April 22, 2022

Dear reader, welcome to the Akno/UNE mentor program. We are aware that some of you are participating in this program in very difficult circumstances, and we hope that the program offers some relief. Below we answer frequently asked questions about the program.

NB Needless to add, perhaps, but we ask mentors of students/scholars/cultural workers at risk of persecution not to share the names of their mentees publicly.

*What are Akno and UNE?*

The Akno/UNE mentor program is launched by the teams behind [Akno](https://akno.network/) – a German academic association that targets students and scholars at risk from Central & Eastern Europe – and UNE or [The University of New Europe](https://neweurope.university/). UNE is an initiative by a group of scholars who plea for a new European research and teaching institution. With this institution, we want to train and teach critical understanding of the acute political, social, and economic challenges that Europe is facing now. With different illiberalization developments in mind, at UNE we plan to allocate a fixed number of places for European students and scholars at risk.

*Does UNE offer positions and/or funding of its own?*

No. UNE is a university in the making. This means that we are not (yet) a running institution – so we do not offer any degrees, accreditation, or career opportunities ourselves.Now that displacement of students, scholars, and cultural workers is urgent, we do match students, scholars, and cultural workers with experienced mentors to help them facilitate matches with existing programs and emergency initiatives. This is the aim of the UNE mentor program.

*What is the UNE mentor program?*

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine the UNE team has concentrated its attention on fleeing, shelter, and emergency initiatives aimed at students, scholars, and cultural workers from Ukraine and also from Belarus and Russia. Our aim is to connect these groups to experienced professionals from elsewhere. Put differently, with the mentor program, we act as matchmakers between qualified people from locations at risk on the one hand and colleagues at knowledge/cultural institutions from elsewhere on the other. We offer participants a resource list to help them get started (see below for details on this list).

*What explains the choice to unite Ukrainian refugee scholars, students and cultural workers with Belarusian and Russian scholars, students and cultural workers in one program?*

The University of New Europe aims to unite critical thinkers and cultural workers across Europe. The same aim explains our striving to use the mentor program to reach out firstly, but not exclusively to Ukrainian students, scholars, and cultural workers at risk. We do so in the awareness that the war is, first and foremost, placing vast amounts of Ukrainian students, scholars, and cultural workers at acute risk in one way or another. And we do so in the awareness that Ukrainian students, scholars, and cultural workers who face or flee the war face different problems and needs than Belarusian and Russian students, scholars, and cultural workers who face or risk political persecution because they express dissent with the authorities.

*If I sign up as Belarusian or Russian mentee, do I risk taking the place of a Ukrainian student, scholar, or cultural worker in need?*

No. Many high-profile scholars and cultural workers want to help colleagues and/or students. We keep soliciting enough mentors to continue to connect all participants to a mentor.

*What is the UNE resource list?*

At the heart of the program is our extensive, crowdsourced resource list – a list with currently available emergency/shelter/sabbatical resources for students/scholars/cultural workers at risk from Ukraine and from Belarus and Russia. [**For the latest version of the resource list, please click the second top-left link (Resources…’) on our site**](https://neweurope.university/). The list is regularly updated. We therefore advise both mentors and mentees to keep revisiting and using updated online versions of the list.

NB1 The majority of programs on our resource list understandably aims at the substantial amounts of Ukrainian students, scholars, and cultural workers who are now at risk; but the list also includes options for Belarusian & Russian students, scholars, and cultural workers at risk.

NB2 This program was launched by academics and many programs target academics; but the list also includes options for artists, journalists, and other cultural practitioners.

*Does the resource list include programs offered by UNE?*

No. The items on the resource list are not our own programs or links. The list is meant to offer participants various options, but we do not have control over these different options ourselves.

*I saw an interesting program, but am unclear about visa or my rights of travel. What to do?*

For mentees from Ukraine, our resource list includes this EU link with helpful, country-specific information on travel and residence rights for mentees from Ukraine fleeing to countries within the European Union. For Belarusian and Russian mentees at risk, there is no clear international policy. Unfortunately, it is also difficult to collect up-to-date information online for most countries. We do advise mentors to reach out directly to potentially interesting host institutions and ask their international offices for advice or help.

*Is English the only working language in the mentor program?*

Yes. To our regret, we do not have the means or team size to facilitate a program in different languages. For pragmatic reasons, to date we therefore rely on English as working language. It is not necessary to speak English perfectly to participate, however.

*Is it possible to participate in the program if I do not have Internet access?*

We realize that stable Internet access is not self-evident for all participants. Once mentees are linked to mentors they can switch to other communication options and communicate outside online channels (*e.g. via Signal or other safer options for mentees who risk persecution*).As our registration takes place online, participants do need Internet access to register, however.

*What are the aims of an UNE mentorship?*

The UNE mentor program is meant to offer mentees four things:

1. **General orientation,** for mentees who are affected by the war in Ukraine or by political persecution in Russia and Belarus. Conversations with an experienced mentor can help, in case mentees feel disoriented, in getting a bit more grip on future possibilities.
2. **Moral support**. Mentoring can act as a lifeline and emotional buffer. Social support, a listening ear, and solidarity can act as barriers against the many distressing things that are now beyond many mentees’ control. *NB In case this is useful: in the resource list (see above for the link), we share links with advice on psychosocial support.*
3. **Practical advice** regarding fleeing/shelter/study/fellowship/sabbatical options. With help of the resource list, mentors and mentees can jointly explore practical possibilities for the time that comes.
4. **Professional networking**. Many of our mentors are established scholars and cultural workers with strong networks. We ask them to explore if those may come of use for the mentee at some point.

*How to start and/or ‘do’ a mentorship?*

Here are three suggestions on how you could start and facilitate a mentorship (NB both mentees and mentors can start the connection, but we advise mentors to take the lead):

1. Organize an online meeting to get to know each other. This meeting can take place on short term – say, within (a) day(s) after we connect you. It can also happen less quickly, if mentees seek long-term advice; if they must prioritize other matters first; if the mentee is not yet (mentally) ready to start; or because basic safety issues merit attention first.
2. At the first meeting, we propose that mentors a. inventorize what the needs and wishes of the mentee are (or merely listen; see also 1. on the need to sometimes take more time to start up), and b. that, based on these needs, they plan e.g. 2-3 follow-up meetings where they jointly explore fleeing/shelter/sabbatical options. We propose that mentors use the resource list in doing so. One option could be that, based on the information that the mentee shared at the first meeting, the mentor browses the resource list and shares potentially useful options at the next meeting.
3. We advise mentors & mentees to join our occasional mentorship consult hours.

*I have registered, but I have not been paired yet. How come?*

We try to work quickly– but we cannot always connect people as rapidly as we want.

*What if the mentor connection that I have been offered is not a good match?*

We cannot always offer perfect matches. We hope that you understand that and that the connections nevertheless offer some help. But if a match truly does not work, do let us know.

*Is a mentorship supposed to lead to a concrete outcome?*

Whether the resource list and the mentor connection lead to success is of course unclear. This is also important for mentors to keep in mind: it is not always possible to succeed in finding solutions. What we do hope is that connections offer some support and relief to start with.

*Thank you for your attention and we send you many good wishes. For further questions please contact us via* *universityofneweurope@protonmail.com**.*