

Supporting At-risk researchers with Fellowships in Europe

2026 Seminar

Biographies of speakers and moderators

Acil Abdul Hadi

Acil Abdul Hadi is an Assistant Professor of International Human Resource Management at ICN Business School and holds a PhD from the University of Toulouse Capitole, as part of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action research project on the global mobility of employees. Acil's research explores various aspects of international careers and contributes to the fields of international human resource management, global work, and intercultural competencies. Her research seeks to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by individuals pursuing international careers. Acil also has a solid management experience at L'Oréal, known for encouraging global mobility of its employees and embracing diversity across the globe, which enticed her to further explore global careers.

Frank Albrecht

Frank Albrecht heads the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's division "Philipp Schwartz Initiative and Academic Academic Freedom", which is home to the Philipp Schwartz Initiative as well as the Foundation's work for MSCA4Ukraine and the strategic focus area of academic freedom. Before the 2015 launch of the Philipp Schwartz Initiative, he worked in the Humboldt Foundation's Strategic Planning and the "North America, Australia, New Zealand and Oceania" division. Previously, he worked for a consultancy firm in the United Kingdom and on temporary assignments for UNDP. He holds a degree in General Linguistics and German and American Language and Culture from Bonn University.

Samer Alzaidy

Samer Alzaidy, Policy Officer at Nuffic, has over a decade of experience in international diploma recognition, specializing in refugee qualification recognition and fraud detection. As a Policy Officer and Nuffic's refugees account holder and working group chair, he combines practical experience, policy development and a large network to improve recognition pathways for displaced people. His extensive involvement in European initiatives like the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) and key NARIC projects on fraud detection and refugee qualification recognition positions him as an expert in addressing complex recognition challenges. He is Nuffic's contact for Scholars at Risk Netherlands.

Kristina Berkut

Dr. Kristina Berkut is International Cooperation Manager at Association Bernard Gregory, where she connects researchers with companies and supports their transition into non-academic careers. Since 2020, she has also supported displaced researchers through ABG, notably via the PAUSE and InspirEurope programmes, as well as through EURAXESS/Science4Refugees (training, individual advising and recruitment), while taking

into account the cultural dimensions of professional integration. With a PhD in Intercultural Management and a background in journalism, communication and modern literature, she helps international researchers with non-linear career paths take confident steps towards a well-considered career plan.

Elisabetta Dolzan

Elisabetta Dolzan works at the University of Trento (Italy), where she focuses on the implementation of programmes for refugee and at-risk students and scholars, including the EU-funded SAFE for researchers at risk. Over the recent years, the University of Trento has been hosting some 15 researchers at risk with a wide variety of research and geographical backgrounds. Elisabetta is a lawyer by training; before moving into the education sector, she developed 13+ years of experience in the protection of individuals forced to flee, both in private practice and at UNHCR.

Ursula Maria Egyptien Gad

Ursula Maria Egyptien Gad has been head of DAAD France since 1 July 2023. She is responsible for 41 DAAD university lecturers at universities throughout France. She is a member of the University Council of the DFH / UFA (German-French University) as well as the boards of directors of various German-French cultural centres. As Head of Marketing (2018–2023, DAAD Bonn) and of the GATE-Germany office, a consortium of German universities and research institutions, she was responsible for numerous communication initiatives in the context of the internationalisation of Germany as a centre for higher education and research. Ursula Egyptien holds a doctorate from the University of Cologne. She is a mediator certified by the University of Cologne (INeKO) and licensed by the Federal Association of Mediation.

Frank Geary

Frank Geary is the Director of Scholars At Risk Europe (SAR Europe), the European office of the global Scholars at Risk network hosted at Maynooth University in Ireland. Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission is to protect scholars and promote academic freedom. SAR Europe has been coordinator of the Inspireurope+ and MSCA4Ukraine projects. SAR Europe supports SAR national sections and coordinates with partner networks across Europe to strengthen our collective voice and contribute to informed policymaking for the greater protection of scholars and increased respect for academic freedom worldwide.

Alberto Gregori

Alberto Gregori is a researcher and R&D innovation manager specializing in polymer science, functional materials, and sensing technologies. He currently serves as a Research Fellow at IMT Nord Europe in Douai, France, where he develops and coordinates research projects on advanced gas and particle sensing systems in collaboration with academic and industrial partners. He is also active in the Marie Skłodowska Curie Alumni Association (MCAA), where he serves as vice-chair of the France Chapter and contributes to science communication (MEDNIGHT) and career development activities (mentoring, seminars).

Donatienne Hissard

A specialist of Asia and global challenges, Donatienne Hissard has 22 years of experience in diplomacy and professions in relation with international cooperation in France and abroad (Belgium, China, Italy). She worked until her appointment at the head of Campus France as

deputy Director for Sustainable Development at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. She was appointed Director-General of Campus France by decree of the French President on 11 May 2022. Donatienne Hissard holds a Master's degree in Modern Literature from the University of Paris-Sorbonne, a Licence degree in Chinese Language and Literature from the Inalco, and is a graduate from the Institut d'études politiques de Paris. She speaks English, Spanish and Chinese.

Jean-François Huchet

Jean-François Huchet is a professor at INALCO (National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations), affiliated to the French Institute for Research on East Asia (IFRAE) (INALCO-Paris Cité University-CNRS). He specializes in Asian economics, focusing particularly on the Chinese and Indian economies from a comparative perspective. His research also includes the environmental crisis in China and Chinese capitalism. He is the author of "The Environmental Crisis in China: Developments and Limits of Public Policies" (Presses de Sciences Po, 2016). He served as Deputy Director of the CNRS Asia Network (a scientific interest group) from 2013 to 2017 and is an Associate Member of the Center for Studies on Modern and Contemporary China (CECMC). He edited the journal "Perspectives chinoises" from 2006 to 2011 and was Vice-President of the Scientific Council at INALCO. In January 2019, he was elected as President of INALCO and again for the period 2023-2027. Since January 2025, he has also been Vice-President of the Board of France Universités.

Stefanie Kottowski

Stefanie Kottowski is the project manager for the EU-funded SAFE project, which supports research stays for at-risk doctoral and postdoctoral researchers in the EU. She has been working for the DAAD for almost fifteen years with a strong focus on EU-funded initiatives and projects for vulnerable groups. Previously, she was an advisor for the DAAD's Hilde Domin Programme for students at risk as well as project manager for the EU HOPES projects offering education opportunities for refugees from Syria in the Middle East. Stefanie holds a Bachelor's degree in European Studies and a Master's degree in Cultural Management from Maastricht University.

Khyber Shinwari

Dr. Khyber Shinwari is an immunologist from Afghanistan. He completed his PhD in Biological Sciences with a focus on immunology, where his research centered on inborn errors of immunity. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Freiburg, Germany, working on intestinal macrophages in chronic granulomatous disease. Previously, he served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology at Nangarhar University, Afghanistan.

Laura Lohéac

Laura Lohéac has been the Executive Director of the French hosting Program for scientists in exile, PAUSE, at Collège de France since May 2017 and President of the Association Marianne for Human Rights Defenders since December 2021. As an expert in international affairs, L. Lohéac held several positions in French administration, including the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, and at the office of the Secretary of State for Higher Education and Research, where she established PAUSE.

Marija Mitic

Marija Mitic is a Policy Analyst at the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG

EAC). Marija coordinates feedback to policy activities in the unit, incl. data management, strengthening science-policy links in MSCA and structured uptake of project results in policymaking. She is responsible for several MSCA initiatives supporting researchers at risk and academic freedom. Marija's formal and non-formal training is in linguistics, intercultural leadership and European higher education policy.

Alexandra Pedersen

Alexandra Pedersen holds degrees in Computer Science (BSc) and International Business Management (MSc). She has more than 20 years of experience working for the European Commission. Initially working with projects which aimed at reducing the digital divide between Europe and Latin America and for the past 15 years working for the European Research Executive Agency in the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) programmes. Under MSCA, she has coordinated Engineering & Mathematics evaluation panels for MSCA Individual Fellowships and Staff Exchanges and she has also acted as call coordinator for the MSCA COFUND programme for over five years. Currently, among other horizontal tasks she is project officer and call coordinator for the MSCA4Ukraine and for the SAFE Researchers at Risk projects.

Tim Riches

Tim Riches is a Team Leader on the Fellowship Programme at the Council for At-Risk Academics (Cara). Having worked at Cara for over four years, Tim leads the Active Fellows team in supporting academics to rebuild their careers in safety and integrate into UK institutions. He works closely with universities and other partner organisations to ensure that displaced academics can thrive in safe and supportive environments.

Raha Sabet Sarvestany

Raha Sabet Sarvestany is an academic activist, currently a postdoctoral researcher in Gender Studies with a PhD in Women's Studies who has worked at various academic environments and universities. Her research focuses on human agency and resilience, minority identities, religion, social movements, contemporary Iranian political history, and power.

Marcello Scalisi

Marcello Scalisi is the Director of UNIMED – Mediterranean Universities Union – since 2008. He holds a degree in Historical Sciences and International Cooperation at the Faculty of Literature, Philosophy and Languages of the University of Roma Tre, Italy. He started working at UNIMED in 1998 as a project manager and moved gradually to the coordination of UNIMED's initiatives and projects. He has extensive experience in managing and monitoring international projects. UNIMED is currently a network of more than 180 universities from more than 25 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region, with 12 SubNetworks involving more than 400 researchers, around 40 funded projects, 20 staff people and 15 institutional partnerships with important international organizations. Nowadays, UNIMED is a permanent stakeholder of the European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean.

Sibel Schmidt

Sibel Schmidt studied linguistics, communications, and sociology and spent several years in the private sector organizing conferences and exhibitions to foster knowledge transfer in collaboration with research institutions and the R&D sector. In late 2017, she joined the

University of Cologne, where she initially managed a research center. After completing a degree in science management at TU Berlin, she joined the International Office at the UoC, where she now heads the International Collaboration and Global Engagement unit. Sibel Schmidt also serves as Coordinator of the At-Risk Scholar Support.

Cristina Stefanelli

Cristina Stefanelli is Senior Project Manager at UNIMED, the Mediterranean Universities Union, where she coordinates initiatives on digital transformation, capacity building, and academic cooperation in crisis and fragile contexts. Her work focuses on the intersection of learning innovation and equity in higher education.

Henriette Stoeber

Henriette Stoeber is a Senior Policy Analyst in the European University Association's (EUA) Higher Education Policy Unit, where she works on various policy issues in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the EU, including Erasmus+. Henriette implements all quantitative research projects of the unit. She is also in charge of EUA's activities for students and researchers with an at-risk or refugee(-like) background, and EUA's work on Ukraine. Prior to joining EUA, Henriette has worked at the Hungarian Rectors' Conference and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). She holds a Joint MA in European Public Policy from the University of York (UK) and Central European University (then - Hungary), where she specialised in the field of higher education policy.

Outi Tomperi

Outi Tomperi is a Senior Adviser at the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), working in the unit for international higher education cooperation. She works with support structures and initiatives concerning highly-skilled migrants and at-risk researches. She has previously been involved in two Horizon 2020 Science4Refugees projects at EDUFI and in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation at university level.

Malamati Tsapoutzoglou

Malamati (Tina) Tsapoutzoglou is a psychologist working at the School of Psychology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Besides her lab and teaching work at the School of Psychology, since 2017 she has been working in projects related to the support of refugee/migrant students and researchers, including "S.U.C.RE.: Supporting University Community Pathways for Refugees-Migrants" (Erasmus+ KA2 funded), the "INSPIREUROPE-Initiative To Support, Promote, and Integrate researchers@risk In Europe" (H2020-MSCA-funded) and its successor InspireuropePlus. She is a member of the Advisory Board for the SAFE project and is, also, involved in the operation and the activities of SAR Greece section assisting the steering committee and the Chair of the Section.

Albena Yarcheva

Albena Yarcheva is a PhD student at the Faculty of History, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She works as a Project Manager in the university and is a representative of EURAXESS Bulgaria. Her academic and professional interests focus on cultural heritage, ethnology, cultural anthropology, ecology, international academic cooperation and research dissemination. She is actively involved in European projects, academic events and international collaboration initiatives related to higher education, innovation and researcher mobility.