

Education Island , 2019

by Anne Ackermann

In the tiny self declared The Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) which occupies the north of the mediterranean island of Cyprus over 100.000 mostly international students are currently enrolled in a total of 20 universities, giving it the nickname “education island”.

The revenues from the presence of these international students, of which as many as 20.000 come from African countries like Nigeria, DRC, Kenya or Cameroon, are the backbone of the economy of this internationally unrecognised piece of land under Turkish occupation.

Many of the young Africans were brought to the island by sometimes malicious agents who promised to make come true the “overseas dream” by advertising free scholarships for “studying in Europe”. Many have sacrificed all to come here in order to gain a European diploma. Just that this is not Europe.

While they struggle to pay tuition fees and high costs of living, many face racism, economic hardship and a general feeling of being stuck. When going back home is not an option and the gates to Europe are closed, life on what they call a ‘no man’s island’ often gets heavy.

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