

Responding to the European refugee crisis: a Rapid Response Module for training humanitarian interpreters

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In 2015, over one million refugees arrived in Europe by sea alone (Clayton & Holland 2015); more than 1.3 million people applied for asylum that year (Eurostat 2015). Many of these refugees do not speak the languages of their host countries, and there is a critical shortage of trained interpreters working in refugee contexts (Statewatch 2016).

To address this need, the University of Geneva's InZone centre has developed a Rapid Response Module (RRM) for Humanitarian Interpreters. Leveraging the potential of elearning technology, this selfstudy module provides an orientation for interpreters working in disaster zones and other humanitarian contexts. As learners work through a series of realistic interpreting assignments, they discover basic interpreting concepts, methods and tools, cultural and ethical challenges, interpreting-specific psychosocial stressors, potential health issues, and selfcare strategies.

InZone piloted this course with about 30 humanitarian interpreters working with Arabic, Pashto, Dari and Farsi in Greece. Our aim was to train a first cohort of interpreters and assess course strengths and weaknesses with a view to scaling up the module and making it more widely available in contexts of forced migration.

In this paper, we present the RRM as an example of how such short elearning modules may successfully be designed and developed and how learning technologies, networks, and distribution channels can be leveraged to reach audiences quickly with missioncritical concepts and information. By offering datadriven reflections on the RRM, we demonstrate how research can help to develop technology-enhanced training, providing for scale and addressing the urgent humanitarian crisis that has arrived on Europe's shores.