

Intellectual Output 3:  
**Institutional Support  
for Refugee Scholars  
in Higher Education**



**S.U.C.R.E.**

Supporting University Community Pathways for Refugees-Migrants



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THESSALONIKI

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Scholars in Higher Education**

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*Heike Berner, Marinus Kool, Johannes Müller*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This S.U.C.RE. output is inspired by the personal experiences of hosting refugee scholars at our own institutions and a search for good practices in refugee scholar support systems. We became particularly interested in opportunities and challenges of integrating refugee scholars into the host country's academic environment and in the impact of forced migration on academic career paths. We also wanted to add to similar EU-projects such as inHERE, Academic Refugee and Science4Refugees.<sup>1</sup>

Three surveys were used to capture the situation of refugee-migrants in academia. No.1 was dedicated to the institutional perspective, no. 2 addressed the scholar's perspective, and no. 3 interviewed academic hosts:

- No.1 was looking at motivations, standard support offers, and good practices and funding opportunities in HEIs.
- No.2 inquired into needs and expectations of the scholars and asked for perceptions and reflections on research and career development.
- No.3 approached academic hosts for motivations, expectations and experiences and asked for an assessment of their mentees with view to career perspectives.

The results, in a nutshell, showed a broad variety of initiatives and activities in support of refugee scholars, confirmed a surprisingly widespread high degree of good will and solidarity among academics, highlighted fundamental differences between voluntary and forced international academic careers, revealed fundamental misperceptions on all sides and suggested a series of measures to face particular challenges of hosting refugee scholars.

Among the measures that seem most relevant are:

- provide more support / better preparation for academic hosts,
- provide better support with career development for scholars,
- (more) support for the families of scholars,
- an early emphasis on employment /employability prospects.

This report provides in the following sections background and context, the detailed results of the three surveys, generic and specific recommendations, a narrative on responsible relationships between scholars and institutions, and examples of good practices.

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<sup>1</sup> These projects are referred to in later sections of this report.

# INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

## The S.U.C.RE Project

The Supporting University Community Pathways for Refugee-migrants Project S.U.C.RE (<http://sucre.auth.gr/>) is a 2-year project funded through Erasmus+. The project<sup>2</sup> aims for an understanding of the underlying reasons for potentials and barriers to the effective operational and strategic work concerning refugee students and scholars across universities. It will be a key contribution to the debate on relative deservingness of different groups of migrants/refugees and the role of Higher Education in this regard.

Intellectual Output 3 (IO3) is concerned with refugee scholars hosted at a university department. All new scholars have a learning curve when settling in at a higher education institute – and vice versa. However, this group of refugee scholars is affected by additional challenges compared to regular visiting international scholars, such as language, academic culture and bringing their families. One should also acknowledge that scholars at risk and refugee scholars<sup>3</sup> may have different (residency) status and different rights and obligations in different countries. They share that they are forced academic migrants – contrary to voluntary international scholars. An example is the recent call for refugee scholars in The Netherlands who could apply for Dutch research grants<sup>4</sup>. This grant scheme is only open to scholars with a formal refugee status and not for scholars with a temporary residence permit.

## Background

Scholars at risk is a phenomenon as old as the world that has been documented extensively<sup>5</sup>. Scholars have been persecuted, put in prison, banned from their country and killed for their beliefs, discoveries and newly developed theories. Their opponents were religious and worldly leaders alike. These events occurred in ancient times, and they continue up to the present day: From Mohammad ibn Zakariyā Rāzī or Rhazes (9th century), to Galileo Galilei (in 1633 for his views on the Solar

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<sup>2</sup> According to the application for Erasmus+ funding submitted on 30 March 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Refugee scholars are highly educated refugees in different stages of seeking asylum in their host countries. A scholar at risk is a scholar who is at risk in her or his own country and has a temporary residence as a guest at the host institution. Both may nourish the hope of being able to return to their home country as soon as possible. In this report we make no distinction between them.







<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nwo.nl/en/news-and-events/news/2018/05/nwo-launches-new-refugees-in-science-pilot.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wired.com/2012/06/famous-persecuted-scientists/>



System), to Baruch Spinoza (in 1656 for his views on religion), to Albert Einstein (being a Jew and fleeing to the USA in 1933), to Alan Turing (convicted in 1952 for homosexuality) – only to mention a very small number of prominent and well-known scholars and scientists.

Today, many less-known scholars continue being under attack. The motto of the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR)<sup>6</sup> is 'Protecting scholars and the freedom to think, question and share ideas'. As part of their Academic Freedom Monitoring project, SAR annually publishes the report *Freedom to Think*. The most recent 2018 report<sup>7</sup> analyzes 294 reported attacks on higher education communities in 47 countries from September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2018.

REPORTED ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION		
SEPTEMBER 1, 2017 – AUGUST 31, 2018		
	Killings, Violence, Disappearances	79
	Imprisonment	88
	Prosecution	60
	Loss of Position	22
	Travel Restrictions	15
	Other	30
Total		294

Being a 'scholar at risk' means that a scholar as a member of a higher education community suffers frequent attacks by those seeking to gain or hold power, control access to information, and restrict research, publication, teaching and learning. Beyond the harms to direct victims, these attacks harm society by undermining the ability of higher education communities to serve their educational, economic and social functions, denying society the full benefits of top quality higher education. The attacks take many different forms, such as (i) killings, violence or disappearance, (ii) wrongful imprisonment, (iii) wrongful prosecution, (iv) loss of position, (v), travel restrictions, or (vi) other significant events<sup>8</sup>. In this context, academic freedom is referred to as: *The right of teachers and students to express their ideas in the classroom or in writing, free from political, religious, or institutional restrictions, even if these ideas are unpopular.*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [www.scholarsatrisk.org](http://www.scholarsatrisk.org)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/free-to-think-2018/>

<sup>8</sup> According to the classification used by the SAR Monitoring project

<sup>9</sup> Academic Freedom (n.d.). The American Heritage® New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/academic-freedom>

A more elaborate view is from Cary Nelson<sup>10</sup> (2010, as president of the American Association of University Professors AAUP) that helps to clarify what academic freedom is, and what it is not. Either side is underpinned by 12 clearly formulated attributes. Not surprisingly, there are as many challenges to such a statement as there are confirmations. It goes beyond the scope of this publication to explore these issues in depth.

## Other initiatives

Many people are active in supporting refugee scholars in Europe and across the globe. This study builds on the Scholars at Risk (SAR) network and the regional and national sections<sup>11</sup> across Europe. Exemplary networks for this study are found in the United Kingdom (the Council for Assisting at Risk Academics, founded in 1933, and partnering with SAR in 2006 to form the CARA-SAR UK Universities Network), Ireland (since 2009), The Netherlands (since 2009), Norway (since 2011), Sweden and Germany (since 2016), and in Switzerland. All over Europe, around 250 universities (113 of which in the UK through CARA) in 20 countries are members of SAR. Since 2010, approximately 340 scholars have been hosted at 123 European universities through the SAR network (excl. the UK).

It is very likely that universities host even more scholars through all sorts of personal contacts and arrangements. This study has not been in a position to find this out in detail.

At least two other Erasmus+ projects were implemented during the course of S.U.C.RE:

- a. 'Academic Refuge' project<sup>12</sup> (September 2016 – August 2019), implemented by the University of Oslo (coordinator), SAR Network, UNICA – Brussels and the University of Ljubljana<sup>13</sup>. Part of this project is a MOOC<sup>14</sup> on core academic values and academic freedom, launched on June 4, 2018.
- b. 'inHERE' project<sup>15</sup>: Higher Education Supporting Refugees in Europe (September 2016 – September 2018), implemented by Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED, coordinator), European Universities Association EUA, the Sapienza University of Rome, the University of Barcelona and Campus France<sup>16</sup>. EUA's Refugees Welcome Map<sup>17</sup> will be integrated in *inHERE*.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/12/21/defining-academic-freedom>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/sar-sections/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.uio.no/english/about/global/globally-engaged/academic-refuge/>

<sup>13</sup> 2016-1-NO01-KA203-022043

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.uio.no/english/about/global/globally-engaged/academic-refuge/academic-refuge-mooc.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.inhereproject.eu/>

<sup>16</sup> 2016-1-IT02-KA203-024430

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.eua.eu/101-projects/541-refugees-welcome-map.html>

The European Association for International Education EAIE facilitated the publication *Pathways to Practice. A Practitioner's Toolkit*<sup>18</sup> written by Marit Egner (University of Oslo, Norway) and Karolina Catoni (University of Gothenburg, Sweden). It provides, among other things, the key steps in the process of hosting scholar.

The Scholars at Risk Network is about to update their *How to Host Handbook*<sup>19</sup> (2014) which is also helpful in supporting hosting institutions and scholars to get the best out of a placement.

## Quotes

This report contains many quotes (**all in colored text boxes** or *italicized*) which have been taken from our three surveys that we have conducted with host institutions, scholars and academic mentors. Some quotes were translated from German into English and in some quotes we have made minor linguistic adjustments.

# METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENTS

Three online surveys have targeted the following groups:

1. higher education institutions (HEIs) hosting scholars;
2. scholars at risk and refugee scholars currently being hosted;
3. academic hosts of scholars.

All three surveys are still available online at the URL given at the end of the respective paragraphs:

**Survey 1** (13 questions) was piloted at eight (8) universities in May 2017. The online version was sent (June 2017) to:

<sup>18</sup> ISBN 978-90-74271-45-5 (2017)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/how-to-host-handbook/>

- universities and research institutes in Germany (ca 80), the Netherlands (18) and Belgium-Flanders (6);
- SAR country coordinators / representatives in United Kingdom (at CARA), Norway, Sweden, Finland, Ireland and Switzerland;
- *Secretariat of the Compostela Group of Universities in Spain*;
- selected institutions in France, Iceland, Canada and the USA.

Responses from 60 institutions came in until late September 2017, and initial results were shared with all responding institutions in early October 2017. Results that are more elaborate were shared with all respondents early November 2017. These results included information on best practices and interesting cases obtained from web pages on academic freedom/scholars at risk initiatives provided by the respondents. Partial results were presented at the SAR Global conference in Berlin on April 27, 2018. Received feedback has been duly incorporated.

Survey 1 is available online at: <https://form.jotformeu.com/71382951532356>

**Survey 2** was administered in the final months of 2017 and sent to scholars via the Philipp Schwartz coordinators in Germany and the same networks as used for Survey 1. In 35 questions, the survey addressed the personal background, support and challenges of scholars, and further focused on career and research issues. 67 scholars responded. Standardized qualitative interviews with selected scholars on a voluntary basis are currently being undertaken.

Survey 2 is available online at: <https://form.jotformeu.com/72851093232352>

**Survey 3** was sent out to academic hosts in April 2018 through the same channels and 39 responses were obtained. This survey (14 questions) addresses the hosts' views on hosting scholars and on the development of scholars' research careers. Standardized qualitative interviews with selected hosts on a voluntary basis have been undertaken

Survey 3 is available online at: <https://form.jotformeu.com/80103978876367>

*The respondents to all surveys do **not** constitute representative samples.*

## Host institutions (Survey 1)

Responses to Survey 1 were collected from 60 institutions, 48 of which are hosting scholars from 10 different countries. All 60 institutions indicated they wanted feed-back. The responding institutions are located in Germany (26), Netherlands and Belgium (9), Norway and Sweden (7), UK and Scotland (5), rest of Europe (7), and the Americas (6). Most institutions (47) are members of international (usually SAR) and / or national networks.

## Scholars in Survey 1

At the time of the survey (mid-2017), 87 scholars were being hosted. About 50 scholars were hosted in the previous 3-4 years - including some replacements. We estimate that the 48 HEIs are/have been hosting about 125 different scholars. The family situation of those scholars is as follows:

- 47% of the scholars are accompanied by family members in their host countries; 35% are without a family, 18% did not provide this information.
- 39% of the scholars are accompanied by children – the majority under 12 years of age.

These personal circumstances obviously have implications for their stay in the host country and – implicitly – at the host institution, as is sustained in the responses on several questions of surveys 1 and 2, and as we shall see later.

The scholars in Survey 1 ...

...are / have been hosted in eight countries | ...have an academic background in:



They have come from 26 different countries:



A sharp increase in refugee scholars can be seen in 2015 from Syria and in the second half of 2016 from Turkey, most notably in Germany.

### Scholars in Survey 2<sup>20</sup>

Responses came from over 62 scholars with the following characteristics:

- 25% are under 40 years of age
- 24% are female scholars
- two-thirds are from two countries: Syria and Iraq
- two-thirds are on official visa and nearly all others have a recognized asylum status
- 60% are with a partner and 53% with children
- 39% have partners or children in their home country
- 89% are PhD holders<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Please note that this group of 60+ scholars may only overlap partially with the 125 scholars whose background was sketched in the preceding section. Interestingly, the family situations of the two groups are very similar.

<sup>21</sup> It was a deliberate choice to focus on PhD holders as these scholars are most likely engaged in research.

The scholars have academic backgrounds in Natural Sciences (16); Social Sciences (12), Humanities (12); Law (8); Applied Sciences (9); Economics (4) and Medicine (1).

Furthermore,

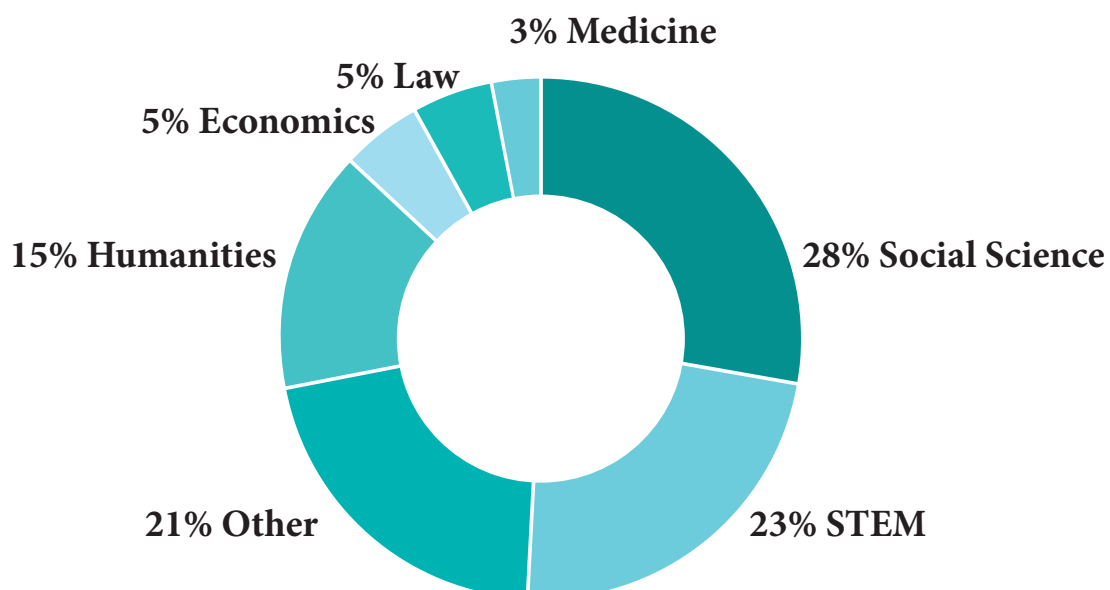
- 80% revealed their identity
- 61% of the scholars were occupying positions as (senior, assistant) professor in their home country, against only 10% now
- the majority of scholars has a position as ‘researcher’ and very few are currently teaching at their host institutions.

### Academic Hosts in Survey 3

We received responses from 39 academic hosts, 9 of whom had previous hosting experience. Their characteristics are as follows:

- 72% are senior professors or heads of institute
- 18% are women
- 31% knew the hosted scholar before
- 82% of hosts state to have acted out of moral obligation
- 80% of hosted scholars are funded by a fellowship; only 10% are contracted researchers.

The disciplines of the 39 hosts roughly correspond to the distribution among scholars:



# HOSTING REFUGEE SCHOLARS: A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP

Before discussing the outcome of the three surveys it might be useful to provide a generalized account of common problems and issues of hosting threatened scholars. How does the relationship between scholar, institution and academic host typically evolve and which problems typically arise during a hosting cycle?

Supporting threatened academics is a matter of academic solidarity and a humanitarian responsibility of Higher Education Institutions in countries where academic freedom and security are granted. It is usually from this premise that European HEIs start considering the possibility to either help colleagues in danger or cooperate with networks and aid organizations like Scholars at Risk, Scholar Rescue Fund or CARA. However, HEIs are not charity organizations and threatened researchers are not simply looking for mercy. Hence, the relationship of the parties involved is more complex than it might seem at first sight.

## In Search of Win-Win-Situations

The threatened scholar is above all interested in satisfying two existential needs: a) finding a safe harbor for himself and for his/her family and b) finding an appropriate position that allows for the continuation of the academic/scientific activity and grants the subsistence. The HEI is interested in gaining a researcher and/or teacher who contributes to its academic profile and research output. The host is interested in integrating the threatened scholar into a preexisting research group and possibly benefitting from his/her expertise.

This ideal win/win-situation, however, is difficult to obtain, as typically a number of challenges have to be faced during the hosting cycle. The first step is the matching process, during which a threatened scholar – usually with the help of an aid agency or guided by an administrative unit from an HEI – is in search for an appropriate placement. Potential hosts have to be identified and convinced, overlap in research interests and the adequacy of research opportunities need to be assured, contact has to be made, funding agreements achieved etc.



## Complex pre-arrival needs

In many cases the scholar is not yet in the host country (or still stuck in a refugee camp): facilitating the scholar's arrival may involve complicated visa issues or even hazardous rescuing operations, followed by delicate residential status negotiations. If accompanying or following family is involved, these problems multiply and may endure for months, as family reunion can be a prolonged and uncertain process. All this is usually far beyond the expertise of a standard International Office and experience shows that there isn't even much hope for a manual or comprehensive guidelines, as each case tends to be characterized by highly individual intricacies.

On arrival, the scholar's main concern, of course, is housing, settling, and normalizing. Yet, the impact of normality for persecuted or threatened persons is often underestimated: returning to an everyday life routine is not only linked to bureaucratic paper work and physical preparations, but can also constitute a challenge after a period of existential unrest and turbulence (not to speak of traumatic experiences). What is more – most scholars do have to adapt to a very different normality compared to their home countries and are faced with intercultural challenges, poor or simply wrong language proficiency, inexperience with local customs and circumstances. All this is time consuming and may overshadow the relief of having reached a safe place.

It may also overshadow the resumption of the scientific activity, where scholars anyway have to deal with a series of problems: they have to adapt to a new and usually unknown scientific environment; they may have to recognize methodological backlog, accepting the need to catch up in certain subjects; they may feel urged to substantially change their research focus, in some cases they may even be forced to reinvent themselves as scientists, given the different regional or continental focus and perspective of their discipline. Again, language is a major barrier, as many scholars are absolute beginners in the language of their host country and unfamiliar with academic writing in English.

## Family Issues Weigh Heavily

Scholars with family are often under double pressure. Most of the family life organization remains with the scholars if the spouses are unable to support them due to limitations in language proficiency and/or social interaction. They

have to deal with standard correspondences from offices, insurances, service providers, rent affairs, school issues and everyday routines – tasks that can be very demanding, burdening and time-consuming.

Academic hosts usually are sympathetic and appreciative. They expect their scholars to initially face many problems and maybe have difficulties adapting to the culture. They may also try to be helpful, provide advice and counseling with view to scientific development and research projects. As do the colleagues, who are open-minded and cooperative. If research output is convincing or within the range of expectation, the relationship often intensifies, tightens and support is granted. However, if certain shortcomings persist and difficulties of communication and integration continue, indifference gains ground, sometimes even disaffection and tensions. Since most scholars join their hosts within the framework of an independent scholarship (as opposed to an employment requiring full integration), this does not necessarily lead to discord, but may lead to disinterest.

While fully appreciating the privileged situation of being temporarily in a safe position and enabled to continue working scientifically, many scholars nevertheless suffer from their precarious status and unstable financial situation. Indeed, the standard situation for refugee academics is that they are forced to plan for their future, while they are struggling with the present and are still suffering from the past. This is all the more encumbering as most scholars lose a lot of time before they understand the rules of an academic career in their hosting country, before they are able to assess their situation on the academic labour market and to identify opportunities and alternatives beyond academia e.g. in industry, as a freelance professional or in the public sector. Given the time limitation of temporary funded positions, it is very optimistic to expect migrant scholars to be fit for competition in an academic labour market already hostile to academics from within.

## The Limits of Institutional Support

HEIs committed to supporting threatened scholars do provide a broad array of services and help. Most of these service offers are focusing on the early phase of the first 4-6 weeks: help with visa and residency issues, assistance with house hunting and registration formalities, family support and advice with view to childcare and schooling are widespread and almost standard, as is the allocation

of language courses. However, as International Offices or HR Departments do have many more clients to serve, support often ends after the initial phase and it is up to the respective scholar to ask for additional help – requiring persistence and assertiveness, which is not innate to everybody. At the same time, academic hosts usually tend to focus on the scientific aspects of the stay and to expect “the administration” to take care for any further need of the scholar.

With this basic outline as a background, it is now time for a closer look at the results of the three surveys, addressing HEIs, scholars and hosts.

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# RESULTS SURVEY 1: HIGHER EDUCATION HOSTING INSTITUTIONS

This section presents the results from Survey 1 with respect to the scholars’ challenges, needs, support structures and funding from the institutional perspective.

## Reasons for HEIs to Host Scholars

As **social reasons** for hosting, institutions mention:

**Commitment & solidarity**

Fitting mission & vision

Protecting scholars

**Social & human responsibility**

The **academic reasons** are shown below:

Personal academic connections

# Improving academic freedom

Enhancing international dimension  
Strengthening profile & enhancing reputation  
Enabling doing research

Other **academic reasons** are:

- attracting top talent and expertise in a field relevant to the university;
- availability of a funding program – *without this it is very hard to integrate a refugee scholar at a German public university;*
- academic opportunities: exploring with the Institute for International Education (IIE) the scope for scholarships for distance masters programs in priority areas;
- recognizing the importance of all universities to stand up to support academic freedom as part of the global academic community;
- hosting is in accordance with university core values and mission;
- diversity unlocks innovation and drives growth & excellence—a finding that should intensify efforts to ensure that senior leaders both embody and embrace the power of differences.

## Quotes

1. The University of Dundee is committed to supporting scholars who are refugees or have humanitarian protection. From 2017, the university's first group of 'Humanitarian Scholars' commenced postgraduate studies.
2. The University of Bayreuth is an institution with a strategy on internationalization and a strong and sustainable welcoming culture. We want to contribute to support scholars fled from crisis areas and scholars who are still abroad in their integration in Upper Franconia, Bavaria and Germany.

3. We thought it aligned with our commitment to academic freedom as well as with our intellectual/academic engagement with the Middle East. We have the only Arabic major in the SUNY system, a minor in Israel Studies, and offer Turkish language while also hosting a large number of Turkish students.
4. We take responsibility to support people who had to flee due to conflicts that have been contributed to by the British government.
5. Thank you for providing and working through this valuable data collection and survey. Good luck with the project and greetings. Please let us know if you need further support.

## Benefits for the HEIs

The most frequently mentioned **institutional benefits** (up to half of the respondents) are represented in the statements below.



Some other noteworthy replies are: the presence of highly qualified researchers enriching academic life on campus; making a political statement; promoting and supporting diversity of academic staff and experiences with regard to migration on campus; intercultural exchange, developing a scientific dialogue.

## Quotes

1. Scholars recommended by CARA are professional, highly motivated and engaged post-docs and research students, starting with a stronger skill set.
2. Academic freedom and higher education values should not be taken for granted!

## Benefits for Scholars - HEI Perspective

The **social benefits** from the perspective of the Higher Education Institutes above were mentioned by half of the respondents. Other benefits are, for instance:

- personal aspects, like getting life and (scientific) reputation back, lose the "outlaw" status; return to normality after trauma of flight and suppression; achieve social stability, and improve one's self-esteem;
- becoming an advocate for SAR actions;
- at least one year of secured financial and work conditions, and international work experience;
- employment and integration into the labor market;
- being exposed to 'new ways of life'; working in new academic environment; feeling part of a community; learning how meritocracy systems function.

**Academic benefits** that were identified ...

- learning about publications, grant applications and opportunity to attend conferences;
- working in supportive culture where scholars can develop their professional and personal skills with academic and collegial support;
- learn about new ways of doing things and new academic traditions;
- freedom to exchange ideas and know-how; intellectual stimulation;
- possibility for receiving prestigious scholarships and contracts;

- strengthening CV; benefit from resources and measures like further education; developing generic academic skills; having access to resources (library, staff training, computers etc.); strengthen knowledge through research and teaching;
- staff and students benefit from interaction with scholars who have experience in another academic community and opportunities for collaboration in research work in areas of mutual interest.

## Quotes

1. I hope that the scholar can find a long-term perspective in Germany or in Europe. Preferably, he can build a group in my university but this will depend on successful acquiring external funding.
2. Scholars have stability for the period of placement or their study, while at the same time gaining experience, learning techniques, obtaining qualifications and at the same time progressing their academic career. For the scholar and their families, where relevant, it provides a safe environment to progress their career and continue to engage in academia, while at the same time gaining additional cultural and global experience.
3. Ideally, scholars will benefit from an international perspective to their practice and influence their practical abilities when they return to their home country.

## Benefits for Scholars - HEI Perspective

The majority of institutional problems are **social and practical** rather than academic. Those mentioned most often (30 – 45% respondents) are the following three in decreasing order:

- access to adequate funding and resources to host the scholar;
- career development and supporting scholars in building a career or tenure-track in academia, as placements are restricted to short-term contracts of one or two years;
- practical and bureaucratic problems like getting ID cards, visa and housing.

Next mentioned are problems dealing with scholars with traumas or psychological problems and sufficient support staff and colleagues to follow up and coping with work-load. Assigning a mentor can then be a helpful relief.

The least frequently mentioned problems are language aspects, social integration and acculturation of the scholar, lack of knowledge of the refugee/asylum process, high moral responsibility and commitment towards refugee versus his/her uncertain professional perspective.

One particular aspect is the tension between an infrastructure for highly individualized support for a new target group regarding standard services of well-established Welcome Centers for regular foreign staff, i.e. residence status, support of family issues in the home country, private challenges/problems which tend to overshadow professional academic work.

As one institution says: *We have not succeeded so far to host a scholar because of legal obstacles. We are supposed to advertise all jobs.*

The most prominent **academic problems** mentioned are (i) the inclusion in departmental life, (ii) the scientific matching between the scholar's expertise and the research group, and (iii) assessing qualities and qualifications, as some scholars lack required academic skills. Other problems mentioned are:

- difficult to foresee the needs of the scholar before he/she arrives, so flexible planning is needed;
- lack of interest for persecuted academics in some departments and getting support and sympathy from relevant Deans;



- more effort is needed on academic integration – the scholar may not immediately be part of scheduled teaching or other activities.

## Quotes

1. The scheme aims to offer the scholar stability / safety during a period of instability in their home nation, but the opportunity to study or work on a placement in the UK is limited to the period covered by their visa, so it is possible that the situation in their home country may not be resolved when the period of study ends
2. I don't see problems so much as complications - the issue of the faculty member's right to work and even stay was high on everyone's mind this spring.
3. Once the fellowship is over, an obligation to ensure that the scholar finds another institutional affiliation as the visa is tied to the work permit.
4. Each case is unique requiring special considerations.

## Problems for Scholars

The more frequent non-academic problems are depicted in the word cloud. In addition, two more **personal problem areas** that are mentioned regularly by the host institutions. These are:

- dealing with trauma, grief and loss from the past, guilt and powerlessness feelings towards friends and colleagues who were not so lucky, not to be able to go back;
- family issues, such as feeling lost, lonely and in limbo; loss of status and career perspectives; feeling of being a person in need; social integration for the family/social isolation; access to communication means and freedom of movement; involuntary exile; support family at home; integration of the family (schooling, right language courses, ..) in the host country.

Language

# Bureaucratic, practical & administrative hurdles

## Worries on home, family & friends

## Future opportunities

The academic problems of scholars from the host institution's perspective can be described as follows.

- ability to re-define and re-develop specialty. Two cases are, (i) a scholar can no longer do digs in the Middle East; and (ii) a scholar is not able doing research in his home country;
- understanding Western scientific landscape and career paths, and adapting to the institutional research cultural in a short time;
- coping with required level of research excellence, academic language and writing skills, and finding scholars / peers of the similar research topics;
- access to funding for translating previous scientific publications;
- finding a good match between possibilities / interests of the scholar and the needs / opportunities at the institution, including identifying suitable professional contacts;
- too little integration into the existing international community of researchers at university;
- acculturation aspects, work in an unfamiliar environment, access to national networks and knowledge of national academic market;

The most striking problem is related to future career paths and dealing with difficulties to move from fellowships into a more permanent position, and competing for regular academic jobs after the stay.

## Quotes

1. She has no way back – what nobody expected.
2. While the scholar themselves are in a stable situation, they often have family members that have remained in their home nation who may be at risk. Unlike other international staff and postgraduate students, scholars are not here through choice, so may require a period of adjustment to allow them to settle in their new community and place of study.
3. Fear for the future, acknowledging that the Western academic system is different, that the scholar can do research but has lost her /his status and has to learn again.
4. The main problems from the scholar's perspective were job insecurity and loneliness. Since the position was only for one year the scholar was reluctant to bring his wife and son to live with him. His wife would lose her job--and thus much needed income--and his son was completing an undergraduate degree. Although several colleagues initiated social activities with scholar and were friendly and supportive, the scholar was on his own in a new environment for much of the time. There isn't an extensive Farsi-speaking community in .... and the scholar often felt isolated.
5. Especially the spouse is isolated and there is no opportunity for her.
6. (...) housing here in Germany, the German law, the new language, and new culture - I think new arrivals need some instructions and help in these ways.
7. There are no problems for our institution in my opinion.

## Support for Scholars

The support on **social, integration and practical** issues that is offered by the host institutions is visualized below. Highly valued is the availability of a contact person / mentor / buddy who can help with any day-to-day business, especially at the start of a hosting period.



As **academic** support, host institutions offer:

- access to national and international research networks, follow-up scholarship programs on scientific cooperation, and coaching career services – all aiming to develop their scientific career options;
- academic guidance and support; training & workshops;
- a place of work with access to all university facilities like ICT and library;
- full integration into teaching & research: further education in academia; higher education pedagogics; teaching opportunities;
- enabling giving seminars and public talks,
- discussing with the scholar about opportunities in Germany and Europe to secure external funds which helps to extend the contract.

## Quotes

1. A scholar receives special attention and support but in the end the scholar is an employee just as anyone else.
2. The University has a large community of international students and staff that can assist during any period of adjustment.
3. As structures are not set yet, we try to find out what scholars need most and try to start from there. In this attempt we do try, however, to separate the merely personal support needs and those of family members from the professional work environment on campus.

## Funding Sources at HEIs

The *internal* university sources of funding are depicted in the word-cloud. *University funding* takes different forms, such as salaries released temporarily, re-allocating resources, and fee waivers.

Staff, alumni & student donations  
Emergency & incidental funds  
**University funds**  
Ad-hoc solutions  
University foundations

*External* sources are scholarship programs such as:

- the Philipp Schwartz Initiative<sup>21</sup> of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (supported by the German Federal Foreign Office)
- the Baden-Württemberg and Lower Saxony programs in Germany
- the Scholar Rescue Fund<sup>22</sup> from the IIE
- in France, the PAUSE program<sup>23</sup> established early 2017
- UAF<sup>24</sup> in The Netherlands, and
- all sorts of ad-hoc initiatives: crowd-funding, matching funds, private sponsorships and foundations.

## RESULTS SURVEY 2: SCHOLARS

Scholars emphasized the following **non-academic problems**:

- anxiety, stress, xenophobia, low self-esteem
- wife's unemployment, family absence and safety concerns
- marginalization, isolation and loneliness
- job-related insecurity
- integration of children
- lack of language knowledge.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/philipp-schwartz-initiative-en.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.iie.org/Programs/Scholar-Rescue-Fund>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/programme-pause/index.htm>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.uaf.nl/wat\\_doet\\_het\\_uaf/projecten/scholars\\_at\\_risk](https://www.uaf.nl/wat_doet_het_uaf/projecten/scholars_at_risk)

## Quotes

1. We find people they are not willing to accept us to live with them.
2. I have been suffering because of loss of self-esteem. I was somebody back in my country. And now I am 50 and have to prove myself all over again.

## Needs of Scholars

**Social, integration and inclusion aspects.** In addition to the word cloud below, one institution suggested a one-stop-service philosophy which cannot always be offered due to staff constraints. The administrative & practical label includes legal and organizational issues, a more flexible bureaucracy, help with finding affordable accommodation. Another relevant point is that institutions will have to consider that the scholar *"... needs time to settle down, process all that has happened, deal with loss of a stable position and prestige"*.



Personal traits of scholars referred to are flexibility and persistence. Concerns exist about family safety, jobs for a partner and family reuniting.

Support in career planning, job market knowledge, alternative career options, funding programs, improving publication skills, all these are mentioned as **academic aspects**. Although not jumping out, the mid- and long term perspective

– especially when going back is not (yet) an option – is perceived as a great concern for scholars. All key-players agree that a one-year stay at a host institution is too short, as mentioned earlier and revealed in the two quotes below.

## Quotes

1. It would have been good if the institution had been in a position to offer the scholar a more permanent and secure position.
2. Long term appointments would offer more certainty (and rest), but will be difficult to realize within the institution.

Scholars mentioned a number of needs and support they are sometimes missing, such as:

- academic career guidance
- teaching opportunities
- proposal writing and applying for funding
- social and personal interaction in the faculty and society
- high cost of living and secured income,

and illustrated by: *“I was encouraged to join research groups and various colloquiums. I was also encouraged to network with other departments and institutions. I was not pressured but welcomed overall. Yet, I still feel a little bit out of place. I can't claim to have fully integrated.”*



## Acceptance, Integration and Self-Awareness of Scholars

Almost 60% of the scholars responding to Survey 2 say that they are well or sufficiently accepted; 25 % state the opposite (“not so much”, “not at all”), the others did not answer this question.

On Self-awareness, some said **Yes**, some said **No**, while half of the scholars did not reply to this question. Let the **quotes** speak:

1. ... but as I couldn't be hired since Feb 2017, I am losing my self-esteem and am questioning my real value and contributions.
2. Of course, this experience has changed my self-consciousness. For example, the working method, working discipline of German scientists is a life experience for me.
3. I completely changed. When I got my PhD seven years ago, I thought all my refugee-status-associated problems would disappear or solved. That is not the case. Even though I am in a relatively better situation than other refugees from my home country, I still feel insecure professionally and in my job prospects.
4. I never thought before I would be living under such rough circumstances. It is not that my vision has changed, it is now that I have a vision. Now I see the difficult circumstances that some of us are living in around the world. I am very sorry for those who are still struggling to find a better niche to live and to work.
5. I would like to thank you to give me this great job opportunity because I don't like to receive social help and I want to work and pay my taxes like any other good citizen in Germany.
6. The institution helped to reconstruct my compromised academic career by proving a unique research environment and obtaining sufficient funding for my living and research expenses.

## Scientific Careers

What scholars say about problems relating to their scientific careers:

- *Lack of research publications*
- *Not enough up-to-date in my field*
- *Age*
- *Less opportunities to use skills and experiences*
- *Insufficient time to integrate in new academic world in part by publishing peer-reviewed articles*
- *Competitive disadvantage*
- *Lost my library in Syria*
- *Losing my previous career*
- *Language weakness, need to write in new language (English, German), academic writing skills*

**Quote:** High expectations of the supervisor from us, forgetting that we are stressed and that we keep thinking of our family members who are still in conflict zones in our home country.

What scholars say about their needs in relation to furthering their scientific careers:

- *hosting for more than 2 years*
- *training for the market, new software programmes*
- *participation in (inter)national conferences / workshops*
- *positions like junior academic can be helpful*
- *obtain an academic job opportunity at the end of the (Phillip Schwartz) scholarship; achieve a stable situation; securing a position; develop a career plan*
- *scholarship / financial support*
- *integration in the university*
- *assistance with financing a scientific research project*
- *help in publishing my book (now in Arabic)*
- *support in establishing my own business*

## Quotes

1. I do not see prospects of continuing research in Norway.
2. I am so worried about finding a permanent work position in my field of research. I lost my work in Syria due to the war. To have a life of freedom, to be a normal human with full rights. I need to complete my life in stable place and work, to live in peace and safety.
3. I need clear explanation of my further perspectives in western academia, or as a mediator between western and eastern academia: how can my research contribute to better understanding and possible solution of the EU-Russia conflict, Ukraine crisis and growing misunderstanding between the "old" and "new" EU member states?"

# RESULTS SURVEY 3: ACADEMIC HOSTS AND RESEARCH CAREERS OF SCHOLARS

When looking at academic hosts and the scientific hosting situation of a scholar, our concern was above all to understand better the relationship between host and scholar and how this affects the career perspectives of a scholar.

## Scientific Careers

Most academic hosts act out of humanitarian motivations, feeling morally obliged to help threatened scholars (3/4 explicitly named “moral obligation” as a reason for hosting). Scientific excellence is often named as well, but rather as an additional requirement, complementing the moral obligation. However, only a few

scientists act as hosts out of proper initiative, while most have been asked to do so. Some even refer to the availability of funding as an additional reason for hosting a scholar.

## Reasons for Scientists to Host a Scholar

Most academic hosts act out of humanitarian motivations, feeling morally obliged to help threatened scholars (75 % explicitly named “moral obligation” as a reason for hosting). Scientific excellence is often named as well, but rather as an additional requirement, complementing the moral obligation. However, only a few scientists act as hosts out of proper initiative, while most have been asked to do so. Some even refer to the availability of funding as an additional reason for hosting a scholar.



## Scientific Hosts as Academic Mentors?

Only two hosts out of our sample deplored a plain mismatch, while 95% of hosts confirmed that the scholar’s scientific profile did fit their Institute’s research interest. However, asked for the contributions of the scholars, responses were very nuanced, ranging from enthusiastic (“*It is a blessing that he is at our institute*”) to a lukewarm “*interesting*” or rather disinterested “*sufficient*” to disappointment

(*“not up to the level”*). A third of all hosts expressed doubts about the scientific performance, either acknowledging the difficulty of the personal situation, accepting different standards and backgrounds, pointing to linguistic limitations or praising the scholar’s efforts to improve and catch up.

While most academic hosts are very willing to help their colleagues at risk, they are often surprised by the fact that the refugee scholars are not like they expected them to be.

## Quotes

1. The scholar fits only partly into our research group, perhaps mainly because of language problems. The English language (...) was poor at the early stage of the visit. Another problem were the different traditions in our countries with view to how to carry out research.
2. Research performance is fair but not up to the level of Dutch scholars with the same amount of academic experience: repetitive publications on similar/same topics in secondary journals, needs a lot of support to achieve a level of academic output that is required for postdoc level.

Many hosts acknowledge the effort of their scholars trying to adapt to a new scientific environment and realise their particular challenges:

## Quotes

1. He had to learn a lot to bridge the gap, but he was willing and build up a new project, which was based on prework in his home country.
2. The scholar has displayed a great willingness and aptitude to learn new methods and is contributing in the daily work and intellectual progress being made.

3. He has to reinvent his research in a German setting and has started to produce promising work.

Teaching seems to be an even bigger problem: only 15% of hosts do provide teaching opportunities to their scholars, and less than 10% are considering these valid teaching contributions. In most cases, teaching *is not possible because of language problems*, while often formal obstacles – guestscholar status, inflexible study programs – prevent scholars from being integrated into teaching duties.

## Academic Mentoring Needed...

Hosts generally do their best to assist the scholars and show intense commitment in supporting integration and scientific adaption. If much of the help provided is not effective, it is certainly not for a lack of awareness from the side of the hosts. These are the most cited challenge hosts identified for their scholars:

### Quotes

1. It is hard to learn every method etc. that we are doing and even more to learn the German working customs and habits.
1. Challenges are abundant: Learning German. Reuniting with family. Dealing with experience of military service. Getting used to a new academic system.
2. The scholars has plenty to worry about - Family situation (members still in former country), Job prospect after scholarship, learning the German language, and finding the energy to refocus on his research.

However, hosts are often unable to respond adequately to the needs of their scholars. Time constraints and inexperience are among the reasons, but also the lack of preparation and the unavailability of external support. Nevertheless, 85% of all hosts mention administrative and general institutional services as good. 50%

of all hosts actively provide scientific guidance and supervision. But only 10% provide career counselling e.g. in the form of mentoring or coaching or consider career advice as necessary. This is even more surprising as only 25% of the hosts consider their scholars to be able to pursue an academic career in the host country, 42% are uncertain, but do see a chance, while 33% do not expect their scholars to be fit for competition with local academics.

Reasons observed by the hosts regarding the employability of their scholars are quite clear:

## Quotes

1. Competition is fierce and his research record is not strong enough
2. Too much competition and too much behind the state of the art
3. Area of expertise is too old-fashioned
4. The scholar is not making adjustments to a German university setting, but stays within diaspora circles.

While all hosts seem to care for their scholar's career perspectives, support almost exclusively focuses on scientific counselling, help with proposal writing and academic networking. Only three hosts did actively offer systematic career development counselling, mentoring or personal coaching. Even when asked for the most sought-after extra support they wished for from their organization, 25% requested more funding or long-term positions, but only three asked for professional career advice or systematic assistance with job hunting.

Family  
 Status/Position/Future  
 Self-esteem  
 Language  
 Bureaucracy  
 Scientific Qualification  
 Culture

## ...and Mentoring for the Hosts

Most hosts are praising the administrative support provided by International Offices and Welcome Centres (65% were satisfied, 20% had no complaint; only 15% were disappointed by administrative services). However, at the same time many deplore a lack of assistance with the issues of integration and professional career development faced in every-day life at the institutes. Some state that they would have appreciated some prior information on what to expect.

### Quotes

1. The main challenge is helping somebody with difficulties in our society which I never encountered. And helping somebody with far more urgent problems than the scientific ones I have.
2. More guidance regarding the professional career development would be needed for the scholar.”
3. “It is time demanding and we are overloaded with work.
4. More sustainable support and more advice on the main challenges would be needed to fully support the scholar.
5. A professional career counselling and a dual-career perspective and coaching for refugee partners would be a great plus.

Evidently, hosts do need continuous support, when hosting a refugee scholar. At the same time, they need better preparation before accepting the task. It is important to support not only the scholar but also the academic host who, often for the first time in his/her career, is encountering the challenge to host a person with a very different set of experiences. Academic hosts must indeed be made aware of the challenges involved and of the responsibilities, which are implied in hosting a refugee scholar. As a matter of fact, rather than an academic host,



threatened scholars need a scientific mentor, who assists them to adapt to a new scientific landscape, who guides them into a new research environment and helps them to find their place in an academic labor market very different from the one in their home country.

# HOSTING REFUGEE SCHOLARS: A RESPONSIBLE RELATIONSHIP

In the light of these findings, it seems as if humanitarian convictions are a mere starting point for hosting a threatened scholar, but far from sufficient for a successful hosting cycle. As a matter of fact, best results for host and guest scholar can be expected if humanitarian reflexes are suppressed. This starts with the matching process: hosting a refugee scholar is not an emergency aid, but an attempt in laying the basis for a sustainable reorientation of an academic career. Hence, hosting can be successful only if host and scholar are a close match. Vague overlap of interest and common research focus may not be enough; more important are possible joint projects and perspectives of development, which include potential for future career opportunities. A bold plan A and a good alternative plan B should be on the table before offering to host a threatened scholar.

## Initiating a Career Relaunch

Hosting a refugee scholar means assuming responsibility – both from the side of the host and from the institutional side. It is within the responsibility of the HEI to make sure that the matching process is conducted as thoroughly as possible. During the process, hosts should be made aware of the particular situation of the scholar, of the particular relationship that follows from a hosting commitment, of the peculiar mixture of host, cooperation partner and supervisor that results from it. As a matter of fact, being an academic host actually means accepting the task of becoming a scientific mentor for the scholar. At the same time, HEIs have to think about professional support for the host in his/her efforts to prepare the scholar for a career relaunch or even for a new “second” career. Carefully chosen career development programs are key for a successful hosting period.

## Comprehensive Proactive Support Is Needed

While refugee scholars benefit from all logistic and operative services usually provided to international scholars in support of their stay, HEIs must embrace a more comprehensive approach to scholars with a refugee background. Support offers need to take into account that unlike normal international scholars, refugee scholars did not choose to migrate nor did they choose their host country and therefore lack even basic knowledge about their new environment. This holds true both for the scientific side, as threatened scholars may not have done research in relation to international competitiveness and may ignore even fundamental characteristics of academic career pathways and employment options. And it holds true for the private side, as forced migrants often arrive without any preparation in their host country, unfamiliar with the language, the customs and the everyday routine. Hence, support for refugee scholars must be more intense and steady than for other international scholars; it must be proactive, individual and outreaching.

In particular scholars with family deserve special attention, including personal coaching relating to individual needs (e.g. schooling, daycare, integration/acculturation of spouse and children). Educational differences among spouses are more frequent in some oriental countries than in western countries. This may hamper integration efforts, as spouses may not necessarily be able to join the same (academic) language course of the hosting HEI. They may not share the same (academic) circles linked with the scientific position of one of them. They may not be able to share administrative and bureaucratic burdens. Personal support may help to spot individual needs and to provide tailor-made solutions.

## The Risk of Mutual Overload

Host and scholar should not be left alone with their mutual overload. The HEI should monitor the hosting relation and have regular contact with both and find solutions in case of newly identified needs – e.g. linguistic support for academic writing, networking with neighboring HEIs, workshops on specific issues like “academic selection processes”, “presentation skills”, “research funding institutions”, “proposal writing” etc. At the same time, personal coaching is needed to overcome intercultural barriers and develop integration strategies.

Standard services within an International Office (Welcome Centre, Incoming Support) are usually not prepared for such a close supervision. Larger HEIs should think about appointing special staff with sufficient (time) resources to follow up placements and hosting of Refugee Scholars. Where this is impossible, alliances with local supporters, aid organizations and/or volunteer networks are indispensable for a responsible care and a comprehensive support in order to avoid disappointment, depression and ultimately failure of a hosting relationship.

A successful hosting relationship, however, does not necessarily lead to a stable academic career. It may also prepare the refugee scholar to change track and to develop professional perspectives outside or beyond academia – as a freelance professional, in industry and commerce, in the public sector, as a medical doctor or lawyer or in any other field of employment apt to provide a stable and decent living.

The ultimate goal, of course, is and should be to enable the refugee scholar and his family to settle down in a safe place, to resume working in a position adequate to his/her academic training and to leave precarious living conditions behind – either until a return in the home-country is possible or until the scholar and his/her family have managed to feel at home in the host country.

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

*“IF ONE SCHOLAR IS TARGETED,  
WE ALL ARE TARGETED”*

Quoted from a response received from a host institution in Norway

The **most important conclusion** of our surveys is that **scholars, institutions** and **hosts** are **very supportive to the different programs** that are being offered in different countries. All three parties are, one way or another, also beneficiaries. Yet, a great number of recommendations and suggestions for improvement and enrichment is made which are based on ongoing – and sometimes challenging – experiences.

## Specific Recommendations

1. **Placements** • *The duration of (initial) placements should be at least between 18 to 24 months, preferably even 36 months.*

This applies especially to first placements and when scholars move from one country to the next. For all sorts of reasons that are outlined in this report and below in the specific recommendations, a scholar often needs considerable time to ‘come up to speed’ in the new academic and social environment. An additional year often is needed to find jobs. The Philip Schwartz Initiative in Germany, for instance, already acknowledges this by offering a 24-month fellowship plus the possibilities to extend the fellowship for another year in order to ease the transition into professional life.

2. **Language** • *Host institutions and national support organizations need to pay due attention to language skills of the scholar.*

Several aspects relate to language, such as (i) the scholar needs academic writing / reading / speaking skills mostly in English, a 2nd or even 3rd language other than the mother tongue; (ii) learning the local language when staying in a North Western-European country other than the UK or Ireland; (iii) the spouse and children will also be in need of learning the local language. Host institutions may offer easy access to training in academic writing and in proposal writing. Support organizations should facilitate the learning of the local language.

**3. Career guidance • *Scholars need career guidance and counselling immediately after having settled at their host institution.***

Uncertainty about the (near) future is a continuous concern for scholars. Many still cannot return to their home country after one or two years. Many scholars face obstacles in the competitive academic environment when preparing applications for research positions and grants. Options for careers outside academia need to be considered seriously (see also: Employability).

**4. Employability • *Support organizations need to address employability issues for scholars.***

Scholars in our surveys ask for support in promoting self-employment and fostering entrepreneurial skills. Not all refugee scholars will be able or willing to pursue an academic career and they need knowledge and skills to assist them in seeking other career options. Host institutions can assist to some extent (for instance in offering courses in entrepreneurship) but additional input from national support organizations will be needed.

**5. Academic acculturation • *Host institutions need to address explicitly the prevailing academic (un)written rules, norms, values and codes of conduct.***

Scholars arrive at academic environments which in many respects are different from home. Proper attention is needed for all aspects of academic life at the host institution, including recurrent meetings between the scholar and the scientific host that go beyond the progress on research and teaching.

**6. Research careers • *Scholars need intense counselling with view to their research profile and career. Hosts need professional support by career development services.***

Scholars have to adapt to a different scientific environment and tradition. Systematic help to overcome methodological gaps, inexperience in certain subjects and lack of proper network is vital for a research career relaunch. Professional coaching and mentoring programs should be part of the solution (see also Career Guidance, Employability and Academic Acculturation).

**7. Practical issues • *Host institutions need to assign an administrative mentor to a scholar (and the family).***

Scholars will have to deal with a great number of socio-economic and administrative issues, such as health and other insurances, schooling, accommodation, income, residence permits, access to first line healthcare and so on. Often these issues are dealt with in a different language and

need attention soon after arrival – when the absorption capacity for so much new information is already under pressure. Regular meetings with an administrative mentor will be helpful.

**8. Family concerns • *Host institutions and support organizations need to be prepared to address family concerns.***

Scholars mention having many worries and concerns about the accompanying partners and children as well as for their relatives who stayed behind. Host institutions are primarily engaged in hosting the scholar and facilitating the scholars' academic career – although in Germany and Norway several support initiatives for families have developed. Supporting organizations also should take care of accompanying spouses and family members as this will take a burden from the scholars and empower the other family members

**9. Psycho-social issues • *Host institutions and support organizations need to be aware that scholars may need support in psycho-social matters.***

Scholars report in the survey a great variety of psycho-social issues, such as loss of self-esteem and authority, dealing with traumas, anxiety, stress, concerns for family left behind, isolation and loneliness. These issues can have a direct impact on their academic performance. Host institutions as well as support organizations need to be aware of this and provide easy access to psycho-social support (ombudsman, psychologist, therapist, ... ) either at the institutions themselves or through the regular health system.

## Specific Recommendations

The following section contains a number of responses from our surveys, which can be seen as specific recommendations in their own right.

### Recommendations Concerning Scholars

- All scholars are different regarding needs, experiences and expectations and it is important that all parties are aware of this and adapt the activities accordingly.
- The matching process between the scholar and the relevant hosting department is of utter importance.

- Solutions are needed for (i) rotating scholars who cannot return to their home country and who are unable to continue their career without support from SAR, thus obstructing the opportunities for new threatened scholars; (ii) for scholars who turn out to be lacking the qualities (academic, language, age) for an academic career.
- Scholars need the conditions and opportunities to grow as a researcher during the placement and to become employable in a new setting.
- In most cases, the scholar wants to be seen as a resource for the university but security concerns could limit the scholar's participation in public events, talks and presentations.
- Particular emphasis must be given to family support, as spouses and children of refugee scholars do have very different and much more extensive needs compared to families of "regular" international scholars. (E.g., most of the time the stay is for a longer period or permanent, so schooling, insurances, language acquisition and social isolation play a more important role than for families who are staying only for a few months.)

### Recommendations Concerning Host Institutions

- As hosting scholars is a valuable but also complicated program, with many fields of influence inside and outside the university a regular evaluation of these programs on funding, academic matching, responding to changing world etc. is very important.
- Universities should continue programs like this but there is a need for commitment from senior management down to departmental level.
- The establishment of a Scholars at Risk Committee with senior management participation will contribute to creating support within the institution.

**Quote:** *Even if hosting a SAR-scholar is the most expensive and resource-demanding part of this activity, we see the promotion of the theme "academic freedom" as the most important for our institution. Promoting awareness about this subject to all university employees and students is of high importance to national and international understanding.*

- Hosting institutions need to make an individual plan for professional development for the scholar as soon as the scholar has landed in her / his new situation. It is also important to involve the relevant staff in the implementation of a program for welcoming at risk academics.

**Quote:** *I initiated the effort to bring a scholar at risk to campus. My main take-away from the experience is that the university community must be prepared to offer social as well as academic support to a scholar if the effort is to be successful. That means a number of people must commit to making themselves available. As they say: "It takes a village . . ."*

- Universities would wish to have some support from the government for this work. If the EU wants universities to become more active in the field, it should consider allocating funds for this target group

## Recommendations Concerning Scholars at Risk Network

### Quotes

- SAR was instrumental in helping us get our scholar before her visa there expired and in arranging for her travel. Ahead of that, SAR set up everything for us so that we knew as much as possible about who she is, what she can do, etc. before we even skype-interviewed her. It's the most user-friendly system.
- A updated hosting manual would be very nice.
- SAR has been a tremendously popular program and we are in the early staging of building the community. We will start hosting in August 2017 and ... may judge after a time specified if the planned support was appropriate, sufficient and helpful for the scholars.



## Recommendations Concerning Academic Hosts

- Academic hosts need better preparation and information, when they consider hosting a refugee scholar within their research group.
- Hosting a refugee scholar is also about assuming responsibility for the career development of the scholar – including directing her/him towards non-academic activities where appropriate.
- Academic hosts should be aware of the lack of international experience shown by many refugee scholars, who generally are not able to choose their hosting country for scientific reasons.
- Differences of scientific culture, background and preparation between the hosted scholar and its new academic environment can only be overcome with the active help of the academic host.

## Quotes

- It takes time to be able to contribute to research in a new cultural-scientific context, and with limited linguistic competence in English but efforts by both parts may lead to positive results in the long run.
- I underestimated the challenge to develop different skills in parallel: learning a new language, developing new research skills, adapting to a new academic system, understanding a new employment market and to take care of the family in a foreign cultural setting.

# INTERESTING CASES AND GOOD PRACTICES

We have identified, amongst a great many initiatives that have been undertaken in recent years, a number of good practices. This selection is the tip of an iceberg of many bigger and smaller, documented and not-documented initiatives that universities and others have developed - all with the common aim to make the stay of refugee scholars, refugee students or scholars at risk at a university as productive as possible and / or prepare them better for next steps in their academic careers and integration. The practices have been divided into four categories. We acknowledge that some cases address more than one category.

- A. Supporting (social) integration, including partners
- B. Strengthening academic profiles
- C. Updating academic knowledge and skills
- D. Financing mechanisms.

## A. Supporting (Social) Integration

University  
of Cologne



### University of Cologne in Germany: Family Support

The University of Cologne Welcome Centre (that support scholars in all administrative matters) soon realized that families of refugee scholars need more support than families of “regular” visiting scholars.

Scholars often come unprepared for a life in Germany, have more children, and at times less money. The burden of organizing everyday life depends on the scholar – often the only person speaking English. The scholars' concern for their families (many times rather isolated) and the work they have in organizing their life, add to the stress the scholars feel next to their obligations to do research, teach, and secure a follow-up job/grant. Two quotes from a survey with scholars:

*“Especially the spouse is isolated and there is no opportunity for her. “*

*“(…) housing here in Germany, the German law and general directions, the new language, and new culture - I think new arrivals need some instructions and help in these ways.”*

Therefore, the International Office at the University of Cologne started a new project for family support. Paid by the Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, a position was established (student assistant 9 h/week) starting February 2018. The goal has been to help the scholars' families overcome language barriers and escape isolation, connect families with each other and enable social contacts, to get to know the city better, explore interesting places and enable them to solve everyday problems on their own. Thereby, we want to take some weight off the shoulders of the scholars making their life less stressful so that they can focus on academia.

Activities include meeting the scholars and their families, trying to build trust and find out what they are interested in or what the most pressing issues are. Through regular office hours and steady contact – personally, or via email – we try to help with all sorts of everyday issues. We also connect them with specific programs for families. Further information is sent to all of the scholars in a bi-weekly newsletter on e.g. sports clubs or the public transportation system. One very important aspect is to help the spouses to attend language courses that are offered free of charge and to empower them to engage in activities by themselves.



## University of Cologne: Scholars at Risk Mentoring Program (SAR Mentoring)

The SAR Mentoring Program aims to provide support in career planning for researchers who have taken refuge in Germany.

The International Office and the Department for Academic Staff Development initiated SAR Mentoring in 2017 which is open to scholars from the University of Cologne and surrounding partner universities. Only very few scholars had worked or done research in Germany before. Finding their place in a research/work surrounding that is very different from the one in the home country can be extremely challenging. At the same time, it is important for the scholars to find their place quickly, as most grants and job opportunities are temporarily limited and follow-up opportunities need to be found very soon.

The main goals of the Scholars at Risk Mentoring is to introduce refugee scholars to the German scientific system, promote their careers, and help them integrate in the community of the University of Cologne and the surrounding universities. Researchers shall be enabled to network, advance their career development, and improve their job satisfaction.

The various offers of the one-year program include mentoring partnerships, advanced training workshops, networking opportunities, information and documentation resources, and optional individual coaching. All modules are offered in English and are designed and organized by the Department for Academic Staff Development.

The design of the program is based on quality standards of Forum Mentoring, a nationwide organization of mentoring programs at universities and research institutions in Germany.

[https://verwaltung.uni-koeln.de/abteilung43/content/mentoring\\_amp\\_coaching/mentoring/sar\\_mentoring/index\\_ger.html](https://verwaltung.uni-koeln.de/abteilung43/content/mentoring_amp_coaching/mentoring/sar_mentoring/index_ger.html)



As a response to the European refugee crisis in 2015, the University of Oslo has made a call for an academic dugnad\* to welcome refugees and asylum seekers into our society.

The Oslo and Akershus University of Applied Sciences was a partner from the very beginning and more universities and colleges have joined since.

The University of Oslo and the Municipality of Oslo have developed an internship scheme for refugees with an academic background, called **Academic Practice**. Refugees with at least one higher degree may apply for an internship in an academic environment similar to the one they have left, as part of the introduction program offered to all newly settled refugees in Norway. Depending on the individual participant's skills, the tasks may for instance be equivalent to those of a research assistant or those of a researcher. Participants may also attend university lectures.

Through the **Academic Network** refugees and asylum seekers get to know local students from a similar academic background to begin building networks in Norway. The focus is on acquiring English and Norwegian language skills at the Academic Language Café.

The recognition of **previous education** is being addressed together with NOKUT, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance. NOKUT is developing an European Qualifications passport.

**Language courses** for refugees who want to qualify for higher education is primarily a governmental responsibility. However, the university offers two low-threshold, online courses for refugees who want to work with language training on their own: one in Norwegian as a MOOC and one in English.

<https://www.uio.no/english/about/collaboration/academic-dugnad/>

\* Dugnad derives from the Old Norse "dugnad", meaning help, good deed. It describes a group of people doing voluntary work together for a common good, as an extraordinary effort to create something of lasting value.

## B. Strengthening Academic Profiles



### Matching Scholars' Profiles: Science4Refugees

Science4Refugees is an initiative from the European Commission through EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion. Science4Refugees helps refugee scientists and researchers find suitable jobs that both improve their own situation and put their skills and experience to good use in Europe's research system.

The Science4Refugees initiative and the EURAXESS portal provide research refugee friendly internships, part-time and full-time jobs, access to an European Research Community, as well as a complete range of information and support services on working and living in Europe. Science4Refugees enables the match-making of talented refugees with asylum status having a scientific background with positions in universities and research institutions that are 'refugee-welcoming organizations' and that have positions available, including internships and part-time and full-time jobs. Participating in Science4Refugees does not mean that national conditions have been met and that there is entitlement to work in the EU. Recruitment through EURAXESS and Science4Refugees is open, transparent and merit-based, and you will compete for employment on the same basis as non-refugee applicants. It is also compulsory to follow national employment law, including rules on residence, visas and work permits, when applying for a job.

<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/> and <http://ec.europa.eu/research/science4refugees/index.cfm>



## Mentoring Scholars: Academics in Solidarity

**Academics in Solidarity:** As part of AGYA, the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 'Academics in Solidarity' is a peer-to-peer mentoring program that gives excellent researchers the opportunity to effectively support refugee and endangered scholars through academic counselling, systematic network building, and administrative assistance. With the support of AGYA and the Freie Universität Berlin, the project seeks to create an Arab-German network of solidarity that not only opens up new perspectives to the mentoring program's mentees but also strengthens the value of cross-cultural research cooperation. 'Academics in Solidarity' collaborates with mentors from renowned German and Arab higher education and research institutions. Mentors act on a voluntary basis and may represent all academic disciplines. Besides functioning as on-going dialogue partners and introducing their mentees into the academic landscape of their host countries, mentors provide the following services:

- academic counselling
- administrative support (e.g., access to data bases, libraries, or archives)
- advice on academic career opportunities
- identification of suitable funding options
- network building

'Academics in Solidarity' offers its mentors special training as well as administrative and technical support both prior to and throughout the mentoring process. Furthermore, mentors will get the chance to exchange ideas and experiences with other mentors at annual network meetings.

<http://agya.info/adopt-an-academic/>



## Supporting Research of Scholars: Science in Asylum

In November 2015, the Centre for Social Innovation – ZSI in Austria launched a project and fundraising campaign to support refugees scientists, to document their research and to gain a foothold in Austria. Highly skilled refugees are facing great difficulties finding a job in Austria and are often forced in to the low-wage sector. Science in Asylum offered refugees the possibility to attend seminars that provide essential information, training and networking possibilities. The project ran until December 2016.

The project “Science in Asylum” aims to contribute to a better integration of refugee scientists in the labor market. The program offered refugees the possibility to attend seminars that provide essential information, training and networking possibilities helping them to utilize their professional experience in the Austrian / European science sector. The activities and seminars addressed issues such as:

- Acknowledging competences / achievements
- The Austrian / European research system
- Participants write a short paper showcasing their scientific work
- Disseminating of the paper to relevant peers
- Light “peer review” (by volunteers)
- Publication of the papers via a specific website and via a seminar volume
- Integration of participants in the scientific community of their respective field
  - Organising networking meetings
  - Developing mentor / mentee relationships

<https://www.zsi.at/en/object/news/3892>

Final Report at:

<https://www.respekt.net/en/support-projects/details/projekt/1071/>



## Capacity Building of Scholars

At the Scholars at Risk Global Conference in Berlin (April 2018) three initiatives were presented that focus on capacity building for threatened scholars, students & academic communities. These three examples are presented briefly below.

**a. Syrian Researchers** is a scientific network addressing the Arabic speaking individuals and societies. It was launched by a group of academics in Syria and abroad to raise the scientific and academic level of the Syrian society in particular and in the Arab one in general, and to spread science in all readable, audible and visual means. Today, Syrian Researchers is considered the largest Arabic scientific assemblage on the internet by its quantity of daily-published scientific content and by the number of its followers and visits.

The activities of Syrian Researchers can be divided into several domains: publishing and translating local and international scientific research, developing scientific visual content in an attractive and modern way, responding to readers' inquiries and providing academic and scientific consolations, in addition to organizing scientific activities and fairs and developing partnerships with direct or indirect added value. Scientific method, work organizing and having faith in our goals are credited for our pioneering role in the Arab world.

**Contact:**

<https://www.syr-res.com/about/english.html>

**b. Chance for Science** is a social network for refugeeed local scientists, academics and students based at the University of Leipzig in Germany. By creating an online account and providing information on previous research work and research interests, scientists of German research institutions and scientists who fled to Germany can use the platform to match research interests and communicate with each other. Recently we extended the platform for fled academics/students and academics/students living in Germany, who want to have an exchange about their subject/field of activity. Scientists of German research institutions support fled scientist to continue their research while they also benefit from the exchange of knowledge.

This could be for instance:

- providing access to literature/to libraries
- offering invitations to events of the research institutions
- offering invitations to guest lectures at universities
- conducting joint publications
- offering scientific exchange via occasional skype-appointments
- exchange their expertise by networking

**Contact:**

Prof. Dr. Carmen Bachmann  
[www.chance-for-science.de](http://www.chance-for-science.de)

**c. ReDI School of Digital Integration** is a non-profit digital school for tech-interested newcomers in Germany. We offer our students high-quality training and the chance to collaborate with the start-up and digital industry. Our aim is to provide our students with valuable digital skills and a strong network of tech leaders, students and alumni to help create new opportunities for all. Currently, ReDI offers courses in Berlin and in Munich. There is a strong partnership with the private sector.

A ReDI School student participates in a 3-month program with usually two weekly evening classes (two hours each) taught by volunteers, who are all professionals in the digital industry. Someone not based in either Berlin or Munich is recommended taking part in the Cisco Networking Academy (<https://www.netacad.com>). In addition, participants will get access to a large number of workshops, professional networks, job training and conferences, which can help you land a job or find a paid internship

**Contact:**

Mireia Nadal Chiva  
<https://www.redi-school.org>

## C. Updating Academic Knowledge and Skills



### **InclUUsion at Utrecht University in the Netherlands**

InclUUsion is an innovative program of Utrecht University and is aimed at those with refugee background who are currently 'on hold' in refugee shelters or in their new homes in the Netherlands. It offers newcomers the opportunity to participate for free in all kinds of courses offered by Utrecht University without being officially enrolled. InclUUsion is a call to action to make use of the waiting period asylum seeking process or because of waiting for diploma recognitions. So far, the focus has been on refugee students.

Since its start in 2016 InclUUsion has offered a wide range of courses in all disciplines to more than 350 students of more than 30 nationalities. InclUUsion has proven to be an effective approach to enhance participation and integration. Refugee students get acquainted with the academic system- and culture, acquire or improve their academic skills, build up a network of fellow students/friends which will support them while looking for education opportunities or a job in the Netherlands.

InclUUsion is also a vehicle to enhance mutual understanding by creating opportunities for social interaction between different groups like regular students, teachers and support staff.

InclUUsion has a strong network of partner organizations and works in close cooperation with the Utrecht Municipality, with higher education institutions abroad and in the Netherlands and with other organizations in order to create a positive and receptive social environment for refugees.

<https://www.uu.nl/en/education/inclusion/why-inclusion>



## Improving Knowledge and Skills: Attending Classes

The University of Luzern offers refugees the possibility to attend regular classes free of charge. The Fall Semester 2018 sees the commencement of the project "Discovery Semester". Refugees are invited to get to know the University of Lucerne not only as an academic institution but also as a place of intercultural exchange with the possibility to meet Swiss students and professors and to learn more about the Swiss Higher Education System. This initiative mixes social integration and improving academic knowledge and skills.

The various information and counselling services offered by the University of Lucerne can help with a personal assessment and reorientation. Furthermore, language skills can be improved.

The programme offers the following:

- Attendance of up to four courses as an audit student in the fields of Theology, Humanities and Cultural Sciences, Law and Economics and Management. Please note that as audit students you don't have the possibility to earn credits or to take an exam.
- Option to borrow a laptop free of charge for the duration of the programme, to participate in all course offerings of the Campus Sport and to access the University library). At the end of the semester a certificate of attendance will be issued.
- Buddy system organized by Lucerne students and participation in events and excursions, e.g. cooking evening.
- Welcome Day before the start of the semester with official welcome and introduction to the "Discovery Semester"

<https://www.unilu.ch/en/university/uni-for-all/refugees-to-attend-lectures/>



## Improving Knowledge and Skills: Supplementary Courses

The University of Gothenburg in Sweden offers supplementary courses for certain academic professions, eg. for dentists, medical doctors, nurses, teachers, pharmacists and biomedical scientists. The courses are aimed at shortening the way to the Swedish labour market, and are therefore suited for persons with a refugee background who have completed their studies in a country outside of the EU.

The University of Gothenburg is also coordinating a nationally funded fast track pilot for newly arrived migrants with a started or completed PhD education that will shorten the ways for scholars into Swedish academia. This Inclusive Internationalisation is a pilot programme during the autumn 2018.

Since the fall of 2016, the University of Gothenburg is developing a university-wide model for recognition of prior learning. The development of the model is being made in close cooperation with the Swedish Council for Higher Education and other universities in Sweden.

Other activities for refugees in Gothenburg are:

- Information meetings
- Mentoring and Buddy program
- Online linguistic support
- Open lectures
- Summer School

[https://www.gu.se/english/about\\_the\\_university/Refugees/education-for-thos-with-refugee-background](https://www.gu.se/english/about_the_university/Refugees/education-for-thos-with-refugee-background)



## Bursary Schemes

In The Netherlands and (Flemish Belgium), scholars receive their fellowship from UAF (The Dutch Foundation for Refugees) through a monthly bursary scheme. Jointly, the scholars at risk coordinators at universities, sponsors and UAF agree on their respective contributions to finance the secondment of a scholars to a university. The family composition, requirements for children's schooling, health insurance and costs for accommodation are taken into consideration.

In general, the bursary-conditions of the Netherlands Fellowship Programme (NFP) for PhD students are taken as a basis. This bursary construction avoids that scholars are taxable due to the absence of a formal labor relation with the HEIs. They have a formal guest-researcher status at the HEIs that covers institutional liabilities and work-related risks and provides access to a work place and IT and library facilities. The bursary costs are much lower than those with an HEI employee-status whereas the net-income for the scholars is the same. The drawback for the scholar is that scholars are not eligible to Dutch social security schemes.

[https://www.uaf.nl/wat\\_doet\\_het\\_uaf/projecten/scholars\\_at\\_risk](https://www.uaf.nl/wat_doet_het_uaf/projecten/scholars_at_risk)



## Joined Hosting

A scholar is working successfully in the Netherlands since 2016 on a PhD with combined financial and academic support from two university departments: of the Radboud University in Nijmegen and the IHS (Institute for Housing and Urban Studies) at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. The financing is for four years through a bursary scheme and an appointment as junior researcher. Which institution will be degree-awarding, Nijmegen or Rotterdam, or both in a double degree, is still under discussion.

## Disclaimer and Contact

The contents of this publication are the responsibility of the authors.

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