

SAR Greece Section Building Meeting

Summary of Meeting *Monday, October 12, 2020 - 14:00 to 16:00 (Greek local time (EEST))*

Attendees:

Representatives from: University of the Aegean, Aristotle University, University of Zakho, University of Piraeus, University of Ioannina, University of Thessaly, DAAD Greece, Deree-the American College of Greece, NTUA, Hellenic Open University, Association Of Albanian Graduates and Students in Greece, University of Padova, Organization Earth, Analyseto and SAR Europe staff.

Next Steps towards a Greece section

- We invite you to join the SAR network: In order to do so, please complete the [membership form](#).
- Form a SAR Greece Section Steering Committee in Greece (3-5 universities in Greece); and
- Raise the profile of academic freedom and threats to scholars via events, meetings and other channels in Greece (e.g. requesting inclusion of a steering committee representative at meetings organised by rectors' conference or other higher education events)

Chair: Alexandros Triantafyllidis, Associate Professor of the School of Biology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Summary of Meeting, SAR Europe and AUTH co-hosted an online meeting with Greek universities to continue work towards a SAR Greece Section. The meeting included 29 participants from 12 Greek higher education institutions as well as NGOs. There was considerable interest amongst participants in forming a SAR Greece section, and a good understanding of the benefits of organising at the national level (pooling resources and expertise, stronger voice). SAR staff in Europe and the US will coordinate on next steps which include assistance on how to join the network, responding to related queries and instituting a national steering committee composed of 3 to 5 Greek member institutions.

Presentation on SAR & how SAR Sections works, Denise Roche, Advocacy Manager of SAR Europe, delivered an overview on the work of SAR and its membership structure. Universities, colleges, and other institutional members of the SAR Network have a variety of [opportunities](#) to make a difference in protecting threatened scholars and strengthening the university space. For example, [hosting a scholar](#), [student advocacy seminars](#), the [Academic Freedom Monitoring Project](#) and the [Scholars in Prison Project](#). [SAR Sections](#) are groups of higher education institutions and associations that are nationally or regionally focused and organized specifically to coordinate participation in SAR activities. SAR Sections are often coordinated by a local steering committee or secretariat, in partnership with the SAR Secretariat. To date, SAR has helped launch thirteen SAR sections around the world, with eleven located in Europe.

Presentation on Experiences from SAR Italy, Francesca Helm, Assistant Professor of English and Translation at the University of Padova, Italy and Co-coordinator of SAR Italy and member of the steering committee, gave an illuminating account of SAR Italy's experience. SAR Italy is organised as a Steering Committee and Chair. The Committee meets every 2-3 months, elections after 2 years with a General Assembly meets at least once a year. They also operate a number of working groups. Francesca highlighted a number of benefits of creating a national section/network, including positive collaboration amongst universities to develop strong relations, mutual support; share knowledge and understanding on SAR;



greater visibility to ‘academic freedom’ and to SAR activities; stronger lobbying power; and network for hosting scholars.

General Discussion, Andreas Takis, committee member of SAR Europe’s European Advocacy Committee for Academic Freedom, commented that academic freedom is not a new concern for Greece, and has been encountered in many ways over the years, including in discussions relating to Greece’s role as a receiving country for significant numbers of refugees. There were numerous interventions during the course of the discussion with considerable interest shown in forming a SAR Greece section. The American College of Greece mentioned that they are currently providing the accommodation for seventeen refugee students and that they may be able to offer similar services to at-risk scholars. Organization Earth commented on the importance of civil society and academics coming together on this issue. There was some concern raised about the funding capacity to host scholars, but Sinead O’Gorman from SAR Europe stressed that there were many ways to be active within the network, including through advocacy on behalf of scholars in prison, or workshops and events. For example, the online course [Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters](#) which was developed through the EU funded ‘Academic Refuge’ project involving University of Oslo, SAR, the Unica network and the University of Ljubljana, could be incorporated into the curriculum, while SAR’s Academic Freedom Monitoring project, and student advocacy workshops provide other avenues to get involved. The potential benefits of universities joining together to fundraise for involvement in related work was also mentioned.