



PLAN  
EINSTEIN  
IS WHERE  
YOU BUILD  
YOUR FUTURE



**UIA** | URBAN  
INNOVATIVE  
ACTIONS



# PLAN EINSTEIN

LIVING TOGETHER  
LEARNING TOGETHER  
WORKING TOGETHER

**A STUDENT:  
"I AM PROUD OF WHO  
I HAVE AGAIN BECOME."**

## LIVING TOGETHER, LEARNING TOGETHER AND WORKING TOGETHER IN OVERVECHT, THAT'S PLAN EINSTEIN!

**Plan Einstein is an innovative approach developed by the Municipality of Utrecht and its partners in the reception and integration of refugees.**

At Einsteindreef in the Utrecht district of Overvecht, refugees live together with local youngsters. Residents of Plan Einstein and neighbourhood members in Overvecht can follow courses Entrepreneurship and English here, and/or participate in a practical programme for entrepreneurship and work or join other activities.

Refugees use their time in the asylum seekers' centre (AZC) to rebuild their lives, while locals take the next step towards a better future. Also, various social and cultural activities are organised.

This makes Plan Einstein a place in Overvecht where people meet, where new social contacts are made and where you can further your (professional) development. Living together, learning together and working together in Overvecht, that makes Plan Einstein special!



### A REFUGEE:

"I HAVE BEEN IN ASYLUM CENTRES WHERE WE HAD LITTLE TO NO CONTACT WITH DUTCH PEOPLE. NOW I LIVE AMONG THEM! FOR ME PERSONALLY, IT GOES BEYOND COOKING AND EATING TOGETHER. YOU BUILD UP A NETWORK. MY NETWORK PROVIDES ME SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ENABLE ME TO THINK OF MY FUTURE"



# LEARNING TOGETHER

In Plan Einstein, refugees and local residents work on their professional future! Through various courses and activities they can develop their personal skills and professional competences.

For the refugees, the Dutch Council for Refugees (Vluchtelingenwerk) first identifies the educational and professional background, skills, current interests and possible obstacles.

## A LOCAL RESIDENT:

“Unemployment in our district is high. Many people find it difficult to find work. But everyone has talents. The English and Entrepreneurship courses can help broaden your horizon.”

Both refugees and local residents can participate in 3 different programmes:

- 1 (Business) English, both for beginners and advanced students offered by the People’s University of Utrecht.
- 2 (International) Entrepreneurship offered by the Utrecht Center for Entrepreneurship.
- 3 Practical programme and coaching for entrepreneurship and work by the Social Impact Factory.

Participants can work to strengthen the professional skills they need in work, such as collaboration and networking. Furthermore, participants can get help with starting a business, acquire skills in entrepreneurship, receive individual coaching and expand their professional network.

The courses they can follow in Plan Einstein and the network they build can boost the prospects of refugees and local residents for a better future, regardless of their status and regardless of where that future lies.

# LIVING TOGETHER

At Einsteindreef in the Utrecht district of Overvecht, refugees live together in the same building with youngsters with a connection to the neighbourhood. Socius and organisations for volunteers like Welcome in Utrecht organise events such as eating or playing sports together, network meetings, a language café and scores of other activities.

## A REFUGEE:

“WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT THIS RECEPTION LOCATION IS THAT WE LIVE IN A RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT, AMONG LOCAL PEOPLE. PEOPLE WHO CHAT WITH US WHEN WE MEET THEM IN THE STREET AND IN THE SHOP. WE SHARE A HOME ENVIRONMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND OTHER ASYLUM SEEKERS. WE OFTEN EAT WITH ONE ANOTHER, MAKE MUSIC TOGETHER AND FOLLOW THE SAME COURSES. HERE WE NO LONGER FEEL LIKE FOREIGNERS OR STRANGERS, LIKE IN THE OTHER RECEPTION CENTRES. WE JUST BELONG AND THAT GIVES US A NICE AND SAFE FEELING. LIKE OUR LIVES ARE NO LONGER ON HOLD AND WE CAN AGAIN BUILD ON OUR FUTURE.”



## A YOUNGSTER LIVING IN PLAN EINSTEIN:

“What I like is different groups in society live together here. We share a central square and meeting space.”



# WORKING TOGETHER

Both refugees and locals from the district of Overvecht are encouraged to work on their future, regardless of where that future lies. The starting point for Utrecht is an “inclusive city”; a city for and with everyone. The activities are offered not only to refugees, but also to interested neighbourhood members.

## A LOCAL RESIDENT:

“I was curious to meet asylum seekers. Who are these people who come from Syria, Iraq or Yemen? You read and hear so much about what they have gone through. Now that we have become neighbours, we have an opportunity to get to know one another.”



## A REFUGEE:

“I WANT THEM TO TALK TO ME AS A HUMAN BEING, NOT AS A REFUGEE. THEY DON'T HAVE TO FEEL SORRY FOR ME. I HAVE EXPERIENCED A LOT SINCE I FLED MY COUNTRY. PLAN EINSTEIN GIVES ME A CHANCE TO WORK ON MY FUTURE. LAST WEEK I RECEIVED A CERTIFICATE FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSE. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE FOR MAKING THIS PLAN POSSIBLE. I DON'T HAVE TO SIT STILL ANYMORE. I CAN ACTIVELY WORK ON MY FUTURE.”



# A SPECIAL AND INNOVATIVE APPROACH

What makes Plan Einstein innovative is that it gives refugees who don't yet have a residence permit an opportunity, right from the start, to live together, learn together and work together on (re)building their future.

Einsteindreef in Overvecht is the first place where this approach is being realised and Utrecht therefore serves as an example for other European cities.

Part of the innovative approach is that the City of Utrecht is also committed to ensuring that refugees with a residence permit who are accommodated in the city remain in the city or region as much as possible. As a result, they build up their own network faster, which promotes their integration.

The European Commission considers the Utrecht approach to be inspiring and innovative. This is why Utrecht receives funding for Plan Einstein from the European Commission's Urban Innovative Actions Initiative.

**KEES DIEPEVEEN,**  
DEPUTY MAYOR:



“Cities play a crucial role in the reception and integration process of asylum seekers. The way we receive newcomers into our society has an impact on its future shape and prosperity.”

The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad is an inclusive approach to facilitate integration from day one by introducing a shared living concept in which local youth and asylum seekers live together. It aims to create an innovative reception facility which is built upon social networks within the neighbourhood developing future proof skills together with asylum seekers. After the determination of an asylum status participants will have developed skills in self efficacy and resilience which can be used both in the Netherlands or elsewhere.”

## FURTHER INFORMATION



### PLAN EINSTEIN

Einsteindreef 91-93, 3562 GB Utrecht

#### Website:

[www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/utrecht](http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/utrecht)  
and [www.plan-einstein.nl](http://www.plan-einstein.nl)

Or follow us on Twitter or Facebook:  
Plan Einstein

Email: [vluchtelingenvragen@utrecht.nl](mailto:vluchtelingenvragen@utrecht.nl)

## PARTNERSHIPS

The innovative approach to reception and integration, the Utrecht Refugee Launch Pad (URLP), was developed by the municipality of Utrecht together with the housing corporation for young People SOCIUS, the Utrecht Center for Entrepreneurship (Utrecht University), the Utrecht Council for Refugees, the Utrecht People's University and the Social Impact Factory. The Universities of Oxford and Roehampton are responsible for the research and evaluation of the impact and results of the project on the district, its participants and the city. Wherever beneficial, the municipality also involves other district parties in the implementation of Plan Einstein.



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