

## Stories about Refugees from All over the World

**KIT Students Present Stories about the Lives of Refugees and Seek to Promote Mutual Understanding – Seed Capital for Book Project Acquired by Crowdfunding on “KITcrowd”**



*What made them come to Karlsruhe? Together with refugees from all over the world, KIT students tell their stories in texts and pictures. (Photos at the top and bottom right: Lisa Hess; bottom left: Kilian Schürger)*

**Overcoming fears of contact and enhancing exchange between refugees and citizens: This is the objective of the Enactus student group of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). Within the framework of various projects, the students stand up for refugees, offer language courses, and organize soccer plays. They now plan to publish a photobook, in which they want to tell the refugees' stories in texts and pictures together with the refugees. The book entitled “Flüchtlingszeit” will be issued in November. Funds for editing, layout, and sales have been acquired very successfully on the “KITcrowd” platform.**

“At times, more than 2250 refugees live in a tent on KIT Campus East and at the Station for First Admission of Refugees in Karlsruhe. They influence the cityscape. And we are convinced of the fact that they are very important to the cultural diversity and competitiveness of our state,” Leopold Spenner says. He heads the Enactus project group “Flüchtlingszeit”. “With our book, we want to counteract mistrust and fears of contact with immigrants and promote exchange

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and integration of the refugees. As we have also experienced problems associated with immigration, we try to describe our impressions the way we have experienced them, such that each reader can make up his own mind.”

Since one and a half years, the students of the Enactus university group have been working with refugees and their children. The Zic-zac project, for instance, is dedicated to offering language courses to the refugees and playing soccer with them. “Doing this, you get to know each other and build up trust. We learned how hopeless the situation of many refugees in their home countries is, but also how friendly, strong, and often well-educated the refugees are,” Spenner says. He emphasizes that the circumstances that make them come to Germany are very different and very touching. Documenting them may also help the refugees that have to tell the reasons and circumstances of their refuge during their hearings.

Meanwhile, more than 30 stories have been written, sometimes big portrait photographs have been taken to show the people behind. 18 students of all disciplines of KIT, together with numerous refugees from Karlsruhe and the surroundings, photographer Lisa Hess, Karlsruhe, design students of Karlsruhe University for Arts and Design (HfG), voluntary helpers, and a small publishing company in Northern Germany, are working on the book. State Minister Aydan Özoğuz, Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration, has agreed to write the foreword.

The money required for editing and layout of the book, application for the ISBN number, and sales was acquired via the KITcrowd platform ([www.kitcrowd.de](http://www.kitcrowd.de)): The goal of EUR 1500 was reached after two weeks already. After the term defined, EUR 3164 were collected. In July, the crowdfunding platform Startnext, with which KITcrowd cooperates, declared “Flüchtlingszeit” the project of the day.

In case of reasonable proceeds from the sales of books, the concept is planned to be continued in the long term. “We would like refugees and interested citizens of Karlsruhe and students to meet once per week in order to work on the stories. These stories may then be published on our internet pages and help refugees during their hearing,” Leopold Spenner says. Moreover, regular exchange and contact will improve language skills and promote integration. In case of success, the Karlsruhe concept might be transferred to other cities.

**More information:** [www.fluechtlingszeit.de](http://www.fluechtlingszeit.de)



*Students of the “Flüchtlingszeit“ Enactus project group: Kilian Schürger, Lisa Hess, Eva Schlosser, and Leopold Spenner (from left to right, Photo: Manuel Balzer)*

## Realizing Project Ideas by Crowdfunding

KIT is one of the first German science institutions running an own crowdfunding platform to support not only technical, but also philanthropic projects. On [www.kitcrowd.de](http://www.kitcrowd.de), employees and students of KIT can present their projects or ideas in the areas of “Technology & Founding” and “Campus & Community”. Private persons and companies can support these ideas financially and morally. If many supporters are found, even smaller amounts may result in successful project funding. To cover the entire range of crowdfunding options, KIT cooperates with commercial crowdfunding platforms, such as Startnext Crowdfunding GmbH.

All projects can be found at [www.kitcrowd.de](http://www.kitcrowd.de).

**KIT possesses extensive scientific competences for research into, development, and integrated planning of the city of the future in all major aspects. Scientists of five KIT Centers – Climate and Environment; Energy; Mobility Systems; Humans and Technology; Informations, Systems, Technologies – work on studies and the sustainable design of urban spaces from their disciplines’ perspective and in an inter- and transdisciplinary manner.**

**Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) is a public corporation pursuing the tasks of a Baden-Wuerttemberg state university and of a national research center of the Helmholtz Association. The KIT mission combines the three core tasks of research, higher education, and innovation. With about 9,400 employees and 24,500 students, KIT is one of the big institutions of research and higher education in natural sciences and engineering in Europe.**

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