



ANNUAL REPORT

2019

SAR Italy is a partnership between Italian higher education institutions and research centres and Scholars at Risk, 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 over 500 other higher education institutions in 40 countries in the world.

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Launch of SAR Italy

[SAR Italy](#) was officially launched at the University of Padova on 19th February 2019, when the first national assembly was also held with 14 member universities. The launch took place in association with the 2019 Winter School on “Knowledges at Risk: Universities Promoting Academic Freedom,” and was organized by the University of Padova and the University of Trento. The Italian section represents Italian universities in the global Scholars at Risk Network, and will coordinate activities in Italy in support of scholars and to promote academic freedom.



The aims of SAR Italy are:

- 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.

Read the full [Terms of Reference](#)

[Press coverage of the event](#)

Coordination and Networking

Coordination (2019-2021)

Università di Trento and Università di Padova

Steering Committee (2019-2021)

Scuola Normale Superiore, Università di Cagliari, Università di Padova, Università di Trieste, Università di Trento.

Membership

At the launch of SAR Italy, fourteen universities signed the Founding Statement. By the end of the year twenty Italian universities or research institutions had become members of SAR International.

2019 Members

Istituto Universitario Europeo, Magna Charta Observatory, SISSA - Scuola Internazionale Superiore di Studi Avanzati – Trieste, Scuola Normale Superiore, Università di Bologna, Università di Brescia, Università di Cagliari, Università di Firenze, Università di Genova, Università di Macerata, Università di Milano, Università di Padova, Università di Pavia, Università di Roma La Sapienza, Università di Siena, Università di Torino, Università di Trento, Università di Trieste, Università di Verona, Università Telematica Internazionale UNINETTUNO.

As 2019 was the first year of the network, much of the activity consisted in coordination and networking, laying the groundwork for a rich agenda. Three national assemblies were held, as well as three online meetings of the steering committee. Steering committee members also participated in the SAR International Advisory Committee meetings.

- 19 February 2019 – Launch of SAR Italy and first national Assembly at Università di Padova.
- 19 March 2019 - Participation in the SAR International Advisory Committee Annual Meeting
- 30 May 2019 – Second national assembly held at the Università di Milano.
- 17 April 2019 - Online meeting of SAR Italy steering committee.
- 1 July 2019 - Online meeting of SAR Italy steering committee.
- 31 October 2019 - presentation of SAR Italy by Ester Gallo at La Sapienza, Università di Roma, at an event organized by UNHCR to present the Manifesto of Inclusive Universities
<https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/sections/sar-italy/section-news/manifesto-delluniversita-inclusiva/>
- 12 November 2019 - online meeting of SAR Italy steering committee.
- 11 December 2019 - third national assembly held at the University of Trento.
- 19 December 2019 – presentation of SAR Italy at the CRUI (National Conference of Italian Rectors), Roma (Ester Gallo and Claudia Padovani)

SAR Italy Working Groups

During the National Assembly (Trento, 11th December 2019), **three working groups** have been established to work concretely on the following activities:

1. **WORKING GROUP 1: Hosting and support**

The aim of WG1 is to identify legal and administrative procedures necessary to create calls addressed to scholars at risk (possessing status of refugee, asylum seeker, SAR certificate); to identify the minimum requirements for the hosting departments; to discuss the possibility of creating a mentoring/tutoring system to support the guest scholars at risk (to give continuity to the work inside and outside the university); to prepare an informative *Vademecum* to share with all SAR Italia members.

WG1 – Coordinator: Carla Savastano, University of Trieste (carla.savastano@amm.units.it)

2. **WORKING GROUP 2: Outreach and lobbying**

The aim of WG2 is to identify local, regional and national funds to support research scholarships for scholars at risk; to build a dialogue with the MIUR (Ministry of Education, University and Research) also by involving the CRUI to frame a national funding program; to construct a collaboration with relevant national institutions devoted, such as the Senate of the Republic Commission for Human Rights.

WG2 – Coordinators: Ester Gallo, University of Trento (ester.gallo@unitn.it); Gianmario Demuro, University of Cagliari (demuro@unica.it)

3. **WORKING GROUP 3: Partnerships and local networks**

The aims of WG3 is to build a dialogue with international/national/local organisation and associations working on refugees, human rights. Specifically, this group will dialogue with the UNHCR to implement within SAR Italy universities the Manifesto for an Inclusive University https://www.unhcr.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Manifesto-dellUniversita-inclusiva_UNHCR.pdf. It will also collaborate with the CRUI Network 'Universities for Peace' (<https://www.cruir.it/cruir-english.html>) as well as with the Shelter Cities Program and Network working on the protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). The working group is also evaluating possible synergies between SAR activities and the ICORN (International Cities of Refuge Network) of which some regions and municipalities (such as Tuscany) are parts.

WG3 – Coordinator: Roberta Altin, University of Trieste (raltin@units.it)

Sub-national Networks and Local Synergies

On a local level, each of the member institutions has organized themselves, with one or more local committees or working groups.

In Trieste and **Friuli Venezia Giulia Region**, a network of ten high-level science institutions, 3 universities and 7 international centres has been created to provide study and research opportunities for scholars forced to leave their countries of origin due to conflicts. The initiative has been formalised through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Scientist displaced by the War, on the 17 September 2018 at the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste - a UNESCO Category 1 Centre. Several subscribers of the Memorandum are members of or collaborate closely with SAR Italy and SAR International. [ICTP ceremony](#)



In the **Tuscany region**, universities and research institutes are organising a **regional network** comprising: Scuola Normale Superiore-Pisa (SNS), the University of Pisa, the University of Florence, the University of Siena and the European University Institute. The common objective is to act in a synergistic way to promote fund raising activities and to coordinate the external communication of SAR actions.

The **University of Florence** has established three working groups, with the participation of administrative colleagues and lecturers from all departments. The three working groups are dedicated to the analysis and simplification of administrative procedures, fund raising and the development of relationships with the different realities of the municipal and provincial territory.

The **University of Trento** has created an internal network of 13 SAR referents, one of each academic structure (department, research centre and postgraduate schools) to work jointly on the annual call for refugee scholars and to implement strategies of reception, inclusion and transition.

The **University of Padova** established a SAR@UniPd team to discuss how best to meet the goals of the network, while giving more visibility to SAR activities across the University. Also, the University adhered to a local project to protect human rights defenders.

Report of SAR Italy Activities

The activities of SAR Italy are organized around three pillars: Protection, Advocacy, Research and Learning.



Protection

SAR's core protection work provides direct assistance to threatened scholars, including by arranging temporary research and teaching positions at SAR member institutions and a range of other services. In the first year of activity SAR Italy shared knowledge through the network on how hosting can be organised within the Italian higher education system and laying the groundwork for hosting in 2020. Several different approaches have been developed.

- The University of Trento published a [call](#) for 2 research fellowships (Assegni di ricerca) within the "Temporary Protection Project SAR-UniTrento" (August 2019). Eligible candidates are scholars who have obtained/requested international protection status and scholars who hold SAR Risk Statement. The calls are open to all disciplines and provide scholars with 12 + 12 – month fellowship plus free accommodation for the entire duration of the contract. The call has received 12 applications from scholars from: Turkey, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Iran and Cameroon. An inter-departmental commission evaluated candidates according to their CV, research project, interview and took into account their risk status. The hosting will commence in 2020.
- The University of Padova was working in liaison with Scholars Rescue Fund to host a scholar in 2020 at the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, with the support of the Centro Elena Cornaro (50% funded by ISRF, 25% SPGI, 25% Centro Elena Cornaro). The hosting will commence in 2020.
- The Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa obtained funds from Regione Toscana and the Associazione Amici della Normale to host a scholar in 2020 with a 12 month '*contratto di collaborazione coordinata e continuativa*'

Advocacy

SAR International’s advocacy work aims to increase protection for vulnerable individuals by documenting the problem of attacks on higher education and seeking accountability of perpetrators in order to deter future attacks. The organisation of Student Advocacy Seminars is an important part of SAR’s advocacy work. Seminar students develop research and leadership skills while advocating on behalf of imprisoned scholars and students identified by SAR’s Scholars in Prison Project.



University of Trento for Academic Freedom: ‘We are Amaya’

From March-June 2019 Ester Gallo at the University of Trento organized a Student Advocacy Seminar with the participation of students from the Bachelor’s course in International Studies and the support of the Department of Sociology and Social Research. The Advocacy Seminars were also supported by Adam Braver from Roger Williams University in the United States and Coordinator of SAR Advocacy Seminars and Clare Robinson from New York University and Advocacy Director of SAR.

The students advocated for Amaya Eva Coppens, a fifth-year medical student at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, who was arrested in September 2018, in apparent retaliation for her participation in a nationwide protest movement against the government. The students researched the case and produced a campaign and the Advocacy Report “We are Amaya” in [English](#) and [Italian](#)¹.



Advocacy Students Federica Tagliavini, Francesca Ongaro, Pietro Carra and Ion Foltea meet the Rector of the University of Trento, Paolo Collini (May 2019)

¹ English version https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/UniTrento-Report-Advocacy-2019_eng.pdf Italian version: https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/UniTrento-Report-Advocacy-2019_ita.pdf



Sangria at Sociologia: Advocacy Students organised an information and signature campaign during the evening party at the Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento (May 2019).



In June 2019 Advocacy Students Francesca Ongaro and Clelia Zardini presented their activities and campaign to students at the University of Padova.



Advocacy Students and Davide Strazzari (Department of Sociology) presenting SAR and a game on Academic Freedom to high school students during the open event 'Researchers Night', 27th September 2019.



Research and Learning

SAR's research and learning work aims to increase security for scholars and universities by increasing understanding of academic freedom and related higher education values among states, higher education communities, and the public. SAR has developed a series of publications which support this aim, including *Promoting Higher Education Values: A Guide for Discussion* and the MOOC on academic freedom called *Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters*.

On a national level **SAR Italy** members participated in online training and international events, such as a seminar in Brussels seminar on Higher Education Values in Practice. Furthermore several events were organized to support learning in the Italian context.

- **University of Padova, 18-22 February 2019 Winter school:** [Times and Spaces of Globalization: Knowledges at Risk](#).

A 5-day winter school was organized by the Next Generation Global Studies group at the University of Padova in collaboration with the University of Trento and Scholars at Risk. It addressed some of the many issues emerging from global dynamics that are putting at risk - or promise to transform profoundly and in unexpected directions - the very existence of academic knowledge, the roles and activities of higher education institutions, the lives and experiences of scholars, students and researchers. 22 students participated from Italy, Turkey, Vietnam, India, Morocco, Russia, Zimbabwe, Kyrgyzstan

- 13-14 June 2019 – participation at the seminar in Brussels [Higher Education Values in Practice: integration of highly skilled refugees and at-risk Academics in Europe](#). At the conference the e-Handbook “Promoting Core Higher Education Values” was launched and is available for [download](#)!

- **University of Trento, 20 September 2019** – [panel at CUCS 2019](#) – Citizenship and Collective Goods. University and International Cooperation for Safety, Environment and Sustainable Development. University of Trento. Ester Gallo (University of Trento), Claudia Padovani and Francesca Helm (University of Padova) organised a panel on: *Defending academic freedom and freedom of expression. The role of universities and international organisations*. The discussion gathered representatives from the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), different representatives of Italian universities (scholars, students and administrative staff), the World Academy of Science in Trieste (TWAS), the Observatory on Balkans and Transeuropa (OBC Transeuropa) and representatives of NGOs working with Human Rights Defenders and the Shelter Cities Project. More info: <https://event.unitn.it/cucs2019/>

- **University of Florence, 2nd December 2019** – Seminar on refugee intellectuals and writers with Bakary Jobe from Comgo and Amaterisio Dore (Nigeria). The seminar was hosted within the course

Sociology of Migration, at the Department of Social Sciences in Novoli, and in collaboration with the Centre of the Municipality of Pontassieve.

- **University of Trento, 10-11 December 2019** – International seminar on [Refugees and Higher Education: Hosting and Integrating Scholars and Students](#). University of Trento.

The international seminar was organised by SAR Italy together with the Rectorate Office of *Equality & Diversity* and the *International Migration Laboratory* of the University of Trento. It aimed to bring together institutions, organisations, displaced scholars and students involved in the SAR network, with a view to foster dialogue, share good practices, and reflect on common challenges and responses, as well as developing future collaborations. 80 individuals participated in the workshop. The *first day* started with keynotes by Angelo Pittalunga, presenting the UNHCR’s strategy for Refugees and Tertiary Education in Italy and Prem Rajaram Kumar, from the Central European University, talking about moving beyond the integration paradigm. The keynotes were followed by two panels, the first on the hosting and integration of refugee students and the second on universities’ strategies of protecting at-risk scholars. The panels included refugee students, at-risk scholars and teaching and administrative staff from the universities of Barcelona, Bologna, Ferrara, Oslo, Bielefeld, Padova, Trento and CARA. The day closed with the screening of the documentary ‘Science in Exile: Four Researchers in Flight from War, Their Dream of Science in Time of Peace’². The *second day* focused on a practical workshop ‘How to Host’: Sharing Good Practices and Plans Ahead, which consisted of an exchange about the ongoing protection programs for students and scholars developed by some of the institutions that are members of SAR Italy. Drawing also from other European experiences, the aim was to identify specific legal, economic, administrative, educational/research strategies and to start planning future collaborations.



² https://twas.org/sites/default/files/science_in_exile_poster_blank_final.pdf

- Inspire Europe 2019-2021

The Universities of Padova and Trento are associate partners in the [InSPIREurope](#) project³ which is funded under the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and coordinated by [Scholars at Risk Europe at Maynooth University](#), Ireland. InSPIREurope forges a coordinated, cross-sectoral, Europe-wide alliance for researchers at risk. The project anchors the excellent work already underway across Europe in support of researchers at risk, and lays the groundwork for a durable support structure in Europe.

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³. <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sar-europe/inspireurope>