





# SEA-EU Alliance assistance to the academic community in Ukraine

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This editorial presents the activities of 9 universities of the University Alliance “European University of the Seas” (SEA-EU) in assisting their colleagues from Ukrainian universities after the beginning of the War in Ukraine. As the universities come from different parts of Europe, they were affected by the War in very different ways – some being neighbours to Ukraine (Poland) and some being far away from the migrant route from Ukraine (Malta). Therefore, they have been affected in different ways by the current War in Europe, but they all engaged their resources to provide academic and humanitarian help to their academic colleagues in Ukraine. All activities were presented and publicised during the governance meeting of the SEA-EU Alliance in Gdańsk in 2023; here we provide an update about our assistance to Ukrainian colleagues.

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Humanism is the foundation of European higher education. This is enshrined in the Magna Charta Universitatum (1): “Universities acknowledge that they have a responsibility to engage with and respond to the aspirations and challenges of the world and to the communities they serve, to benefit humanity and contribute to sustainability. Intellectual and moral autonomy is the hallmark of any university and a precondition for the fulfilment of its responsibilities to society.” This is why academics, through their research, are committed to solving contemporary problems, but also to fostering the ethos of the younger generation towards peacekeeping and the commitment of society to international solidarity by strengthening civil society attitudes.

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The War in Ukraine has affected all aspects of life, negatively impacting mental health and disrupting health care delivery (2, 3) and academic life (4, 5). Research activities in the academic and other sectors have also been adversely affected (6).

It was therefore the duty of the academic community to condemn the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022 and launch a campaign to support the country's refugees and its academic community (7). The 9 universities that comprise the University of the Seas Alliance (SEA-EU) (8) have also stepped in to organise support for their colleagues in Ukraine. As an Alliance, the first six universities of SEA-EU supported Ukraine by financing the participation of specialists from the I. I. Mechnikov National University of Odesa in SEA-EU activities. The possibility of integrating this Ukrainian university as a full partner of SEA-EU in the future is being considered.

This editorial describes individual activities of SEA-EU universities (currently 9 Alliance members) to help Ukrainian students and academics from the beginning of the War to the end of 2023.

## University of Algarve (UAlg), Portugal

UAlg has been open to the students fleeing from Ukraine since the beginning of the War. Among a total of 307 requests for study, research or work at UAlg between March 2022 and October 2023, 195 consisted of 25 different nationalities, including 70 (22.5%) Ukrainian citizens, followed by 39 Moroccan and 20 Nigerian citizens.

The University simplified and adopted new procedures for the enrolment and study for individuals from Ukraine, including:

- Students who were enrolled in Ukrainian universities at the onset of the War;
- Individuals who completed their high school education in Ukraine and had not been enrolled on any higher education institution;
- Researchers and professors who have been working at a higher education institution;
- Students interested in doing mobility to UAlg;
- People seeking Diploma Recognition.

Currently, UAlg hosts 10 student refugees from Ukraine (7 of Ukrainian nationality) enrolled into the Integrated Master course in Medicine (4 students), Economics course (1 student), Design and Communications course (1 student), Moving Image course (1 student), Languages, Literatures and Cultures course (1 student), Sports course (1 student), and Dietetics and Nutrition (1 student). The first eight students were already enrolled in Ukrainian universities when the War broke out, and the last two finished school in Ukraine.

Ideally, we would have 16 students continuing their studies; however, one left for a university in Lisbon even before the interview; two withdrew their requests shortly after

being enrolled at UAlg; one more had not renewed her registration due to the language difficulties (she spoke neither English nor Portuguese) as well as the need to support her family financially back in Ukraine (she planned to be away from the studies for one year and eventually return); another left after a year of studies due to genuine difficulties in following several subjects and after having decided to get a job. Two students from the Integrated Master course in Medicine also did not renew their registration for the next academic year, one due to psychological problems (he left for France where he has some family who would support him in a year-long recovery) and another because could not pass any of the subjects. All of them expressed concern regarding the language barrier.

On the contrary, four students showed outstanding results in the last academic year and kept enthusiastically going in the current one. All of them were of Ukrainian nationality and so eager to learn and excited about the course that they worked very hard even without knowing any Portuguese, constantly translating every word in supporting materials. UAlg is truly proud of them.

All of the above-mentioned students were accepted to UAlg as national students, significantly reducing tuition fees from €3500/year to €697/year. Moreover, they were all allowed to apply for a social action scholarship, which helped cover the annual tuition fee, pay for a room at the student residence, and partially cover living expenses.

Also, all students could attend an annual Portuguese language course, and some chose to repeat it in the next academic year.

UAlg also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University to promote cooperation in the fields of education and academic research. This includes the exchange of information and materials; facilitation of communication, networking and arrangements made by faculty, administration or student organization leaders; organization of joint training, summer programmes, language courses, conferences and academic programmes; facilitation of joint research activities and publications; mutual support in the field of international promotion; and the initiation a cooperation process with the SEA-EU Alliance.

Last but not least, considering the probable vulnerable state of mind of people leaving Ukraine and a lack of language skills (both Portuguese and English), UAlg had shown a deep concern and sensibility towards better communication and understanding by putting in charge a Ukrainian UAlg colleague to become “a bridge” between the institution and refugees. In addition, in the UAlg V+ volunteer campaign, several UAlg staff families offered rooms in their homes to host Ukrainian students. Two student refugees accepted the offer.

## University of Bretagne-Occidentale (UBO), France

UBO has developed a programme to welcome Ukrainian students and researchers, through which it welcomed around 20 students from Ukraine, either of Ukrainian nationality or foreign students (e.g. students from Morocco who were enrolled at a university in Ukraine). To facilitate their arrival and stay, as well as ease communications with the

various beneficiaries of this programme, a unique email address was created: [ukraine.solidarite@univ-brest.fr](mailto:ukraine.solidarite@univ-brest.fr).

Besides this, UBO has set up several initiatives to benefit students from Ukraine. Students were guaranteed fee waivers, enabling them to enrol at UBO exempt from tuition fees. This enrolment allowed them to obtain student status and the same rights as local students. They were given free access to French language courses, offering beginners a chance to learn the French language. Being able to speak and understand the local language is essential to facilitating integration at a university, especially in France. Learning French can be challenging, even more so for languages that do not have a Latin root. To facilitate this learning process, UBO is offering four hours a week of intensive French courses (levels A0 to B1) which have been designed specifically for Ukrainian students. So far, the University held intensive courses in French for 61 students.

Arriving at a new university can be challenging, even if the arrival has already been pre-planned. Aware of the difficulties of an emergency arrival in a new establishment, all faculties across the universities were mobilised to support students in their choice of course, especially the guidance department.

To make it easier for these students to resume their studies under complex conditions, in a new institution and with the need to adapt to a new country and a new language, we decided to organise their studies over two years, establishing many support measures to help them succeed, including tutoring opportunities.

We also helped students take advantage of the full range of available services. In particular, they were referred to the student health services where, given the traumas associated with War and their forced flight from their home country, they were helped to deal with any psychological problems they might have, as well as any other requests for care. They were also given immediate access to other services, such as sports facilities and university libraries.

To facilitate their life on campus, the UBO helped them find accommodation in student halls managed by a national body, the Centre Régional des Oeuvres Universitaires et Scolaires (CROUS), and with the related administrative procedures for obtaining a grant to fund their stay.

Aside from administrative support in obtaining housing assistance, students received financial support in the form of additional grants as a continuation of the previously granted emergency assistance. These grants were supported by UBO's student life and campus contribution funds.

In September 2022, 12 students were able to enrol in the first-year degree course of their choice; 3 dropped out during the year. Despite the adaptation of the academic year and tutoring possibilities, we noted a low level of attendance at UBO courses, as most students continued taking remote courses in their home university. Likewise, they encountered difficulties in following courses due to insufficient level of French language knowledge, as very few were available in English. They also experienced psychological fragility due to the context of War. However, there are positive stories: a Ukrainian student completed the academic year at the top of the class and all students passed their French certification at A2 level.

For researchers, the UBO offers opportunities for cooperation at the research level. Within the framework of the SEA-EU alliance, there is a call to start a partnership between UBO and partner SEA-EU universities with a Ukrainian university. The UBO also offers incoming grants for doctoral students and researchers, and its International Mobility Center helps researchers and doctoral students with administrative procedures and offers advice on daily life, before departure and on arrival. More is available at <https://www.cmibrest.fr/en/international-phd-student-or-researcher>.

At the national level, the French Programme d'aide à l'Accueil en Urgence des Scientifiques en Exil (PAUSE) programme supports scientists and artists in exile by facilitating their arrival in higher education and research institutions or cultural institutions. More information is available at <https://www.programmepause.fr/en/>. However, the UBO has not been able to welcome any Ukrainian teacher-researcher into its research laboratories, either directly or via the PAUSE programme.

## University of Cadiz (UCA), Spain

UCA, through its International University Centre for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CUNEAC), stands as a benchmark in university collaboration between Spain, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (9).

The CUNEAC was created in 2019 in the Organigram of the Vice-Rectorate for Internationalisation of the University of Cadiz as a unit directly dependent on the Vice-Rector for Internationalisation. Its purpose was the development of educational, scientific, cultural and multidisciplinary relations and projects with the countries of Central Asia and Eastern Europe. CUNEAC is conceived as a transversal and multidisciplinary centre; it collaborates with all the units and centres of the UCA, as well as with any institution in the world, and can carry out any type of academic, scientific or cultural project in any area of human knowledge. It has the largest Spanish network of university partners and Spanish assistantships in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It is the main partner for local Hispanism in Central Asian countries, as well as Ukraine, Armenia, Russia and Georgia, and provides vital support to Hispanists and teachers of Spanish. It has an International Prize for the Development of Hispanism in the Post-Soviet Space, the only one of its kind in the world, which has been awarded to Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan. Together with the UCA Library, CUNEAC has created a specific library relevant by this importance in the Spanish-speaking world. This library currently has around 4,000 copies and is enriched annually with new acquisitions. One of the main objectives of this project is to turn Cadiz into a documentation centre for researchers from all over the world working on issues related to the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as their relations with Spain and the Spanish-speaking world.

Even before the outbreak of the War in Ukraine, the UCA was already the Spanish university with the most partners in Ukraine through the Erasmus+ KA171 programme, which is designed by the CUNEAC Centre. It is also the Spanish university that has participated in most congresses of the Association of Hispanists of Ukraine, of which it is an active mem-

ber and with which it has organised various workshops and seminars for Hispanists and teachers of Spanish.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that with the outbreak of War on 24 February 2022, the UCA was one of the first in Spain to implement the Specific Action Plan for Aid to Ukraine, which has been carried out during the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23. Most of the funding came from UCA sources, which explains why the budget granted by the Spanish Ministry of Universities for the “University-Refuge” Action Plan has only been used from October 2023.

The UCA’s Action Plan has focused on three priority groups: people who were already in Cadiz before the beginning of the War, people who have been arriving in Cadiz in search of refuge, and people who live or used to live in Ukraine.

For the development of this Ukraine Plan, two Ukrainian students from the UCA were incorporated as paid interns in a company, which has allowed them to receive financial aid and to strengthen their professional future, while at the same time it was possible to implement an online assistance service in Ukrainian and Russian for those people who requested it.

This free online service consists of providing information on university-related queries in Ukrainian, Russian, English and Spanish, but also telephone or videoconference interpreting between these languages to help refugees with their dealings with administrations, as well as non-governmental and other types of organizations.

Mobility has been one of the tools that have been prioritised since the beginning of the War, with the aim of giving refuge in Cadiz to Ukrainian university students without harming their home university activity and without them losing their links with their Ukrainian university of origin.

Between February 2022 and July 2023, a total of 62 applications for aid were considered by the Ukrainian Commission, with all eligible applicants being granted aid and only 10 applications being rejected.

Apart from the aid granted by the Ukrainian Commission with UCA funds, the Erasmus mobility nominations of all our partners in Ukraine have been attended in a direct and priority way, allocating for this purpose all the budget that was foreseen for Russia and Belarus, countries with whose universities relations have been temporarily suspended.

By modifying the usual summer use of the La Caleta International Residence, priority has been given to the accommodation of Ukrainian students and lecturers over the use of the UCA staff.

In collaboration with the Centro Superior de Lenguas Modernas (University School for Modern Languages), 2 face-to-face courses of initial Spanish have been given with the aim of providing the Ukrainian refugee community in Cadiz (both university students and non-university students) with basic knowledge for communication with the local population.

Simultaneously, in collaboration with the Grynchenko University of Kyiv, 2 online courses in initial Ukrainian were offered for Spanish and Spanish speakers who receive, attend to and are in contact with Ukrainian refugees in Spain.

A meeting was organised for Ukrainian refugee women with the director of the Women’s Institute of the Andalusian Regional Government, in order to offer them all the services



and programmes of this institution and to prevent their rights as individuals and as women from being undermined.

At the beginning of the War, food and supplies donated by the University Community were collected in all the centres of the 4 campuses of the UCA and sent to Ukraine.

The above activities were implemented from the beginning of the War until July 2023, when a new Action Plan 2023/24 was approved, with a total budget of EUR 69,000 granted to the UCA by the Spanish Ministry of Universities, which includes 15 initiatives:

- Initial Ukrainian language course for groups serving the Ukrainian community;
- Initial Spanish course for Ukrainian refugees;
- Quarterly Spanish improvement course (10 scholarships for enrolment in the University Language School for modern languages) for the integration of refugees in the UCA;
- Online course on Ukrainian History and Culture in Spanish, with special emphasis on Spanish-Ukrainian relations;
- Ukrainian film series entitled 'VOSE' (5 films);
- Ukrainian director as a speaker at the UCA Film School;
- 10 scholarships for the 2×1 Programme: enrolment in a one-year Spanish course (up to B2), along with access to the UCA Degree;
- Creation of a website in Ukrainian with the specific actions for Ukraine and how they can be accessed;
- Seminar (in Ukrainian) on psychological support for refugees (given by a Ukrainian psychologist);
- Acquisition of bibliographic collections in Ukrainian for the refugee community to have access to them in the Humanities Library of the UCA, along with the exhibition of the main works of Ukrainian thought and arts;
- Free library card for Ukrainian refugees in Cadiz who are not members of the UCA community;
- Seminars on Spanish-Ukrainian interculturality for Spaniards and Ukrainians;
- Cycle of awareness-raising lectures on the Ukrainian refugee crisis, given by Ukrainian specialists;
- Practical workshop on professional orientation, job search and internships in companies for Ukrainian refugees;
- Methodological course for Ukrainian teachers of Spanish language and culture.

## University of Gdańsk (UG), Poland

The Russian attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 came as a great shock to all Europeans. Poland, as a neighbouring country of Ukraine, where a large group of Ukrainian immigrants lived before this War began, stood in solidarity with the victims of the War from the

beginning. The attack, carried out at 4:55 AM Central European Time, caused shock, but also disbelief. All day the media reported on the situation on the emerging battle front. In Poland, the event was discussed feverishly. During such discussions, students decided to offer real support – not only verbally, but by organising a campaign to collect and send the most necessary items – food, clothing and hygiene products – to those in need in Ukraine. Students and residents of Gdańsk began to bring donations to the Faculty of Social Sciences at Gdańsk University. A list of the most necessary items was created with the idea of sending them to Ukraine in collaboration with a charity organisation. The campaign was gaining momentum. As Gdańsk is located 600 km from the nearest border crossing with Ukraine, the refugees did not start arriving until the next day (25 February). Ukrainians living in Gdańsk also joined the aid effort, as there were around 80,000 Ukrainian citizens living in the city before the War who had been working, studying and building their future here for several years, especially after the political breakthrough in Ukraine in 2014. Since 2014, there was an aid programme for young Ukrainians at the University of Gdańsk, with 20 students being admitted every year free of charge. The assistance was coordinated by the English teacher Prof Marta Koval.

Every hour, the number of Ukrainian citizens arriving from war zones and other areas of the country where there was a threat of bomb attacks increased. In the following days, the corridors of the UG Faculty of Social Sciences building quickly filled with donations. Students from other faculties joined the campaign, and such donation collections were also organised at the Faculty of Law and Administration. The collected donations were handed over to local government and public institutions, which distributed them to those in need. The UG became the largest centre in the entire northern Polish region for collecting donations and sending them on to Ukraine. The scale of the effort was enormous, and in the weeks that followed, the UG became a logistics centre. Large trucks with donations from Ireland, Norway, Germany, France and other countries kept arriving on campus, where they were repacked and transported onward to Ukraine. Students from all 11 faculties, as well as students living in the dormitories and academic staff, joined in to help. During the first week, more than 400 transports were sent from the university to Ukraine; dozens of volunteers helped with receiving the donations, sorting the parcels and sending them to those most in need.

Here are some initiatives at the University of Gdańsk to assist Ukrainian refugees:

- The University donated two dormitories located at the UG Sopot campus to the Sopot city council for the accommodation of refugees for two years. Over 500 people have been accommodated there (<https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/3054/university-Gdańsk-transferred-ds8-and-ds9-sopot-refugees-ukraine>).
- Staff and students of the Faculty of Philology at the UG who speak Ukrainian or Russian have worked as volunteer translators.
- The UG launched webinars and courses in Polish as a foreign language for refugees, as well as training courses for lecturers/teachers of Polish as a foreign language.
- From 1 July to 31 October 2022, seven groups of Ukrainian teachers (140 in total) participated in a several-week course in Polish with pedagogical elements. The aim of the



course was to teach refugee teachers Polish at B1 level, including pedagogical aspects, so that they could obtain employment in Polish schools. As the participants were mainly women, care was taken to ensure that their children were looked after while the mothers participated in the activities (<https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/3625/140-teachers-ukraine-will-take-part-training-philology-faculty>).

- Students from the Faculty of Law and Administration of the UG prepared legal guides for Ukrainian citizens within the framework of the Gdańsk Youth Fund for the project “Legal SOS for Ukrainian citizens” (<https://prawo.ug.edu.pl/partnerzy-i-absolwenci/dopomoga-ukraini/yuridichniy-posibnik>).
- The Academic Cultural Centre, together with the staff of the Faculty of Chemistry, created a day care centre for Ukrainian children (<https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/3171/daycare-centre-ukrainian-children-established-ug>).

The unequivocal stance of the academic community of the UG towards the War in Ukraine was important.

Already at its meeting on 24 February 2023, the University Senate unanimously endorsed the “Declaration of Solidarity with Ukraine” (available at: <https://www.gospodarkamorska.pl/sea-eu-universytet-Gdański-wspolpracuje-z-uczelnia-z-nadmorskiej-odessy-64263>). This appeal stated that “the University of Gdańsk decides to suspend cooperation with Russian and Belarusian universities and research centres until the end of military operations and the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine.” At the same time, the Senate appealed to the universities and research centres cooperating with the UG to strongly and unequivocally condemn the War waged by Russia against Ukraine. This document called for the start of peace talks. It was believed that such a solidarity stance could put pressure on the Russian authorities to put an end to this tragic aggressive warfare and be of vital importance for world peace.

After the first days of the War, when the aid for Ukraine was mainly in the form of collections of gifts for the those in need, more and more comprehensive forms of assistance began to be organized. Conditions were set for Ukrainian students who came to Gdańsk to continue their studies. Due to language difficulties (Polish or English as required teaching languages), only 15 students took the advantage of this programme. A recruitment procedure was also prepared for the refugees from Ukraine who wished to start studying at the University from 1 October 2022. Forty students took advantage of these opportunities and special one-off scholarships were funded for them, to be paid in December 2022. The funds were raised by the UG Development Foundation.

In the spring of 2022, the most important activity was to continue providing support to the incoming refugees and all those who remained in Ukraine. A programme of short-term grants was prepared for scientists who arrived in the Pomeranian. The academic community was aware of how hazardous it is to halt scientific work, so it was important for scientists to be able to continue their research while remaining in other countries. The idea was to allow Ukrainian researchers to stay at the UG for a few weeks, continuing their previous research work or joining our scientific projects, and to help them apply for funding from other sources. At the same time, we provided them with funding and accommodation,

with housing infrastructure prepared for this purpose in one of the academic accommodation facilities. Forty Ukrainian researchers benefited from this form of support.

A very important activity of the UG was the inclusion of our SEA-EU Alliance partner university from Ukraine – the National Mechnikov University of Odesa. One such activity was the invitation of a young researcher from the Odessa University to participate in an international research cruise from Gdańsk to Cadiz, which took place in May and June 2022 and was one of the most important outcomes of the first phase of the SEA-EU alliance activities (<https://www.gospodarkamorska.pl/sea-eu-universytet-Gdański-wspolpracuje-z-uczelnia-z-nadmorskiej-odessy-64263>).

The most recent of these outreach activities was the organization, together with the Lech Wałęsa Institute Foundation and the Ukrainian Consulate in Gdańsk, of a two-week summer school we called “Children of Heroes” for 30 children whose fathers were fighting at the battlefronts. We wanted to provide these children with a two-week “breather” from the trauma of war, offering, among other things, a tour of the attractions of the Tricity, while showing them the UG as an open place if they wanted to study here one day. The event took place in September 2022 and was attended by 30 children and 5 teachers who looked after them during their stay in Poland. During the meeting with the children, the Rector of UG, Prof. Piotr Stepnowski, explained the University’s activities in helping Ukraine: “The University of Gdańsk is not only a university, not only an idea for future studies, but it is a place where we want to actively speak out on socially important issues. We want to help you; at the beginning of the War it was emergency aid, organizing accommodation, collecting food and necessities, but also conducting a dialogue with the Ukrainian and Polish governments on how to support Ukraine wisely and effectively...”. He was thanked by the Ukrainian Consul in Gdańsk, Mr Oleksandr Plodystyi: “What you have done is extremely important. The humanitarian aid, the assistance to Ukraine, the organisation of accommodation – thank you very much for all this. Now we have a new area of assistance, and I hope there will be further prospects. Thank you very much, also on behalf of the children, because for them this is an important and edifying experience” (see: [Summer school ‘Children of Heroes’ - UG helps Ukraine | NEWS - Uniwersytet Gdański](#)).

The UG’s efforts to help Ukraine have been recognised in Poland; the National Agency for Academic Exchange selected it as the best place to organize the international conference “Focus on Ukraine”, which took place on 12–13 May 2022, which would jointly seek answers to the question “How to help Ukraine?” (see: [Uniwersytet Gdański: Przygotujmy się do odbudowy Ukrainy - Portal edukacyjny Perspektywy](#) and [Solidarni z Ukrainą. Jak pomóc studentom, którzy uciekli przed wojną](#)). Conference speakers included students, volunteers, scientists, rectors of Polish universities and representatives of the Ukrainian scientific community. The Polish Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Mr Włodzimierz Bernacki, and the Ukrainian Minister of Education, Mr Serhiy Szkarłat, participated in the event both in person and online. An important voice in the discussion was that of Prof Andrei Vitrenka, First Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, who said: “Our main goal is to increase or at least maintain the potential of the Ukrainian academic community. Therefore, I would like to ask the rectors of Polish universities to provide our students with access to the knowledge base, which is the library. For our scientists, I would

ask to temporarily employ them and allow them to teach our students” (see: <https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/3299/how-will-polish-scientific-community-help-ukraine-i-and-ii-day-solidarity-ukraine>). The conference was extremely valuable in learning about the Ukrainian perspective and expectations on the direction of further assistance. Sofiia Butko, PhD, from the Kharkiv National University stated: “It is very important for us that we come to Poland not as refugees, but as academics. It gives us a sense of dignity. We can do more than just try to survive” (see <https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/3299/how-will-polish-scientific-community-help-ukraine-i-and-ii-day-solidarity-ukraine>).

The result of this conference was a change in approach to supporting Ukraine. New initiatives were built alongside intensive charitable support. They were summarized in the second “Focus on Ukraine” conference held at the UG on 3–4 April 2022, which explored how to integrate Ukrainian higher education into the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. Poland has a key role to play in this process, creating a natural bridge between East and West for Ukraine. Specific questions were raised about the future of student and academic mobility in the war context, recognition of refugee education, academic cooperation during and after the War, digitalisation of the learning processes and the role of new technologies in the reconstruction of post-war Ukraine (see: <https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/5074/focus-ukraine-what-has-polish-scientific-community-done-and-will-do-ukraine-conference-report>).

The reflection on the directions of support for Ukraine that arose from the first “Focus on Ukraine” conference led to a change in action by the UG, which decided to prioritize helping the academic community in Ukraine. To date, the University has signed several cooperation agreements with Ukrainian universities, leading to joint scientific projects and exchanges of teaching staff and students studying in Gdańsk. However, in view of the existing state of war, it was important to focus on assisting one partner, as this assistance would then be comprehensive and help to build a lasting relationship for the future. As the UG is a member of the SEA EU alliances, the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University was selected from among existing partners, since it fit perfectly into the vision and mission of the SEA-EU alliance due to its profile and coastal location. In addition, Gdańsk and Odessa are partner cities. For this reason, on 28 April 2022, the Rector of the UG, Prof Piotr Stepnowski, and the Rector of OUN, Prof Vyacheslav Truba, signed the Memorandum of Understanding on scientific cooperation and in areas related to student education. The UG Rector stated: “Firstly, despite the ongoing shameful War caused by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, almost under bombardment, we are signing a new agreement on cooperation between our institutions. We make no secret of the fact that our intention is for the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University to join our SEA EU university partnership. Starting from our first discussions on the subject, we will urge the European Commission to reopen existing and new partnerships to allow friendly Ukrainian universities to be associated in them. As never before, this is becoming a European *raison d’état*” (see: <https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/3225/cooperation-agreement-odessa-iimechnikov-national-university-signed>).

Following this agreement, the other members of the SEA-EU alliance also signed such memoranda. This event can be regarded as a breakthrough in terms of the strategic di-

rections adopted by the UG for helping Ukraine during the War and building joint ventures for the future. To fund these activities, the UG applied for the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange competition “Solidarity with Ukraine” and received nearly PLN 900,000 (EUR 208,000). The project (which ran from January to December 2023) was aimed at supporting the functioning and further development of the Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University by including it in the SEA-EU Alliance through scientific, teaching and organizational cooperation. The real help we can give Ukraine today is to enable students or researchers to use the education and competences they acquired with us in the process of rebuilding Ukraine. Such a non-appropriating attitude will also, on balance, result in benefits for Poland and in continuous and fruitful cooperation between our two countries in the future, as well as in academic integration within the SEA EU alliance. Poland will play an important role in the multi-year process of rebuilding the country of our eastern neighbors; for Polish universities and the UG specifically, this will mean playing a role in rebuilding the science and higher education sector.

The project included the visits of Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University representatives to Gdańsk during SEA-EU joint events, such as the Staff Weeks of the Alliance. For example, in May 2023, Prof Nina Kravchenko and Iryna Onyshchuk, PhD, represented our partner from Odessa at the Staff Week “Promoting Multilingualism, Supporting English Language Competence and Establishing a Common SEA-EU Language Policy”, which was organized as part of Task 4.6 SEA-EU language policy of the SEA-EU 2.0 project in cooperation with the University of Malta (see: <https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/5360/second-day-staff-week-university-gdansk>).

In June 2023, a SEA-EU conference was held in Gdańsk as part of Task 4.4, “SEA-EU Goes Greener”, whose aim was to establish a “Sustainability Network” platform for the exchange of experiences in organizing modern forms of education through project work of students and research staff in the area of sustainable development. The network also deals with the identification of research potential for the preparation of joint research, publications and scientific projects, as well as the collection and exchange of experiences about the administration’s activities for the development of the university’s environmental policy. The Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University was represented by three researchers who came from Odessa especially for this purpose (see: <https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/5489/towards-sustainable-development-goes-greener-and-open-lectures-during-sea-eu-governing-week>).

A number of events implemented as part of the “Solidarity with Ukraine” project were aimed at students and doctoral students.

Students from the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University visited the UG as part of three summer schools. The first one, called “The European Science Campus summer school”, took place between 19 and 30 July 2023, thanks to funding received from the National Agency for International Exchange. The event was hosted by the UG Student and Doctoral Activity Centre (see: <https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/5649/european-science-campus-summer-school-students-odessa-national-university>).

The second summer school was held at the UG from 13–24 August 2023, under the name “Summer School for the Promotion of Democratic Values”. It was attended by students

from SEA EU universities and the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University, and was aimed at initiating a discussion on universal humanistic values and their impact on democratic systems, especially in the context of the escalation of Russian aggression against Ukraine. It was very important for the organizers and participants that the event took place in Gdańsk, the cradle of “Solidarity”, the movement that initiated democratic change in Poland and the Eastern Bloc. The practical dimension of the school remained extremely important. Over several days, participants were to learn the basic techniques of press photography, film editing and scientific writing (see: <https://ug.edu.pl/news/en/5666/summer-school-promotion-democratic-values>).

Another summer school was the “XXVI Summer School of Biotechnology”, attended by 2 doctoral students from Odessa in August 2023, and the “Congress of Young Science”, organised for the third time, in which 14 students and students from Odessa presented their research. The congress was held under the patronage of UG rector, Prof Piotr Stepnowski, and rector of the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University, Prof Viacheslav Truba.

Within the framework of the SEA-EU 2.0 project, the UG is responsible for coordinating activities to build an active campus life shared by the SEA-EU partners in order to promote the common values that underpin the Alliance, but also to activate students in fostering intercultural integration, but also to have them get to know each other better. This is all the more important given that the project is creating three joint degree courses to carry out its tasks. In May 2023, representatives of the choirs from the universities of Brest, Split, Bodo and Odessa participated in this activity. Together with the UG choir, they prepared a concert entitled “Singing by the Sea”. In addition, the choristers from the SEA-EU coastal alliance universities also performed the premiere composition “The Calling”. The meeting aimed to integrate the artistic communities of the SEA-EU universities, but also to undertake joint cultural activities within the framework of building a modern European campus.

During 2023, a total of 120 people (students, doctoral students, researchers and administrative staff) participated in learning about the functioning of the UG and the SEA-EU Alliance in Gdańsk

Of utmost importance was the participation of representatives of the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University in the SEA-EU Governing Week (27–30 June 2023) as the major bi-annual event of the Alliance. The opening of the Governing Week was an event called the “Ukrainian Day” during which each SEA-EU member university presented its activities and initiatives in support for Ukraine. Representatives of Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University then spoke about the structure, research areas and potential of their institution. At the end of the meeting, further ways of supporting the university from Odessa were discussed. The meeting was also attended by other guests, including the Ukrainian Consul in Gdańsk, Oleksandr Plodystyi.

Summing up the deliberations, UG rector Prof Piotr Stepnowski also stressed that he hoped that the work done so far would contribute to a favourable decision by the European Commission on Ukrainian universities joining the European University project: “I believe that we will convince the European Commission not only to allow Ukrainian universities to be associate partners in alliances, but also full members” (see: <https://ug.edu.pl/news/>



[pl/5478/o-etyce-i-wsparciu-dla-ukrainy-pierwsze-spotkania-sea-eu-governing-week](https://ug.edu.pl/news/pl/5468/goscie-z-odessy-i-wystawa-swiat-wojny-ukrainian-day-na-governing-week-sea-eu)). The Ukrainian Day concluded with the opening of a very moving photo exhibition by Leonid Shevchuk, entitled “World of War”. The photographs depicted the daily life in Ukraine during the ongoing War; however, they did not include any soldiers, but rather only civilians; no guns, but only human emotions. The exhibition accompanying Ukrainian Day Sea EU was open to all residents of Gdańsk (see: <https://ug.edu.pl/news/pl/5468/goscie-z-odessy-i-wystawa-swiat-wojny-ukrainian-day-na-governing-week-sea-eu>).

## Christian-Albrechts University in Kiel (CAU)

The CAU has several exchange activities with Ukrainian partner universities. Currently, there are three signed partnerships with universities in Ukraine. Two have been concluded at the university level, one at the faculty level – the former with the Taras Shevchenko University, Kyiv (contract signed in April 1990) and the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University (contract signed in May 2022), and the latter with the Kherson State Agricultural and Economic University, Kherson (contract signed in May 2023).

The partnership with the Taras Shevchenko University, Kyiv is very special; it is much older, and was characterized by a very intensive phase of exchange in the first few years after the signing, but this then declined sharply until 2021. It was not until the outbreak of the War that the CAU once again made efforts to intensify these contacts/activities. The Vice-Rector of the Taras Shevchenko University spent several months at the CAU in 2022 as a result of a long-term scholarship from the Volkswagen Foundation for refugee Ukrainian academics. As part of this stay, agreements were made to resume exchange activities between the two universities. The first visits to Kiel (trips to Ukraine by CAU students and academics are prohibited due to the war) took place in the winter term 2022/23. The following activities took place:

- Study visits by Ukrainian students to the CAU on a self-pay basis (2023);
- Participation of two students with a CAU scholarship in the International Summer Course at the CAU (2023);
- Several academic stays at the CAU in the academic fields of law (2022 and 2023), biology/zoology (2023) and Slavic studies/language and literature (two 3-month lectureships in 2023).

Further academic visits at CAU in the above-mentioned areas are planned for 2024.

The partnership with the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University was established on the initiative of the Rector of the UG shortly after the outbreak of the War in spring 2022. There was a good and intensive exchange of communication with the Vice-Rector from Odessa right from the start of the cooperation, and the first academic stays of several weeks by researchers from Odessa in Kiel could already be carried out in fall 2022.

Since then, the exchange has continued to develop and the Vice-Rector from Odessa has already visited Kiel twice to carry out his own research activities, but also to get to know the CAU better and to plan the academic exchange.



The following activities took place:

- Participation of 2 students with a CAU-scholarship in the International Summer Course at CAU (2023);
- Several scientific visits to CAU in the academic fields of Law (2022 and 2023), Biology (2022 and 2023), Economics (2023) and German Studies (2023).

Further academic visits at CAU in the above-mentioned academic fields are planned for the year 2024. To finance these exchange activities with the Taras Shevchenko University and the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University, both funds from the CAU and reallocated funds from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which were originally intended for the exchange with Russian universities, were used. These DAAD funds are now available for the exchange with the Ukrainian partner universities for several years.

There is also a faculty agreement between the CAU Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences and the Kherson State Agricultural and Economic University, Kherson. It started with a scholarship from the CAU Faculty for a refugee professor of KSAEU. Since August 2022, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has been funding the project “Ukraine Digital” which comprised the following activities:

- More than 90 on-site scholarships for KSAEU students;
- Participation of a student from the Kherson State Agrarian University with a scholarship in the International Summer Course at the CAU (2023);
- Three teaching scholarships for professors,
- Purchase of 70 laptops and delivery to the new location of the Kherson State Agrarian University (Kherson was occupied until the beginning of November 2022);
- Invitation of 5 students as guest students in Kiel in the winter semester 2022/23; 2 students extended for the summer semester 2023;
- Delegation visit of the KSAEU Vice President to Kiel in May 2023;
- Currently developing an international certificate programme in Quantitative Analysis, which will be offered online and includes video courses with subtitles in Ukrainian.

The CAU is currently working on a new application to the DAAD for prolonging the project “Ukraine Digital” for 2024, which seeks cooperation through joint courses and/or seminars on statistics and/or programming, in which students from both universities can then participate. Student tandems from Kiel and Kherson will then work together on a project.

The scientific cooperation with other non-partner universities continued during the War, although under more difficult conditions. Several joint publications were completed in 2022 and 2023. A total of 7 publications have been completed so far, including several with the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv.

Prof Jens Scholz, MD, PhD, chief executive officer of the University Medical Center of Schleswig-Holstein and first chair of the Association of University Hospitals in Germany, has been honoured by two Ukrainian universities for his humanitarian commitment. In his position as the Chair of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine at the CAU, Prof Scholz

received an honorary doctorate from the National Medical Danylo-Halyzkyj University in Lviv in November 2022 and from the National Medical Oleksandr Bogomolets University in Kyiv in December 2022. The medical-scientific cooperation between the University Medical Center of Schleswig-Holstein and the National Medical Universities in Ukraine has existed since 2014. When the Russian aggression against Ukraine began, Scholz initiated a comprehensive aid campaign for hospitals in Ukraine. Since the beginning of the War, the University Medical Center has supplied medical technology and medicines worth over EUR 4.6 million directly to more than 20 hospitals in Ukraine.

In the face of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Eastern Europe, the CAU has been tirelessly working to provide a multitude of services to refugees, especially those from Ukraine. With a dedicated team whose members share Eastern European backgrounds, we have been able to offer assistance not only in the German language, but also in Russian and Polish. This linguistic diversity ensures that we can evaluate certificates that have not yet been translated, determine university entrance qualifications, and provide tailored study-specific guidance to aspiring students from Ukraine and other affected regions.

One notable achievement in our efforts to assist refugees has been the recruitment of an additional student assistant proficient in the Russian language. This invaluable addition to our team has significantly reduced bureaucratic hurdles, enabling us to provide direct and efficient guidance to many refugees from Ukraine, facilitating their path to higher education.

The impact of our work is underscored by the following concrete numbers. Since the beginning of the conflict, we have engaged in more than 2000 counselling contacts; 72% comprise individuals with Ukrainian citizenship, while the remaining 28% are third-country nationals who had fled from Ukraine. We have reached out to refugees from various countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Yemen. Moreover, we have received 60 requests for advising from refugee researchers, underscoring the need for specialized support in this field.

Our consultations have predominantly revolved around the following core issues:

- Access to studies/application process: Helping refugees navigate the complex application procedures and providing guidance on entering higher education;
- German courses/study preparation: Assisting individuals in acquiring the necessary language skills for successful academic integration;
- Application for medicine/dentistry/pharmacy higher semester: We have had approximately 750 counselling contacts in this regard, where we have aided students in securing placements in these competitive programmes;
- Study financing: Offering advice on funding opportunities and scholarships;
- Third-country nationals: Assisting with the prerequisites for student visas;
- Housing search: Aiding students in their quest for suitable accommodations.

We have also undertaken specific measures to support refugee students on their educational journey. A1 language courses were offered to 35 third-country nationals from Ukraine

and 30 individuals with Ukrainian citizenship. We also provided “Fit fürs Studium” courses at the B2-C1 level, which includes academic language courses and study preparation, for 55 Ukrainians and third-country nationals from Ukraine. Additionally, 37 Ukrainians have been enrolled in university studies programmes at the bachelor or master’s level.

Looking ahead to 2024, we anticipate a significant surge in applications and registrations from Ukrainian students. This is due to many having completed the B1 integration course, now making them eligible for our academic study preparation courses at the B2/C1 level.

Our commitment to supporting refugees in their pursuit of higher education remains steadfast, and we will continue to adapt and expand our services to meet the evolving needs of those affected by the ongoing crisis in Eastern Europe.

## University of Malta (UM), Malta

The island’s geographic position does not place it on a direct migratory route from Ukraine, but rather for migration from the Southern shores of the Mediterranean; consequently, the UM did not experience a large influx of students or academics following the onset of the War. However, the island has in place extensive systems to support the migration of third country nationals who seek to move to Malta for employment or study purposes; there is also a sizeable community of Ukrainians residing in Malta, as well as a network of non-governmental organizations, government and national services focused specifically on the integration and support of migrants (legal migration, irregular migration and refugees/protection holders).

Malta and the UM extended their full support for Ukrainian nationals who are beneficiaries of protection. These are accorded equal rights to other protection holders, including access to free education (in state/state-funded schools, post-secondary and tertiary higher education institutions), free health care (National Health Services) and other benefits in line with national and international provisions for holders of protection. Requests from students, academics and their families were treated on a case-by-case basis. The fact that English is used as a medium of communication in all sectors helped tremendously in terms of integration and access.

Several students pursued English language courses provided by the UM Language School and other entities in order to support their transition into schools, post-secondary and tertiary education programme.

In terms of academic engagement, the UM collaborates with Ukraine mainly through the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (KA171). The funds for collaboration are restricted to what is available from KA171, namely a travel allowance (amounting to approximately EUR 360) and a monthly/daily subsistence rate dependant on the type of mobility being undertaken (i.e. student or staff mobility). Students are informed about the process to apply for international protection, unless they are already benefiting from it upon arrival. The UM is currently collaborating with Ukraine for both student and staff mobilities with the Ukrainian Catholic University (Theology, International Relations and Law) and the Igor

Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute (ICT). Agreements are in place for both student and staff mobility.

## University of Naples Parthenope (UNP)

The UNP strongly supports the Ukrainian academic community in ensuring continuity of Ukrainian science. For the UNP, the Russian aggression represents a threat to peace, freedom and democracy, some of the most fundamental European values, which are also the foundation for research and academic collaboration.

The UNP provided support for Ukrainian students who fled the War and need scientific positions or academic transfer and accommodation abroad. In particular, the University offered dedicated fellowship to Ukrainian students to enrol or register for the last academic year. The competition call funded 9 scholarships to be granted to students who could be enrolled in a bachelor's or master's degree programme. Unfortunately, only two scholarships out of 9 were assigned, possibly due to geographic reasons, i.e. the migration flow from Ukraine went mostly towards the Northern Italy. Furthermore, the University is a partner of an ongoing collaboration project, UKRENERGY, which is co-funded by the European Union in the frame of the Erasmus+ programme, Key Action 2, aimed at fostering the "Capacity Building in Higher Education" of its partner countries. Its main goal is promoting teaching and learning excellence in Ukraine by establishing innovative Master's Courses on Energy Sustainability in Buildings in line with the Bologna Process principles.

The UNP will continue to work in order to implement any further measures in support of Ukrainian research community reiterating our call to peace and respect human rights.

## Nord University (Nord), Norway

The Nord University has more than 20 years of fruitful collaboration with Ukraine. Our first joint project, entitled "Professional retraining and social adaptation of military officers in Ukraine" (shortened as "Ukraine-Norway"), dates back to 2003 and has been running until 2022. In 2014, a Norwegian-Ukrainian University Alliance was established to support joint activities and collaboration between Nord University and 15 Ukrainian institutions. This initiative has formed the basis for all further collaboration between Nord University and Ukrainian partners. In 2023, in relation to the celebration of our 20 years anniversary of our cooperation, we have relaunched the Alliance (now named as "Ukrainian-Norwegian Education and Research Alliance"), extending it to 17 Ukrainian partners, with more institutions indicating willingness to join.

The collaboration supported 6 funded projects with Ukraine within the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility programme since 2014, with extensive incoming student and academic staff exchanges, particularly in the areas of business, accounting and economy, and special needs education. The most recent Erasmus+ project between Nord and Ukraine is funded within Key Action 2, "Capacity Building in Higher Education", awarded in 2023 and coordinated by the Nord University. The project "The Universities' Reaction

to Big Obstructions: Building resilient higher education to respond and manage societal crises” (TURBO) has started in 2024 with the aim to increase Ukrainian universities’ resilience, preparedness and responsiveness by building their capacities, improving competencies and sharing experience.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine became a huge tragedy for everyone. The Nord University hosted students from Ukraine for an educational stay; several students who were writing their master thesis as double degree students in Ukraine; as well as PhD students and many colleagues around all of Ukraine. Regardless of the difficulties caused by the War, the Nord University continued to carry out its main mission and educate students with full compassion and understanding. This was important for two reasons – firstly, it enabled us to support the students in their desire to receive a degree at the Nord University, which is a recognized institution abroad; and secondly, we were able to show our support and commitment to Ukrainian partners in such difficult times.

Still, the work on the education programmes dates far before 2022–2023. We would like to highlight the following main results:

1. Post-education and professional re-training: We have carried out the “Norway-Ukraine. Professional Adaptation. Integration into the State System” project in 2022–2023. Its goal was to integrate the model of professional retraining and social adaptation of veterans and members of their families, initially carried out by the “Ukraine-Norway” project in 2003–2019, into the state system, with coordination with Ukrainian ministries, especially the Ministry of Veterans of Ukraine. As of 2022 (the last project year), the military actions in Ukraine substantially affected the project and many veterans had to return to protect the country. We thus agreed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway (a funding agency for the project) to reallocate the funds and proposed the delivery of re-training, as well as social and psychological assistance, to the internally displaced people in Ukraine. By the end of the project, we received approval from Ukrainian authorities for the recognition and integration of our model into the state system.
2. Master’s degree level: Through Erasmus+ and the nationally-funded Norwegian programme “EURASIA” (during 2014–2022), our collaboration supported a range of mobility and research projects in public sector accounting, budgeting and finance. This entailed student exchange on both doctoral and master’s degree levels (194 incoming students since 2014); guest teaching and research collaboration; and establishing and running a double degree Master of Science in Public sector economy with the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The Nord University has been facilitating the work of Ukrainian double degree master students in completing their master’s theses with excellent results. In 2019 and 2023, a Ukrainian student won the best master thesis awards at the Business School.
3. Doctoral level: Together with the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, we have worked hard to institutionalize and implement the joint PhD supervision model. This required great efforts from partners to ensure recognition of the training programme, comparison and analysis (10) and its adoption (despite such obstacles as COVID-19 and the War), necessitating close collaboration with the Ukrainian authorities. As a result,

on 14 February 2024, the first Ukrainian PhD student enrolled under a cotutelle agreement has successfully defended her thesis.

4. Short-term programmes: Together with Ukrainian partners, we successfully implemented the short-term study tours to Ukraine for Norwegian master's students. They had a very positive experience with the foreign academic and business culture and Ukrainian society (10-14).
5. Microcredits. Under the new "TURBO" project, we have broadened our focus and plan to share experience and knowledge with Ukrainian partners in designing and delivering microcredit courses. We expect this will help build their capacity to deliver flexible educational offerings to heterogeneous groups of students.

As complementary support activities to Ukrainian students and staff present at the Nord University at the time of the invasion, we provided immediate psychological support through the university counselling service. The Nord University effectuated measures initiated by the Norwegian government to support Ukrainian students, which included, among others:

- Financial support covering the basic living costs of Ukrainian students who were not able to support themselves because of the military invasion;
- Flexibility of the admission process for Ukrainian applicants to degree studies at the University – deadlines were postponed for months and documentation requirements were waived, enabling students pursuing a degree in Ukraine to continue their higher education.

The Nord University supported Ukrainian incoming exchange students if they asked for collective protection under the Norwegian refugee support system, which offered scholarships, accommodation, integration and language courses, as well as other types of support. Those who were not able to reach Norway due to martial law forbidding men from leaving the country, the Nord University responded by changing the teaching modalities into a hybrid format, so that they were able to complete their courses as planned via digital means.

Despite the challenges brought by the War, the Nord University continues its work in nurturing and strengthening cooperation with Ukraine. In doing so, it sets ambitious goals (e.g. through establishing joint programmes at master's and doctoral level) and simultaneously adapts to turbulent conditions – for example, by offering a hybrid solution for the male students who could not travel to us because of the War, thus ensuring equal education without discrimination. We are certain that education is not possible without internationalization, and we do our best to ensure the highest quality and relevance for students, partner universities and society.

## University of Split (UNIST), Croatia

The UNIST is actively participating in the national activities to assist the people of Ukraine (<https://hrvatskazaukrajinu.gov.hr/>). Currently, there are over 22 thousand registered refugees from Ukraine in Croatia. The Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of



Croatia provided official instructions to all higher education institutions in Croatia on admission procedures for students from Ukraine ([https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA\\_HR\\_Temporary-Protection\\_2022.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA_HR_Temporary-Protection_2022.pdf)). In accordance with the Act on International and Temporary Protection, students from Ukraine can be admitted to the higher education institutions in Croatia to continue their studies and are entitled to all related rights: residence, family reunification, accommodation, work, health care, education, freedom of religion, free legal assistance, social welfare and integration assistance.

At the beginning of the Russian invasion, the UNIST, together with other Croatian universities and public higher education and research institutions, suspended the official scientific and education cooperation with institutions from the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the funds from the Erasmus+ KA1 projects available for Russia were transferred to Ukraine. Besides existing partnerships with Ukrainian universities, the UNIST is actively looking to include new partners, which is supported by Croatian National Agency for Erasmus+ (Agency for Mobility and EU programmes).

Currently there are several students from Ukraine at UNIST. As a member of the International Association of Maritime Universities, the Faculty of Maritime Studies hosts 3 students from the Odessa Maritime Academy, a maritime university in Odessa, Ukraine, who arrived within the framework of the Erasmus programme, through the collaboration between the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, the UNIST's Science Office and the Faculty of Maritime Studies.

In March 2022, the UNIST organised humanitarian aid for refugees from Ukraine temporarily residing in Croatia, entitled “University of Split for Ukrainian refugees” (<https://www.unist.hr/en/news/humanitarian-aid-university-of-split-for-ukrainian-refugees>). All University departments, schools and faculties participated in the actions.

Students from different university department, faculties and schools organized their independent activities. One of those was the humanitarian pub quiz organized by the students from the School of Medicine in May 2022. Medical students, gathered around the Split branch of the European Medical Students' Association, organized a general knowledge quiz and humanitarian aid collection (<https://emsasplit.org/humanitaran-pub-quiz-zabolnicu-u-ukrajini/>). The collected funds were directed to a Ukrainian hospital, towards the procurement of an audiometer, as a small token of appreciation and solidarity.

In addition to the already existing scientific collaboration with Ukrainian colleagues, perhaps the most important activity of the UNIST scientists was research about the effects of the War in Ukraine and assistance to the Ukrainian colleagues to document it and the effects of war on different aspects of life in the country. This activity was inspired by our own experience from the 1991–1995 Croatian War of Independence, which happened after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and the invasion of the Yugoslav Federal Army on Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (15). We followed the bright example of the Croatian Medical Journal (CMJ), the first medical journal in Croatia, which was founded after the Croatian proclaimed its independence in 1991; in this context, CMJ had to publish its first supplement to document the medical aspect of war in Croatia before its first regular issue (16). During and after the Croatian War of Independence, CMJ published many war-related articles, but also helped colleagues from Croatian Universities and hos-

pitals publish more than 360 articles about the consequences of the War (17). The knowledge gained during the war in Croatia, as a man-made disaster, was very relevant in the country's successful response to the COVID-19 pandemic as a natural disaster many years later (18).

With this experience, UNIST professors not only collaborated with international colleagues to document the impact of war in Ukraine on the health of the population, including the disruption of clinical trials in Ukraine (3), but also actively helped their Ukrainian colleagues write and publish about the war in Ukraine. This was particularly relevant in medicine – the directors of the “Translational Research in Biomedicine – TRIBE” doctoral programme at the School of Medicine initiated the project Giving Voice (19). They partnered with ST-OPEN, the scientific journal of the University of Split (<https://st-open.unist.hr/index.php/st-open>), to help authors publish reports about the consequences of the war in Ukraine. So far, five articles have been published in ST-OPEN (2, 20-23), and more articles are in preparation. The UNIST continues to help document the consequences of war in Ukraine and acts as an agent of change for peace and prosperity of the people in Ukraine.

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