



Requirements for threat assessments for applications to the Philipp Schwartz Initiative

(last edited: 5 July 2024)

Background

The assessment of the individual risks of a nominated researcher is an essential part of the application and nomination process of the Philipp Schwartz Initiative (PSI). The threat assessments are carried out - in coordination with the Federal Foreign Office - by credible independent organisations with relevant expertise.

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation will announce which partner organisations can conduct threat assessments at the start of the call for applications. However, due to the many crises worldwide, their capacities are limited. We therefore advise you to contact them as soon as possible after the start of the call for applications. Requests for threat assessments can only be made by nominating organisations.

The risk can also be proven by a corresponding residence status in connection with an asylum procedure in the EU. If such a status exists, a separate examination by another organisation is not required.

If these possibilities are not available, a detailed, personal, written statement from a credible third party (e.g. non-governmental organisations) may also be submitted in individual cases. In order to clarify in advance whether the threat assessments from such an organisation can be recognized, the consent of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation must be obtained (see below).

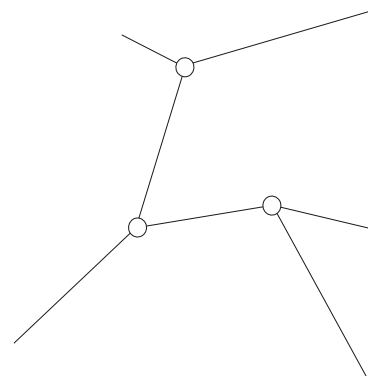
As a guide for applicant institutions and organisations that have not yet prepared a risk assessment for the Philipp Schwartz Initiative before, the requirements for such a third-party statement are listed below.

What does „individual risk“ mean?

Researchers eligible for PSI funding may be exposed to various forms of risk in their country of origin or country of permanent residence, including targeted persecution due to their specific scientific research or teaching activities, for political, religious, ethnic and/or gender motives or due to other identity categories, as well as risk due to armed conflicts.

Time of threat

It is essential that a significant, persistent and acute risk exists at the time of nomination or - in the case of those who have already fled - that it has





occurred in recent years and that the threat exposure and the departure from the country of threat did not take place more than five years ago.

What are the requirements for verifying and confirming a threat?

With regard to the assessing organisation

Organisations that issue threat assessments must fulfill the following criteria:

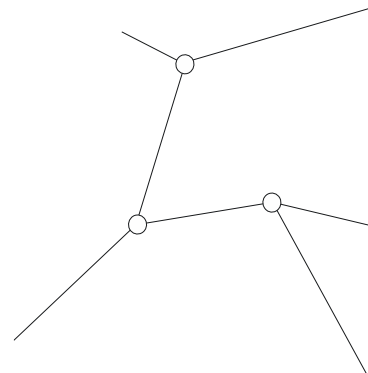
- **Proven regional expertise:** The organisation must have proven knowledge of the region on which it reports as part of its risk assessment.
- **Political independence:** With the help of publicly available information and information provided to the AvH by partners about the organisation (e.g. statutes, links to other state or private actors, funding, previous projects, transparency, people involved), the AvH checks in advance whether there is a very high probability that the organisation is independent with regard to the state or private actors from which the threat emanates.
- **Independence from applicant institutions:** In order to rule out conflicts of interest in the application process, entities issuing threat assessments must be independent from applicant institutions (universities, research institutions).
- **Secure communication channels** to avoid additional risk to nominated researchers.

With regard to the threat assessment

The following aspects must be examined and named in the assessment:

- **Start and duration of threat** (see chapter „Time of threat“)
- **Origin and nature of threat** (see chapter „What does ‘individual risk’ mean“?)

It is essential to give a summary of the facts within the assessment. This must include a description of the individual nature of the threat, for example by providing information on scientific and/or political involvement, "citations", threatened or actual sanctions or imprisonment.





- **Are there documents to support the information provided?** If not, are there persons who can confirm the information provided (without exposing the nominee or the respondent to additional risks)? Can the information provided be confirmed by other verification?

If all these questions are answered in the negative, the risk cannot be sufficiently proven.

Process steps

Before you ask an organisation to provide a threat assessment please contact the AvH (schwartz-initiative@avh.de). The AvH will check whether the organisation and threat assessments issued by this organisation are likely to meet the above requirements and whether the assessment can be recognized. Check and recognition of third-party assessments can only be guaranteed if they are coordinated with the AvH in good time.

If the response is positive, the next steps are as follows:

- The applicant institution contacts the organisation providing the threat assessment on behalf of a candidate.
- The organisation provides feedback as to whether it can provide the assessment - if so, it receives a written description of the risk situation of the nominated candidate via the applicant institution.
- On the basis of this presentation and any other supporting documents, the organisation checks the risk situation for plausibility and/or authenticity.
- The organisation assesses the individual risk of the candidate in a written statement (max. 1 page).
- The applicant institution uploads the statement in the online portal for the Philipp Schwartz Initiative and thus submits it as part of the application.

