

## **Press release uniko 07. October 2022**

### **Protests in Iran: Austrian universities demand national programme for vulnerable researchers**

**The national universities association Universities Austria (uniko) is shocked by the continuing violence against students, professors and the civil society used by the Iranian regime in a brutal attempt to nip any kind of protest in the bud: “The tragic death of art student Mahsa Amini that provoked a wave of protest must be thoroughly investigated and must not remain without consequences,” says uniko President Sabine Seidler. “Therefore, the Austrian universities extend an urgent appeal to the Austrian federal government and the European Commission to take a clear stance on this issue and to facilitate the reception of vulnerable researchers from Iran seeking protection.” Furthermore, uniko requests the establishment of a national support programme for vulnerable researchers following international examples and aims to provide a new perspective especially to vulnerable women.**

The MORE initiative, which was initiated by uniko and has recently enabled the support of numerous Ukrainian students, could be extended to provide assistance to vulnerable academics and artists in form of a new track. “We have the concepts, the networks, such as Scholars at Risk and the broad support from the universities – what we lack is the support and the necessary resources for the implementation,” say uniko President Seidler. The objective is to quickly provide protection in a non-bureaucratic way and a new perspective to qualified persons who are considered vulnerable by means of a temporary employment at a university and a targeted mentoring programme. At the international and European level, some comparable programmes have already been implemented, which are complemented by national initiatives such as the Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Germany or the PAUSE programme in France. Now would be the right time for Austria to follow these examples.