the European Union) at the link: <http://www.enic-naric.net/recognise-qualifications-held-by-refugees.aspx>. Partners of the ENIC-NARIC are UNESCO, the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

The refugees, who are not able to submit appropriate documentation for the recognition of qualifications obtained in their countries of origin, must fill in a statement, based on special form, where qualifications and certifications obtained should be described, as well as provide the respective self-certification. The check of the validity of the self-certifications will be carried out by special Committees of University Professors, belonging to the scientific disciplinary sectors of the various degree courses. These Committees have the task of checking the submitted documentation as well and above all to check, through exams, the validity of the stated knowledge. A positive result of the evaluations will enable the refugees to enroll in university degree courses in accordance with the competence level verified through the exams. So doing the refugees will be able to re-enter into the higher education circuit that best suits to their specific skills.

Recognition of Academic Qualifications for migrants with documentation

In Europe, the recognition of foreign qualifications is regulated by the Lisbon Convention, Treaty of the Council of Europe on 11 April 1997, available at <http://www.coe.int/it/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165>.

With regard to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF), you can visit the specific web page of the European Commission:
http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/documentation_en.htm.

The procedures of admission of foreign students to the degree courses of the International Telematic University UNINETTUNO are carried on in accordance to the provisions of the Italian laws and, in line with the rules linked to the processes of harmonization of the study paths and professions in the framework of the EQF - European Qualification Frameworks.

Recognition of Professional Skills

The service of professional skills recognition is addressed to migrants and refugees in order to support them in entering the labor market. The Education and Training Data Sheet and the Professional Skills Data Sheet allow migrants and refugees to collect their educational and

professional experiences based on a European standard: EuroPass – European Skills Passport(<https://europa.eu/europass/en>).

The recognition of professional skills is done through the establishment of specific Technical-Scientific Committees of experts from the labor world, including experts from specific professional fields and grouped in committees in function of the types of professional certification to be recognized. The recognized professional skills will be classified within the EQF - European Qualification Framework (<https://europa.eu/europass/en/european-qualifications-framework-eqf>).

The analysis and processing of the data will allow to prepare a Certificate of Skills, undersigned by the related Committee. This certificate can represent a tool for entering the labor market for refugees and migrants.

Language Learning Courses

Within the “Language Learning Courses” section, the University for Refugees makes available literacy courses for the Italian language (I Learn Italian – The Treasure of the Letters), for the Arab language (I Learn Arabic – The Treasure of the Letters) designed and realized by UNINETTUNO. In addition, the portal of the University for Refugees makes available online courses in the following languages: English, German, Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Greek, Croatian, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Slovakian, Finnish, Swedish. These courses were made available by the European Commission thanks to the OLS4Refugees project.

Health Services

This area collects the answers to the main questions that foreigners have while interacting with a public or private healthcare facility. The objective is to facilitate their access to healthcare and first aid. At present, in this section it is possible to use Find a doctor, an interactive search engine that allows refugees and migrants to contact specialists, who have joined the project, in accordance with their location in Italy.

Mutual rights and duties

This area aims to educate on the value of respecting differences. "Mutual Rights and Duties" helps foreigners living in Italy to get familiar with the rules, norms, cultures, religions featuring the hosting country, and to Euro-Mediterranean citizens with the history, culture, religions and laws regulating the governments of the countries of origin of the refugees. This area is aimed at continuously posting contents enabling all the citizens of the new European globalized and interconnected society to acquire the knowledge allowing to use the needed tools to be prepared to interact with the diversities and to be able to live respecting differences.

RESULTS GAINED BY THE UNIVERSITY FOR REFUGEES

The impact of the University for Refugees exceeded our expectations. Today, more than 15840 migrants and refugees have downloaded the Italian Language Learning App and 950 refugees have registered on the University for Refugees portal to use the various services offered. As far as enrolled students are concerned, the majority are men (93%), between 18 and 34 years old (81%), coming from 28 different countries. Students reside in reception centers of different countries in

particular: Saudi Arabia, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Ghana, Jordan, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Rwanda, Turkey, United States of America.

It is the Web that introduced these students to the University, but above all it is on the UNINETTUNO portal that they were able to find digitized videolessons of their professors who can no longer teach in many universities in the countries from which the refugees come, such as the Syrian Universities, especially in Aleppo, completely destroyed by the war. The vision with which the University for Refugees was designed and realized is not based on a colonization model; thanks to the continuing work of international cooperation and to the active involvement of the Universities of the other countries of the World, carried on by UNINETTUNO, today refugees and migrants find the digitized lessons about engineering in Arabic, English and French delivered by the professors of their own Universities, such as, for example, professors of the Universities of Damascus, but above all of Aleppo, completely destroyed by the war: Fadel Sukkar (professor of Computer Science at the University of Aleppo), Mohamed Kheir Ahmed (professor of Mathematical Methods for Engineering at the University of Aleppo), Ayman Hamadeh (professor of Databases at the University of Aleppo), Ousamah Douedari (professor of Electro-techniques at the University of Aleppo), Muhammad Gh. Aljalali (professor of Economics for Engineering at the University of Damscus), Fawwaz Mufdi (professor of Electronic Measurements at the University of Damascus).

Among these professors who had to leave their universities because of the war and violence and who, as matter a fact, are unable to deliver their courses any longer, UNINETTUNO stored, in the Internet, their scientific expertise and made it available even to their own students who do not have the possibility of meeting and seeing them in their own Universities. Giving these opportunities to refugees and migrants means giving them back their dignity and giving them the courage to go on trusting humankind. Through the University for Refugees we actually demonstrated how, in order to create and spread knowledge, thanks to the Internet and to satellite television frontiers are indefinite, borders are place of continuity and not of conflicts. With UNINETTUNO, the University has no borders, it moves under open skies jointly with different cultures and different knowledge; it is up to people to respect differences in order to enhance their value, experiencing them as a richness.

In UNINETTUNO's Didactic Cyberspace, together, the interconnected minds of teachers and students of the North and South shores of the World create new knowledge and develop a network of skills and expertise, based not on imposing cultural models of the one upon the other, but on comparing cultures and educational models. Together we created a true laboratory for intercultural and interlingual cooperation that enables the development of a new virtual space, where we produce the contents to be included into the study programs and teaching and learning models to make younger generations capable of becoming innovation and change leaders.

I would like to conclude this contribution with some testimonies of the first refugee students enrolled at UNINETTUNO that can be representative of the many messages we received in these years of work:

Harout, Syria, enrolled at the Three-year Degree in Information and Communication Technologies Engineering: "I am 30 years old and I was born in the city of Aleppo, in Syria. I was a student at the University of Aleppo and UNINETTUNO's portal I found the video lessons of some of my professors

at the University of Aleppo and now I do not know in which place of the World are. At present, I have the status of political refugee in Lebanon and, hoping that peace comes back again in my country, thanks to UNINETTUNO's University for Refugees, I will be able to realize my dream: complete the study path I began in Syria and earn a study title recognized in Italy and in Europe. I thank this University which gave me the possibility of resuming my studies to have a better life and leave the past behind."

Kokou, Gabon, Master in Marketing and Business Management (already graduated in her country in Marketing and Economics). "This experience as a student at UNINETTUNO is like a divide between past, present and future. It is the most beautiful thing that happened to me since I came to Italy across the Mediterranean Sea."

Diakaria, Mali, Earned a Three-year Degree in Media and Communication. "I am a refugee from Mali, but I have been studying in Senegal up to last year, now I have the status of refugee. Thanks to the opportunity of going on studying that UNINETTUNO gave me and many other youths in my same situation a new hope for a better future looms at my horizon."

Devon, Nigeria, Earned a Three-year Degree in Media and Communication. "Following the University with UNINETTUNO is giving a new sense to my life. I hope, one day, I will be able to watch the youths of the entire world in their eyes, refugees, migrants and be able to tell them that, no mind their condition and the violence from which they flee, everything is in your mind and in your heart and if you believe in your mission in the world, sooner or later, you will be able to achieve your goals."

Today the University for Refugees is developing a big laboratory for true integration, to enhance good immigration, dialogue, a peaceful coexistence among peoples and struggle against terrorism. Only this way, jointly with them, we believe we can develop a future of peace.

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