

RUNNING FOR COUNCILOR OF SRA

Rui Gaspar



Has a PhD in Psychology, specialization in Social Psychology from the University of Lisbon. He is Coordinator of the Degree in Psychology since February 2020 and of the post grad course in Public Health Communication since February 2019, at the Catholic University of Portugal, and also board member and Principal Investigator at the Catolica Research Centre for Psychological, Family & Social Wellbeing (CRC-W). He is member of the scientific committee - “Risk Communication” panel - at the Portuguese Food Safety & Economic Authority and was a Behavioural Sciences Task Force to fight COVID-19 member, nominated by the Portuguese government. He is Associate Editor of the scientific journal Human Behaviour & Emerging Technologies (Wiley/Hindawi). His research focuses on Emerging Risks Perception, Risk Communication and Crisis Communication, and Information and Communication Technologies use. Examples of thematic focuses of the research are: extreme weather events and climate change; disease outbreaks and pandemics; conventional meat and cultured meat; human enhancement technologies and artificial intelligence; environmentally sustainable behaviours.

The past and present, with SRA:

I am current President of the Society for Risk Analysis – Europe (SRA-E), member of the SRA-E Iberian Chapter and the Society for Risk Analysis (SRA) Risk Communication Specialty Group, and other SRA specialty groups. My first contact with SRA was in 2001, when I assisted the SRA-Europe Annual Conference organization in Lisbon, Portugal. The following years brought increasingly closer participation with SRA and SRA-E, particularly in the last decade, with various participations in both the SRA and the SRA-E Annual Conferences. 16 years after SRA E2001, I was the organizing committee president of the 2017 SRA-Europe Annual Conference in Lisbon, Portugal. In 2017 I received the SRA Presidential Merit Award, “in recognition of dedication to SRA and efforts to improve and enhance the Society’s functioning and governance, activities and programs, and visibility and vitality around the world”.

The future, with SRA – statement of goals:

If elected SRA council member, I aim for a stronger SRA community and a stronger Risk Science, as key drivers of a more resilient society, grounded on three strategic areas:

1) Risk science advocacy

Goal: Increase support for risk science advocacy activities. Targets: decision makers in relevant

governmental and non-governmental organizations within and across countries and regions.

In a recent SRA newsletter, the President of SRA - Prof. Ragnar Lofstedt - referred that we need to “ensure greater presence of the Society and its members within policy circles” (July 2022, SRA Newsletter). Accordingly, the SRA Risk Science Committee is “currently working on a science advocacy framework through which we can work to increase the impact of our science”. Once this framework is created, the next step will be to operationalize it within and across different countries and regions of the world, adapting it to their specificities. We will need to identify key actors in policy circles that can work with us as agents of change to increase the integration and impact of risk science in activities and decisions where risk science should be a core component. We will also need the support of our SRA community, in the form of ideas and volunteers to make this happen, as this is key for the advocacy activities’ success.

2) Risk science literacy

Goal: Increase support for science literacy resources and activities. Targets: the public (with a special attention to vulnerable population groups), non-risk experts and relevant stakeholders.

During the pandemic, it became clear that the meaning of “risk” (as our society defined in its Risk Glossary) is still not fully comprehended. It was often considered to be the “probability” of SARS-CoV-2 contagion, defining it in relation to exposure to a biological hazard (the virus) rather than defining “risk in relation to the consequences (effects, implications)” (SRA Risk Glossary, 2018, p. 4) of such exposure, i.e. the consequences of having the disease (COVID-19) for physical and mental health, the economy, social relationships, national health systems, etc. This is one example that, despite the fact that Risk Science has been working with and for society for many decades - from climate change, to cyber risks, from nuclear energy to natural catastrophes, and many other societal challenges – there is still much to do to increase the public, non-risk experts and other stakeholders understanding of risk and related concepts.

3) Risk science community’s social capital

Goal: Increase support for risk science community(ies) activities within and across regions, to enhance its social capital. Target: The SRA community(ies).

One key for the risk science success as a field, has been the Risk Analysis community, as a driver of social change. As a multi and inter-disciplinary community, it gathers people and organizations with different scientific-technical backgrounds and expertise, from various professional contexts. It is essential to maintain this community alive, through vivid and relevant discussions between members. There is still much to discuss, still so much to do.

This can be achieved through the 1) creation of new and strengthening of existent Regional Chapters, by enhancing networks within and between chapters; 2) the strengthening of collaborations between SRA-E and SRA and its regional organizations, through the organization of joint initiatives; 3) strengthening early career professionals engagement with the SRA Student and Young Professionals (SYP) Committee by creating networks of early career professionals in risk analysis in each SRA Regional Organizations/Chapters to collaborate with SYP; 4) strengthening senior career professionals engagement with SRA through the creation of

a Council of SRA Fellows, to provide strategic consultation for the SRA executive committee.

Given my past and present engagement with SRA, I very much look forward to future new challenges and collaborations in the next decades!