

Norway – NOKUT

Institution	NOKUT
Interviewed Person	Nora (29), refugee from Palestine

I – Preparation

Nora (29) is a Syrian/Palestinian woman. Her grandparents fled Palestine in 1948 and settled in Homs in Syria. Two generations later Palestinian descendants are still regarded as refugees in Syria. In February 2016 Nora left Syria with her husband and her two small children, and became a refugee in Greece. As part of the EU resettlement programme, she hoped to leave the refugee camp in Athens and resettle in another European country where she has family.

II – Awareness

The first European Qualifications Passports for Refugees (EQPR) were issued in March 2017 in Athens. This certificate will help refugees who had to flee their countries to continue with their studies or work.

This initiative was a pilot project run by the Council of Europe’s Education Department in the framework of the Action Plan Building Inclusive Societies. Partners included the Greek Ministry of education, Research and Religious Affairs and qualification recognition centres in Greece, Italy, Norway and the UK. The UNHCR Office in Greece also supported the project.

With a Bachelor’s Degree in Physiotherapy from Al-Baath University, Nora’s professional goal is to work with the elderly. Such a certificate should help her to work in this field and thereby, amongst other things, make a meaningful contribution to her new community.

“These documents are my securities. They show that I am a good person who has studied, and a person who wants to work and contribute to the society. You need to have an evidence of that, and these documents are my evidence”.

III – Starting up

Refugees went through individual interviews with experienced evaluators to ascertain their qualifications in the absence of supporting documentation. Nora became the very first person to receive the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees.

“This gives me the opportunity to continue studying. It states among other things where I did my previous studies.”

This was in March 2017. Only two months later, the family was informed that they would be resettled in Norway.

“My greatest hope for the future is to be well integrated into the Norwegian society. I owe Norway so much for choosing me as a quota refugee. When you receive an opportunity like the one we have received, you have to show that you are able to work hard and do your best.”

IV – Documentation and support

After arriving in Norway Nora was, because of her EQPR, given the possibility to attend a course in International Public Health at a Norwegian University. The study program is part of a new scheme conducted by a couple of Norwegian universities. The plan is to offer supplementary education to refugees with health, teacher or engineer educations from their home countries. In October, Nora went to her very first lecture in Norway.

«I don't have much information about this study program, but I am really excited to get started. I hope going to classes will help me learn Norwegian faster by learning medical terminology and have everyday communication with my fellow students”.

“They say it will take two years to learn Norwegian properly, but my goal is to learn how to speak the language in six months' time.”

VI – Impact

To Nora her EQPR and the possibility to attend lectures is something for which she is very grateful. Both the passport and the lectures give her a great opportunity to use her own background and degree, and get a relevant job. She misses Syria, but think it is safer for her small children to grow up in Norway. If they are to live here, she will need to learn the language, and find a job.