



Odysseus Network

ULB

Academic network for legal studies on immigration and asylum in Europe

ODYSSEUS SUMMER SCHOOL 2026

Refugee Voices

From the beneficiaries of the Odysseus Academic Network's "Scholarships for Refugees" initiative.

Brussels · 29 June – 10 July 2026

UNHCR · The UN Refugee Agency

#REFYOUNGEES



FOREWORD

Giving the floor to those the law is written for

Behind every asylum file is a person, a profession, and a journey. This booklet is about the people.

Since 2016, in response to the evolving asylum situation in Europe, the Odysseus Academic Network has stood beside student refugees through its “Scholarships for Refugees” initiative. The idea is simple and deliberate: to open the doors of high-level training in EU immigration and asylum law to the very people whose lives that law shapes most directly.

The scholarship allows persons recognised as refugees, or as beneficiaries of subsidiary or temporary protection, to take part in the Odysseus Summer School — to engage with European academics, resume studies often interrupted by forced departure, and turn lived experience into legal and professional expertise. To date, thirty-five refugees from countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Eritrea, Ukraine and Sudan have attended the Summer School thanks to this support.

The initiative is entirely self-financed. It exists only because of the generosity of donors and the steady support of our partners — a crowdfunding community, institutional supporters, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The pages that follow give the floor to the 2026 beneficiaries. These are their words, their journeys, and their reasons for joining us in Brussels.

THE INITIATIVE

The Summer School & the Refugee Scholarships

ABOUT THE SUMMER SCHOOL

The Summer School is organised by the Odysseus Academic Network. It provides a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy of the European Union, combining theoretical depth with practical insight delivered by leading academics, practitioners and EU officials.

Particular attention is given to recent legislative, jurisprudential and political developments at EU level — including the implementation of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum. The 26th edition takes place in Brussels from 29 June to 10 July 2026.

ABOUT THE STUDENT-REFUGEE SCHOLARSHIPS

The Student-Refugee Scholarships respond to the contemporary asylum situation in Europe and aim to give student refugees the opportunity to gain knowledge of EU immigration and asylum law. The programme supports integration in Europe, professional development and the continuation of academic paths that forced displacement may have interrupted.

Only persons officially recognised as refugees, or as beneficiaries of subsidiary or temporary protection, are eligible; asylum seekers cannot apply. Depending on each participant's personal financial situation, the scholarship covers part of the tuition fees, travel costs and accommodation for the full duration of the Summer School.

CLASS OF 2026

Refugee *Voices*

Eight participants. Eight journeys into the law that shaped their lives — told in their own words.



Hüseyin Ali Kudret 01

TURKISH

FIELD OF STUDIES

LLB; LLM in Public International Law (Human Rights)

PROFESSION IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Attorney at law & researcher

ARRIVAL IN EUROPE

2022

PROTECTION GRANTED BY

Netherlands

TYPE OF PROTECTION

Refugee status

MY STORY

Growing up in Turkey as a member of a minority group, both ethnically and religiously, I faced numerous injustices throughout my life. This experience fuelled my desire to seek justice for others, and from an early age I aspired to become a lawyer and a human rights activist. To realise this dream, I completed my law degree with cum laude distinction and began practising in pursuit of my mission. My efforts came at a cost, however including years of investigations, torture, and ultimately the loss of my attorney's licence. As a result, I sought asylum in the Netherlands.

Seeking asylum can open new opportunities, but it also entails significant costs and challenges throughout the journey. As a queer person, I came to realise how poorly intersectionality is understood in the EU. This motivated me to pursue a master's degree in Public International Law, specialising in International Human Rights Law at Utrecht University, where I focused on states' obligations towards queer asylum seekers in reception centres. Working to bridge the gap between legal theory and practice, I was recognised as the most remarkable law student at Utrecht University.

My personal experience as a refugee has shaped both my research interests and my advocacy work. Having lived through displacement and the challenges of rebuilding a life in a new country, I became increasingly interested in refugee protection, migration law, and the practical impact of legal frameworks on people's lives. Today I work with several organisations focused on human rights, refugee protection and access to justice, while developing a PhD proposal on refugee rights and inequalities within European legal frameworks.

WHY THE ODYSSEUS SUMMER SCHOOL

The Odysseus Summer School offers a unique opportunity to deepen my understanding of EU asylum and migration law at a particularly important moment, with the implementation of the new Common European Asylum System instruments. As both a refugee and a legal researcher, I am especially interested in the gap between legal standards and the realities refugees experience in practice. I hope to strengthen my academic knowledge, learn from leading scholars and practitioners, and exchange ideas with participants from different backgrounds. The knowledge and network gained through the Summer School will directly support my future research and advocacy for a more rights-based and inclusive asylum system in Europe.



Anastasiia Sheremok 02

UKRAINIAN

FIELD OF STUDIES

International and European Law

ARRIVAL IN EUROPE

2024

PROTECTION GRANTED BY

Belgium

MY STORY

I arrived in Belgium in September 2024 because of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, when it became too dangerous to stay in my hometown, Kyiv. In Belgium, I began my advanced LLM in international public and European law.

WHY THE ODYSSEUS SUMMER SCHOOL

I see this summer school as an opportunity to contribute to securing a clear legal status for my people in European society. I also advise Ukrainians on the legal implications of temporary protection status and liaise with EU institutions and Belgian authorities on the options for Ukrainians to remain in the EU after 2027.



El Haje Amedou Sy 03

MAURITANIENNE

PARCOURS PROFESSIONNEL

Technicien socio-éducatif — association Emmaüs Solidarité

ARRIVÉE EN EUROPE

Mars 2020

PROTECTION ACCORDÉE PAR

France (OFPRA)

TYPE DE PROTECTION

Statut de réfugié

MY STORY

.Je travaille actuellement comme accompagnateur socio-éducatif au sein de l'association Emmaüs Solidarité, où j'accompagne des personnes en situation de grande précarité. Arrivé en Europe en mars 2020, j'ai obtenu une protection en France auprès de l'OFPRA.

POURQUOI L'ÉCOLE D'ÉTÉ ODYSSEUS ?

Participer à l'École d'Été Odysseus représente pour moi une opportunité rare de croiser mon expérience de terrain avec une formation académique de haut niveau sur le droit européen de l'immigration et de l'asile. En tant que professionnel du secteur social travaillant quotidiennement avec des personnes exilées, et en tant que réfugié moi-même, je perçois l'importance cruciale de comprendre les mécanismes juridiques qui structurent les parcours de protection en Europe. Cette formation me permettra d'enrichir mes pratiques professionnelles, de mieux défendre les droits des personnes que j'accompagne, et de contribuer à des échanges interdisciplinaires avec des participants venant d'horizons variés.



Anwar Hassan Ahmed Al-Buraihi 04

YEMENI

FIELD OF STUDIES

MA in Journalism and Communication

ARRIVAL IN EUROPE

2022

TYPE OF PROTECTION

International protection

PROFESSION IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Teacher, freelancer & human rights activist

PROTECTION GRANTED BY

Netherlands

MY STORY

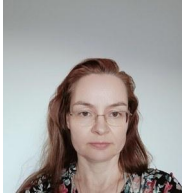
My name is Anwar Al-Buraihi and I am from Yemen. I hold a master's degree in Journalism and Communication from Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. I worked as a teacher and then as a freelancer, and today I consider myself a human rights activist.

Since the beginning of the civil war in Yemen in 2015, the situation has become very dangerous for journalists and human rights activists. This is why I had to flee to Europe and apply for asylum. I came to the Netherlands and applied for asylum in February 2022, and I was granted international protection in January 2024.

WHY THE ODYSSEUS SUMMER SCHOOL

Attending the Summer School would be a great opportunity to communicate and share ideas with the experts and researchers of European immigration and asylum law, and it will also support my further studies.

Who is a refugee? What is the Dublin Regulation? What are the Eurodac system and the EU asylum system, and why are they distinctive? I am confident the Summer School on EU Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy will address all of these questions and more. As a refugee in the EU, I want to understand European policy and legislation on immigration and asylum in depth. The course is also a strong example of how organisations and universities in the EU help refugees integrate — something especially valuable to me as a volunteer working with refugees in the Netherlands. I look forward to joining your Summer School.



Tetiana Chahina 05

UKRAINIAN

FIELD OF STUDIES

Law

ARRIVAL IN EUROPE

2023

TYPE OF PROTECTION

Temporary protection

PROFESSION IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Corporate lawyer

PROTECTION GRANTED BY

Belgium

MY STORY

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, I was forced to leave the country as a refugee in February 2023 with my two children, and we were granted temporary protection status in the Kingdom of Belgium. I now work in Belgium as a volunteer with the Ukrainian NGO “Unie Svit Hart” and am learning Dutch.

WHY THE ODYSSEUS SUMMER SCHOOL

The temporary protection status that Ukrainian refugees received from the EU may expire in March 2027, and the question of changing status — obtaining refugee status or subsidiary protection — will become relevant for many Ukrainians in Belgium. At the Odysseus Summer School I will gain knowledge of the EU legislation governing the granting of asylum, as well as the practical aspects of its application and the work of the relevant institutions and procedures.



Yevheniia Bondarenko 06

UKRAINIAN

FIELD OF STUDIES

International Law, EU Law & European Integration, Human Rights

ARRIVAL IN EUROPE

2022

TYPE OF PROTECTION

Temporary protection

PROFESSION IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Professor (Kyiv National Economic University) & legal expert

PROTECTION GRANTED BY

Belgium

MY STORY

I am a Ukrainian legal scholar and practitioner, PhD in Law and Professor at the Department of Public and International Law of Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman. For more than eighteen years, my professional work has focused on human rights, the rule of law, legal education and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Since 2022, I have been living in Belgium under temporary protection and working part-time with Caritas International Belgium, HelpDesk Ukraine, in the Department of Asylum and Migration. Together with a team of professionals, I provide socio-legal support to displaced persons and people in need of protection facing complex issues related to residence, social assistance, accommodation and interaction with Belgian institutions. This experience has made EU immigration and asylum law closely connected to people's lives, legal certainty and access to basic rights.

WHY THE ODYSSEUS SUMMER SCHOOL

I would like to take part in the Odysseus Summer School because it offers a unique opportunity to deepen my knowledge of EU immigration and asylum law — particularly temporary protection, asylum procedures, reception standards, access to rights, family unity and integration measures. For me, this programme is both professionally relevant and personally meaningful. It will strengthen my support to people in need of protection in Belgium and enrich my teaching and academic work in Ukraine, where these issues are increasingly important for future lawyers, especially in the context of Ukraine's European integration.

DOMAINE D'ÉTUDES

Droit

ARRIVÉE EN EUROPE

7 avril 2023

PROFESSION DANS LE PAYS D'ORIGINE

Avocat & défenseur des droits humains

PROTECTION ACCORDÉE PAR

Belgique

MON PARCOURS

Je suis un ressortissant burundais qui vit depuis avril 2023 en Belgique. Né en 1973, je suis titulaire d'une licence en droit (2002) et d'un master en droits de l'homme et résolution pacifique des conflits (2008). Sur le plan professionnel, j'ai presté au sein d'ONG de défense des droits humains au Burundi avant de devenir avocat en 2008, puis consultant sur les thématiques liées à la justice, à la gouvernance et aux droits humains. J'ai joué un rôle actif au sein de la société civile burundaise jusqu'en 2023, lorsque j'ai dû prendre le chemin de l'exil à la suite d'une série de menaces et de harcèlements liés à l'exercice de ma profession.

Arrivé en Belgique, j'ai presté comme bénévole pour des organisations de défense des droits humains telles que l'Umbrella Refugee Committee, Burundian Refugee Voice-Itaka, le Jesuit Refugee Service, Avocats Sans Frontières Belgique ou encore NADOE. Actuellement, je preste au sein du service juridique du CPAS de Schaerbeek dans le cadre d'un contrat d'insertion.

MOTIVATION À SUIVRE LE COURS D'ÉTÉ

Je suis intéressé par cette formation pour renforcer mes compétences professionnelles dans le domaine du droit des étrangers. Je suis juriste et coordinateur bénévole des projets au sein de l'association Burundian Refugee Voice-Itaka, ainsi que membre du conseil d'administration de l'Umbrella Refugee Committee et pourvoyeur d'assistance juridique aux réfugiés et demandeurs de protection internationale.

Mon expérience vécue en tant que réfugié me permettra d'accomplir mes missions en concentrant mes interventions sur les besoins réels de notre communauté, afin de les transmettre fidèlement aux autorités, qui ne maîtrisent pas toujours les réalités du terrain. Les connaissances acquises seront immédiatement partagées et mises en pratique au sein de notre réseau, profitant ainsi à des centaines de demandeurs d'asile et de réfugiés. En m'apportant de solides bases académiques en droit de l'Union européenne, cette formation me donnera les moyens de renforcer les capacités de nos associations et de demeurer des défenseurs fidèles, rigoureux et fiables aux yeux des communautés que nous servons.

FIELD OF STUDIES

Communications, Brand Strategy & Digital Marketing;
Political Science (BA, Rivne State University of
Humanities, 2015–2019)

ARRIVAL IN EUROPE

December 2022

CURRENT ROLE IN BELGIUM

Volunteer — Communications & Advocacy Specialist,
Umbrella Refugee Committee

PROTECTION GRANTED BY

Belgium

MY STORY

I left Ukraine because of the direct danger to my life and a profound depression that overtook me as I watched the war unfold and felt increasingly unable to help my people in any meaningful way. Staying meant breaking completely. Coming to Belgium gave me a way to continue serving my community — from a different place, but with the same dedication and commitment. Today, my work is a way of transforming pain into purpose: every refugee I help navigate the system is a reminder of why I left and why I keep going.

WHY THE ODYSSEUS SUMMER SCHOOL

In my role at the Umbrella Refugee Committee, I serve as a daily bridge between refugees, asylum seekers and the institutions working to support them. A core part of my work involves explaining to people their legal status, rights, obligations and the protection mechanisms available to them. To do this effectively and accurately, I need a deeper and more current understanding of the EU legal framework governing migration and asylum — including the legislative changes introduced under the new EU Pact, which entered into force in 2026. The Odysseus Summer School offers precisely the structured legal education I need to strengthen the quality of my advocacy and improve access to reliable information for the vulnerable communities I serve every day.

THANK YOU

Made possible by *your support*

The Scholarships for Refugees initiative is entirely self-financed. It exists because of donors who give what they can, partners who believe in it, and a community that refuses to let displacement be the end of a story. To everyone who has contributed, thank you!

Support the initiative. Every contribution, large or small, helps another refugee or beneficiary of protection take their seat at the Summer School. Join our crowdfunding campaign and help us fund the next class.

WITH HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Every name below helped make this year's scholarships possible.

Aline	Davide	Honoré	Magdi	Raquel
Ana	Elia	Irena	Marlene	Tamara
Anna	Elisa	Jessica Caroline	Marthe	Till
Barbora	Elvira	Jian Yi Zelia	Matea	Valentine
Carry	Ermioni	Leon	Maya	Vicente
Cristina	Ester	Leonie	Merethe Albrecht	Victoria
Cristina	Fanny	Loveleen	Miguel	Ziya

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In partnership with the Odysseus Academic Network, ULB, UNHCR & #RefYOUgees

Contact · odysseus@ulb.be



#REFYOUGEES

UNHCR · The UN Refugee Agency