

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
- 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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