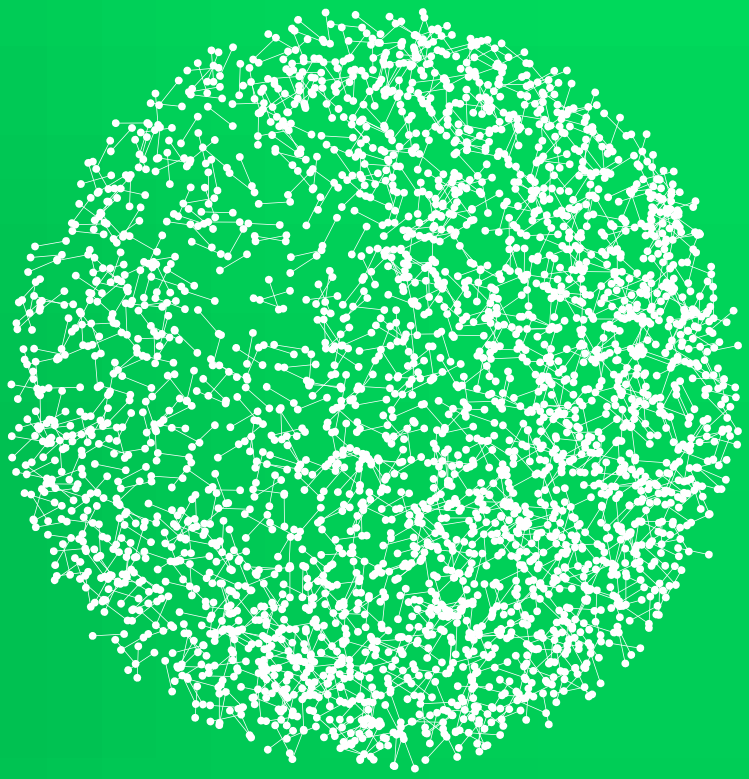
Conference on the Ukraine Crisis

RESPONSES FROM THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH SECTORS



CONFERENCE REPORT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International Science Council
The global voice for science
Kristiania University College
#ScienceForUkraine
allea All European Academies

The conference took place virtually on 15 June 2022, from 09:00 to 14:00 CEST.

Conference host:	International Science Council (ISC)
Organizing committee:	Kristiania University College
	Science for Ukraine
	All European Academies (ALLEA)
Technical support:	Conference Consultancy South Africa

This report was drafted by Erin Buisse (ISC Senior Consultant), Joel Bubbers (ISC Senior Consultant) and Vivi Stavrou (Executive Secretary of the Committee for Freedom and Responsibility in Science and ISC Senior Science Officer).

DOI: 10.24948/2022.04

REFERENCE: International Science Council. 2022. *Conference on the Ukraine Crisis: Responses from the European higher education and research sectors*. Paris, International Science Council.

Design: Mr Clinton

Cover: Freepik.com

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

MAIN DISCUSSIONS

The *Conference on the Ukraine Crisis: Responses from the European higher education and research sectors*, held virtually on 15 June 2022, brought together over 150 stakeholders across Europe, including many Ukrainians, to reflect on assistance provided to date for academics, scientists[1], researchers and students who are at-risk[2], displaced[3] or refugees[4] as a result of the war in Ukraine, and to put forward recommendations for mid- to long-term support, including the rebuilding of the higher education and research sectors after the conflict. At the time of the conference, nearly five months had passed since the war broke out in February 2022, forcibly displacing millions of Ukrainians, including some 8 million seeking refugee or temporary protection status outside the country[5] and at least another 7.7 million internally displaced[6]. While it is clear that the humanitarian response is moving from the immediate emergency phase into that of a protracted crisis, there is a call from the Ukrainian government to look towards the reconstruction of the country after the war, and thus to developing assistance programmes that will enable people to return once it is safe to do and allow the Ukrainian higher education and research sectors to thrive.

> **Ukraine is an extraordinary crisis of existential magnitude for its citizens, for its infrastructure, including both its physical and human infrastructures of education and science. But it is a crisis that has existential implications extending much more broadly. The potential for the deep and lasting geostrategic divisions which may now have been created to have significant impact not only on geostrategic matters but on the critical agendas of the global commons, including sustainability, is real.**
>
> **Peter Gluckman, ISC President**

The right to education and science and to benefit from advances in science and technology is enshrined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[7], as is the right to engage in scientific inquiry, pursue and communicate knowledge, and associate freely in such activities. Unfortunately, academic and scientific freedom is under attack in many places, including in Ukraine, which threatens both individual scientists and also higher education and science systems and infrastructures. The loss of a country's science system deals a damaging blow not only to domestic scientific investment, teaching and research, and to long-term growth, but given that modern science is a global activity,

also to the global network of scientists and research infrastructure. The conveners of this conference were particularly interested in maintaining academic and scientific cooperation and in exploring how science recovers from catastrophe, specifically in this case by creating collaborative responses for rebuilding a modern science and research system in Ukraine.

While many Ukrainian academics, students and researchers are seeking safety and opportunities away from the crisis, conference speakers highlighted the need to support Ukrainians remaining within the country's borders. Many of these individuals may either be unable to leave the country due to certain restrictions or choose to remain despite facing numerous challenges. There is a need to assist ongoing research efforts in Ukraine; suggested solutions include financial support for remote working contracts, technological and laboratory supplies, access to facilities and virtual opportunities for research, teaching and studying. Research grants are competitive and favour the established and the exceptional, and not the scholars and researchers who are not working on or leading research projects. There is a need to consider financial support for National Research Foundation of Ukraine grants that have been interrupted by funds being redirected towards the war effort – both competitive grants and grants aimed at keeping staff at work. Some projects would be able to start or continue their work, but without this funding they cannot, which leads to systematic failure.

Continuity and access to learning remains challenging, especially for students and teachers who remain in dangerous regions. In safer regions, access may be hindered due to damaged infrastructure and internet networks, or limited supplies. Air-raids, often several times per day, cause constant interruptions.

Honourable Serhiy Shkarlet,
Minister of Education and Science, Ukraine

Many current opportunities to support academics, researchers and students are residential, based in host countries, and are hugely beneficial to those who can access them. There are often restrictions or limitations on who is eligible. Science for Ukraine noted that in its database of opportunities and grants for affected researchers and scientists, virtual mobility grants make up only a fraction of available grants and opportunities. Increasing such grants would allow for remote work, which would enhance flexibility, for example allowing the researcher to remain in Ukraine or to have the possibility of carrying their grant over to a third country or back to their home country on their return. In addition, mobility allowances are needed to support scholars with families who do relocate to other countries.

A collective, centralized and proactive approach to providing support, such as establishing a dedicated European fellowship scheme that includes facilitating access to existing European funding programmes, may be a solution to address challenges faced by independent institutions or governments. The European University Association noted that there is a lot of potential for educational collaboration between European universities, which can be supported by European and national programmes such as inter-university partnerships. This could contribute to accelerated rebuilding and enhancement of Ukrainian higher education after the war.

The support of individual Russian institutions and persons is a contested topic. Some organizations, like the International Science Council, have decided that while denouncing the invasion of Ukraine and the atrocities, it is important to enable pathways for dialogue and peacebuilding after the war. They advocated that efforts can and should be made to support those in Russia who protested against the war and may be under significant risk. Other individuals and organizations have blocked support for or engagement with such individuals and organizations.

There was, however, collective agreement about the important value of science, research and higher education, which should be protected and preserved during a crisis. Speedy access to quality higher education and to research activities following disruption and displacement is critical in supporting stability, as well as in strengthening a country's resilience to future shocks. There is a need to have more sustainable structures in place that can deal with crises like Ukraine, enabling global responses to be better prepared in the future.

As an agency responding to one humanitarian crisis after another, there is a need to have a more predictable and dependable response to the higher education and scientific sectors in the emergency context. We need to learn from these recent experiences with Ukraine and Afghanistan.

Manal Stulgaitis,
Refugee Education and Complementary Pathways
Expert, United Nations Refugee Agency

> **Scientific collaboration and science across national borders require investment and effort. Collaboration has a cost that funders often do not choose to recognize. But it has benefits – it creates resilience. Where there is collaboration, students and fellows and scientists can find temporary homes; when they return, they can bring equipment and reagents, they will bring ideas and new colleagues, and a faster recovery is possible. Scientific collaboration across borders should become seen as a critical strategic need by all countries.**
>
> **Peter Gluckman, ISC President**

COLLECTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations focus on high-level policies aimed at national governments, multilateral organizations, the global science ecosystem of international science organizations and systems, individual disciplinary unions and associations, and universities. Suggested actions for the implementation of each recommendation are outlined in detail in the conference report.

Seven recommendations were made for supporting academics, researchers, students and higher education and science systems affected by conflict and catastrophe.

1 RESPONSIBILITY

Governments, the higher education, scientific and research community must work together to deliver their national commitments to recognizing and supporting the right to education and science within their country.

RATIONALE

National governments have already signed and committed to international instruments and documents, but further action is needed to ensure their implementation within their country. At a minimum, particular attention should be paid by national governments, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to fulfilling their obligations by:

→ Acknowledging the fundamental right to science and education, including the right to access quality higher education, participate in and enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications;

→ Putting in place management, programmatic and financial mechanisms to protect higher education and scientific personnel, systems and infrastructure during human-induced disasters and war, and to enable recovery and rebuilding efforts. National governments must be capable of rapidly scaling these mechanisms, should there be an emergency situation in their country, with clearly identified contact points and reporting lines to responsible ministries.

2 INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Governments, the higher education, scientific and research community must work together to deliver their national commitments for supporting the participation of at-risk, displaced and refugee scholars and researchers in their home country or a third country if necessary.

RATIONALE

There is an urgent need for national governments to uphold their commitments under Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and be held accountable as agreed in these treaties. These high-level commitments specifically outline funding and support across international borders and a global response to support countries affected by crisis or conflict. Measures to fulfil such commitments will need financing and policies that address how to keep existing educational and research systems functioning, and the provision of support mechanisms and protection to scholars and researchers, regardless of their displacement status or location due to a crisis. They will need to include standing structures, budget lines and policies to support higher education and research systems across borders, on both a temporary and long-term basis.

3 OPENNESS

The international scientific and research community should empower conflict-affected science systems with the means to rebuild by fully adopting the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation on open science.

RATIONALE

'Open science'[8] represents the democratization of science and, in an interconnected scientific world, is crucial for enabling fragile or conflict-affected countries to rebuild or develop their higher education and research systems because of the otherwise prohibitive costs of participating in the current 'closed' scientific model. Likewise, open science is essential for enabling displaced scholars and researchers to access educational and research resources and continue their work.

4 INCLUSION

All stakeholders must ensure that programmes and opportunities are designed inclusively to avoid exclusion of specific groups of at-risk, displaced and refugee scholars and researchers based on characteristics such as language, family status, gender, disability, cultural background and psychosocial wellbeing.

RATIONALE

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach that can provide an adequate response. Instead, programmes and opportunities need to have an inclusion lens that considers the specific needs of different participant groups when planning and designing support measures. This includes the need for more holistic or integrated assistance to address the psychological, social, financial, physical and professional needs and wellbeing of individuals and their families.

5 MOBILITY

Stakeholders must work together to develop global mechanisms and coordination structures that facilitate secure academic and scientific mobility - to ensure the potential of displaced and refugee scholars and researchers is not lost.

RATIONALE

Crises are complex in nature and require collaborative solutions across the humanitarian, higher education, research and scientific communities as well as partnerships with donors/funders, policy-makers and civil society. Mobility is a critical ingredient to enabling the human drivers of higher education and science systems to survive and thrive during crisis so that they can drive recovery in its aftermath, but this mobility is often hindered by uncoordinated or insufficient policy responses. Bringing together valuable experience, knowledge and resources in a coordinated manner will improve efficiency, reduce duplication of efforts and lay the foundation for structures and mechanisms that can be activated to respond more quickly to future crises.

6 FLEXIBILITY

All stakeholders must recognize the evolving needs of academics, researchers and students by designing more flexible programmatic and funding models that enable changes in location and allow for both remote and in-person participation.

RATIONALE

Funding and programmes to offer virtual support to individuals affected by crises is a new request emerging from the Ukraine crisis. It addresses issues such as travel restrictions and continuity of work, but challenges more traditional programme design. Further exploration and advocacy are needed to respond to the request for virtual support. In addition, the need for more holistic or integrated assistance to address the psychological, social, financial, physical and professional needs and wellbeing of individuals and their families continues to be highlighted.

7 PREDICTABILITY

Stakeholders must work together to develop sustainable frameworks within and between national scientific, higher education and research systems that enable a more predictable and effective approach to the phases of preparedness, response and rebuilding in the aftermath of conflict or disaster.

RATIONALE

Crises will continue to happen around the world, either through conflict, climate change or other disasters. There is a need to consider how countries, organizations and international agencies can more effectively prepare for, respond to and rebuild after such crises. While it is necessary to focus on immediate lifesaving needs at the beginning of an emergency, it is also essential to keep long-term goals in mind and to build on lessons learned. Multilateral science organizations are well-placed to drive this inter-partner lesson learning and framework development.

CALL TO ACTION

All interested parties and stakeholders are encouraged to share the findings of this report as widely as possible and consider what steps they might take to implement the recommendations contained within, particularly for those actors responsible for programming or policy in Ukraine context, and in other countries and regions affected by war and conflict.

In addition to publishing the results of the conference via this report, the co-organizers will disseminate the recommendations through media articles and participation in relevant events. The co-organisers will work with their membership and networks to advocate for the uptake of the recommendations above, including through a wider research initiative on the effectiveness of the current policy framework for conflict and disaster management in the global science sector.

Co-Chairs ISC and ALLEA will also convene the Ukraine Working Group, a platform for Ukrainian and international stakeholders in the science sector, to explore further engagement opportunities. This will include planning a follow-up conference in early 2023 to renew the focus on these recommendations and generate new insight on the evolving situation in Ukraine. Any interested parties are encouraged to contact the co-organizers to share any commitments, ideas, questions or support required to maximise the impact of the report's findings on stakeholders in the Ukrainian context.

Download the full report at: https://council.science/publications/ukraine-crisis-responses-from-european-higher-education-research/

1. Unless specifically referred to, the report includes scientists within the more inclusive 'researchers' category. Drawing from the International Science Council (ISC), the following definition of science is referred to: 'The ISC has a broad understanding of the sciences, in all their diversity, covering science as a collective institution with a broad range of practices and values, but also scientists as a community.... The word science is used to refer to the systematic organization of knowledge that can be rationally explained and reliably applied. It is inclusive of the natural (including physical, mathematical and life) and social (including behavioural and economic) science domains. It is recognized that there is no single word or phrase in English (though there are in other languages) that adequately describes this knowledge community. It is hoped that this shorthand will be accepted in the sense intended.' (ISC, 2021)

2. The following are considered categories of risk and include those living in a war zone or situation of protracted crisis; definitions from Scholars at Risk (as noted by Inspireurope, 2020) are included.
   - 'Risk due to the content of a scholar's work, research or teaching being perceived as threatening by authorities or other groups. When the development of ideas, exchange of information and expression of new opinions are considered threatening, individual scholars/researchers are particularly vulnerable.' (Inspireurope, 2020, p.9)
   - 'Risk because of the individual's status as an academic or researcher. Because researchers undertake frequent international travel, and have international contacts, this gives them a certain professional standing or prominence. This can mean that attacks on one such high-profile scholar are an efficient means of sending a message to others, quickly creating a chilling effect.' (Inspireurope, 2020, p.9)
   - 'Risk as a result of their peaceful exercise of basic human rights, in particular, the right to freedom of expression or freedom of association.' (Inspireurope, 2020, p.9)
   - Risk of discrimination or persecution on grounds of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.
   - Risk of natural hazards leading to a humanitarian disaster.

3. The term displaced, as defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN General Assembly, 1946), 'applies to a person who, as a result of the actions of the authorities of the régimes... has been deported from, or has been obliged to leave, his country of nationality or of former habitual residence, such as persons who were compelled to undertake forced labour or who were deported for racial, religious or political reasons.'

4. According to the 1951 Convention on Refugees (UNHCR, 2010), a refugee is 'someone who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.'

5. UNHCR. Regional Bureau for Europe. Ukraine Situation Flash Update #17, 17 June 2022. https://reliefweb.int/attachments/9334a85a-f2a7-4906-8521-ef7a9220922c/Ukraine%20situation%20flash%20update%20No%2017%2017%2006%202022.pdf

6. UN OHCHR, 2022.

7. UN, 1948.

8. 'The essential attributes of open science are: open access to the record of science and to the data of science; access to the digital infrastructures that enable widespread engagement and communication; and open engagement between scientists and other societal actors.' (ISC, 2020)

International Science Council

The global voice for science

www.council.science