



Researchers at Risk: An Update on National- level Actions in Europe 2024

Impressum

Researchers at Risk: An Update on National-level Actions in Europe 2024

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The background of the entire page is a light blue color. Overlaid on this is a repeating pattern of darker blue shapes. The pattern consists of rounded squares arranged in a grid, with small circles positioned at the intersections between the squares. The word "Introduction" is centered in the lower half of the page in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

Introduction



Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are currently under pressure in many countries around the world. The initial [Inspireurope mapping report](#) and the [first report on national-level initiatives in Europe](#) have already pointed out that the number of researchers at risk largely exceeds the available support structures. In the last two years, the contributors to this report have witnessed an increasing number of applications by researchers at risk.

Attacks on the academic freedom of scholars and university students continue to curtail academic freedom by limiting what can and cannot be said in and out of classrooms, and additionally by encouraging self-censorship. They affect staff and students alike and range from loss of life and liberty to loss of professional standing, and employment. In some countries, this results from war or armed conflict, as in Ukraine, Sudan, or the Middle East. In other countries, the attacks follow in the trail of increasingly oppressive and authoritarian regimes. Afghanistan, Iran or Russia may serve as examples of countries where the risk of prosecution faced by scholars and students, and, particularly by female academics, has continued to be on the rise.

For decades such attacks have been met by NGOs, higher education institutions and government-backed programs offering temporary positions for researchers who have been forced to flee oppressive and dangerous situations (see, for example, the [SAR's Free to Think Reports](#), the [PAUSE rapport d'activité 2022](#), the [CARA 2022 annual report](#) or the [AvH brochure A new beginning 2021](#)). The report at hand also demonstrates that because of these sustained commitments and actions there is excellent work already underway in Europe for the support of researchers at risk. As a result of these efforts many scholars have been enabled to continue contributing to the academic discourse, as well as to social, cultural, political, and economic innovation. Their contributions to high quality teaching and research benefits host institutions and societies, national research systems, and the global academic community as a whole.

Despite the support that has already been garnered for researchers at risk, numerous international crises have recently resulted in an increasing number of applications for assistance from at-risk scholars. The gap between the number of applications and the funding available for positions has increased since the last Inspireurope report on national-level initiatives was published in 2021. The stakeholders surveyed in this current publication report a sustained need for additional engagement and initiatives, including scholarship placements to support researchers and their families. They recognize that these researchers bring perspectives and experiences to their new hosting context which can enhance knowledge production, increase diversity in science and education, and raise awareness of the threats to academic freedom on a global scale. The continued engagement with researchers at risk through national-level actions as well as on a European scale, e.g. by the MSCA4Ukraine programme, signals the enduring commitment of European academic communities and political actors to the value of academic freedom as a driver of research excellence and as a cornerstone of democratic societies. Stakeholders wishing to engage further with the issues of academic freedom and the support for researchers at risk will find important information and guidance in this report, which gathers experiences from 15 different European countries. The aim of the report is to share knowledge between actors already involved in this field, as well as to provide information and advice and to encourage the development of new national-level initiatives.

1.1 About Inspireurope+

Inspireurope+ is a project funded under the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. The project partners include global leaders in the provision of support for researchers at risk, and their common work is coordinated by Scholars at Risk Europe at Maynooth University, Ireland. By joining forces in this way, Inspireurope+ facilitates transnational cooperation and coordination across Europe to strengthen support for researchers at risk. Building on the work undertaken by Inspireurope (2019-2022), Inspireurope+ proceeds from the viewpoint that excellence in research depends upon free and open scientific debate and requires a diversity of perspectives and methodologies to flourish. Inspireurope+ partners all share a commitment to defending academic freedom and to the support, promotion and integration of researchers at risk in their respective research and innovation ecosystems.

Inspireurope+ strives to offer guidance and support for researchers at risk, to build institutional capacity and preparedness across Europe, and to advise national-level initiatives for researchers at risk. Moreover, the project regularly informs policymaking in Europe on matters related to researchers at risk. The consortium members work towards raising awareness of why researchers are at risk, and about ways to support them, at the same time as broadening and diversifying support structures across Europe.

1.2 Researchers at risk

Researchers at risk include researchers, scholars, and scientists at all stages of their research careers, including doctoral candidates through to experienced researchers and professors, who are experiencing threats to their life, liberty, or research career, and those who are forced or have been forced to flee because of such threats.

While some researchers at risk have recognised refugee status, asylum status, or similar protection status, a more significant proportion of those seeking the assistance of NGOs specialising in the field of scholar protection are outside the refugee process. They seek or hold temporary visas/work permits through visiting research/scholar positions at host universities outside their home countries.

The global Scholars at Risk Network (SAR) reports that although each individual researcher's situation is unique, clear patterns have emerged within the over 5,000 applications for assistance the Network has received since its founding in 2000. Based on over 20 years' experience receiving requests for assistance from at-risk scholars, professors, researchers, doctoral students, institutional leaders, and other members of higher education communities, SAR identifies three broad categories of risk reported:

a) Risk due to the content of a scholar's work, research, or teaching being perceived as threatening by authorities or other groups. When the development of ideas, exchange of

information, and expression of new opinions are considered threatening, individual scholars/ researchers are particularly vulnerable.

b) Risk because of the individual's status as an academic/ researcher. Because of their education, frequent travel, and professional standing, scholars are often prominent members of their community. Where a scholar is a member of a political, ethnic, or religious minority, female, or a member of LGBTQ+ communities, an attack on an individual scholar may be a highly visible and efficient means for intimidating and silencing others. For additional information please consult [How to Host: A Handbook for Higher Education Partners, Scholars at Risk Network](#) and [other resources](#) provided by the Inspireurope+ Consortium.

c) Risk as a result of their peaceful exercise of basic human rights, in particular, the right to freedom of expression or freedom of association. This includes the many scholars who have sought refuge abroad because conflict in their home country has made normal academic work impossible. The effects of conflict may include the physical destruction of university buildings, unreliable supplies of electricity and water, the breakdown of local internet provision, the risk of imminent conscription for male scholars, and a rise in general criminality, including kidnapping for ransom, with academics being seen as relatively well-paid and therefore attractive targets.

For a wider background and context on support for researchers at risk in Europe, we invite readers to review the Inspireurope Mapping Report: [Researchers at Risk: Mapping Europe's Response](#).

1.3 Notes on Methodology

Portions of the information available in this guide were collected through a series of interviews conducted in 2020 by a team from SAR Europe, PAUSE and AvH. Many of the insights collected were published in a [report on national-level actions in Europe](#) in 2021. The current report is intended to provide an update to the 2021 report as well as to introduce new information based upon developments since that time. For this purpose, current authors have contacted representatives of fifteen different national-level initiatives in summer 2023, asking for updates on programmes and services which have occurred in the two years since the last report was published. What is obvious in the responses is the encouraging growth of existing initiatives, and the emergence of new initiatives and programmes. The following country spotlights reflect different facets of commonly shared challenges which existing and newly emerging initiatives are facing in times of increased geopolitical strife and upheaval.

1.4 Overview of national-level initiatives in Europe – Responding to times of crises

The following country spotlights on national-level initiatives in Europe reflect a broad range of engagement with researchers at risk. There is no one-size fits all approach for supporting researchers at risk. Rather, the different approaches presented here provide a variety of meaningful examples and best practices. These different approaches are intended to provide encouragement and ideas for additional stakeholders to become involved in activities supporting researchers at risk and advancing academic freedom. The focus within these country spotlights is on concrete efforts made to support researchers at risk in different European contexts. In addition, it is noticeable that most of the national-level initiatives presented here also attempt to raise more generalised awareness, not only of the individual challenges and trajectories faced by researchers at risk, but also the importance of academic freedom as a cornerstone for innovative and sustainable knowledge production.

Since 2021, a number of specific events as well as broader global trends curtailed academic freedom in many countries. Attacks on higher education institutions, staff members and students have increased – whether in the context of armed conflict, such as in Ukraine, Sudan or the Middle East, or in the context of new or increasingly repressive autocratic regimes as for example in Afghanistan and Iran. These, and numerous other more generalised or individual attacks on academic freedom and individual researchers have led to a surge in applications to the diverse programmes offered by the national-level initiatives presented in the following chapter. This sharp increase in the number of applications constitutes a serious challenge for different actors, whether in terms of programme management or in terms of individual risk assessments.

In some countries, more rapid response style emergency interventions and programmes have also been set up and carried out, most notably around the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In addition, on a European level, [MSCA4Ukraine](#) has been devised as an EU-funded fellowship scheme for displaced researchers from Ukraine. The scheme is implemented by a consortium comprised of [Scholars at Risk Europe](#), the [Alexander von Humboldt Foundation](#) and the [European University Association](#), with the French national [PAUSE programme](#), hosted by the [Collège de France](#), and the global [Scholars at Risk Network](#) participating as associated partners. The support offered by MSCA4Ukraine enables displaced researchers to continue their research at academic and non-academic host organizations in EU Member States and Horizon Europe Associated countries, while maintaining their connections to research and innovation communities in Ukraine. The scheme currently supports around 124 researchers in 21 host countries. Beyond fellowships, MSCA4Ukraine aims to leverage support for applicants who could not be financed by the scheme due to budget constraints. It also pro-

vides individual advice and support to applicants seeking alternative funding and/or placement opportunities; and organizes career development and networking activities for researchers from Ukraine. While this ability to respond to newly emerging crisis situations is encouraging, it also presents an additional dimension of challenge for “matching” programmes and the responsible coordination of information between researchers at risk and host institutions and organisations in several countries.

The following country spotlights highlight many cases where there have been successful adaptations of current programmes to meet increasingly acute and overlapping international crises. However, they also reflect the challenges arising from this international context. The different reports shed light on the importance of keeping programmes open to researchers from all over the world and providing safe havens for researchers at risk, especially when they have to flee country and regional contexts beyond the limelight of media coverage or the reach of European political attention and will.



2.

National-level Actions - Country Spotlights

This chapter features the status and most recent developments regarding initiatives and support structures for researchers at risk in different countries, with a focus on the time frame between 2021 and 2023. As mentioned earlier, the institutional environments and initiatives differ from one country to another. This chapter is not intended to present a comprehensive perspective, but rather to present a compilation of approaches and lessons learned. The hope is that these examples will contribute to mutual learning and will encourage additional stakeholders to take action and develop new approaches to support researchers at risk.





2.1 Belgium

There is no official national-level initiative in Belgium yet, and this may be in part because of the community nature of competences in education. The activities are organised and managed independently in the Wallonia-Brussels and Flanders regions.

2.1.1 Wallonia-Brussels Federation (FWB)

Overview of existing initiatives

The Académie de Recherche et d'Enseignement Supérieur (ARES – Academy for Research and Higher Education) has published on its website a [mapping of initiatives](#) taken by Wallonia-Brussels Federation (FWB) higher education institutions (HEIs) for migrants and refugees, including academics and researchers at risk. It was drawn up in 2019 and its updated version was published in March 2022. At least 6 HEIs provide financial support in the form of scholarships to host scholars at risk, mainly for doctoral and post-doctoral students.

- In 2016, the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) set up a Solidarity Fund through which it aims to support researchers who can no longer carry out their work in their country of origin, where they are exposed to risks due to the content of their research work or the free expression of their opinions. The Solidarity scholarship consists of a one-year post-doctorate position (12 months), for a total amount of 50,000 euros gross (i.e. ca. 35,000 euros net) as well as a relocation allowance of 2,500 euros net. Since 2017, 32 researchers have benefited from a scholarship from the ULB Solidarity Fund. These grants have been awarded to scientists from all areas of research and from countries such as Burundi, China, Iran, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Ethiopia, Russia and Afghanistan (among others). For the 2022-2023 academic year, 11 researchers at risk are working at ULB as post-docs.
- At UCLouvain, students and scholars at risk from developing countries can apply for a PhD scholarship via the general annual call for nationals from developing countries. Since 2018, and on an ad hoc basis, calls have been launched for a one-year post-doctoral fellowship for displaced or at-risk scientists. In response to the conflict in Ukraine, UCLouvain has extended its Access2University (A2U) programme to researchers of Ukrainian nationality.
- ULiège offers post-doctoral and doctoral scholarships. A specific doctoral programme has been developed, with scholarships on offer to meet promoters and develop a coherent doctoral research project. Grants to complete a thesis and exceptional loans in the event of a break in funding by the HEI in the country of origin are also available.
- At UMONS, scholarships may be awarded on the basis of a needs and context assessment. Their duration and amount are also determined on an individual basis;

- At UNamur, on an ad hoc basis, resources can be freed up within existing fellowship funding programmes to support researchers at risk.
- In specific situations, Hénallux may agree to finance up to 10% of the cost of hosting a SAR for a period of between 1 and 12 months.

Additional initiatives also exist. The HEG (IHECS), continues to foster a culture of welcoming refugee experts and visiting professors. Some HEIs have also set up specific initiatives, such as the ULB Solidarity Fund, under which a joint UCLouvain-ULB appeal was launched in 2022-2023 following the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.

Lastly, some HEIs provide support to facilitate the arrival and reception of scholars at risk, for example through supervision by the international office, by paying particular attention to reception and integration conditions in the selection procedures, or by providing support with administrative procedures upstream and upon arrival. Some HEIs offer support activities or services during their stay, including access to housing, social and psychological support services, support with administrative formalities, specific dedicated contact points, mentoring systems, French as a foreign language courses, training on Belgium, local culture and inter-culturality, employability support, and psycho-medical-social support.

Finally, some institutions show their commitment to academic freedom through their institutional policies, and specifically through the institution's involvement in networks or partnerships. They provide advocacy activities and raise awareness for the protection of academic freedom and researchers at risk. Moreover, they promote academic freedom generally through their teaching, research and community service activities related to researchers at risk.

These different initiatives primarily involve the administration of the institution itself, a scholar at risk, and a promoter, who will professionally accompany the scholar at risk during his/her stay. Generally, these programmes may also involve the institution's various services, including social services, as well as occasional faculties other than the one hosting the scholar at risk, in the case of language courses, for example. The teaching staff/research team into which the scholar will integrate is of course central to the entire process.

SAR Wallonia-Brussels section

In February 2023, a Scholars at Risk section was set up in the FWB, whose members to date are the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), the UCLouvain, the Université de Liège, the Conseil des Recteurs et Rectrices francophones (CRef) and the ARES, which brings together all the HEIs in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. ARES has been member of the SAR network since 2017. The aim of setting up this new section is to obtain financial support from outside the HEIs, for the welcoming of scholars at risk, to encourage and improve expertise in this field, as well as to increase the visibility of the actions carried out locally and publicly.

The SAR FWB section does not currently receive any financial support from the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation or any other public authorities. In this respect, it should be noted that the SAR Flanders section, created in 2021, has benefited from an annual budget of 200,000 euros since its creation two years ago.

Key lessons learned

It is important to secure external financial support to reinforce the initiatives that are already being developed and put in place by the institutions to host scholars at risk.

- The various initiatives developed by the institutions can have a positive impact both for the individual scholar at risk, and may also be beneficial for the institution's academic community (students, teaching staff, researchers) in general.
- Being able to count on a promoter who supports a scholar at risk in accordance with his or her personal situation and academic/professional qualifications is crucial.
- The difficulties which scholars at risk have in advancing their careers in the short and medium term, both personally and professionally, should not be overlooked by institutions hosting or considering hosting scholars at risk.

2.1.2 Flanders

SAR Flanders section

Summary by Koen Verlaeckt, Secretary General of Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR):

The Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) submitted a request to the Government of Flanders to co-fund the hosting of scholars at risk by Flemish universities. Minister-president Jan Jambon generously approved a budget of EUR 200,000 which allowed SAR Flanders to host five scholars, with the individual universities providing at least half of the required budget. The government's grant also acted as an incentive, with three universities hosting more than one scholar during the previous academic year. During the 2021-2022 academic year, the member universities hosted nine scholars in total from Turkey, Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria.

For some universities, the hosting of threatened scholars was a completely new experience, requiring discretion and careful consideration. Maintaining active collaboration across institutions within SAR Flanders has helped facilitate problem-solving when questions arise. The SAR contact points within the five universities keep in close contact with each other and they report once a year to the VLIR Working Group on Internationalisation. They found that serious delays in visa delivery procedures created some frustration. In the end, these problems were eventually solved.

The second reason for increased Flemish engagement in the SAR network has to do with the importance that our universities give to human rights. Within VLIR we developed a human rights assessment tool, allowing researchers to check the risks of human rights violations when entering new international partnerships. The tool is now being implemented by all the Dutch-speaking universities of Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region. Additionally, in order to stimulate peer learning, our academic experts meet at least once a year to discuss how they dealt with difficult cases. Flemish universities strongly advocate for value-driven international cooperation, both in terms of students and staff mobility and research partnerships. They will continue to do so because these intentional partnerships can exist only if academic freedom and the freedom of speech are guaranteed.

SCHOLARS AT RISK
WALLONIA-BRUSSELS SECTION

SCHOLARS AT RISK
FLANDERS SECTION



2.2

Denmark

Interview with Vivian Tos Lindgaard, Head of International Staff Mobility, University of Copenhagen, and Daniel Ladani, Global Mobility Consultant, University of Copenhagen

What key lessons have you learned in your work in Denmark to support researchers at risk?

Our experience since the establishment of the SAR Denmark section has been very good so far and we have learned some key lessons as well. The biggest lessons for us have been learned through hosting researchers at risk – in particular the fact that hosting is more challenging when a researcher has a large family. These situations require much more resources and the transition can be somewhat difficult. It would be easier if we had the opportunity to offer an employment for more than a year. This way accompanying family members can settle more easily. Especially if the family has never travelled outside of their home country or continent. There are many things such as culture, integration, language etc. and it takes time to adapt when you make a life changing decision that sometimes can be stressful for the researcher, but also for the accompanying family members.

What is the value and importance of coordinating with other institutions within your country to support researchers at risk?

All the Danish universities have become members of the Danish section of SAR; as a result the Danish universities are involved with the network and are hosting researchers at risk in temporary positions. Furthermore, the Danish Institute of Human Rights is also a member, which is a huge asset for collaboration and the SAR Denmark initiative. We share insights and experiences, and all the members are advocates for this initiative and its importance in terms of academic freedom in the sphere of university life. Being able to assist and help each other is key and the coordination between institutions here promotes the initiatives tenfold. We are also working on expanding the section to a Nordic section, and hopefully this will become a reality in the near future.

Have there been any new programmes initiated in Denmark aiming specifically at researchers at risk from Ukraine or Afghanistan (or any other specific national context)?

We have initiated the SARU-fellowship program for Ukrainian researchers affected by the war including remote fellowships and fellowships in Denmark (1-year employment as postdoc). We initially thought of it as a one-off initiative, but it is still ongoing. The foundations are very interested in continuing to provide funding for this purpose. And we will launch third call for applications in the nearest future.

Aarhus University launched a 2022-2023 fellowship program with 15 fellowships (each 1-year employment as postdoc) for Ukrainian researchers affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The program was open to all Ukrainian researchers in Denmark (and abroad). Further calls are not planned.

How do these new programmes interact and/or impact on other, more general support schemes for researchers at risk in your country?

For the University of Copenhagen and Aarhus University it does not affect the general support we have for the “regular” SAR scholars since we have a separate pool of funding coming from the central pot of the University; and the SARU fellowship contains only funds donated specifically for the Ukrainian researchers by private foundations. We are continuing upon our general support for SAR researchers as we have done for the past 6 years, and we will continue to do so.

Is there any private sector involvement in your country in supporting researchers at risk?

The funding of the SAR Denmark section is the main obstacle in Denmark. SAR Denmark’s activities are funded by the host universities and institutions themselves. It is difficult to involve the private sector in supporting researchers at risk without any possibilities of national funding.

However, since the war in Ukraine, we have managed to receive funding provided by the Carlsberg foundation, Novo Nordisk foundation and the Villum Foundation for our SARU-fellowships (with all Danish universities participating in this program). The Danish SAR section has received DKK 15 million to employ scientists/scholars at risk from Ukraine, and the SARU fellowships are still ongoing. We expect to receive further funding for the purpose of accommodating and supporting Ukrainian researchers in the future.

What advice would you give new initiatives for researchers at risk or those interested in establishing such initiatives in other countries/ regions?

In our case, cooperating with the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR) has been key. SAR is very helpful in all aspects; the network can help clarifying complicated questions. Our advice would therefore be to make use of SAR and everything they offer – it will be very helpful if you plan to begin organising the launch of a national section or similar initiatives. There is so much knowledge and information that can be shared, and it is a great way to get started.

An addition, through our work with the SAR-Ukraine (SARU) fellowships, we have learned that it is very important as universities to be very clear about the application requirements when drafting and composing a new call for applications for scholars at risk. It took an extensive amount of time to talk it all through with other member universities, and to reach a joint decision on the most important requirements to apply. For the first call, a lot of time and work was put in distilling and describing the most important requirements to find the right match and the most appropriate candidates. When we launched the second call for applications, we had a more precise and clearer view.

2.3

Finland



In 2016 the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) established a Higher Education in Emergencies partnership with the Institute for International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF). The programme is a model of pooling expertise and resources to enable sustainable support. In addition, all Finnish universities are members of the SAR Network, and Universities Finland (UNIFI) provides leadership for the SAR Finland section and related national-level organising. The national SAR section nowadays also co-operates quite closely with other Nordic sections, inviting for example speakers from the Swedish section to SARF events.

Separate national-level instruments have been created for researchers from Ukraine and in order to support the academic community and the reconstruction of higher education system in Ukraine. Finnish National Agency for Education has set up [EDUFI Fellowships](#) for doctoral students from Ukraine, which provides doctoral level students from Ukraine the opportunity to continue their academic work in Finland. There is a rolling deadline for applications. As of August 2023, about 30 doctoral students have received the fellowship to attend nine different universities in Finland.

Research Council of Finland has also organised [calls for inviting researchers from Ukraine to Finland](#). In addition to these measures, there have been efforts by individual universities in terms of fundraising and supporting scholars. On this scale, however, there are no other country specific scholar protection schemes in place. SAR Finland estimates that the situation in Ukraine has resulted in Finnish universities and other stakeholders being even more committed to SAR and related initiatives.

Interview with Emily Borczik, Europe Director, Scholar Rescue Fund, Institute of International Education

How does the EDUFI/IIE-SRF partnership work?

The Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF) is the only global program that arranges and funds fellowships for threatened and displaced scholars at partnering higher education institutions worldwide. While our reach is truly global, partners across Europe have been integral to our success since the programme's founding in 2002. Under the IIE-SRF model, we provide a fellowship grant of up to US\$25,000, which is matched by the host institution to create a comprehensive financial support package for the scholar. As of August 2023, more than 160 higher education institutions in 26 European countries have partnered with IIE-SRF to host close to 250 fellows from 33 countries. In 2023, nearly one-third of all IIE-SRF fellowship placements have been arranged in partnership with European institutions.

In Finland, our partnership with EDUFI is an excellent model for sustainable national programming to support threatened and displaced scholars. In the framework of the partnership, IIE-SRF and EDUFI jointly support and fund fellowship appointments at Finnish higher education institutions, with EDUFI providing the financial match through a national

funding scheme and coordinating the participation of universities. With this joint support, an individual scholar receives approximately US\$50,000 for a one-year appointment, which is typically renewable for a second year under the same terms. IIE-SRF also provides supplemental funding for relocation expenses and health insurance and access to resources for professional development, while EDUFI may provide immigration assistance, if necessary, and facilitates networking among the scholars, their families, and host universities. Host institutions arrange visiting positions on campus, contributing critical academic, administrative, and personal support for IIE-SRF fellows and their families. To date, four Finnish universities have hosted IIE-SRF fellows under this partnership.

In bringing together dedicated individuals from IIE-SRF, higher education institutions, and the government sector, we pool our expertise and resources to help ensure comprehensive, consistent, and sustainable support for scholars restarting their careers in Finland. We are grateful for our colleagues at EDUFI and at universities across Finland, who are integral to IIE-SRF's ability to provide safe haven to the increasing number of scholars in need of assistance. IIE-SRF encourages current and future partners from the governmental, not-for-profit, higher education, and private sectors across Europe to consider similar models and welcomes new and innovative ideas for partnerships.

More information on the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund can be found [here](#).

Interview with Sini Piippo, Senior Programme Adviser at EDUFI

What was the impetus to establish the programme?

Global responsibility is one of our strategic priorities and we want to identify means to encourage global responsibility as a part of international mobility and cooperation in education. The establishment of the initiative was a way to react to the humanitarian tragedy and higher education emergency, especially in Syria. EDUFI had worked together with the higher education community in Finland to identify possible ways of providing support and had identified the cooperation and the partnership with the IIE-SRF as a way to respond to this need.

How important has national-level support been for supporting researchers at risk in Finland?

Providing national-level support has been crucial to launch the activities in Finland, to develop national procedures and cooperation structures, as well as to provide support in implementation. Having the partnership with the IIE-SRF is also crucial. First of all, in addition to providing funding, the IIE-SRF as one of the key global actors in this field and provides extremely important expertise in the selection of the scholars, the support measures and guidance of both the host institutions and the scholars, as well as the higher education contexts of the scholars' countries of origin. Concerning the national context in Finland, having national

nal-level coordination for the activities helps in identifying and solving any challenges in the implementation as well as provides a platform and network to share and develop good practices. Host institutions are crucial in their expertise of institutional level implementation, HR services, and scientific field expertise. Joint collaboration also sparks other initiatives and discussions. Also, the expertise and perspective of individual scholars can be fed into the development of the programme.

What were key lessons learned and main challenges since the establishment of the support programme in 2016?

It is important to take into consideration the need for targeted and tailored support and the specific expertise in the field of supporting at-risk scholars. Implementation can differ from other programmes of international higher education cooperation, so it is important to keep an open mind and be flexible when creating the programme structure, the networks, and working methods. This can mean, for example, ensuring additional resources on the institutional level for comprehensive support to scholars, and also for their families, or working closely with immigration authorities.

It has been crucial to facilitate cooperation between distinct levels of actors (international, national, institutional and individual) to develop a network that ensures different perspectives are covered. Combining various levels of expertise helps support the quality of the implementation. Peer support – be it the HR personnel responsible for the guidance at the universities or the scholars and their families is especially important. The main challenges so far have been the sustainability of support, the possibility to provide more long-term funding opportunities, as well as sustainable career options.

More information on the Finnish National Agency for Education's partnership with IIE-SRF can be found [here](#).



FINNISH NATIONAL
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION



2.4

France

Officially launched on January 16, 2017, by the Ministry for Higher Education and Research, the French hosting programme for scientists and artists in exile, PAUSE programme is an ambitious national project initiated by the French State with support from research communities, civil society and economic stakeholders. The programme is hosted by the Collège de France, a leading French research and knowledge institution.

Before the creation of PAUSE there were no coordinated initiatives in France for the support of researchers at risk or in danger. PAUSE's main mandate is therefore to respond to this need by protecting and hosting researchers and artists who are prevented from pursuing their activities in their country of origin because of the content of their research, a political commitment, their belonging to a minority, or a situation of armed conflict.

The programme co-funds institutions seeking to host a scientist or an artist forced into exile through three calls for applications per year. PhD candidates, researchers or artists can be supported for one year, which is renewable once, or twice for PhD students.

PAUSE also assists researchers and artists with identifying a host institution and helps its laureates and their families to access legal assistance and the services to which they are legally entitled in France. In order to help its laureates to achieve a sustainable professional integration, PAUSE offers them group workshops to prepare a career development within but also outside academia in France. PAUSE also offers additional funding dedicated to individual training enabling them to improve their skills, follow individualised coaching, and learn French or another language useful for their professional career.

Beyond direct support to its laureates and their host institutions, PAUSE carries out advocacy work to uphold academic freedom and intends to give a voice to researchers and artists at risk through research and artistic projects aiming at documenting and telling their personal and professional narratives.

Since its creation, PAUSE has supported more than 585 researchers and artists thanks to the commitment of nearly 129 French host institutions. Almost half of the laureates are women, a balance the programme intends to keep.

Nearly 55% of the supported researchers work in the humanities and social sciences, but the programme is open to all scientific and artistic disciplines. PAUSE also enables PhD candidates to resume their studies; currently, one fourth of the laureates are doctoral students. More than 10% of PAUSE laureates are artists or artist-teachers.

The war in Ukraine has considerably changed the profiles of the laureates hosted by the programme. Before the year 2022, less than 10 researchers and artists from the post-soviet area were supported by PAUSE, while they now make up more than two thirds of the laureates currently enrolled in the programme. PAUSE laureates also come from

from the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and South America, representing 43 countries in total.

An inclusive governance, allowing for the representation of key stakeholders

The PAUSE programme is structured around three committees with each of them having dedicated missions to ensure good representation of the stakeholders. The Executive Committee is composed of representatives of four ministries (Higher Education and Research; Interior; Europe and Foreign Affairs; Culture) and of major French research and higher education actors (i.e., research organizations, the rectors conference, the Francophone university agency).

The Executive Committee defines the programme's orientations and also plays a key role in the selection of PAUSE laureates as it validates all the applications selected by the Scientific and Artistic Committees. Involving public authorities in the decision-making process also facilitates the day-to-day management of the programme and, therefore, the stay of researchers and artists in exile. For instance, it enables the implementation of an accelerated procedure for PAUSE laureates' visas and resident permits in partnership with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior.

The Scientific and Artistic Assessment Committees, composed of high-level researchers and art professionals taking part on a voluntary basis, are responsible for evaluating the applications received. They also advise the programme on the orientation of the laureates and on the programme itself.

The Support Committee brings together public figures from the research and artistic communities as well as civil society engaged in the defence of academic and artistic freedom. They are advocates of the cause and can be important channels for fundraising.

Whenever possible, including public authorities in the programme's ideation phase is a significant asset; it can help them to take full ownership of the initiative, which can contribute to making a programme more impactful. In France, support for researchers and artists at risk has a strong political backing. PAUSE programme has also worked to ensure that administrations are fully involved in the implementation of the programme, thus ensuring its sustainability even in the face of political change. In countries where the political environment does not allow for State support it is important to gain adherence from leading universities and research institutions or organizations, such as EURAXESS, which helps to facilitate the researchers' mobility.

Responding to crisis situations

Since its creation, the programme had to adapt to humanitarian and political crises and to organize emergency responses in a context of increasing instability around the world.

When the COVID-19 crisis broke, PAUSE allocated additional funding to its laureates in order to alleviate the effects of the lockdown measures introduced in 2020.

In October 2021, in response to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the programme organized a special session for Afghan scholars and artists. A total of 22 Afghan scientists and 5 artists were supported. Thanks to the cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, most of PAUSE laureates had arrived in France within a few weeks.

In March 2022, just a few days following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the programme launched two Emergency Funds “Solidarité Ukraine” to host scientists and artists impacted by the war. The aim of these Emergency Funds was to finance the stay of researchers and artists fleeing the war for 3 months in order to allow them to take shelter with their families, with the possibility to be hosted for a longer period through the programme’s regular calls. Under this framework, the programme supported a total of 132 Ukrainian scientists and 45 artists and professionals of the cultural sector from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

These emergency and crisis responses required adaptability and flexibility from the programme and the team, while posing important challenges. Indeed, for both Afghanistan and Ukraine, this meant processing applications in tight deadlines while managing both emergency procedures and regular calls at the same time. These situations put important constraints on both the financial and human resources of the programme.

Diversifying sources of funding to expand researchers and artists at risk opportunities

PAUSE carries out its activities with the financial support of public actors, such as the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. Its main contributor is the Ministry for Higher Education and Research.

In addition to an annual budget to implement the programme, most of which is dedicated to direct support to host institutions and researchers and artists at risk, the ministry for Higher Education and Research and the Ministry of Culture also allocate funding for the programme’s human resources. Research institutions, such as the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), also contribute to the programme’s budget.

Support from public authorities has been key for the launch of the two Emergency Funds for Ukraine. The Ministry of Higher Education and Research as well as the Ministry of Culture have significantly contributed to these funds through special envelopes in order to host scientists and artists impacted by the war.

However, the high number of applications received by PAUSE during the last years has required consequent additional funding and a diversification of the programme’s financial resources. To meet these challenges, the programme is also supported by private foundations, including L’Oréal Foundation, Fondation des Neurosciences de Paris and the Open Society Foundations among others. New potential donors may need to be made aware of the issue of academic and

artistic freedom – presenting them with clear objectives and specific projects to fund can help, as well as the backing of public figures. In this regard, the PAUSE programme has launched a fundraising campaign in 2022 in order to increase its capabilities.

Challenges remain

Support to researchers and artists in exile relies on the solidarity of the host institutions. These institutions give funding, time, and resources to welcome new colleagues in their unique circumstances. They help them to adapt to a new country, a new work environment and to rebuild their careers and professional networks after being forced to flee their country. The hosting, which is mostly based on volunteering, can sometimes be challenging for the institution. Improving hosting by sharing good practices is therefore particularly important at the national level. PAUSE organizes events and training dedicated to host institutions at the national level and at the European level through the activities of the Inspireurope+ consortium.

PAUSE laureates have launched a PAUSE “Laureate Network” with the support of the programme. Its aim is to build a community of mutual aid between the former and the new PAUSE laureates and to offer advice on such topics as first steps on arrival, administrative procedures, and exchange of employment opportunities. The Network also organizes Science, Art & Society meetings every two months. These public meetings serve as a platform for laureates to present their academic and artistic work and to build a network.

Another shared concern among Inspireurope+’s partners is the future of the researchers supported. The highly competitive and limited opportunities within the research and higher education ecosystem in France makes it difficult for PAUSE laureates to find tenured positions in academia. Providing a safe haven for two years allows scientists and artists in exile to resume their careers, but there is a need to afford them the means to access a sustainable situation where they are no longer supported by the programme. Two-thirds of the former PAUSE laureates have benefited from a positive transition and have found another working or training contract; however, long-term professional integration still remains one of the priorities of the programme.

More information on the PAUSE programme can be found [here](#).

Interview with Laura Lohéac, Executive Director of the PAUSE programme

Could you tell us more about the main evolutions of the programme since its creation in 2017?

Since its launch by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research seven years ago, the PAUSE programme has undergone several notable evolutions, both in terms of operations and target audience.

Initially, PAUSE solely aimed at co-funding institutions wishing to host a scientist in exile. While this remains PAUSE's main mandate, we have significantly strengthened our activities aimed at supporting our laureates and the host institutions, notably with regards to social and professional integration. This more comprehensive approach to the support provided by PAUSE includes the development of partnerships with specialized associations to offer collective trainings and workshops to researchers. PAUSE also provides host institutions with an additional budget exclusively for training and capacity-building activities for its laureates. These trainings not only aim at strengthening their scientific and language skills, but also to provide them tools to reinforce their professional project within and outside the academic field.

Another notable evolution is the opening of the programme to artists at-risk, with the launch of the first call for applications for artists in January 2021. While the idea to open the programme to artists was at the core of its creation and benefited from the support of the Ministry of Culture, PAUSE was able to materialize this opening thanks to the mobilization of cultural institutions. Artists now make-up for 11% of the programme's laureates.

Looking at the future, one important step for the programme is to further develop its advocacy activities for the support of academic freedom and researchers and artists at-risk. While PAUSE is already engaged in defending specific cases of scholars threatened due to the content of their research, further national and international collaborations in the area of advocacy are crucial to shed light on academic freedom among the public.

What do you believe are the main challenges induced by the war in Ukraine for programmes like PAUSE?

On one hand, the high number of applications received by the programme for the two Emergency Funds for Ukraine launched in March 2022 required an unprecedented mobilization of PAUSE's financial and human resources. Thanks to exceptional mobilization and funding from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, as well as the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture, but also from private donations, PAUSE was able to respond to the needs and to expand its team. However, the challenge is, while the war continues, to be able to renew the funding for these beneficiaries who now apply to the regular calls of the programme.

On the other hand, the war in Ukraine has created a new profile of PAUSE laureates who wish to return to their country as soon as possible, while the situation on the ground

remains highly uncertain. This situation induces more challenges for these laureates when confronted to longer-term planning or integration into the host country. On the programme's side, this situation requires continuous adjustments to new developments in order to best accompany these researchers and artists.

Another challenge raised by the Ukrainian crisis was how to turn emergency responses into long-term solution for the programme's laureates, while also avoiding the risk of brain drain. One solution was to integrate the beneficiaries of the Emergency Funds within the regular calls of the programme. Among the beneficiaries of the Emergency Funds, over a hundred scientists and artists extended their stay in France with the support of PAUSE or the French Agency for Research- through a partnership with PAUSE. 44 laureates benefited from another work or funding opportunity in France or abroad, while 16 laureates returned to Ukraine.

What opportunities do you foresee for researchers at-risk and academic freedom at the European and international levels?

Significant progress has been made for researchers at-risk at the European level, with a growing awareness of the importance of academic freedom. This could partly be credited to international and national initiatives such as SAR and SAR Europe, or PAUSE, the work done by the Inspireurope+ consortium and a strong bilateral cooperation with our German partner, the Alexander von Humboldt's Philipp Schwartz Initiative.

Within the framework of the French Presidency of the European Council, France committed to support academic freedom and this led to the adoption of the Marseille Declaration in March 2022, which follows on from the Bonn Declaration on the freedom of scientific research adopted by the European Research Ministers in October 2020.

While these initiatives mark important steps for the protection of researchers at-risk and academic freedom, it is important to continue to facilitate the implementation of harmonized procedures at the EU level, notably by sharing good practices between countries. Implementing simplified and harmonized administrative procedures for researchers at risk, as this is done in France through the passport talent chercheur residency permit could help achieve this goal. Increasing European funding for existing and new national initiatives is also crucial for the protection of academics at-risk. At the international level, there is a strong need to strengthen links with non-EU countries on these issues.





2.5 Germany

The Philipp Schwartz Initiative was founded in 2015 to allow researchers who are subject to significant and continuous personal threat in their country of origin to continue their work at German universities and research institutions. Since its start, it successfully supports these scholars:

- to remain an active member of the global science community and continue their research
- to prepare for reintegration in their home countries
- and in case a return is not possible to build longer-term perspectives in Germany and other countries inside or outside academia.

In addition, the initiative contributes to the establishment of support structures for scholars at risk in German universities and research institutions. From a science policy perspective, it helps to preserve the capacity of academic and scientific systems under pressure in times of crisis.

The sponsorship framework

The applicants for the Philipp Schwartz-Initiative are the host institutions. They nominate individual researchers at risk whom they would like to welcome at their institution. For every researcher nominated, an individual academic mentor as well as a project manager is named. The host institutions receive funding which is composed of two components:

- A fully-funded fellowship for a period of up to 24 months; application may be made for an extension of up to 12 months in the framework of a co-financing model.
- A lump sum allowance for the host institution of € 20,000 for each individual sponsored to provide individual trainings, coachings, language classes for PSI fellows and to help establish long-term support structures at host institutions.

The decision on which applications are approved is taken by the Humboldt Foundation's independent Selection Committee on the basis of the application package submitted. The selection takes into account:

- the concept of the host institution
- the professional fit between the guest and the intended scientific mentor (also with regard to the research project)
- scientific qualification of the guest
- commitment of the host institution to the nominated person
- concrete support measures on the part of the host institution and the mentor
- perspectives for the time after the end of the funding

The central question for the selection is if the combination of all these factors makes a new start in a scientific or science-related career in Germany, another country, or the country of origin seem likely.

Already at the selection stage, a sustainable, long-term perspective for the scholars at risk plays a crucial role. For this reason, the applicant institutions have to submit a concept delineating their measures for a sustainable support infrastructure for threatened researchers. In addition, the academic host of the researcher at risk is asked to elaborate on the avenues for future career development. He or she should identify concrete steps and measures that will be taken to support the researcher at risk in achieving the goal of successful integration into the academic – or non-academic, closely related workforce. The generous lump sum payment for the institutions provides the necessary financial means for both concrete support measures for an individual researcher as well as more general institutional capacity building activities.

In addition, the initiative organizes the Philipp Schwartz-Stakeholder Forum, a yearly training and networking event for host institutions, fellows, and other relevant stakeholders. This event provides the fellows with additional coaching opportunities and fosters the exchange of best practices among the representatives from different German, European and international research institutions and initiatives for researchers at risk.

Results - Support and protection for scholars at risk

Since the start of the initiative in 2015, more than 490 researchers at 126 German host institutions have been funded. In total, researchers came from 26 different countries, with Turkey, Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, and Russia being the most represented. As of 2023, around 58% of fellows have been male, ca. 42% have been female, while 0,2% declared themselves explicitly as diverse. The breakdown according to academic subjects shows a balanced distribution. 41% of the fellows situate their research in the natural science, 24% in social sciences, 23% in humanities, and 12% in engineering sciences.

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation conducts a first follow-up survey among the programme alumni at the end of their fellowship. This has shown that immediately after the end of the fellowship, 56% of the researchers had secured follow-up employment. Those positions have been inside academia in Germany (68%), outside academia in Germany (20%), inside academia but outside Germany (10%) or outside academia outside Germany (2%). A small number of researchers (4%) were able to return to their home country.

Special programmes for Scholars from Afghanistan, Ukraine and Iran

As ad hoc responses to specific geopolitical developments, special fellowship programmes for scholars from Ukraine, Afghanistan and Iran have been launched in addition to the main programme since 2022.

Following the Russian invasion in Ukraine in February 2022, overnight a huge number of researchers in Ukraine required

support from the international community as quickly as possible. Within weeks in the PSI alone, 170 Ukrainian scholars were nominated for support. It was clear that in addition to the main PSI programme, another instrument had to be created quickly to address this very special situation.

In 2022, after the Taliban's seizure of power, and the subsequent increase in oppression in the academic sector in Afghanistan, the Humboldt Foundation with the support of Germany's Federal Foreign Office supplemented its main programme through a special programme titled "Bridge Fellowships for Scholars from Afghanistan". This special programme targeted Afghan researchers and scholars who are at acute risk, for whom, due to their specific qualifications, the main programme is less appropriate. The bridge programme gives special consideration to prospects outside science and academia. Under this fellowship scheme 20 one-year fellowships have been awarded in spring 2022, which then could be extended by additional 12 months in 2023. New applications are no longer open.

Within a few weeks after the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation – with the help of Springer Nature and the Carl Zeiss Foundation, was able to create the Philipp Schwartz Emergency Fund for Ukraine. The Fund addressed two aspects of vital relevance: Assistance through the Fund had to be available quickly and unbureaucratically. The Emergency Fund aimed to support those researchers who would be most vulnerable, especially female researchers finding themselves in sudden forced displacement in Germany, many of them with children, while their partners remain in Ukraine as decreed under martial law for any Ukrainian. As a result, in 2022 a total of 27 grants have been awarded to 23 higher education institutions, 70% of which supported female scholars.

In 2023, with the support of Germany's Federal Foreign Office, the Humboldt Foundation launched a special call for Philipp Schwartz Fellowships aimed at researchers from Iran. Complementing the Fellowships awarded in the regular Philipp Schwartz Programme, this special initiative has enabled the Humboldt Foundation to support an additional 12 at-risk researchers.

In light of the increased threats that women in those two countries face, particular emphasis was given to supporting female researchers. Among the 20 researchers from Afghanistan, 35% were female researchers and among the 12 scholars from Iran 75% were female.

The Philipp Schwartz-Initiative as networking hub

Under the auspices of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation the German Section of the global Scholars at Risk Network was founded in 2016 in Bonn. The SAR Germany Section is composed of German universities, research institutions and science organisations. It serves as a platform for exchange and mutual support as well as source of best practices and further information for institutions who sup-

port researchers at risk. The foundation coordinates the SAR Germany Section, which currently consists of 60 member institutions.

The Philipp Schwartz-Initiative is one of the most important long-term protection and fellowship programmes for scholars at risk in Europe. In close collaboration with other crucial partners in this endeavour, it has joined the Inspireurope+-project consortium to establish support structures for researchers at risk at European level. Building on their learnings and experiences, the consortium members provide information and advice to policy makers and other national and international stakeholders.

The Alexander von Humboldt foundation continues its commitment to academic freedom on a national and international level by further strengthening the Philipp Schwartz Initiative as a model initiative of support to researchers at risk and by effectively feeding in learnings of these support programmes for researchers at risk into policy discussions.

The European Commission has moreover selected the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, together with its partners Scholars at Risk Europe and the European University Association (EUA) to implement MSCA4Ukraine, a fellowship scheme for displaced researchers from Ukraine. The programme supports around 120 researchers from Ukraine to continue their research in 21 host countries in European Union member states and countries associated with Horizon Europe. It also aims at supporting re-integration of scholars into and rebuilding the Ukrainian science sector.

More information on the programme can be found [here](#).

Three key learnings

1. The aim of the initiative is to provide an opportunity for a temporary integration into German academia to enable the researchers to continue their scientific career before potentially returning and contributing to the science community in their home country. However, the vast majority of fellows has so far not been able to return to their home country after the fellowship ended as threat or persecution continue. One of the most important aspects of the fellowship, therefore, is to focus on longer-term perspectives after the end of the fellowship, starting from the application stage. Support strategies by the host institutions play an integral part at selection stage. Managing transitions to regular fellowship programmes, into the competitive (German) science market, or the labour market beyond science must be considered from the beginning. This is specifically important as experiences of risk, flight, and exile are not systematically considered when evaluating scientific output in selection processes for fellowships and employment.

2. In light of increasing global conflicts, the demand for support of scholars at risk continues at a very high level. The number of nominations for PSI fellowships has increased by 200% compared to the years before 2022. Developing appropriate ad-hoc responses to multiple crises, while at the

same time providing sustainable and reliable support structures remains a challenge. To this end, close collaboration between host institutions and scholars and also initiatives on national and international level is crucial.

3. Women and members of other marginalised groups are often exposed to particular risks, especially in armed conflicts. Nevertheless, women are significantly underrepresented in many funding programmes for researchers at risk. Additionally, it appears that the gender and the status of scholars at risk have twofold disadvantaging and excluding effects, which is also evident in the host science system. The intersectionality of discrimination categories (such as gender, skin colour, or other categories) in relation to researchers at risk still needs to be comprehensively investigated.



Alexander von
HUMBOLDT
STIFTUNG

2.6

Greece



Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) became the first Greek member of the Scholars at Risk Network in 2018. A SAR Greece Section was officially launched on October 1, 2021 with Aristotle University as Chair, Ionian University and University of the Aegean as steering committee members, and the University of Thessaly as the fourth founding member. Its mission is to coordinate activities across Greece in support of scholars and to promote academic freedom. Since its official launch SAR Greece has been growing fast; it now numbers seven members. There are ongoing discussions with nine other Greek Universities interested in joining SAR.

Interview with Alexandros Triantafyllidis, Professor at the School of Biology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

What are the main actions of SAR Greece during its two years of existence?

SAR Greece Section is working hard towards (a) raising awareness of threats to academic freedom and particular scholars and (b) developing professional opportunities for at risk researchers both in and outside academia, via different channels and activities in Greece.

Dissemination of the message is pivotal for the success of our aims and multiple actions have been elaborated on that front. Reflecting on more than two years of SAR Greece actions, it is clear that HEIs in Greece are much more aware of their special responsibility to support academic freedom in a world where restrictions on basic and human rights are increasing. At the National Level we were honored that in March 2022 the President of the Hellenic Republic Katerina Sakelaropoulou welcomed SAR Greece Chair Prof. Alexandros Triantafyllidis and Assoc. Professor and SAR European Advisory Board member Andreas Takis at the Presidential Mansion. Representatives of SAR Greece have also informed the Greek Rectors' Synod multiple times about SAR and have met the Deputy Minister of Education, Professor Angelos Syrigos to discuss the aim of creating a National Funding Scheme for Scholars at Risk. This was announced by the Deputy Minister of Education, Prof. Angelos Syrigos and the Vice-President of the State Scholarships Foundation Prof. Panagiotis Gklavinis in an online event in August 2022.

We have also had an important success in preparing the ground for accepting at-risk scholars. One of the greatest difficulties in any such effort is ensuring the legal entry, residence, and employment of these scholars. Towards that end, AUTH has established a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Migration to enhance visa pathways for at-risk researchers interested in joining Greek Higher Education Institutions (HEI). This permanent relationship creates a semi-official cooperative structure through which the aforementioned state authorities receive requests from SAR Greece for official documents by third-country nationals, already qualified as SAR beneficiaries, in order to process them in a timely and secure way.

Meanwhile, all SAR Greece members continue to engage with academics and HEIs' administration at all levels to expand the network. Ionian University hosts and updates the website of [SAR Greece](#), while all members issue regular press releases with a reference to SAR Greece on different occasions (e.g. World Refugee Day).

Have you had interactions with other national programmes or initiatives for supporting researchers at risk? Has this transnational/ bilateral cooperation been useful in advancing your efforts at home?

Yes of course! The participation of AUTH as a partner in the Inspireurope project (Sep 2019 – Aug 2022 with 9 other partners) and in the Inspireurope+ project (Sep 2022 – Aug 2025 with 7 other partners) has enabled us to also spread the message especially in Southeast Europe. Two Inspireurope Outreach Workshops aiming at “Supporting Researchers at Risk in Southeast Europe” have been organised in Thessaloniki. These hybrid workshops have brought together over 100 academics, higher education institution representatives, NGOs, high-ranking EU and national officials, representatives of professional/industry associations and refugees with high academic qualifications from Greece and other European countries to share experience and discuss existing challenges as well as good practices in supporting researchers at risk. The workshops have succeeded in raising awareness on specific actions and measures (e.g. adjusting employment requirements, creating funding opportunities) necessary for promoting employment of at-risk researchers in Greek HEIs.

A roundtable for university leaders from 15 Balkan Universities took place in October 2023 at Aristotle University. The Roundtable gave university leadership (rectors, vice-rectors, international directors etc.) the opportunity to exchange their experiences and institutional approaches for support of scholars at risk. It also provided scope to discuss good practices and useful guidelines, as well as national and European support approaches for at risk-researchers.

In addition, we have prepared an [extended guide](#) to welcome the first at-risk scholar to AUTH. This was created with the guidance from our partners from the Inspireurope project.

What are some of the obstacles you are encountering in advancing your efforts at the national level in Greece? At the same time in what ways can the current government focus on internationalization of Greek HEIs create new possibilities for support of Scholars at Risk?

The changing international geopolitical context and the sharp rise in authoritarian regimes in the last two decades is leading universities to question their international policies and internationalization practices. In recent years Greek HEIs have started to create (mostly) English taught bachelor's or master's degrees in order to attract a considerable number of foreign students. However, profit should not be the sole purpose of such efforts. It should also include the creation of an appropriate environment recognizing the in-

clusion of vulnerable (refugee) groups of international students and teachers. These efforts of course also offer new possibilities for the integration of foreign academics, including researchers at risk that would not have been possible under the Greek taught courses and degrees of the past. In this context, AUTH and four other universities have joined the Utrecht Network Task Force "[Responsible Internationalization and Global Engagement](#)". This is expected to assist its rector authorities and the SAR Greece section in general to develop appropriate policies and promote the sharing of best practices. Coordinated efforts at the political and academic level are needed to overcome two of the main obstacles in support activities at the national level, namely the centralized recruitment process for academic posts, even temporary ones, in Greek HEIs and shortage of funding for dedicated fellowships or positions for at-risk scholars.

SCHOLARS AT RISK

GREECE SECTION

2.7

Ireland



Activities in Ireland to support researchers at risk have been primarily undertaken within the framework of the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR). The SAR Ireland section was formed as a partnership between Universities Ireland and the Scholars at Risk Network in 2009. Since that time the following seven universities have hosted at least 16 at-risk scholars: University of Galway, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Queen's University Belfast, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, and University of Limerick. The at-risk scholars have come from Iran and Iraq, among other countries. As secretariat of the SAR Ireland section, Universities Ireland contributes to the costs of hosting at-risk scholars and organising events to promote academic freedom, most recently in February 2024 in Belfast (organized by Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University).

Interview with Rowena Pecchenino, Professor of Economics, Maynooth University and Chair of SAR Ireland (2022)

What key lessons have been learned by SAR Ireland since its establishment in 2009? What has worked well and what have been some of the challenges?

The major challenge has been translating statements of support from university leaders into concrete initiatives to support researchers at risk, in part due to the lack of ongoing funding to support meaningful participation by Irish universities in this work. Thus far, there has been limited joint action taken, but this is in the process of being rectified. It is very difficult to organize a steering committee across all the universities in Ireland where there is limited dedicated administrative support for SAR Ireland's work and generally no recognized departmental home for the SAR programme within the individual universities.

What has worked very well is the support we have received from SAR's offices and liaising with other SAR sections in Europe. Since these are established bodies with resources and experience, they are most helpful as we pursue various initiatives. We have also been extremely fortunate in receiving high-level moral support for our work as demonstrated in the acceptance by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins of our invitations to provide two keynote addresses at SAR Ireland events, in 2016, and 2021.

What advice would you give new initiatives for researchers at risk or those interested in establishing such initiatives in other countries and regions?

I would strongly recommend joining SAR since the central infrastructure already exists. However, active support from local sources, especially from university presidents and rectors is needed as funding is a critical component of any initiative.

Could you provide some concrete examples of how institutions in Ireland are working together to support at-risk scholars and researchers?

Our focus has been on informing the local community of the challenges faced by at-risk scholars and researchers. This

approach became the only one when the pandemic made it impossible to invite scholars to campus as post-docs, students or even speakers.

Can you describe the value and importance of coordinating with other institutions within Ireland to support researchers at risk?

Ireland is a small country and at-risk scholars often need both a university community and a personal community. Being able to link people across all universities is essential. Our intention is to request joint funding of scholars from all SAR university members, so while a scholar will have an appointment at an individual university that scholar will be a SAR Ireland funded scholar. Also, by coordinating across all universities a match that is best for the scholar can be achieved.

Do you have advice for other national initiatives for at-risk scholars and researchers?

If there are existing initiatives, work collaboratively with them to provide complementary services. Do not recreate the wheel. Most importantly, make sure that there is a source of certain and recurrent funding across the nation that is available to all participants in the national section. It is essential to know this before scholars can be invited.

More information on SAR Ireland activities can be found [here](#).

SCHOLARS AT RISK

IRELAND SECTION



2.8

Italy

Activities at the national level in Italy to support researchers at risk are primarily within the framework of the Scholars at Risk Network. SAR Italy was created in 2019 under the initiative of the University of Padova and the University of Trento. It is a partnership between Italian higher education institutions and research centres and SAR. It currently has 38 members (universities, research institutes and scientific associations) and several other institutions are in the process of joining the network.

Hosting activities

Between January 2021 and December 2022 ninety-two temporary positions were created at sixteen universities for scholars from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Russia, Turkey, Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia, Belarus and Iran. These positions range from 2-month visiting scientist positions to research fellowships lasting 12 months and renewable for up to 3 years. The SAR Italy network has proved valuable in providing follow-up placements for scholars, some of whom have moved from one Italian university to another (eg. from Florence to Padova, from Milan to Bologna). Some of the first scholars who were hosted in Italy through SAR Italy have now moved to other countries – for example to Germany, Norway and the United States (often with the continued support of SAR or SRF, Scholars Rescue Fund).

Institutional Capacity building

SAR Italy has developed guidelines to foster the organizational, administrative and scientific work that is necessary to include at-risk scholars in the Italian host institutions. This document, the [“Vademecum for At-Risk Scholars Protection”](#), is regularly updated based on the exchange of good practices and criticalities between SAR Italy members. In Spring 2023 SAR Italy developed a survey for at-risk scholars hosted in the network to gain insights on their experiences. The survey fully complies with the respect of anonymity and privacy and it is articulated into different sessions, ranging from pre-arrival to the transition stage. The results will be shared shortly within the Italian networks and upon requests.

In Fall 2023 SAR Italy is organizing a training activity for academic and administrative staff of SAR Italy universities on different aspects of protection, namely: (a) visa issues in emergency; (b) turning visa into research permit and international and EU researcher mobility; (c) Contractual/fellowship typologies; (d) scientific inclusion and monitoring. The language of instruction will be Italian, and the training is also used to gather feedback from hosting departments and universities.

Advice for Researchers at Risk

SAR Italy has also organised opportunities for networking and professional development for hosted scholars. A workshop entitled “Rebuilding Careers in Exile” was organised between June and September 2022 by the University of

Padova in the context of a collaboration between SAR Italy and SAR Sweden named Swetaly. The workshop consisted of five meetings, which were attended on-site and virtually by over 40 scholars from Italy, Sweden, Poland, Germany and Finland. The aims of the workshop were to open a dialogue on the strategic and practical aspects of career orientation in exile. It connected displaced scholars hosted at Italian, Swedish and other European academic institutions, with former scholars at risk and experts in the field of academic career development. In five thematically structured gatherings, scholars were offered insights into career advancement criteria, publication venues, application procedures, European funding schemes, and the specifics of the Italian and German national contexts in the academic sector as well as an overview of potential work opportunities outside of academia.

Working towards a national programme

In 2020 SAR Italy initiated a dialogue with the Italian Rectors Conference and subsequently the Ministry of University to work for the establishment of a national fellowship programme and submitted a proposal for a national programme. However, as of 2023 no national programme has yet been launched.

In September 2021, the Ministry for Universities created and subsequently administered a one-off programme, aiming mostly at researchers and students from Ukraine with a budget of one million euros. Higher education institutions could apply for max. 75,000 euros per institution. These funds were provided to support scholars and students - in the form of research contracts, visiting professorships, grants for students and support for Erasmus+ students. The resources could also be used for scholars and students who were asylum-seekers or arrived from Afghanistan.

SAR Italy was not involved in this initiative other than initially providing the ministry with a proposal for a national programme for at-risk scholars. The funding for each university was minimal when compared to the other, independent university initiatives, some of which greatly surpassed the Ministry’s funding. These independent initiatives have been sponsored mainly by the universities themselves, with some additional funding through the Scholar Rescue Fund (which has expressed interest in co-funding a national programme), the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice (one scholar for a few months), and one scholarship which was provided by a banking foundation. This necessitated a considerable amount of work, but unfortunately ended up being a one-off initiative, since it was not sustained by the foundation.

Key challenges, lessons learnt and recommendations

In relation to the protection and hosting of scholars, there has been a steep learning curve. The response from universities has been very positive, lessons have been learnt but there is much room for improvement.

Major Challenges

- Responses from the Italian embassies in issuing visas has generally been slow and there is a need for a coordinated and institutionalized collaboration between SAR Italy/ Universities, the Ministry of International Affairs and Co-operation (MAECI) and Embassies, which would facilitate the information and procedures related to visa application for threatened scholars and their families.
- Slow procedures in Italy and more favourable conditions in other national programmes (e.g. Germany and France) - such as the existence of a national fellowship program for at-risk scholars, an established coordination between pertinent ministries and universities, as well as longer-term research positions - have led some scholars who were in the process of getting positions in Italian universities to give preference to positions in other contexts.
- Few universities in the SAR Italy network are involved in actual hosting. Most of these hosting initiatives have come from resources for emergencies. Up to now, there has been little prospective thinking or long-term planning for a sustained programme in universities. There is need for greater 'preparedness'.

Lessons learned

- A great deal can be achieved through collaboration on local, national and transnational levels.
- Fruitful collaborations have been developed between SAR Italy and SAR Sweden in many areas, including professional development for SAR Scholars.
- Institutions have their own logics and goals and even when funds are available, they are not always allocated in ways which meet the needs of the scholars (for example short term contracts, low stipends and ad-hoc positions created, with little long-term vision or planning).
- Hosted scholars need language support and language lessons (often for both Italian and English) as well as other professional development activities (use of libraries, academic writing, how to publish, finding work outside of academia).

Recommendations

- The guidelines for hosting developed by SAR Italy are useful as procedures in Italy are different from other contexts, however they could be better known and used within the SAR Italy network. It would also be very useful for individual universities to develop their own versions, including specific information that can help departments' efforts in hospitality.
- University administrative staff need to dedicate considerable time to hosted scholars and specific knowledge is required to understand scholars' needs (e.g. clarity of information on when contract will start, conditions of contract, tax deductions, access to health services, what scholar is expected to do) and safety (regarding anonymity and protection). University staff are often not trained

to provide information about asylum procedures to threatened scholars and on the implications this holds for mobility, contract and welfare. Many administrative staff within SAR Italy universities have manifested the need to be trained on how to better deal with emergency cases. To meet this need, SAR Italy is organizing professional development for university staff which will begin in Autumn 2023.

- Scholars have often manifested a need for guidance in familiarizing themselves with available research funding schemes at local, national and international level, and in acquiring more detailed knowledge with strategies and venues for publishing their work. It would be important to foster more training/informative sessions both at university and SAR Italy levels.
- Scholars can experience isolation within the new academic environment. It would be important to involve them in research, teaching and dissemination activities as well as social events.
- Networking among displaced scholars across Italy and Europe is highly valued by the displaced scholars, as well as professional development. Funds should also be provided to scholars to participate in these activities, including conferences and SAR Italy events.
- SAR Italy does not have a complete record of scholars hosted in member institutions and their status. It would be important to establish a process of recording and keeping track of the scholars hosted in Italy and their positions (also to inform them about trainings, opportunities, events ...)

SCHOLARS AT RISK

ITALY SECTION



2.9

Netherlands

Created in 1948 by refugee students and academics from Eastern Europe, the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF) is the oldest refugee organisation of the Netherlands. From 2009 until 2020 the UAF constituted the Dutch national branch of Scholars at Risk known as SAR Netherlands.

In 2023, UAF provided assistance to 74 researchers at risk. To reach this target, the foundation has partnerships with universities, universities of applied science, The Dutch Ministry of Education, municipalities, companies, lobby groups and volunteers. The UAF supports both refugee scholars and threatened scholars. The two groups form what the UAF present as researchers at risk.

In 2020, the UAF shifted focus to the assistance of individual refugee scholars with a residence permit in the Netherlands and ended its coordination of the SAR program. One of the main reasons for this shift in focus was an issue around tax regulations faced by the UAF due to the financial construction in place where the UAF contributed to research positions for scholars through match-funding. In the years after 2020 the UAF saw that the change in focus created a gap and closed the window of opportunities for researchers at risk to come to the Netherlands. For this reason the UAF has reopened discussions on these difficulties and aims to work together towards solutions. The aim being to bridge this gap, find solutions for these challenges and again operate as the SAR Netherlands branch.

The role of the UAF is to assist and facilitate scholars in their journey when searching for jobs. That's why the UAF supports at-risk researchers with information, advice and guidance and provides financial support for courses and training programs. The UAF also organises activities such as training in the preparation of research applications, intercultural communication and workshops on applying for jobs. When needed, UAF assists scholars who need to improve their academic English or academic writing. These activities are intended to bridge gaps and strengthen the scholars' position in the labour market.

A very encouraging development is that in 2023, 17 at-risk scholars have been able to secure a position in the academic sector and in companies outside the academic sector in the Netherlands through UAF assistance. In addition, the UAF works closely with the programme [Hestia](#), introduced by the Dutch Research Council (NOW), that facilitates a further 10 scholars in their academic ambitions.

Some scholars shared their experience with the UAF:

"I started a new position in Maastricht as a project manager. This is not an academic position, but I find ways to implement my analytic capabilities. In the coming months, I'll try to discover the ways of combining my academic work with my current job. I'd like to thank you and SAR network for your support during my PhD trajectory."

However, scholars also face difficulties when applying for jobs outside of academia. The scholars are often seen as overqualified. An example of a researcher who applied for a Hestia project and could not await the result and decided to make a transition from academia to the labour market.

He said: "In dialogue with my career advisor from UAF, I decided to apply for an IT position where I am working. I am now working as an IT consultant at the University of Applied Science Amsterdam (HvA) next to my job as researcher at the University of Applied Science Utrecht."

The number of applications from researchers at risk from Syria and Turkey has increased significantly since 2015. The UAF also support researchers from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and African countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, and The Democratic Republic of the Congo. The UAF recognises that scholars from Afghanistan and Yemen are really in need of support as well as scholars from Ukraine.

Support structures in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, universities provide financial assistance and guidance on career development. In addition, the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam was part of the – now discontinued – EU funded SUCRE project to support researchers at risk. The University of Utrecht has an Inclusion program for refugee students and researchers at risk. Universities, together with the UAF, organise intercultural communication training that helps researchers to integrate on the work floor.

In December 2022 and throughout 2023 the UAF engaged in dialogue with the Dutch Ministry of Education. The objective of this dialogue is to find a way for the Netherlands to provide more assistance to researchers at-risk. The Ministry of Education expressed clearly that the Netherlands, as a country, can do more but political and financial aspects could hinder this process. In addition, the Minister recognised the tax-regulation issue and took the initiative to bring Ministries together to discuss and overcome this issue. Until now, no governmental solution has been found.

In January 2023, De Jonge Akademie issued an in-depth report that gave a full insight into difficulties that at-risk scholars are facing in the Netherlands. It concludes that "a national structure is needed for reception and support for at-risk scholars." In May 2023, the UAF brought universities and universities of applied sciences together with the aim of finding a solution for hosting scholars in the Netherlands. In the UAF strategy for the coming years scholars remain a central pillar in its activities. For that reason, the UAF and at-risk scholars came together in November 2023 to discuss issues faced when searching for employment.

Furthermore, the influence of the November 2023 election on the political will to address tax regulation issues is yet to be determined. More political involvement will be needed to make the protection and support of at-risk scholars within the SAR-programme possible. The UAF and education institutions will continue their efforts to make this change possible.





2.10
Norway

SAR Norway, the Norwegian section of Scholars at Risk, was launched in 2011 following the mobilization of Norwegian academics and students, particularly the organization “Students and Academics International Assistance Fund” (SAIH). The network brings together all Norwegian universities, as well as several public and private higher education institutions and research institutes. In addition, the Researchers Union and SAIH are associated members. SAR Norway provides information, advice, and referrals as well as networking opportunities for researchers at risk. The hosting institutions must assume all costs. Despite limited financial capacity, the members of SAR Norway support some 20+ researchers at risk each year. Among the 20 members of the network, 13 have already hosted researchers from numerous countries. In 2021 there was a strong mobilization among Norwegian Higher education institutions to support scholars from Afghanistan. Again in 2022 there was mobilization to host Ukrainian scholars, and now a crisis response for Palestine will most likely lead to the highest number of placements ever in Norway.

Interview with Marit Egner, Senior Adviser in the Office for Research and International Cooperation, University of Oslo (UiO).

What key lessons have been learned by Norwegian institutions involved in support efforts, what has worked well and what have been some of the challenges?

The Norwegian institutions have used their autonomy and room of maneuver to support researchers at risk. At the University of Oslo, for example, we developed a special support programme for receiving 15 Ukrainian scholars on short term stays in 2022. Other institutions have also been creative and engaged in their approach. We have had a very good cooperation between the member institutions including thematic meetings twice a year, advice to each other on hosting as well as mobility of researchers at risk between the member institutions. One of the biggest challenges is to secure enough time to do the support work. Another challenge is to manage to attract external funding from ministries or other entities to support fellowships for the researchers at risk. So far, we have received two externally funded fellowships from the ministries, while the institutions covered around 60 fellowships from their own budgets during a period of 14 years (2009-2023).

What advice would you give new initiatives for researchers at risk or those interested in establishing such initiatives in other countries/ regions?

I think firstly, you have to identify and bring together the institutions interested in the topic. Then, you should speak with existing networks in other countries to learn from them. Thirdly, try to get the national government interested.

How are institutions in Norway working together to support at-risk scholars and researchers?

We organise events twice a year to share experiences and discuss relevant topics within the network. We circulate in-

formation on researchers at risk in need of a new placement; this can enable scholars to find a new institution in Norway rather than being required to move to yet another country to find opportunities. We also have teamed up to work on advocacy and to try to attract further funding for fellowships.

What is the value and importance of coordinating with other institutions within your country to support researchers at risk?

The most important aspect is being able to offer researchers at risk the opportunity to stay in Norway for more than two years. Good communication within the network is key in this regard. The SAR Norway Steering Group can discuss issues and be a contact point for all the members. Since each institution normally has one dedicated part-time staff, and the rest of the work is distributed across many different academic environments, it is important to have the institutional contacts to discuss challenges and solutions.

Do you have any comments on the policy environment in Norway as it relates to efforts to support researchers at risk?

We do experience a general political support, and there is a growing interest in issues related to academic freedom. The current government is, however, not so focused on international solidarity. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is however offering scholarships to Students at Risk (ca 150 scholarships granted since 2012).

Is there any private sector involvement in your country in supporting researchers at risk?

Up to now, we have no private sector involvement, except funding from Fritt Ord, a private foundation whose aim is to support freedom of expression and a free press. We hope to engage more with the private sector in the coming years.

More information on SAR Norway can be found [here](#).

SCHOLARS AT RISK

NORWAY SECTION



2.11
Poland

Support for Researchers at Risk in Poland has been stepped up tremendously since 2022 following the Russian attack on Ukraine. Support for students and researchers impacted by the war has been offered both on a national level, as seen by the exemplary actions by the Polish Academy of Science described below, and also directly to individual researchers and research institutions.

Remarks by Beata Kowalska, Associate Professor of Sociology, Jagiellonian University Kraków.

In 2020 I tried to describe the difficulties and obstacles in creating a support network for researchers at risk in Poland and, more broadly, in Central Europe. Besides the top two obstacles that face the whole of Europe – the shortage of funding and the competitiveness and precarity of Europe’s research labor market. I added from the Polish perspective two political ones: the antimigration politics of the former government as well as academic freedom, which is on the first line of the former and possibly also future political battles. However, even if due to the limited financial opportunities of local academic institutions we could not always act as host institutions, we organised guest seminars, solidarity actions, and ultimately forged an agreement with the city of Kraków to establish an academic residency program, providing scholarships for Researchers at Risk.

A year later, in 2021, we welcomed the first Afghan refugees. Based on a grassroots initiative created by people from all over Poland, young Afghans were preparing to study in Poland. In this context, my university offered five scholarships to refugee students.

On 24 February 2022, the situation changed dramatically. Over 2 million war refugees from Ukraine came to Poland. The Russian attack on Ukraine changed the situation of our Ukrainian students and employees. 1288 people from Ukraine studied and worked at the Jagiellonian University at that time. For about 100 people who stayed in Ukraine, we changed the regulations along with their needs, so that they could complete courses in hybrid mode and/or take leave. We offered financial and free psychological support in the Ukrainian language.

Ukrainian students could take classes at Jagiellonian university (JU) and completed selected courses with the consent of the deans. We organized Polish language courses. We offered them two dormitories for the first months, where 700 students, some of them with their families, found shelter. In addition, we prepared new recruitment rules, also for people who did not have documents, to enable them to continue their studies and created committees that checked learning effects. These measures allowed us to welcome more than 1500 new Ukrainian students at the JU.

All the activities described were based on volunteering, limited university funds, and civic fundraising. We took time off work to do this. People from Ukraine were guests in our homes to avoid big refugee camps. I had the impression that Poland has become one great NGO. We tried to find a new paradigm for unprecedented challenges.

The Conference of Polish Rectors virtually hosted Ukrainian Rectors, even from Mariupol. They were asking us to temporarily support their employees and students, while also being concerned about the possible brain drain. This concern was an inspiration to create a Polish-Ukrainian research group which conducted interviews with Ukrainian academics and a survey completed by almost 140 colleagues from the main Ukrainian academic institutions, the results of which were published in the report: [“On the need for global academic solidarity: Ukrainian voices”](#).

In addition, science organisations in Poland have also garnered support for Ukrainian researchers. One of the first to do so, was the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAS), which invited Ukrainian researchers to short-term research stays of three to six months beginning in March 2022. This initiative was then extended with the support of international organizations and thanks to its partnership with the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. Within this support programme, more than 200 researchers, the majority being female, were bestowed with an opportunity to continue their research in a safe environment in Poland. These efforts have been scaled up in 2023. With the support of several European and international Science academies and publishers, and in close cooperation with the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the Polish Academy of Sciences has been able to [award research grants to 18 research teams](#), enabling them to conduct their work in scientific units of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Within this programme the principal investigator will remain in Poland for the duration of the project, while the other members may conduct research both in Poland and in Ukraine for a total duration of three years.



**JAGIELLONIAN
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2.12
Slovakia

The establishment of SAR Slovakia came at a time of growing concern around academic freedom in Eastern Europe.

Launched in 2019, SAR Slovakia brings together six universities and associations across the country – Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, University of Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Pavol Safarik University in Košice, Paneuropean University in Bratislava, and Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts in Bratislava. The section is currently coordinated by the Bratislava Policy Institute (BPI).

The preparatory phase preceding the launch of SAR Slovakia included presentations on academic freedom from SAR staff at to students and faculty at HEIs in Slovakia, as well as lectures given at HEIs in Slovakia by SAR scholars from Turkey and Zimbabwe.

The launch of the SAR Section Slovakia took place on 23rd of May 2019 in Bratislava, followed by an [Academic Freedom Festival](#) hosted by Bratislava Policy Institute.

Since 2019 the main goal of the SAR Slovakia has been to focus its efforts on developing awareness campaigns and advocacy activities related to academic freedom and at-risk scholar support. Advocacy campaigns of SAR Slovakia have been implemented with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European relations, and they have focused on addressing Slovak scholars, media, and the civil society.

Such awareness campaigns in Slovakia are essential due to the reluctance of portions of the population to accept migrants in general. By raising awareness of academic freedom, SAR Slovakia also highlights the benefits that researchers at risk who have had to flee their country of origin can bring to a host country.

In this regard BPI and SAR Slovakia also organized a conference, “Focusing on Freedom”, in Banská Bystrica in 2019 with speakers drawn largely from Central European countries. BPI and SAR Slovakia also organized two trainings of youth workers during 2021. The first provided 30 participants with training focused on youth work and human rights, with specific sections devoted to academic rights and freedoms. The second provided 35 participants with training focused on countering hate speech, and included a specific section devoted to the Scholars at Risk network. In 2022 BPI and SAR Slovakia organised a workshop for young people focusing on propaganda and hate speech, which engaged an additional 20 participants on questions of academic rights and freedoms. As a result of these trainings, workshops, and events across several years in 2023 BPI and SAR Slovakia were able to create a dedicated student initiative within SAR Slovakia.

SAR Slovakia is still developing its capacity to provide fellowships, placements, and other forms of material support to researchers at risk. With support from both Erasmus programs and private money, SAR Slovakia will provide its first fellowship and placement for a researcher at risk at a Slovak university in 2024.



2.13

Sweden

Interview with Karolina Catoni, Acting Head of the International Centre at the University of Gothenburg and co-coordinator of the Swedish section of Scholars at Risk (SAR Sweden):

What is the current status and what have been the most recent developments for SAR Sweden?

As of October 2023, the Swedish SAR network includes representatives from 26 universities and 4 associated members (unions and research organizations). Swedish universities currently host 10 SAR-scholars from different countries, as well as a number of displaced scholars from Ukraine.

The daily operation of the section was strengthened with the formation of a steering committee in 2020. The members of the steering committee take on a range of responsibilities that were formerly solely on the spokesperson. In recent years, efforts have been made to boost the whole SAR-Sweden community and to facilitate the exchange of experience and advice among members. Ideas for improvement have been collected in section meetings and surveys. An online meeting format called „member dialogue“ has been successfully introduced during 2023.

Also, additional funding of €500.000 has been raised through the prolongation of funding by the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, which allows SAR Sweden to offer an additional 12-14 employment opportunities for researchers at risk in Sweden. Currently, funding for SAR Sweden is drawn from 5 different funders. The further organization and funding of SAR Sweden is also being discussed; there is ongoing engagement with a legal counsellor to look into the possibility of forming a foundation for this purpose.

Do you have any new recommendations and/or lessons-learned which have emerged in the last two years which you would like to highlight?

Adding to the importance of national-level awareness/visibility and support by the relevant stakeholders, such as funding agencies, of great value to compare and discuss approaches with other national sections. Even though we have different national contexts we can still be inspired by each other. Hands-on collaboration with other sections often gives leverage, for instance regarding training seminars or other initiatives for scholars.

Have there been any new programmes initiated in Sweden aiming specifically at researchers at risk from Ukraine or Afghanistan (or other specific in the national context)?

Yes, indeed. A funding scheme for at-risk-scholars from Afghanistan was established in late 2021, supported by The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The first hosted scholars arrived during autumn 2022. The program lasts to the end of 2024.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine sparked significant attention to issues related to scholars at risk from university management and external stakeholders. An unprecedented

interest in the section emerged, along with a stronger will to contribute. Several universities allocated their own funding to host scholars from Ukraine beginning in spring term 2022. The Swedish Institute reached out to the Swedish SAR-secretariat with a funding opportunity for supporting the secretariat and building its capacity.

SCHOLARS AT RISK

SWEDEN SECTION

2.14

Switzerland



The first higher education institution in Switzerland joined Scholars at Risk in 2008. The number of members grew steadily thereafter, with a stark increase in the last few years, favoured by three developments:

- the establishment of SAR Switzerland in 2016 with targeted outreach to non-members,
- funding for SAR scholars by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) from 2020,
- and the war in Ukraine that highlighted the necessity of a system like SAR.

With 39 member organizations, SAR Switzerland now encompasses almost the entire landscape of tertiary education institutions. The SAR Swiss section serves as a platform for its member organizations to exchange good practice concerning the hosting of scholars and to achieve synergy effects. The latter concerned, most importantly, the securing of funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation in 2020. During a trial phase of three years, the SNSF provided awards for five scholars who had been assessed as at-threat by SAR New York.

Given the mutually beneficial arrangement and cooperation with SAR Switzerland, the SNSF was willing to rapidly step up funding for at-threat scholars from Afghanistan and Ukraine after August 2021 and February 2022 respectively. Due to the war in Ukraine, the SNSF increased its budget for SAR scholars by CHF 10 million, allowing the funding of some 100 scholars from Ukraine. These additional funds were limited to one year and hosting institutions were asked early on to start looking for own or alternative third-party funding.

Apart from the Ukrainian scholars (special measures/additional funds), 8 regular new SAR Scholars were hosted in 2022 and could benefit from SNSF funding. In 2023, 5 new SAR scholars were hosted at Swiss institutions and could benefit from funding by SNSF. From 2024 onwards, the SNSF has a budget to fund up to ten scholars per year.

The new updated guidelines for funding by the SNSF can be found [here](#).

SCHOLARS AT RISK

SWITZERLAND SECTION



2.15

United Kingdom

Cara (the Council for At-Risk Academics) was founded in 1933 by Britain's foremost academics and scientists in response to new Nazi laws which resulted in hundreds of leading scholars being expelled from German universities on racial or political grounds. 2023 was Cara's 90th anniversary, and in those 90 years, thousands of researchers have received support to rebuild their academic careers in safety. The mission set out by Cara's founders as 'the relief of suffering and the defence of learning and science' is still Cara's mission today. The charity is now working to support academics from anywhere in the world who are suffering as a result of discrimination, persecution, violence or conflict.

Cara's work in 2023 was dominated by the crises in Afghanistan, Ukraine and Sudan. Over the year Cara received over 350 full applications for placements, with those from Sudanese academics rising in the second half of the year to outnumber those from Afghans. This came on top of all the appeals for help still coming from academics across the Middle East – Syria, Yemen and Iran in particular – and from those elsewhere, all needing urgent help to get to safety. At any given time, Cara's 'New Fellows' team were managing up to 90 new applications and working with another 80 or so Fellows at the next stage, agreeing the details of their placements – a complex and time-consuming task, followed by the whole process of actually bringing them, and in many cases their families as well, safely to the UK. As 2023 ended, the Cara team were also closely watching the desperate situation in Gaza, where the universities have been badly damaged or totally destroyed; tragically, many academics, including one Cara 'alumnus', have already been killed, and the survivors will need a great deal of support to rebuild their lives and careers.

As Fellows arrived to take up their Fellowships in 2023, the number of 'Active Fellows' – those actually in placements, mostly in the UK, hosted by Cara's 135 University Network partners – went up from 115 at the beginning of the year to 175, many accompanied by family members, with many more expected to arrive in the first months of 2024. Almost all are on multi-year placements: some are studying for PhDs, and will stay for 3-4 years, with the possibility of work or another placement after that; others are at the postdoctoral level, so initially arrive for 2-year placements, though a growing number now qualify, during their stay, for Skilled Worker or Global Talent visas which allow them to stay for longer – though, in most cases, still with the ambition to return home, when it is safe to do so.

Three Cara Fellows, from Afghanistan, Ukraine and Syria, tell their stories in Cara's [latest video](#).

Programmes for researchers at risk from Ukraine

The 'Researchers at Risk' programme for Ukraine-based researchers was launched in April 2022, in response to the Russian invasion. The programme was led by the British Academy, with support from the other national academies; Cara helped design the programme, was represented on

the award selection panel and administered all the award payments. Additional funding over the first year brought the total available funds to £13.35m (£12.8 million of which came from the UK Government), which was used to fund 179 awards at UK universities and institutes, almost all for two years. At the end of 2023 the British Academy informed host institutions that funds for a third award year had been secured.

This programme complements, rather than replaces, the standard programmes administered by Cara. This intention is highlighted in the programme notes: "The purpose of this Programme is to increase the range of opportunities available to researchers at risk. It is not intended as a replacement to the generous support which many UK institutions are already providing, in partnership with Cara to researchers at risk, and institutions may wish to comment on this in their Supporting Statement. This will be one of the factors considered when proposals are reviewed."

In 2023, the Leverhulme Trust provided additional funding of £1,000,000 over five years targeted at providing research support for researchers at risk, who are active postdoctoral (or equivalent level) researchers. Grants are available to support research project activities for eligible researchers in all disciplines except medical and health sciences. Eligible researchers include existing award holders through Cara's Fellowship Programme, applicants to Cara's Fellowship Programme who have been deemed eligible for support and for whom a placement is being sought, and award holders through the British Academy's 'Researchers at Risk' Programme.

Inspireurope+

Cara is the lead for Work Package 2, 'Guidance for Researchers at Risk', of the second phase of the EU's 'Inspireurope+' programme and is responsible for delivering a series of six webinars and six workshops over the three years of the programme. Three webinars and two training sessions had been held by the end of 2023.

Regional programme for at-risk researchers from Syria

2023 was another productive year for Cara's regionally-based Syria Programme (SP), which was launched in 2016 as Cara's third regional programme and now has some 180 active Syrian participants. It began badly, when earthquakes in February along the Turkish/Syrian border devastated areas that are heavily populated by displaced Syrians, including by many SP participants. Fortunately, Cara's university partners and many individual SP supporters raised over £145,000 in response to Cara's Emergency Appeal; with these funds, and a contribution from Cara's own reserves, Cara was able to make immediate hardship payments to 88 SP participants and their dependants who had been directly affected, with three additional payment rounds over the following three months.

Once normal work could resume, Cara continued to arrange its weekly series of online academic skills development 'E-learn Soirées', presented mainly by UK-based academic volunteers and focussing on research and teaching-related topics, as well as ad hoc online training courses. These were supplemented by face-to-face workshops in Turkey, to support academic writing. Eight short 'research incubation visits' (RIVs) were also hosted by UK institutions in 2023.

RIVs also offer up to two years' subsequent institutional affiliation, which makes it possible for the researcher to have continued access to the host institutions' online resources and to continue collaborative research. A pilot with Sham University faculty in the non-regime north-west of Syria went ahead, to help show evidence of their adherence to European Standards and Guidelines in the absence of formal accreditation. SP participants cross the border into north-west Syria daily to help sustain access to higher education for local communities and for the many Syrians displaced to this non-regime area, offering hope to a generation whose lives have been blighted by the crisis.

Twelve SP participants and seven mentors tell their stories in Cara's new [SP booklet](#).

Recommendations and lessons learned for the establishment of new national-level programmes

- Language support is essential, including specific 'academic language' support; so is support with research methods, CV writing, funding applications etc.
- Mentoring schemes are also invaluable for career development and for the future prospects of displaced academics. Non-academic mentors can also provide vital practical support on issues such as housing, opening bank accounts and paying bills. Long-term planning is crucial. Post-placement options should be part of the conversation as soon as Fellows arrive.
- Family support should routinely be included in Fellowships. Dependants who are with the Fellow need to be supported through the Fellowship, with additional grants specifically for these family members if necessary.
- Prepare in advance for future conflicts and other events which may result in a sudden surge in applications. Regional programmes can play an important part in any response – not all threatened academics can or want to travel far from their home region.

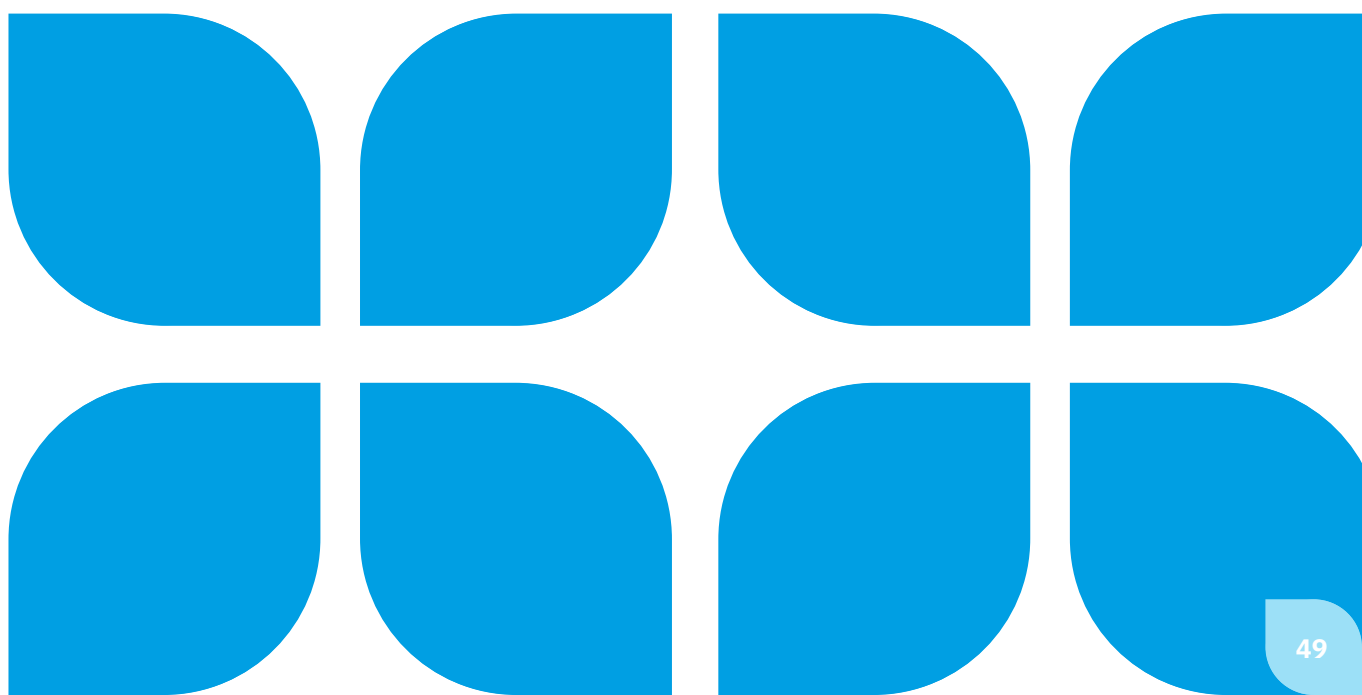
cara

a lifeline to academics at risk



3.

Summary and Conclusion



This report has presented an overview of national-level initiatives in Europe for the support of researchers at risk. Three different types of arrangements have emerged, which could serve as examples for similar initiatives in other countries:

Conclusion

- Government-backed programmes, which provide fellowships and other direct support for researchers at risk. The Philipp Schwartz Initiative, administered by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and mainly supported by the German Federal Foreign Office, and the PAUSE programme, hosted by the Collège de France and supported i.a. by the French Ministry for Higher Education and Research are two examples of this form of support.
- In other countries, partnerships by SAR Sections with national education or development agencies have been established. Examples for fellowship schemes organised in this way can be found in Finland (Finnish National Education Agency) or in Sweden (International Development Agency). The fellowship programme in Switzerland may evolve along a similar pathway.
- In the UK, where the Council for At-risk Academics (Cara) has a longstanding history of providing assistance to researchers at risk, as well as in many other European countries included in the survey, higher education institutions and associations have partnered with the scholar at risk network to provide individual support and raise awareness for the importance of academic freedom and the need for protection schemes.

The country spotlights presented demonstrate that in the last three years many existing initiatives supporting researchers at risk have been extended and increased in scope and capacity. In some countries, such as Poland, Greece, and Belgium new programmes have been created and new organisational structures have been established.

In addition, since 2021 numerous crisis response programmes and special initiatives within existing programmes have been initiated to respond to challenging geopolitical situations. These initiatives and short or medium-term programmes have provided emergency relief for researchers from countries such as Ukraine, Afghanistan, or Iran, where risks, repressions and restrictions of academic freedom have targeted large groups of academics. The increasing demand for support has been at least partly met by additional funding opportunities. However, many of these support measures have been conceived as one-off funding opportunities. Thus, in many cases it is yet to be seen how programme structures, including special initiatives and more open, general support programmes, will develop.

Many representatives of national-level initiatives have highlighted their increased efforts in recent years. Their accounts reflect the challenges posed by sharply increasing numbers of researchers who need secure placements. The shortage of dedicated funding for positions or fellowship for researchers at risk, which has been observed already in 2020, clearly persists. The gap between the number of eligible applications and positions which can be awarded has broadened

in the last three years. Additionally, the question is being raised as to how to reconcile the amplified call, and need for crisis response programmes with the equally needed long-term individual support structures for researchers at risk suffering from suppression, curtailed academic freedom, and concrete repression on a global scale.

This report has shown that there are many promising pathways which are currently already being pursued through national-level initiatives. New stakeholders are invited to join these ongoing efforts and become involved in this network of initiatives, programmes, and support across Europe. The Inspireurope+ project continues to advise and assist these initiatives through the encouragement of ongoing cooperation and coordination.

Summary of Key Advice

General points

- There is no one-size fits all solution. Inspireurope+ continues to encourage the foundation and development of additional national level initiatives for researchers at risk. The consortium is happy to provide any kind of advice and exchange opportunities in this context. Please contact us at inspireurope@mu.ie
- Government-backed programmes such as the Philipp Schwartz-Initiative managed by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the PAUSE Programme administered by the Collège de France offer the advantage of reliable, long-term support schemes. State ministries and state agencies should be encouraged to support national-level initiatives.
- When creating new national-level programmes, the impact of cumulative geopolitical crises and a highly increased demand for placements should be considered. While crisis response schemes are important and helpful, they should not lead to the discontinuation or neglect of long-term, reliable support structures for researchers at risk irrespective of country of origin.
- While specific programmes that consider the particular needs of researchers at risk are advisable, drawing on existing support schemes might be a good starting point to pilot new and more specific measures. Ideally this can lead to the establishment of a dedicated support scheme for researchers at risk, such as the one currently under preparation in Switzerland.
- The lack of funding should not be considered an obstacle to start working towards placements and protection schemes. An advocacy and awareness-raising campaign can be a starting point towards more concrete support programmes and individual placements, as seen from the example of Slovakia. Start small and build up over time.

- Be patient. Working towards new initiatives might take a while and require persistence. In this regard the exchange with long-standing actors in this field will be helpful. Organisations such as Cara, IIE-SRF partnerships, SAR sections and UAF provide valuable assets in this regard.
- Organising at national level is helpful for the pooling of resources and information. A first step in this process might be to identify individual actors, such as higher education institutions or individual stakeholders interested in the topic who could be invited to join forces.
- For the development (first-hand and future enhancement) of programmes for at-risk scholars, the specific expertise in the field of supporting at-risk scholars such as that provided by internationally active support organisations, such as CARA, SAR, IIE-SRF, as well as advice from on the grounds actors and individuals is necessary and extremely valuable. Therefore, cooperation between local, national and international stakeholders is recommended.

Gearing programmes specifically to researchers at risk

- Consider the fact that many researchers will not be alone but accompanied by family members who equally need both financial as well as practical assistance to integrate into a new living environment.
- Both a scientific mentor as well as someone providing mentorship for administrative, everyday advice and support have proven to be extremely valuable assets for researchers hosted.
- Researchers at risk have a lot of resources and skills to offer to their hosting environment. Considering these assets in a general context of internationalisation processes in higher education might lead to valuable win-win situations. Some national-level initiatives have for example reported on the positive impact teaching opportunities in English language courses have, both for the researchers at risk and the students who get exposed to a more international and diverse teaching environment.
- Career development is a very challenging aspect according to the experience of most national-level initiatives. Adequate support structures are therefore needed from a very early stage. Support can be gathered within higher education institutions (many of which have already general staff career development schemes), through national funding organisations or specialised associations and civil society organisations, and internationally, including specific information and training activities provided by the Inspireurope+ consortium.

Programme development – Details

- On a concrete level, it is important to keep an open mind and be flexible when creating the programme structure, the networks, and working methods. This can mean, for example, ensuring additional resources on the institutional level for comprehensive support to scholars, and families, or working closely with immigration authorities.
- When organising support structures, it is advisable to aim for structures where tasks can be shared by a group of people, rather than a single spokesperson who might get overwhelmed with the – often voluntary – contributions to support for researchers at risk in addition to other, regular tasks he or she might have.
- Visa and residency are important issues. Thus, the cooperation and support of national authorities is extremely valuable and helpful for the implementation of support programmes for researchers at risk. Specific institutionalised, or at least semi-permanent, longer-term structures may be easier to navigate than individual and ad-hoc communications and alignments. In this regard both lobbying, advocacy, and dissemination structures are important.
- Guidelines for hosting researchers at risk are useful. These should be widely circulated and disseminated. They can be assembled on a national level but may also be adapted by individual institutions, including specific local recommendations and resources for hosts and researchers at risk.

Project Partners:



Associate Partners:



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