

EU instruments and national regulations to respond to the needs of students and researchers from Ukraine

In response to the war in Ukraine and the arrival of students and staff to Europe's universities, The Guild calls on the European Commission and the French Presidency of the Council to demonstrate solidarity and the added value of a common European approach to the crisis.

The Guild universities are currently providing [concrete support](#) to enable researchers, academics, university staff and students to continue their lives, work, and careers to the best of their ability. Universities are suspending or changing regulations where necessary, making available scholarships, and developing a variety of support mechanisms (language courses, psychological support, employment opportunities within and beyond the university etc).

We welcome the European Commission's commitment to support the continued participation of Ukraine and Ukrainian organisations in Horizon Europe, and to protect Ukrainian students studying at European universities. However, more should be done to enable universities to support Ukrainian students and staff on our campuses.

We invite policymakers to implement immediate and long-term measures by making the best use of national and EU instruments:

1. Facilitation of integration of staff and students at universities

We urge governments to do everything they can to facilitate the integration of staff and students at universities in a timely and flexible manner. This will necessitate close collaborations between ministries and universities, and a willingness of governments to show utmost flexibility and speed in responding positively to concerns from universities about regulatory, financial, or legal barriers they face.

2. Designation of students and staff

It is extremely important to ensure that all provisions affect students and staff from Ukraine – not just Ukrainian citizens. Many special national exemptions and support mechanisms are being developed for citizens from Ukraine, but there are many people on our campuses who are students from Ukraine who are not citizens.

This entails facilitating the access to visa and residency permits for all students and academics displaced by the war in Ukraine, independently from their citizenship. Ukraine was home to more than 76,000 foreign students, a quarter from Africa, alongside staff of non-Ukrainian nationality. They need to be protected and welcomed at European universities, just as Ukrainian citizens.

3. Ease the Erasmus+ rules in order to:

- Enable universities to mobilise unused Erasmus+ 2019 and 2020 funds (where possible) to support incoming students from Ukraine, without expecting them to earn any credit points, and to use this short-term mobility period to adjust to their home university and benefit from the OLS language support. Students should be accepted through a light-touch procedure at the host university's discretion. The same opportunities should be provided for academic and administrative staff members with maximum flexibility.
- Extend all current Erasmus+ funding for students from Ukraine into the next academic year, if this is desired by the students. Existing Inter-Institutional Agreements should be extended automatically.
- Create new Erasmus+ grants for students from Ukraine, allowing them to be supported for one year as exchange students. This would ensure that students can continue their studies as seamlessly as possible, allowing them to return as soon as possible to their home universities. We suggest the provision of utmost flexibility in the documentation required for students and staff from Ukraine.

4. Admission requirements and fees

Universities are trying to be as flexible as they can in suspending student fees, or postponing fee payments. In many instances they need national government support and additional funding to do this on a sustainable basis. They are also changing deadlines for incoming students for the next 2022/23 academic year as much as they can. For that reason, national regulations about admissions procedures and deadlines should be suspended or made flexible to account for the needs of students from Ukraine.

For example, universities will need to be given discretion over admissions procedures where documentation about prior achievements and qualifications is missing. To this end, in many countries the national regulations need to be amended/suspended.

5. MSCA Hop-On Grants

The Hop-On Facility under the Widening Participation part of Horizon Europe, designed to include researchers from Widening countries who were not part of the initial funding application, could be used for researchers from Ukraine within the MSCA.

While MSCA already funds scholarship organizations for academic refugees, allowing the flexibility on the ground to support researchers would be extremely important if required. Whilst future demand for this is very difficult to predict, having the financial and legal structures (including clear employment procedures) of support available would be extremely welcome.

6. Professions

Particular challenges persist in the admission of students studying for professional degrees, e.g. medicine. Here flexibility will be most difficult to achieve, but we nonetheless urge greatest possible flexibility (and support in the provision of places) as these professional skills will be most urgently needed in the reconstruction of Ukraine.

7. Funding support for Researchers at Risk

We advocate the mobilisation of additional funding for the creation of new mechanisms to support researchers from Ukraine, and other nations, who are not able to continue their research at home.

These need to be sufficiently rapid and flexible to account for the unplanned and urgent nature of arrivals from Ukraine. We propose a number of measures, catering for various research career stages:

- *Flexible institutional funding:* Universities have different specialities, facilities, and infrastructure. They will vary in their capacity to host researchers from different disciplines. In addition, the level of need from researchers at risk is changeable and difficult to gauge. A flexible institutional funding award would allow universities to react to incoming researchers in terms of numbers and costs associated with their research (e.g., lab costs, equipment etc). We suggest developing a process similar to that used for Key Action 1 in Erasmus+. Funding could be distributed to either universities directly or via national agencies. This would allow institutions to declare what they can offer to researchers at risk and estimate what support they need. Due to the unplanned nature of the arrival from Ukraine, this funding could include budget items not normally part of research funding to assist their establishment and integration, and could include accommodation for the first few months or childcare costs for 1-2 months etc.
- *Extension of time-based eligibility criteria:* ERC Starting and Consolidator Awards and MSCA Doctoral fellows include eligibility criteria on number of years since completion of PhD. The ERC and MSCA schemes already offer eligible extension criteria (e.g. maternity/paternity leave, long-term sick etc). We suggest that all researchers affiliated to Ukrainian universities be offered an extension period of, for example, one year.
- *Create an emergency fellowship scheme:* A dedicated fellowship scheme for academics unable to carry out research at home – including Ukrainian researchers, as well as Russian researchers at threat for having spoken out against the war. This facility could be adapted from the existing ERA Chairs scheme and MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships. Furthermore, additional places could be created for scholars at risk on MSCA Doctoral Networks. Those networks that will soon be completing would be well positioned to be offered additional funding to continue their programme with a new cohort of PhD students. Having completed a first cycle with their original cohort of students they would have the experience and contacts to rapidly organise to run their programme again with a second cohort.
- *Using Hop-On Facility provided for Widening Participation:* We advocate the use of the hop-on facility under Horizon Europe, designed for researchers from widening countries not originally named in research grant applications, to be used for researchers previously based in Ukraine to be integrated into Horizon Europe projects. This should be used as flexibly as possible. Such a Hop-On facility could, for instance, be used by ERA Chairs or ERC grantees, MSCA projects, or in Centers of Excellence created by the Teaming instrument.

8. Families and Dependents

Some students' and staff families are arriving at our universities, but (not yet) the students themselves – where this is the case, they also require support.