



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL EDUCATION

## **The AIEA 2026 Harold Josephson Student Award for Professional Promise in International Education**

The Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) is pleased to announce Lulia Mirzac as the recipient of the 2026 Harold Josephson Award for Professional Promise in International Education.

The Josephson Award honors the memory of Dr. Harold Josephson, a long-time leader in AIEA who passed away in 1998. Josephson served as Associate Vice Chancellor of International Programs at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The award recognizes deserving graduate students for outstanding contributions to the field of international education.

Mirzac is a distinguished UK ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council)-funded doctoral researcher at the University of Birmingham's Law School, recognized for her exceptional contributions to research, teaching, and service in international education. Her doctoral work addresses critical issues of implicit bias in trafficking-related asylum adjudications, revealing how idealized images of human trafficking, coupled with gendered and racial stereotypes, negatively impact the ability of trafficked men and other 'non-ideal victims' to seek legal redress. Her findings carry significant policy implications for criminal justice systems and contribute to developing more inclusive frameworks for understanding trafficking and migration.

Beyond her dissertation, Mirzac has published on the human rights of stateless persons, forced marriage protections, labor market integration of migrants, and epistemic injustice towards women in healthcare, and has conducted empirical research at Oxford Brookes University documenting the lived experiences of migrants with lived experiences of trafficking through in-depth interviews, demonstrating remarkable breadth across human rights law. In partnership with Dr Meghan Campbell and the Equal Rights Trust, Mirzac produced research commissioned by the Office for Equality and Opportunity within the UK Cabinet Office to support the strengthening of equal pay law and the elimination of pay discrimination. The work contributes to the development of the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill announced in the 2024 King's Speech. As a Research Consultant at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, she contributes legal analyses to the Database of European Laws relating to Cultural and Religious Diversity (CURED).

The impact of Mirzac's scholarship extends into judicial practice. In 2026, she was invited to serve as a trafficking expert during judicial training study visits organized by the Department of Law & Anthropology at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in collaboration with the European Judicial Training Network. As part of an interdisciplinary team of legal scholars and anthropologists, she contributes to training judges and prosecutors from across Europe on



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cultural awareness and implicit bias in asylum adjudication. The program equips the judiciary with tools to assess complex claims involving gender-based harm, religious conversion, and socio-cultural contexts, strengthening fairness and rigor in refugee status determinations.

In compliment to her research, Mirzac is an accomplished educator who brings critical and decolonial perspectives to her teaching. As a Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University and Teaching Associate at Birmingham Law School, she teaches immigration, asylum, and nationality law while intentionally centering voices from the Global South and indigenous scholars. Her pedagogy challenges students to critically examine legal neutrality and colonial legacies, preparing future policymakers and lawyers to use law as a tool for inclusive societies. Her commitment to widening participation in education spans her career, from coordinating Oxford's "Pathways to Law" programme, which supported hundreds of underprivileged students to attend top universities, to establishing the Oxfam "Junior Lawyers Against Poverty" pro-bono scheme connecting students across the Global North and South.

In addition to her scholarly work, Mirzac serves as a Postgraduate Recruitment Advisor at the University of Birmingham, guiding prospective students from diverse backgrounds through the admissions process. Her scholarship and practice consistently center the experiences of historically marginalized groups, trafficked individuals, stateless persons, irregular migrants, and victims of gender-based violence, making her a vital voice for equity and human rights in international education.

AIEA congratulates Iulia Mirzac on receiving this year's Harold Josephson Student Award for Professional Promise in International Education.