



How Syrian Refugees are Rebuilding Their Lives in Europe by Joining the Fight to Help Save the Bees

- Beekeeping is offering refugees a unique way to integrate into their new home
- Helps those who have fled Syria to learn the language and to meet people
- First launched in Munich, Germany, project is now planned for further European cities
- Inspiring Townbee project is among winners of 2017 Ford College Community Challenge

Cologne, Germany, Oct. 12, 2017 – Two years ago, Hafez Al-Moussa was one of 40 men, women and children, aboard a flimsy dinghy, making the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea, to Europe. He was one of the lucky ones – surviving the journey to seek a new start in Germany, after fleeing war-torn Syria.

As a child, Al-Moussa had helped to harvest the honey on the family farm, and this year he did so again, in his adopted country, as part of an innovative new project. Townbee was conceived to help refugees learn their host nation's language and to integrate into their adopted societies, while also supporting the planet's under-threat bee population.

“Like the bees, we've struggled for survival. The first moments in Germany were difficult. Simple things like crossing a road or buying food are more challenging when you cannot speak the language,” said Al-Moussa, 28, who gave up civil engineering studies when he left his home country. “It was incredibly exciting to share the excitement of harvesting the first Townbee honey with my new German friends – who had never before seen a bee hive.”

The brainchild of a team of students from The Technical University of Munich, Townbee seeks a presence in every major city in Europe that has a significant refugee population. In Munich, the hives are in the gardens and rooftops of companies in the city centre and the honey is sold at local shops and markets. All proceeds go back into the project, and since joining, Hafez has enrolled at the same university, where he is now continuing his studies.

“Townbee has helped me to meet people, share new experiences, learn the language and traditions of my new country, and more clearly see my future,” he said. “As well as the friends I have made through the project, I also have 40,000 little bees who rely on me. Sometimes I tell them about my future hopes in Germany.”

Townbee is among winners of the [2017 Ford College Community Challenge](#) (Ford C3), an education program from Ford Motor Company Fund that provides grants to student-led programmes focused on building sustainable communities.

“Learning a language and getting to know people in a new country are major challenges for refugees. This is a way that they can do that – and also help the bees to thrive,” said Hannes Schroter, business student and Townbee project member. In the last 10 years, the Ford College Community Challenge has contributed \$3 million in grants to student teams around the world, including in the U.K. and Germany. Further winners this year include Slurp, which runs soup stalls on the campus of Edinburgh University, making and selling soup with disadvantaged youths; and “Café Ohne Worte” (Café Without Words), which employs, trains, and serves people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Next year the challenge is due to be extended to Spain.

“Taking on environmental and social challenges in one stroke, Townbee is an inspirational project to be involved with, and one that we at Ford are proud and privileged to be a part of,” said Debbie Chennells, manager, Ford Fund, Ford of Europe.

