Italian universities constituting an Italian section of Scholars at Risk
Document elaborated by the Universities of Padova and Trento
November 2018

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of universities, founded in 1999 at the University of Chicago (United States) by academics and human rights defenders interested in promoting the principle of academic freedom and protecting academics whose lives are threatened or whose work of research and teaching is severely compromised. SAR’s current headquarters is at New York University¹. SAR is part of the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR), collaborates with Scholars Rescue Fund (RSF) and the Institute of International Education (IIE) and currently has 450 university members in 40 different countries.

SAR carries out three types of activity: (a) protection: working in collaboration with partner universities to create temporary scholarships (3-24 months) for academics who ask the association for help (these grants are the responsibility of the host university, even if SAR supports contact with international funding organizations/foundations, such as Scholars Rescue Fund); (b) advocacy; information campaigns to raise awareness amongst civil society on the cases of violations of academic freedom in the world (SAR offers support services to universities who want to carry out advocacy work with students); (c) research and education on themes of human rights, academic freedom, academic refugees and hosting policies for at-risk academics (through the organization of seminars, conferences, monitoring projects, and the participation in Erasmus+ projects).

Being a member of SAR means a university commits to respecting the principle of academic freedom, pays an annual fee either as a contributing member ($1000) or as a sustaining member ($5000) and names a delegate for the university.

Universities join SAR at the institutional level. SAR encourages the development of national sections or chapters of universities who have joined SAR in order to coordinate the activities of fund-raising, advocacy and providing information on national contexts, and also to facilitate collaboration with other national sections which currently exist in Europe (UK, Germany, Norway, Switzerland) and in the United States.

A number of Italian universities joined SAR in the course of 2017, or expressed their interest in the network’s activities. Intervening at a first informal meeting, organized in Padova on December 12, 2017, interested universities decided to take steps towards the constitution of an Italian section of Scholars at Risk, SAR Italy. This document aims to offer guidelines on the process of constituting and organizing the SAR Italy national section, outlining the aims and the importance of this step, and the activities which will be undertaken by single institutions or in a coordinated manner by SAR Italy.

The present document includes:
1. List of Italian universities or research centres that have adhered to SAR or have expressed interest
2. SAR National Sections: What they are why they are important
3. Proposal for a Founding Statement for the launch of the Italian SAR Section - DRAFT

¹ SAR, New York University, 194 Mercer Street, 4th Floor - New York, New York 10012 USA Tel: +1-212-998-2179 Fax: +1-212-995-4402; Email: scholarsatrisk@nyu.edu; Website: www.scholarsatrisk.org.
4. Proposal for the Terms of Reference to set up the Italian SAR Section - DRAFT
5. Annex 1: list of possible activities to be carried out by the Italian Section’s member universities, either individually or in collaboration with other institutions.
6. Annex 2: Examples of ‘good practice’ which have been adopted by European SAR member universities
1. List of Italian universities that have adhered to SAR or have expressed interest (15 February 2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities or Research Centres - Members of SAR International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Istituto Universitario Europeo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magna Charta Observatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scuola Normale Superiore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNINETTUNO - International Telematic University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Bologna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Brescia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Cagliari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Macerata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Milano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Padova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Siena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Torino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Trento</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Trieste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Verona</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities or Research Centres – who have expressed interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Università di Genova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Pavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Roma La Sapienza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Teramo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Firenze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università di Udine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **SAR National Sections: What they are why they are important**

A national SAR section is a cluster of higher education institutions and research centres that are present in a national territory that collaborate to protect at-risk academics and to defend the right to academic freedom. They do so on two levels. *First*, by developing approaches, practices and policies in offering protection and assistance to at-risk academics, and supporting their integration within the broader academic community during this time. *Secondly*, by connecting internationally with other sections – and with SAR network worldwide – to promote the value of academic freedom through scholarships, advocacy and educational activities on the topic of academic freedom. National sections (as well as individual universities) might also involve local or international associations: for instance, in Britain SAR-UK collaborates with the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA).

Becoming a member of a SAR-section supports the university’s participation both on a national and international level. Members will have the opportunity to:

(2a) Actively collaborate to inform the academic community, political institutions and civil society about ongoing instances of human rights violation in universities worldwide. This could be done by organising joint workshops, conferences, seminar series or summer/winter schools.

(2b) Collaborate on fundraising activities in order to create ‘Academic Emergency Fund’ to draw on to finance research grants reserved for at-risk scholars;

(2c) Participate in International Monitoring Projects on Academic Freedom organised periodically by SAR and published in the *Free To Think Report*.

(2d) Develop training programmes for university staff on how to host and integrate at-risk scholars in the receiving academic community, also involving students.

Every institution that joins SAR – as contributing member or sustaining member – has the right to belong to the national section.

To date, SAR has ten national sections: United States, Canada, Norway, Ireland, Great Britain, Finland, Germany, Belgium-Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. Each national section nominates a representative for the SAR International Advisory Committee (IAC), which meets 3-4 times per year (often online) in order to decide the main strategies to bring forward in the different national contexts and on an international level. Participating in the IAC is of fundamental importance for the exchange of ideas, sharing of good practices and projects between SAR members.
The experience of already existing sections in the world highlights the value of national sections in different ways:

(a) FUNDRAISING AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: Higher education institutions working within national sections are usually more effective in raising and/or mobilising resources to develop protection, advocacy and learning activities. A structured coordination at national level facilitates dialogue and collaboration with national, regional and provincial government bodies, as well as with national and international networks of civil society associations that are active in the defence of human rights (UNHCR, UN or Amnesty International, for example).

(b) EFFICIENT RESPONSES: They are more successful in a timely response to requests for protection that come from SAR’s European headquarters. SAR-Section members share scholarship and job opportunities, ‘good practices’ in terms of bureaucratic work, housing, integration strategies in the working/studying routine, development of psychological and emotional support during the protection period.

(c) ASSIST AT-RISK ACADEMICS IN TRANSITION PERIODS:
Since SAR implements temporary hosting (from 3 to 24 months) for at-risk academics, it is important that universities and research centres collaborate to extend the period of protection in the country by hosting in different universities. It is unlikely that an academic will be able to return to their country after a 12-month period, so it becomes necessary to find another university to host the scholar. By collaborating in creating funding opportunities, national sections can make the transition period smoother. They reduce the risks of a scholar having to move from one national context to another in search of further scholarships.

How are SAR sections structured?

SAR takes a flexible approach to organizing sections and works with different structures in different countries. Current SAR sections, however, are all variations on the following three model structures:

(1) **Steering Committee & Chair**: This model has been adopted in Norway and Switzerland. The primary representatives at SAR member universities in a given country come together as a ‘general assembly’ to elect 5 to 7 representatives from amongst member universities to serve as a steering committee for the section. Universities also elect a chair. The steering committee and chair normally serve a two-year term. The role of the steering committee is to organise fundraising events, coordinate speaking events for SAR scholars at universities in that country, organize conferences/workshops on academic freedom and higher education values.

(2) **National Secretariat**: This model has been adopted in Ireland, Germany and Finland. A single university – or several universities/research centres, possibly in collaboration with civil society associations – decide to create a platform for collaborating with SAR in the form of a National Secretariat. After consulting the members of this platform, SAR signs a Memorandum of Understanding in which the roles and responsibilities of each member of the National Secretariat are defined. In Germany the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation serves this function, whilst in Ireland it is the association ‘Ireland Universities’, and in Finland the Finnish Rectors’ Council. The
content and aims of the projects that these different National Secretariats implement are discussed and approved by SAR on a case by case basis.

(3) Partner NGOs: This model has been adopted in the UK and the Netherlands. In this model SAR enters an already existing network of NGOs who each have a long history of supporting threatened and/or refugee academics and students. SAR’s partner in the UK is the Council for Assisting at-risk Academics (CARA) while in the Netherlands, it is the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF).

For the Italian SAR section we propose to adopt the first model - steering committee and chair - but with the nomination of two co-chairs who work together during their mandate, sharing functions and responsibilities. The terms of reference have been written with this in mind.
3. Founding Statement for the launch of the Italian SAR Section: SAR Italy

Given art. 15, comma 3 of the International Pact on International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), which states the commitment to respect “the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity”;

Given art. 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, under which "The arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint. Academic freedom shall be respected";

Given art. 33, comma 1 of the Italian Constitution, which recognizes the freedom of art and science and related teaching;

On behalf of the Italian members of the Scholars at Risk (SAR) network, we officially declare the launch of the Italian Section of SAR. Padova, 19 February 2019.

SAR Italy is a partnership between Italian higher education institutions and research centres and SAR, an international network of higher education institutions aimed at fostering the promotion of academic freedom and protecting the fundamental rights of scholars across the world.

In constituting SAR Italy, the governance structures of adhering institutions, as well as researchers, educators, students and administrative personnel send a strong message of solidarity to scholars and institutions that experience situations whereby their academic freedom is at stake, and their research, educational and ‘third mission’ activities are constrained.

Coming together in SAR Italy, the adhering institutions commit to concretely contributing to the promotion and protection of academic freedom, alongside 450 other higher education institutions in 40 countries in the world.

Padova, 19 February 2019

Logos of adhering universities + name and signature of Rectors/Delagates XXX
4. Scholars at Risk (SAR) Italian Section: SAR Italy
Terms of Reference

This document was elaborated by the Universities of Padova and Trento, with the contribution of the Italian universities and research institutions that have joined SAR.

In accordance with the aims and principles of the international network ‘Scholars at Risk’ (SAR), the Italian Section of Scholars at Risk (hereafter: “SAR Italy”) has been constituted in order to promote Scholars at Risk and the network’s activities in Italy and coordinate of protection, advocacy and education related to the defence of academic freedoms. SAR Italy is open to all Italian universities and research institutes that have joined SAR international and thus share its vision and goals, and support the protection of academic freedoms and the terms advanced in this document.

Article 1 - Membership
SAR Italy includes all those universities or research institutes that have joined SAR as contributing member or sustaining member. Being a member of SAR determines the right to join SAR Italy.

Article 2 - Legal status
SAR Italy is a network of universities and research institutes in Italy and is not an autonomous legal entity.

Article 3 - Mandate
SAR Italy aims at*:

a. Promoting the values, aims and activities of SAR.
b. Sharing best practices in terms of hosting, protection, awareness-raising, research and education on themes related to SAR’s mission.
c. Planning and carrying out joint activities on protection, advocacy, education and research.
d. Advocating and lobbying for SAR at the national level.
e. Activating fund-raising projects with external partners (public and private) who share SAR’s founding values.
f. Promoting the hosting and integration of at-risk scholars in Italian universities and research institutes.
g. Representing SAR Italy in the SAR international network.

Article 4 - General Assembly
The General Assembly is composed of all the representatives of the universities and research institutes in Italy that are members of SAR.

The General Assembly decides by simple majority, except for the amendment of the Terms of Reference and the dissolution of SAR Italy, which both require a two-thirds majority.

The tasks of the Assembly are: election of the Steering Committee; setting out guidelines for the Steering Committee; planning annual activities; delegating specific tasks and activities to individuals, taskforces or working groups; amending the Terms of Reference; dissolving SAR Italy.
The General Assembly is held at least once a year at the premises of one of the member universities/research institutes.

Each member has the right to one vote which is expressed by a single person delegated to this task.

**Article 5 - Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee is composed of five members, who hold their position for two years. One-time re-election is possible.

The Steering Committee elects among its members two Co-chairs serving as coordinators of the national network for the two years of their mandate, one-time re-election is possible. The end of the membership within the Steering Committee entails the loss of the role as a Co-chair.

The Steering Committee is responsible for the leadership of SAR Italy and the implementation of all the initiatives needed, including the assignment of specific tasks to individuals, committees or work groups, in coherence with the guidelines approved by the General Assembly.

**Article 6 – Coordination**

Two elected members within the Steering Committee will coordinate the SAR Italy activities.

The Co-chairs convene the General Assembly sending an agenda at least two weeks (14 days) before the day agreed for the Assembly.

The Co-chairs present the General Assembly with an annual report on the activities of the Steering Committee (projects, meeting minutes, etc.).

The Steering Committee nominate one of the Co-Chairs to represent SAR Italy at the SAR International Advisory Committee. The selected representative can authorize the other Co-Chair to take part in the Committee.

**Article 7 – Projects and other joint initiatives**

All members of SAR Italy pay for their own participation in the SAR Italy section and international SAR.

Any fundraising activities will be advanced for specific projects relating to protection, advocacy, research, information/education. Each SAR Italy member – or a restricted number of members – will take charge of research, organization and administration duties in relation to these projects.

Approved by all participants present in the SAR Italy Assembly (Padova, 19 February 2019)

---

**Annex 1 – Possible activities to be carried out as SAR Italy and/or individual universities or research institutes**

Different activities can be carried out by Universities adhering to SAR Italy.
- Host a scholar for a research period – usually between 3 and 24 months, as a doctoral student, post-doc, research assistant or visiting professor.

- Organize workshops, seminars, summer or winter schools or conferences – on academic freedom or related topics.

- Organize Speaker Series – inviting at-risk scholars to their universities to share their stories or the situation of their countries of origin in terms of attacks on academic freedom and universities’ autonomy;

- Arrange Student Advocacy Seminars - Guided by faculty, students research and advocate for imprisoned scholars in the academic community, public institutions and civil society.

- Take active part in the Academic Freedom Monitoring Project, published annually as the Free To Think Report – which provides an international overview of attacks on academic freedom and forms of persecution of academics and students across the world.

- Set up Action Campaigns on behalf of scholars in prison or whose lives are at risk.

Annex 2 – Some examples of ‘good practice’ adopted in European SAR members

Below are some initiatives that national SAR sections or single universities in Europe have carried out and which can be considered as models of good practice as regards meeting SAR’s aims.

The PAUSE initiative in France
http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/en-program-pause/index.htm

In France, Thierry Mandon, Secretary of State for Higher Education and Research announced in October 2016 that the Foundation for academics in danger would be established for the beginning of 2017. Two academics from the Collège de France were assigned with the creation of the Comité de parrainage. In January 2017, PAUSE (Programme d’aide aux Universitaires et Scientifiques en Exil) was launched as a ministerial programme with a budget of 1 million Euros in collaboration with the Collège de France. Straight after this a special working group was established which included the francophone signatories of the Academics for Peace petition from France, Germany and Turkey in the framework of the PAUSE programme to work on a report of the analysis of risks for all the candidates coming from Turkey and to look for relevant host institutions.

PAUSE distributed 25 annual grants in the first session which closed on 10 February 2017 (10 for Turkey, 12 for Syria, 2 for Iraq and 1 for Yemen). Of the 10 Turkish grantees, 9 had signed the Academics for Peace petition. A second round was opened soon after and closed on 24th March 2017.

The Phillipp Schwartz Initiative and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Germany

In Germany universities do not have large amounts of their own funds because they are linked to the State or the province. Together with the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, the Philipp Schwartz Initiative

---

2 In spring 2018 the University of Trento organized a cycle of twelve interdisciplinary seminars on the theme ‘Human Rights and Academic Freedom’. In February 2019 the University of Padova – which organised events in collaboration with SAR in 2017/2018 and hosted a SAR scholar in the same academic year – organised a winter school on the theme ‘Knowledges at Risk’ promoted by the research group Next Generation Global Studies (Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies) in collaboration with SAR and other Italian universities who were interested. On that event further examples of good practice implemented in European and international universities will be presented.

3 In January 2018 the rector of the University of Trento signed a letter of appeal to the Iranian authorities in defence of the medic Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali.
supports at-risk academics: between 2016 and 2017 about 100 people received Philipp Schwartz grants (academics, post-docs, etc.). Doctoral students instead received grants from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. With funds from the province, the University of Göttingen funded a Turkish academic for a year; next hear the contribution will be awarded to another scholar.

Erasmus+ in Norway
The University of Oslo is coordinator of an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership called “Academic Refuge”, in collaboration with Scholars at Risk, UNICA network of universities from the capitals of Europe and the University of Ljubljana. One of the project outputs was a MOOC (massive online open course) on the topic “Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters”. The course centers on the right of students and scholars to ask questions and carry out research which advance scientific knowledge, on the responsibility in the dissemination of results, and on the role of higher education institutions in protecting academic freedom (see: https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/academic-freedom).