



Inspireurope

Supporting Researchers at Risk

*Initiative to Support, Promote and Integrate
Researchers at Risk in Europe*

Inspireurope South East Europe Regional Outreach Workshop

Thessaloniki, Greece and online
31 March 2022

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



https://inspireurope.auth.gr/en/workshop2022_materials



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Inspireurope Regional Outreach Workshop, Greece Thessaloniki 31.3.2022

The **Inspireurope Regional Outreach Workshop** 2022 was hosted by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), partner of Inspireurope Initiative, on March 31st 2022, in a hybrid format, at the Research Dissemination Center (KEDEA) of AUTH, in Thessaloniki.

The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness and promote collaboration in South East Europe to support researchers at risk. It focused on the ways that host institutions and other employers can actively support researchers at risk to continue their academic/professional careers in a safe work environment in Europe, whether in academia, business, NGOs, think tanks or other sectors. Moreover, it aimed to discuss challenges and good practices and provide useful guidelines for national-level actions in Europe in support of researchers at risk, especially nowadays with the dramatic situation in Ukraine.

The workshop included sessions on:

- Academic Freedom
- Building a culture of welcome in South East European institutions
- Preparing the work environment in and out of academia
- Career development & cross-national circulation of researchers in Europe
- Researchers at Risk: Contributions to European academy- Solidarity with Afghan and Ukrainian academics

The Rector of AUTH, Professor Nikolaos G. Papaioannou, opened the event and welcomed the participants. H.E. the President of the Hellenic Republic Katerina Sakellaropoulou honoured the event with a welcome message. Prof. Glavinis Panagiotis, Dean of Faculty of Law, Vice President of the State Scholarships Foundation (IKY), also, addressed the event.

The workshop, which was held in English, was attended by 150 distinguished academics, representatives of other Inspireurope partners, representatives of foreign Universities, Greek Universities, European organizations, employment promotion organizations, NGOs as well as refugee researchers who have already found or are looking for a safe environment in Greece and the rest of Europe. The event was successful in reaching out to 30 countries worldwide, including countries from South-East and South Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, Romania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Russia, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece), North and Central Europe (UK, Sweden, Poland, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, France) as well as Turkey, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Morocco, USA and Trinidad and Tobago.

ANALYTICAL PRESENTATION OF THE SESSIONS

Opening Session

11:00- 11:30 Welcome remarks

H.E. the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellaropoulou addressed the workshop; her message focused on the importance of advocating for the academic freedom of at-risk academics and researchers, as well as, on hosting them in a safe and welcoming work environment, a task with high educational and humanitarian value, especially in the difficult times we are going through.

Chair for morning sessions: **Alexandros Triantafyllidis**, Inspireurope local Coordinator at AUTH, Chair of SAR Greece, and Professor of the School of Biology

Professor A. Triantafyllidis, on behalf of the organizing committee, welcomed the participants to the event, either physically present in the room or attending virtually.

Nikos Papaioannou, Rector of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Professor of the School of Veterinary Medicine, provided information about SAR GREECE section, emphasized on the importance of defending the academic values and freedom and expressed full solidarity with those who suffer.

Panagiotis Glavinis, Dean of Faculty of Law, Vice President of the State Scholarships Foundation (IKY), Professor of International Economic Law, AUTH, pointed out the sensitivity of AUTH and the Faculty of Law about academics at risk, especially nowadays with the increased needs in Eastern Europe and in Ukraine. His proposal, as the Vice President of the Greek State Scholarships Foundation was to devote some funds of IKY to this action (i.e. support researchers at risk) after mobilizing initiatives from other Greek Universities; he also suggested that IKY could provide some short-time scholarships to academics at risk.

Alexandros Triantafyllidis, Inspireurope local Coordinator at AUTH, Chair of SAR Greece, Professor of the School of Biology highlighted that everything has changed through the last 2 years. As a result of the war in Ukraine there is an urgent need to find solutions for all Ukrainians as well as all academics who are in risk. Now is the time for all of us to change; and all of us to act with a solidarity-culture orientation. It is time for internationalisation, for mobilizing and strengthening efforts to create more funds for those who are in danger.

11:30- 12:00 Keynote Speech: Academic Freedom

Angelos Syrigos, Deputy Minister of Education, Greece, Associate Professor of International Law and Foreign Policy

In his keynote speech *“European universities: five centuries of academic freedom”* the Deputy Minister stressed that in days like those we are going through, we fully understand that academic freedom is liberty of teaching and research, liberty of communicating, liberty of studying, of testing controversial ideas and criticizing without fear. The Deputy Minister congratulated AUTH for its initiatives and for taking part in the SAR NETWORK and promised for any help that could be provided.

12:00-13:15 Building a culture of welcome at SE European universities

Chrysi Vitsilaki, Rector of the University of the Aegean, Greece, Professor *“From the shores of the Aegean Sea to the classrooms of the University of the Aegean: Support and integration actions for refugees”*

Aegean University supports all academics in risk because of its geographical place. Some of the related actions of the Aegean University is collection and categorization data from people who manage refugees in order to contact with them systematically, create records regarding them, more systematic documentation about research projects, digitalizing educational materials. Also, organized actions and programmes against racism and xenophobia, language learning lessons and workshops offering the opportunity to continue their academic research and an Online language learning programme supported by IKY. Now the colleagues are working on tools for the creation of multilingual libraries and a data base of refugees with an academic profile giving access to NGO’s and recruiters.

Andreas Floros, Rector of Ionian University, Greece, Professor *“A framework for Academic Freedom Protection in an Insular, Regional Environment”*

He introduced his University as the first modern Greek University, which is partner or coordinator in many projects. Summer schools, cultural events, seminars, international scientific conferences are some of the actions provided for high quality knowledge to all academics, that explains their interest in the Greek Scholars at risk network. Today 29 Ukrainian and Russians are studying there and ways for covering all their needs in these difficult times are sought. It was also officially announced that the UNESCO chair will host an Assos. Prof. from Ukraine for ten months with a scholarship.

Visitación López-Miranda González Vice-rector for Research, Senior Lecturer of Pharmacology & **Andrés Martínez Fernández**, Vice-rector for Planning and Strategy, Senior Lecturer of Telecommunication Engineering, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Spain

“Welcome to Ukrainian researchers at the Rey Juan Carlos University and at the Conference of Rectors of the Public Universities of Madrid”

Universidad Rey Juan Carlos is a public University in South Madrid. It approved an institutional declaration: solidarity with the Ukraine's Universities and condemnation of invasion. The authorities of the University decided to host researchers for 3 months. To be more effective they organized a trip to Poland in order to contact with the researchers as soon as possible. Some representatives even travelled to the area near the borders. Parallel to that, the University was ready to receive emails by those who were interested in visiting Spain, which was forwarded to the Departments who then sent invitation letters to the Ukrainian researchers. In addition, relatives were transferred along with the researchers (parents, children)

Dr. Homayoon Ganji, Research Fellow, University of Pisa
"Experience as a host researcher in an Italian university"

Dr Ganji spoke of the experience he had as a researcher at risk. After leaving Afghanistan, he was worried about continuing his career. He arrived to Italy as a Scholar at risk, he was provided with assistance and help and he started working in Italian Universities. He believes that he and his family are safe and well because of this assistance. He mentioned that, unfortunately, not all have the same luck with him. Finally, he suggested that the scholarships should be extended for two years and made a wish that one day he will be a scholar NOT at risk.

Bernard Dosti, Deputy Rector of Tirana University, Albania, Associate Professor

The Deputy Rector could not take part in the workshop due to other engagement; **Dr. Erida Elmazi**, Director of Scientific Research, Projects and International Relations Directory University of Tirana spoke in his place. As the responsible for the European programmes, she introduced the University, and talked about the internationalization plan of the Institute; presented the Erasmus agreements and the cooperation with other Universities, good practices for supporting incoming foreign students with full assistance and consultations, social support through the buddy programme. Although, they do not have much experience on supporting researchers at risk, their University would be open to collaboration on relevant actions.

Dr. Theodora Tsovili, Senior Child Protection Associate, UNHCR Athens
"Aiming higher-the other 5%"

Dr Tsovili focused on the need to increase opportunities, so that unaccompanied and refugee children as well as scholars' children can be supported in any way. Refugees should be allowed to continue their studies, by presenting lectures on internet

platforms, by participating in refugee camps courses, by phone connected digital access to face-to-face learning, by -e learning mentoring and tutoring. The use of the technology will allow young children to study at home by providing digital books, language learning, teacher training, and educational games.

Finally, after invitation from the Chair of the session to SAR Greece representatives, Associate Professor **Dionysios Gouvias** from the University of Aegean flagged up some practical problems besides possible ideological issues that refugees come across in the academia. Some of these problems are easier to tackle; e.g. to address the language barrier Greek language courses are offered to adult refugees in a non-formal education inside the University. He, also, pointed out that despite the visa problems, residence permit problems and recognition of academic credentials the University of Aegean attempts to create “a community of learning” for refugees. However, problems like supporting families or individual needs are still pending. Finally, he noticed the need for more funding from the State and the Institutions.

13:15-14:30 Building National-level Actions and Support Networks in South East Europe for Researchers at Risk

In light of record numbers of applications from at-risk scholars from Afghanistan, and now given the context of the war in the Ukraine, this panel had an interactive discussion about existing national initiatives for researchers at risk, including shared experiences and suggestions for beginning, engaging, sustaining, growing and/or challenging and changing such initiatives in new national contexts throughout the region.

Moderator: **Joel Hanisek**, PhD, Inspireurope Programme Manager

Karolina Catoni, SAR Sweden Coordinator, International Administrative Officer, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Ms.Katoni provided information about SAR Sweden, with 30 member Universities. The main funding comes from HEIs and the main activities are bridging SAR into a national context, sharing of experience, awareness raising activities, biannual webinars and section meetings. It was also emphatically mentioned the warm response for willingness to host Scholars from Afghanistan. Until now 4 scholars are nominated. As for Ukraine, there is a big national interest and debate, so until now they collect initiatives from research foundations and have close discussions with stakeholders.

Marion Gues, Integration and Career development Officer, PAUSE Program, France

Ms Gues provided analytical information about the PAUSE programme. The missions of it are, among many others, the Co-funding of the Institutions seeking to host a researcher and the support of the researchers by identifying a host institution. Eligible persons are doctoral students, researchers, Professors or Artist teachers, who are in an emergency situation, due to certain reasons (e.g. military conflicts)

Francesca Helm, Co-chair of SAR Italy, Researcher, Department of Political and Juridical Sciences and International Studies, University of Padova

As was mentioned in the presentation, SAR Italy counts over 40 members now. SAR representatives for each University have no secretary and they are volunteers without budgets. They are both academic and administrative staff in order to bring different areas of experience. The main concern is trying to solve legal issues with permanent licenses, collect the problems, develop an international guideline and a working group to update it. Efforts are also being made to promote a two-year scholarship. Finally, there are attempts for collaboration with companies and with SAR international and for trying to have a national programme directly with the Ministry.

Beata Kowalska, Professor, Institute of Sociology, Jagiellonian University, Poland

Beata Kowalska spoke about the limited financial funds and mentioned that solidarity actions, with seminars for academic freedom is one the first steps. They have welcomed the first Afghan refugees who are now preparing to study in Poland. In February 2022 the situation changed dramatically as over 2,3 million refugees from Ukraine came all over Poland. Her University changed regulations along with their needs, offered psychological and financial support to all who needed such. Polish language courses are offered, care for people without papers, dormitories to stay with families. Poland has -in a sudden way- almost become a big NGO.

Afternoon sessions

15:00–16:00: Career development & cross-national circulation of researchers in Europe

Chair: Grigoris Zarotiadis, Dean of the Faculty of Economics & Political Sciences, AUTH
Also representing the Association of the economic Universities from the East Europe and the Black Sea

Svetlana Dimitrova, Sofia University, EURAXESS Bulgaria network Coordinator
“EURAXESS services for RRs and cooperation of programmes and projects”

Ms. Dimitrova referred to the Importance of Euraxess network regular services. Researchers can be provided with psychological support, housing and work.

The Network is a formal initiative of the European Commission; there is a structure, services and experienced staff. As for Ukraine, part- and full-time jobs are provided from Euraxess, internships and access to the European Research Community. Moreover, Euraxess has created an online platform with all needed information.

Miroslav Trajanovic, Professor, University of Nis, EURAXESS Serbia Network
“BRIDGE projects activities for RRs: Internship programme, training and mentoring”

In his presentation, Prof. Trajanovic provided information for the BRIDGE project. Some of the main actions of the network are: contacting trainers for researches in danger, organizing trainings for the mentors, implementation of a pilot internship programme and analyzing the process and the benefits of the project. Finally, he proposed an immediate action for a new programme focused to researchers from Ukraine NOW, as he emphatically stressed.

Ioannis Katsikis, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP Greece
“Relocation 2.0: Building a path for adult refugee legal mobility in the EU”

Mr. I. Katsikis presented the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – CEDEFOP, based in Thessaloniki since 1995. He then referred to the relocation and tying adult refugee skills to the labour market. He mentioned that people in this situation are not free to choose the country of their destination and they are mainly required to stay in the first country they enter. CEDEFOP provides support in creating labour mobility opportunities for refugees, especially in order to support them in moving legally from first asylum countries to other countries, where they can make use of European wide recognisable professional skills in accordance to the local labour market needs.

Jan Peter Ganter De Otero, Human Capital Development Expert, European Training Foundation

“Introducing research activities in VET systems: new possibilities and opportunities for researchers and academic mobility”

The European Training Foundation is an Agency of the European Union helping EU neighboring countries to reform their own education and training systems. The speaker presented their collaborators (Universities, Ministries, EU member states). He mentioned that they have a specific focus on Migration. Finally, he highlighted the importance of VET in systems of innovation and presented the seizing the benefits of technology transfer and applied research in Vocational Education

Previous SAR scholar

“Personal experience”

The ex SAR scholar described their personal experience as a peace and LGBTQ activist academic. After leaving Turkey they went to Brussels, returned to Turkey, continued working as a school counselor, then went to Denmark for one year and to Norway for 2 years, where remaining until now with a new career. According to the presentation, the opportunities of being SAR is that one can be able to continue activism without fear, study gender and sexuality freely, not hiding gender identity. Finally, it was mentioned that sometimes host universities do not realize what are the real difficulties of a SAR, based on the personal experience.

16:00–17:00 Researchers at Risk: European Solidarity with Afghanistan and Ukraine

Moderator: **Ewing Amadi Salumu**, UAF-Stichting Voor Vluchteling

Sarina Rosenthal, Senior Program Officer Scholars at Risk (SAR) Ms Rosenthal referred to SAR U.S. She mentioned that SAR'S work encompasses three key areas, which are protection, advocacy and learning. 300+ worldwide threatened scholars are provided with sanctuary and assistance every year. Especially for Afghanistan and Ukraine there is a 460% increase in applications. SAR helps individual Scholars by initial evaluation, hosting, advice and assistance.

Dr. Said Reza Kazemi, Visiting Researcher, Institute of Anthropology, Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg University
"Higher education in Afghanistan: current situation"

He spoke about the Taliban-run ministry of Higher Education and the system of control with sympathizers, their own members and officials, who are all men and there is an extending control, focusing on religious education, changing curriculum and ending co-education, separating females and males. Taliban are shaping higher education policy after their own ideology.

Julia Runte, Project Officer for the Afghan Scholars and Students at Risk Project, Global Campus of Human Rights,

"Global Campus of Human Rights: Support and Scholarship for Threatened Afghan Scholars and Students"

Ms. Runte informed the participants that Global Campus of Human Rights is the largest network of Human Rights education. It stays ready to response in various crises. This scholarship programme both makes placements and offers funding and it does not refer only to researchers. The scholarship entails living stipend, tuition and enrollment fees.

Dr. Sasha (Oleksandra) Ivashchenko, Leiden University Medical Center, Country Coordinator [Netherlands] Science for Ukraine

“Support for Ukrainian academics and researchers at risk”

Dr. Ivashchenko presented #ScienceForUkraine, a community group of volunteer students and research scientists from academic institutions in Europe and around the world. She spoke about the difficult situation and the needs of the people from Ukraine. She mentioned that there are a lot of people who cannot leave the country (males who have military obligations because of the war / females who cannot leave their family). There is also the category of female scientists that are split from their family and have no sufficient knowledge of English. In these cases, there is a remote cooperation, mentorship and many different ways of helping (mental, psychological support), In the end she emphasized the concerns of brain-drain and the need for remote support.

17:00–17:30 Closing remarks

CONCLUSIONS

Prof. Triantafyllidis summarized the following points

1. The importance of solidarity among Universities and adherence to the Principles of Academic Freedom was underlined by all.
2. Due to the current situation, now more than ever, SE European Universities should be supported by EU. At the same time, momentum is building for the creation from within, of the structures for support of Scholars at Risk.
3. Systematic collaboration is essential for effective support; all programmes and networks need to work together and share best practices. Inspireurope partners have created a plethora of such handbooks.
4. Diversification of sources of funding are needed. National schemes are important. Connection with the private sector is however still missing
5. At the same time, calls for the European commission for an immediate action are stronger than ever. An organised effort should be implemented which should also be sustainable and not as per specific crisis answer.
6. Visa, residence permits and related issues should be streamlined for those who need it. It cannot be stressed enough that S@R are in need of much more than a scholarship.
7. Effective support and professional integration of S@R would be greatly facilitated if the academic and scientific communities were involved from the start.