eua **EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION**

BRIEFING

Impact of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine on the Ukrainian higher education sector

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European University Association asbl

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INTRODUCTION

This brief provides a snapshot of how the Russian Federation's invasion is impacting Ukraine's university sector, and the measures taken by Ukrainian authorities and the higher education sector. It also looks into how the European Union and the European higher education community have responded.

First and foremost, it serves an informational purpose, and as a basis for stepping up support to our Ukrainian colleagues, during and after the war. All information is up to date as of 22 April 2022. As the war continues, and at present developments are very unpredictable, EUA may provide an update at some stage.

In this regard, any comment or addition is welcome, and can be submitted by email to hepu-surveys@eua.eu.

UKRAINIAN HIGHER EDUCATION'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MoES) continues to function, and to provide overview reports on the impact of the invasion on education and science. Together with UNICEF, it is in the process of establishing data on the number and whereabouts of displaced students and staff. Currently around a quarter of Ukraine's population of 44 million is either internally displaced (7.1 million people), or out of the country (more than 5 million people), and this may well be replicated among the country's 1.3 million post-secondary students.

At present, there is no real indication of how many students and staff still continue to study and work, nor by what means and under what circumstances. Strong efforts are being made to continue higher education and research activities, depending on the region, with some interruptions caused by military actions.

In parts of the country, higher education and research institutions have been damaged or destroyed. Since the start of the war, the MoES has launched an interactive dashboard with daily updates on the numbers of damaged and destroyed education institutions: as of 21 April 2022, their numbers amount to 1039 and 99 respectively. A ministry report of 16 April mentions that 45 professional pre-higher and higher education institutions were damaged and two were completely destroyed. Already at the beginning of April 2022, the property and premises of around 58 scientific institutions had been significantly damaged, amounting to nearly 15% of the research infrastructure of higher education and research institutions, and these numbers continue to grow. Some institutions offer teaching to students from institutions no longer in operation, either on-site or online.

Facilitated by their experience during the Covid-19 crisis, by the end of March 2022 about half of the higher education institutions had switched to distance learning, via online provision. This number is likely to increase, for various reasons. For example, physical premises that can no longer be used due to destruction or are used for other purposes such as housing displaced people. Online provision also allows more regular attendance compared to physical classes, is safer for staff and students than physical attendance and allows attendance from abroad. It is also perceived as a means to keep the diaspora connected: according to testimonies from Ukrainian colleagues, many academics continue to teach at their universities while living abroad. In similar circumstances, many students continue to study in the hopes of completing their programmes.

Moreover, this online provision should allow some of the 80,000 international students enrolled at Ukrainian higher education institutions to continue their studies, and potentially finish their degrees. Most international students have left Ukraine for neighbouring or other European countries. Some of them have been repatriated to their home countries, with uncertainty regarding if and how they can continue their studies, and importantly, whether their study periods at Ukrainian institutions will be recognised abroad. It should be recalled that many of these students came to study in Ukraine as they could not access study programmes in their home countries, in particular in professional disciplines such as medicine, dentistry and engineering.

Higher education as part of the national resilience and rebuilding strategy

Currently in Ukraine, the continuation of education at all levels, including higher education, is a strong priority in view of the benefits for individuals, but also as a factor for national resistance and resilience. Major structures in the higher education system, such as the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MoES), the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, ENIC Ukraine (in charge of recognition) and the National Erasmus+ Office, continue their work with part of their staff relocated to other countries.

Services and strategic goals have been adapted in response to the situation. Here, ensuring a comprehensive digital transformation of education and science in Ukraine is one of the key strategies of the MoES. Development of e-admission and e-examination tools, as well as building partnerships with foreign higher education institutions to receive free online access to their learning materials for Ukrainian higher education institutions are among the top priorities.

In its emergency plan from 15 March 2022, the MoES puts a strong emphasis on post-war needs and plans for the education and science fields, which will require restoration and rebuilding. While the physical destruction caused by the war will be a challenge for the rebuilding of Ukraine, another major concern is the brain drain resulting from people leaving Ukraine, including academics and students.

The MoES therefore favours approaches by which students would continue to study at Ukrainian institutions and receive a Ukrainian degree. In this regard, it encourages joint and double degree partnerships between Ukrainian and foreign universities, as well as with non-formal education providers. Grant support schemes may include obligations to return to home universities to obtain the diploma or to focus on joint programmes with one of the diplomas awarded by a Ukrainian university.

Offering study opportunities, and mitigating the risk of brain drain are also among the motivations for the Ukrainian Global University (UGU) - "a trusted platform launched by leading Ukrainian educational institutions and organizations, in partnership with the Office of the President of Ukraine and endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine". It addresses three different groups: international education institutions which are invited to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with UGU; Ukrainian students who are provided with guidance and training when they apply to UGU; and volunteers who are invited to be tutors, mentors and collaborators for the initiative. Students applying to UGU would take a free language test on Duolingo, pass interview and coaching stages and apply to study at a UGU partner institution. This mainly concerns students who are to start a study programme at the level of bachelor's, master's or PhD, rather than those who wish to complete a programme they had already commenced in Ukraine. So far, 36 institutions from across Europe, the US and Canada have joined.

Ukrainian authorities have secured agreements with Coursera, Udemy and EdX on the provision of free-of-charge online courses hosted by these platforms to Ukrainian students, thus allowing students to continue their study programmes. Completion of such courses would be recognised at all Ukrainian higher education institutions and colleges, as facilitated by the recently adopted national regulation. Up to 25% of the learning outcomes of any study programme delivered by professional pre-higher and higher education institutions in Ukraine can come from a non-formal or informal learning provider, and in the case of IT studies this benchmark rises to 35%.

Looking to the immediate future, the MoES conducted a needs analysis of the most pressing challenges and anticipated solutions that could facilitate building partnerships and managing education in an emergency. The Ukrainian Ministry has also launched a dedicated webpage on support to Ukraine in wartime with two subsections "SWG Education and Science meetings in wartime" and "How to organize learning for Ukrainian children abroad".

A Strategy on the Development of Higher Education in 2022-2032 (in Ukrainian) was published by the MoES on 14 April 2022. It contains a roadmap for rebuilding and continuation of the higher education system in the post-war period and has an Action Plan as an annex.

Some further examples of Ukrainian-led initiatives are an [Info Science Bot](#), which targets Ukrainian researchers and so far has around 2500 users, the [Think Tanks Liaison Office in Brussels](#) offering resources for researchers and students, and UAScience.reload by Ukrainian scholars from around the world.

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS AND ACTIONS

European governments and civil society have strongly condemned the Russian Federation's invasion and expressed solidarity with Ukraine and its people. Statements were followed in due course by action, mainly in the form of EU sanctions against the Russia Federation, and also concrete measures to support Ukraine, including in higher education and research. The EU, national governments and donor organisations came forward with a wide range of support initiatives, in particular for individual scholars and students.

Immediately after the start of the war, the European higher education and research community expressed its united support to Ukrainian universities, students and staff. On 2 March 2022, EUA issued a [Statement on Ukraine](#) condemning the aggression in the strongest possible terms. Through Twitter, EUA compiled a [list of statements](#) that express support to Ukrainian higher education and research as well as a [list of concrete offers of support](#) to Ukrainian students and academics from European universities and research institutions.

EUA has engaged its national rectors' conferences in extensive dialogue to facilitate information sharing and the exchange of experiences and good practices related to the situation in Ukraine and its impact on European countries and their university sectors. On 11 March, EUA convened a meeting of the Secretaries General of countries neighbouring Ukraine, including, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Moreover, universities and university organisations across Europe, but particularly in countries neighbouring Ukraine have actively engaged with hands-on measures in support for Ukrainians who have left the country.

While the actions of universities include support for the population at large, providing accommodation, transport, medical care etc., specific measures supporting students and academics appeared more rapidly than in 2015, as Syrian refugees came to Europe. This might be partly because of the geographical closeness, and the fact that already pre-war, larger Ukrainian student and staff communities were present in neighbouring countries, in particular in Poland. The fact that Ukraine is part of the Bologna Process certainly plays a role.

A major difference to 2015 is that the EU Directive ([Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 – 4 March 2022](#)) temporarily provides people fleeing from Ukraine, i.e. Ukrainian citizens, as well as residents with third country nationalities that hold temporary visas in Ukraine, similar rights to EU citizens, with unrestricted access to the labour market and education. However, not all EU member states have yet fully transposed the directive, and there is some diversity in its implementation as the member states can apply either the Council Decision or adequate protection under their national law for third country nationals.

In addition to support for academics and students who left Ukraine, there is a growing awareness for the need to provide support to the Ukrainian higher education sector if it is to continue to function. Apart from the provision of funding and material support, enhanced exchange and collaboration between Ukrainian and European universities and organisations would be a means to support this.

European Union responses

The European Union has taken various large-scale actions to facilitate support mechanisms for Ukrainian academics and students.

Following the above mentioned [Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382](#), on 8 March, the European Commission adopted a proposal for [Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE)](#) allowing member states and regions to provide emergency support to people fleeing Ukraine followed by additional simplifications of the financing procedure and an increase of the pre-financing adopted in [early April](#). In mid-March, Commissioner Mariya Gabriel issued a [statement](#) on measures to support learners and educational staff fleeing Ukraine. Institutions benefiting from ongoing Erasmus+ Key Action 2 collaboration partnership

projects in areas such as inclusion, diversity and integration of refugees may, on a voluntary basis, reallocate part of their funds in support of activities for Ukrainian refugees. Under Key Action 1 (mobility), universities in EU member states and third countries associated to Erasmus+ will be able to offer long-term study mobility for up to 12 months (the funding support excludes summer holiday periods), short-term study mobility, short-term training or teaching mobility (for staff) and traineeships supported by Erasmus+ funds. Students from Ukraine on long-term mobility will be eligible for grants of between €1,050 and €1,150 per month to contribute to their travel, accommodation and subsistence costs, supplemented by a top-up of €250 per month for disadvantaged students. The receiving institutions are expected to take on the tasks of the sending institutions where needed, for example in offering preparation courses, general assistance and the signature of mobility documents. This measure is foreseen to be extended to 2022. In addition, the Commission has proposed, for approval by the European Parliament and the Council, the frontloading of about €200 million from the Erasmus+ budget of 2027 to 2023.

On 23 March, the European Commission issued a communication on "Welcoming those fleeing war in Ukraine: Readying Europe to meet the needs", setting out measures not only to address immediate needs, but also for access to education, housing and jobs. Under the pan-European EURAXESS initiative, the EC launched the ERA4Ukraine webpage providing Ukrainian researchers with an overview of all existing actions at European and national levels. This includes information about the Horizon4Ukraine initiative under the Horizon Europe programme.

There are ongoing discussions about the Commission awarding a €25 million direct aid package of Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA) grants to help researchers from Ukraine. It is most likely that the Inspireurope project consortium, which includes EUA, or a subset of its members will be awarded the contract in a single beneficiary procedure.

Under the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), the Commission Support Group for Ukraine (SGUA), together with the EU Delegation to Ukraine, have re-purposed up to €200 million worth of ongoing projects, approved a €120 million grant in the form of a State and Resilience Building Contract and allocated an emergency support programme of €330 million. These actions aim to strengthen Ukraine's resilience by increasing the capacity of the government, economic actors, independent media and civil society to withstand the impact of the war and contribute to the recovery of the country. There are ongoing discussions on the possibility of a dedicated scholarship scheme for Ukrainian students to be developed under the budget of DG NEAR.

Recognition of study periods and qualifications

On 5 April 2022 the European Commission published a recommendation on the recognition of academic and professional qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, thus aiming to provide national authorities with guidance and practical advice to ensure a quick, fair and flexible recognition process.

At the request of the Commission, the European Training Foundation has created a resource hub that aims to support recognition, education and work for the people fleeing Ukraine. It contains information for Ukrainians about the recognition, education and work in the EU member states, and information for member states on the Ukrainian education system and qualifications in English and Ukrainian.

In addition, to bring more clarity and understanding on the matters of recognition of academic qualifications, several events, discussions and exchanges have been organised:

◊ Some exchanges were organised under the umbrella of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees project implemented by the Council of Europe. The latter has put together a number of tools that can be immediately applied by educators and educational authorities.

◊ ENIC-NARIC network organised a webinar on the recognition of credentials from Ukraine. The network has a database developed under the Erasmus+ Q-entry project which includes relevant information on Ukrainian qualifications and can be used to support the recognition process.

◈ The Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission in cooperation with CIMEA, the Italian ENIC-NARIC centre, organised a webinar on Fast-track Recognition of Ukrainian Academic Qualifications. Information about the Ukrainian education system and available tools for verification of academic qualifications were presented in detail. The event was attended by more than 1600 participants. Materials from the webinar, alongside other useful information on the Ukrainian higher education system, are available at the CIMEA webpage "Focus Ukraine".

Higher education collaboration with Russia

In March, the MoES and Ukrainian academic communities called on European and national institutions and organisations to suspend all kinds of international collaboration with Russian institutions at the systemic and institutional level, to stop funding research and educational projects with Russian institutions, and to suspend Russian membership in international organisations.

Following a statement (in Russian) by the Russian Union of Rectors (RUR) supporting the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation issued on 4 March, EUA suspended 14 Russian member universities whose leaders have signed the statement, as it is diametrically opposed to the European values that they committed to when joining EUA. Other European and national higher education organisations have taken similar steps and invited their member institutions to suspend, or at least carefully assess, exchange and collaboration with Russian organisations and institutions. At the same time, some Russian academics have voiced their opposition to the invasion. But open dissent remains an exception. Media reports confirm that many Russians, and among them many intellectuals and younger people, have left and indeed continue to leave the country. The BBC reports that 25,000 Russian have arrived in Georgia since the beginning of the war, while Deutsche Welle refers to "the largest exodus since the October Revolution of 1917".

All of this also aligns with calls of caution to continue informal exchanges with Russian higher education colleagues, also to enable information flows, regarding both the war in Ukraine and conditions for Russian students and scholars in Europe. Reports by Russian authorities and in Russian media that Russian students have been suspended from their studies at European universities and sent home have not been confirmed, and indeed they have been classified as disinformation.

The European Commission suspended its cooperation with Russia on research and innovation from early March and launched sanctions in several rounds. On 8 April Commissioner Mariya Gabriel announced that the participation of Russian public bodies or related entities in all ongoing grant agreements will be terminated and all related payments suspended under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, Euratom, and Erasmus+. This includes the termination of the participation of Russian public entities or bodies in Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). New contracts or agreements with Russian public bodies or related entities will not be concluded under any of these programmes. At the same time, Russian students, scholars and academic staff will remain eligible for MSCA fellowships, European Research Council (ERC) principal investigator grants, Erasmus+ exchanges and degree mobilities, with a thorough screening against EU sanction lists to be conducted. Student and staff exchanges to Russia will also remain eligible. Similarly, Russian individuals, youth, and civil society organisations will remain eligible for participation in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps youth actions, with a thorough screening to be conducted. Major national schemes for higher education collaboration have taken similar steps across Europe.

The Council of Europe (COE) suspended Russia's rights of representation on 25 February. On 15 March, the Russian Government, in turn, announced its withdrawal from the COE and from the European Convention on Human Rights. On 16 March a decision was adopted by which the Russian Federation ceased to be a member of the COE, and on 17 March, all relations with Belarus were suspended.

Russia remains, however, a signatory of the Cultural Convention, which is a prerequisite for EHEA membership. But the rights of representation of both Russia and Belarus in the Bologna Process were suspended on 12 April, following a statement on the Russian Federation's invasion to Ukraine signed by the overwhelming majority of the parties to the Bologna Process, Ministries and "consultative members", including EUA. According to recent press news Russia is now considering ending its participation in the Bologna Process.

OUTLOOK

What are the best ways to support Ukrainian higher education institutions and their members? As the war continues, there is not one definite answer to this question, also as the situation and needs can change rapidly.

There are a few points for consideration at this stage:

1. Information sharing, collaboration and coordination

There is significant willingness to help and support, at the level of governments and higher education institutions. It is important that the different actors, including Ukrainian government and institutions, exchange information and collaborate in order to assess and respond to needs, pool the limited resources to achieve the sustainable approaches that Ukraine will need in the medium and long term.

2. Sharing of existing good practices in hosting students, academics and researchers

Over the past years, many European higher education systems and universities have developed good practices in support and integration measures for students and academics, at times in the scope of Erasmus+ and other EU (co-)funded projects. These should be shared and updated, in light of the new requirements and opportunities, also due to the different status of citizens and residents arriving from Ukraine. A lot can be gained from interinstitutional learning, through information exchanges, within and between countries. This would also provide an angle to compare the transposition and implementation of the above-mentioned EU Directive, and push for better use of the opportunities that it brings.

3. Funds and programmes to support Ukrainian higher education

The European Commission and many member states started to adapt their programmes for higher education and research collaboration to the situation in Ukraine, and also established some additional funds. Institutions should turn to their national Erasmus+ agencies, MSCA contract points etc. and inquire about the possibility to use Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and also structural funds.

Further adaptation and enhancement of existing European and national higher education and research funding programmes might be necessary, to ensure sufficient support for Ukrainian higher education institutions and their members, and their research and education collaboration with European universities. "Universities without walls" are equally valid and important in times of crisis, maybe even more so. Synergies and collaboration with other sectors and a wider range of actors should be encouraged and enabled.

4. Applying the Bologna Principles – enhancing the European dimension of higher education

Ukraine is part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and has adopted the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Therefore, apart from solidarity, this is also a test case for some of the Bologna principles, including recognition of study periods and qualifications and mobility. In several EU countries, the arrival of Ukrainian students has also triggered flexible processes for granting access and an overdue transposition of the Art. VII of Lisbon Recognition Convention into national regulation, allowing institutions to take in students without documentation.

5. Support the supporters

Alongside the provision of individual grants for academics and students, the hosting higher education institutions and supporting organisations in Europe need sustainable funding support. They often provide support with their own limited resources and based on the voluntary commitment of staff and students. Given that nobody knows how long this war will last, it will be important to ensure that these resources are not exhausted.

6. Support for Ukrainian higher education at institutional and system levels

Support measures need to consider capacity building for Ukraine's higher education institutions, both due to the likelihood that the present crisis will endure and with a view to rebuilding after the war. Apart from the support provided by the EU and EU member states, interuniversity partnerships, while difficult to establish in the current situation, could be a means of support, and could also contribute to accelerated rebuilding after the war. Where possible, this could also include collaborative study course and programme provision.

7. Online education provision & tech support

Similarly to what has been experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, current online provision in Ukraine is more an emergency measure than a fully online study experience. One key question relates to how this can be enhanced in the short and medium term, also through collaboration with European and international partner institutions. This includes testing and examinations, and also e-administration, all measures that must now become default. So far, most processes are partly or fully paper based. In the immediate future, this would also require access to online resources (libraries, labs, research repositories, etc.), and hands-on technology support and IT equipment. This is also an investment for the future, and can provide a basis for enhancement and rebuilding after the war.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

There are many initiatives and activities in support of Ukrainian higher education and research. The following provides some selected links, that give access to key information and websites that facilitate information sharing, networking and collaboration.

◈ EUA has a <u>dedicated website page on Ukraine</u> which leads to major resources, comprising among others a frequently updated Twitter list that gathers <u>Statements from national and European associations</u> in support of Ukrainian universities and also <u>Concrete support offers</u> to Ukrainian students and academics from European universities and research institutions. This is an opportunity to share your institutions' initiatives.

◈ The <u>Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of Ukraine</u> provides extensive information in English.

◈ The National Erasmus+ Office of Ukraine produced short comprehensive videos about the Ukrainian <u>higher education system</u> and <u>VET system</u>.

◈ A <u>regularly updated overview</u> of countries' education responses to host Ukrainian students, including for higher education can be found on UNESCO website.

◈ The <u>Science for Ukraine</u> website provides an overview map on initiatives (distinguished by whether they address students or researchers), mainly in Europe and North America.

◈ <u>Information about recognition of qualifications and access to education and work</u> is provided on a platform by the European Training Foundation.

◈ The Council of Europe has a new website on <u>Education in times of crisis</u> which gathers resources on topics such as recognition, integration and language learning, and also on national initiatives for supporting Ukraine.

◈ Information and advice for supporting and hosting <u>academics</u> and <u>students</u> at risk, has been developed under the InHERE project, and the Inspireurope project, targeting European and national governments, organisations and higher education institutions.

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The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, websites and publications.