

# CAREER NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOLARS AT RISK

BASED ON  
**THE S.U.C.RE IO 3**  
**INSITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR REFUGEE SCHOLARS IN HIGHR EDUCATION**



# Background

- **S.U.C.RE.** was an ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnership of Aristoteles University Thessaloniki (lead), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and University of Cologne
- **S.U.C.RE.** focused on the response of Universities to the academic needs of refugee/migrant students and scholars and on the development of training modules addressed to volunteers working with refugees.
- Thessaloniki: Psycho-social, health and legal support (Training Modules)
- Cologne/Amsterdam: Support for refugee students in HE institutions
- Amsterdam/Cologne: Support for refugee scholars in HE institutions

## IO3 Supporting Refugee Academics at Higher Education Institutions in Europe – Aims, Tools and Experiences –

- **Original objective:**

Compose a guide with best practices for hosts

- **Change of focus**

Report on opportunities and challenges for integration of refugee scholars with particular focus on career paths and career development

# Surveys

- **Three Surveys**

1. Institutional perspective (n=60)

Why, how, funding

2. Perspective of the scholar (n=62)

Needs, expectations & perceptions and reflections on **research and career development**

3. Host perspective (n=39)

Motivations, expectations, experiences and assessment of **career prospective of mentees**

- Combination of quantitative survey and qualitative follow-up interviews (ongoing)

# Status of scholars

Different scholars have different status

- *Scholar at risk* primarily left **temporarily** until the risks and threats have diminished; asylum seeking is considered a last resort.
- *Refugee scholar* is usually a highly educated refugee with a formal refugee status
- *Current Scholars at risk*

These terms have become blurred and the scholar at risk is very often not at the host institution temporarily

# Focus today beyond project

What are the long term issues and needs for Scholars at Risks, HEIs and hosts in terms of career development

# Career development

## The Win Win Win Situation

The ideal situation will look somewhat like this:

- \* Threatened scholar finds safe harbor and appropriate academic position at host institution.
- \* The HEI gains an academic and lecturer who contributes to research output and education.
- \* The host adopts the scholar at risk into her/his research group where they benefit from their expertise

# However....

- Limits to Institutional Support
  - Getting lost in the system
  - Additional help needed to *regular* international scholars
- Shortfalls in hosting
  - Disinterest
  - Mismatch of expectations

# However....

- Complex needs of scholars at risk
  - Arrival
  - Family, family reunion
  - Housing, settling, routine
  - Language barriers, cultural barriers
  - Unfamiliar scientific environment, backlogs, disciplinary differences, academic English
  - Unstable and uncertain

# Perceptions: Social vs academic issues

HEIs and scholars: social, personal and practical issues

Hosts also raise academic issues

## Major issue:

Moving from fellowship into more permanent position, implying competing for regular academic positions with a long term perspective

# Career paths

## Academia

Academic mentoring  
Dual career perspective

## Private sector

Dual career perspective  
Job coaching

# Guidelines for a responsible relationship

- Matching process
- Joint projects and perspectives for development
- Including future career opportunities

# A responsible relationship

## Career re-launch

- Assuming responsibility
- Accepting tasks
- HEIs to give professional support to prepare scholar for career “second career”
- Select appropriate career development programs

## Pro-active support

- Scientific support
- Private life support
- Family support
- Personal coaching

# Specific recommendations

- Placements minimal 2-3 years
- Language skills
- Academic acculturation
  - Address prevailing academic (un)written rules, norms, values and codes of conduct
- Career guidance, also outside academia
  - **Employability**
    - Promote and support self employments and fostering entrepreneurial skills
  - **Research careers**
    - Both scholars and hosts need systematic help
- HEI to assign administrative mentor to scholar and family
  - Socio-economic and administrative issues
  - Family concerns
  - Psychosocial issues

# Discussion

- With the shift in definition of what a Scholar at Risk is and what her/his needs are, we need to shift policy and practices from all stakeholders involved

# IO3 download link

- [https://sucre.auth.gr/sites/default/files/media/attachments/SUCRE-IO3-Publication\\_WEB181219.pdf](https://sucre.auth.gr/sites/default/files/media/attachments/SUCRE-IO3-Publication_WEB181219.pdf)
- The publication also reflects on an number of cases and good practices in terms of:
  - Supporting (social) integration
  - Strengthening academic profiles
  - Updating academic knowledge and skills
  - Financing mechanisms

# Thank you very much for your attention!

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