



## NEWS



UNINETTUNO | REFUGEES IN ITALY | EDUCATION

## ONLINE UNIVERSITY FOR REFUGEES

**UniNettuno, an online university in Rome, has launched a project called "University for Refugees," which offers 50 free places for university degree courses to migrants. The project is aimed at giving young migrants from conflict zones the opportunity to take up their studies again.**

For Maria Amata Garito, rector of UniNettuno, the project aims to give migrants "the right tools to regain their dignity." "We've mainly admitted Syrian refugees in Germany, Lebanon and Turkey," she said. "The first student was a young Syrian man who, thanks to our project, was able to find his former professors from the University of Aleppo. This is the true power of the internet," she added.

### University recognizes credits from foreign institutions

The University for Refugees allows refugees to study through online courses with UniNettuno and begin a procedure to have credits recognized from their previous university studies in their countries of origin.

"Those who have the documents with them follow the rules in place in Italy," Garito said. "Those who don't have the documents because they were lost can, according to EU directives, submit declarations regarding the courses they attended and the subjects they studied. After that, scientific committees at our university hold exams for the students to evaluate whether what they've declared is valid," Garito said.

"These young people face death without fear, because in their country they lived much worse. We can't think that just by saving people at seas we've done our duty," she added.

### Younger students joining in

UniNettuno online university was founded in 2005 by the Nettuno Consortium and the European project MedNet'U, in which 31 Arab universities participated. The platform offers courses in five languages: Arabic, English, French, Italian and Greek. "We've created agreements with many universities and governments in countries around the world. Our degrees are recognized in Germany, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia," she said. The courses are held by professors from Italian and international universities, including those in the United States, France, the UK, Jordan, Egypt, and the universities of Damascus and Aleppo, she said. Students come from 156 countries and there are currently 15,000 enrolled: 11,000 pursuing an undergraduate degree and 4,000 a master's degree.

She said that over the years thousands of students have graduated, and while initially most of the students were over age 40, now 30 percent of the student body is made up of those between the ages of 18 and 25. There are degree programmes in engineering, psychology, economics, communication sciences, literature, and law, together with specific programmes to face new employment challenges, such as courses on big data, cloud computing, renewable energy, psychology and technology, economics and digitalisation. It's a "whole new way" to internationalize the university, based on "two different models: the institutional one and that of Internet and word of mouth," Garito said.