FreeAc

Conditions, Needs and Challenges for Displaced Members of Academia of Ukrainian Higher Education Institutions

Promoting Academic Freedom in Ukraine

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Conditions, Needs and Challenges for Displaced Members of Ukrainian Higher Education Institutions

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Funded by: European Union, Erasmus+

Authors: Lisa Heschl (University Graz, AT, coordinator)

Svitlana Andreichenko (University Graz, AT, International Humanitarian University, UKR)

Nataliia Baadzhy (International Humanitarian University, UKR)

Viktoriia Kachuriner (International Humanitarian University, UKR)

Vitalii Kornieiev (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, UKR)

Bogdana Nosova (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, UKR)

Yuliia Shafarenko (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, UKR)

Dmytro Tsyhaniuk (Sumy State University, UKR)

Anastasiia Volobuieva (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, UKR)

Graphics: KMOP

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Foreword

Higher Education Institutions' provides for a basis to understanding the evolving realities of Ukrainian academia in the context of the ongoing war. It in particular focuses on the situations of displaced members of academia including both academics and students, offering not only valuable insights into their needs but also highlighting the consequences of displacement on higher education institutions (HEI) and the whole higher education system in Ukraine.

As output from the Erasmus+ project 'Promoting Academic Freedom in Ukraine (FreeAc)' (2023-1-AT01-KA220-HED-000164930)[1], the study supports the overarching goal of addressing the direct impacts of war on academic life and academic freedom. The FreeAc project is dedicated to supporting Ukrainian higher education institutions and their displaced academic communities in the face of the ongoing Russian aggression. The project aims to help Ukrainian partner universities – International Humanitarian University in Odesa (IHU), Sumy State University (SumDu) and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK) – to integrate further into the European higher education area and to promote and support freedom of academia under the current challenging situation. FreeAc strives to mitigate the difficulties that academic institutions in Ukraine face during this unprecedented war in Europe in the 21st century to the best extent possible by contributing to the preservation of the integrity of Ukrainian higher education institutions while simultaneously supporting displaced students and academic staff.

By promoting collaboration, FreeAc enriches the European academic environment, fostering solidarity and cross-border cooperation. Through these efforts, the project plays a significant role in advancing the sustainable development of academic freedom while also ensuring the continuity and fostering the diversification of Ukrainian higher education.

[1]The FreeAc project consortium consists of the University of Graz (Austria, Coordinator), the International Humanitarian University (Ukraine), Sumy State University (Ukraine), Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine), Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań (Poland), CESIE (Italy), KMOP - Education and Innovation Hub (Greece) and WUS – (Austria). For additional information about the project and its partners, please visit the **project website** or follow us on **Facebook** and **LinkedIn.**

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Objective of the Study

The unprovoked, unjustified, and illegal full-scale military invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24 February 2022, which escalated the aggression that had been ongoing since February 2014, has had profound and far-reaching impacts on Ukraine's educational system. Over the course of more than three years, the ongoing war has had a disruptive impact on all aspects of life in Ukraine, with education being one of the most vulnerable sectors. Since the beginning of the invasion, many educational institutions were severely damaged by shelling and had to navigate the complexities resulting from the war. For security reasons, students and teachers were forced to relocate, with some finding refuge outside Ukraine, while others moved to areas far from active hostilities or remained in temporarily occupied territories. Similar to 2014, when Crimea was annexed and hostilities erupted in Donbas, Ukrainian HEIs also had to relocate to territory controlled by Ukraine.[2] The Russian aggression causing numerous human tragedies and economic losses has, thus, also raised significant challenges to Ukrainian universities, which had to rapidly adapt to new realities.[3]

Ukraine, a country rich in cultural heritage and academic history, has found itself navigating turbulent waters. With 20% of the country's territory occupied and roughly 15% of the infrastructure of Ukrainian HEIs significantly damaged or destroyed, the survival of higher education in Ukraine has become an imminent issue.[4] While the large-scale destruction of educational infrastructure caused by hostilities and the forced relocation of HEIs to safe territories have severely disrupted the normal functioning of educational and research processes, it was in particular to ensure the physical safety of students and staff at HEIs and the psychological trauma

[2]Nikolaiev, Ye., Riy, G., & Shemelynets, I. (2023). *War in Ukraine: Reshaping the higher education sector* Analytical report, 6. Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University.

[3] See: Кремень, В. Г., Луговий, В. І., Саух, П. Ю., Драч, І. І., Слюсаренко, О. М., Скиба, Ю. А., Жабенко, О. В., Калашнікова, С. А., Таланова, Ж. В., Петроє, О. М., Оржель, О. Ю., Регейло, І. Ю., & Набок, М. В. (2023). *Вища освіта України в умовах воєнного стану та післявоєнного відновлення: виклики і відповіді* Науково-аналітична доповідь, за заг. ред. В.Г. Кременя. Київ, Педагогічна думка. 172 с. https://doi.org/10.37472/NAES-IHED-20234; Latyk, N., Sakovets, N., & Sanayko, A. (2024). Higher education in Ukraine under war conditions. *Human Studies. Series of Pedagogy, 19*(51), 51–57. https://doi.org/10.24919/2413-2039.19/51.6; Zhila, H. (2023). Higher education in wartime: Challenges, problems, and prospects for students and researchers. *Youth and the Market, 210*. https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4634.2023.274694; Lugovyi, V., Kalashnikova, S., Talanova, Z., & Vlasova, I. (2023). Transformation of higher education in Ukraine: Impact of the war and objectives for post-war recovery. *European Journal of Education*. 58 (4), 611-628 https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12584.

[4] Ivanenko, N. (2024). Two years of twinning: Challenges in Ukrainian higher education. *Universities UK International*. https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/universities-uk-international/insights-and-publications/uuki-blog/two-years-twinning-challenges-ukrainian; Ivanenko, N. (2023). Higher education in Ukraine: Past overview, present state and future perspectives. *Centre for Global Higher Education Working Paper Series, 102*. https://www.researchcghe.org/wp-content/uploads/migrate/wp102.pdf.

related to the war having an impact on the continuation of academic careers in general and the overall level of academic motivation and performance of students and teachers.[5]

Ensuring equitable access to quality higher education has become increasingly difficult due to a variety of issues which impede access to education and the enjoyment of the freedom to teach, learn and conduct research at different levels and to different extents. Importantly, while some of the challenges faced because of the war have an immediate impact on the higher education system in Ukraine, the impacts of others will only become visible in the long-term.

From an institutional perspective, the war had and still has major implications on funding and therefore on research innovation and the maintenance of research programs and infrastructures. For instance, the scope of scientific and technical activities, a traditionally important source for funding, has become considerably limited mainly focusing on war technologies and related research. While this switch and the dedication of budgets and funds can be understood given the current context, in the mid- and long-term the focus on one area might impede research and innovation in other academic fields crucial not only for re-building Ukraine but also for allowing Ukrainian researchers and students to remain part of the global academic world and be part of international research collaborations.

Another important source of funding for HEIs in Ukraine that has been lost because of the war, are revenues from international students coming to Ukraine to pursue their careers.[6] But not only the lack of international students poses challenges to HEIs. Indeed, the forced displacement of both students and teachers has had major impacts not only on HEIs and the higher education sector in Ukraine but also on the societal development of Ukraine.

In the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, HEIs were primarily concerned with upholding teaching despite dropping numbers of present students and shortages in teaching personnel. Ukrainian universities managed to work out effective communication mechanisms to keep in touch with their students and to adapt curricula to the new challenges by switching mainly to remote teaching and learning. Yet, the longer the conflict lasts the more difficult it becomes to uphold academic online offers as displaced students and academics might start new careers in e.g. countries of destination or drop out academia due to personal or financial reasons. For HEIs fewer of students imply less financial revenue and the loss of academic excellency results not only in a loss of reputation but also in losing potential for the acquisition of third-party funds. While the displacement causes, thus, immediate consequences for HEIs, it also has wider implications going beyond the higher education sector. The brain drain Ukraine is facing, the exodus of highly qualified academics, creates unprecedented ruptures in the development of the Ukrainian society. In a post-conflict situation, it is the well-educated, those who can engage in critical thinking and reflection, who are of utmost importance for re-building a society and re-establishing democracy.

[5] Тілікіна, Н. (2024). Вплив війни на сферу освіти України та соціально-психологічне становище студентів. *Соціальна робота та соціальна освіта*, 2 (13), 130–147.
[6] CEDOS. (2022). Вплив війни на вищу освіту в Україні: виклики та перспективи. *CEDOS*. https://cedos.org.ua/events/vplyv-vijny-na-vyshhu-osvitu-v-ukrayiny-vyklyky-ta-perspektyvy/

Even though many teachers and students have already returned, it is clear that the war with the constant air raids and shelling causing not only damages to critical Ukrainian infrastructure but also creating a general atmosphere of insecurity will likely facilitate a new wave of migration rather than the fast return of displaced members of academia.[7]

Taking into account the security situation, one has also to consider that not all members of academia actually had the chance to leave Ukraine but had to stay behind being even more directly affected by the limitations imposed on their freedom of academia. For instance, restrictions on movement imposed on Ukrainian male students and researchers aged 18 to 60 because of the martial laws in place limit their possibilities in effectively seeking protection and continuing their careers as they cannot participate in EU grant programs, especially in student and academic mobility.[8] Others might have to stay behind because of other reasons, such as care obligations or out of economic reasons. Unequal opportunities always might result in tensions within a society and should be mitigated.

To address these and a range of other challenges a multifaceted approach has to be developed to ensure the stability and progress of higher education during wartime but also in post-conflict settings. Yet, in order to do so, there is a need to understand the challenges. There is a need to grasp the problem at hand in order to take the next step and develop strategies to counter negative impacts of the war on higher education, to maintain academic continuity and to build resilience within HEIs, allowing them to adapt and thrive despite the ongoing war.

The FreeAc project would like to contribute to the endeavour to understand the challenges Ukrainian HEI face these days better. With this Baseline Study on 'Conditions, Needs and Challenges for Displaced Members of Ukrainian Higher Education Institutions' we want to provide a better picture about the situation of displaced members of academia from the three partner Ukrainian HEI, International Humanitarian University Odesa (IHU), Sumy State University and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK). The full-scale aggression has forced a substantial number of Ukrainian academic staff and students to leave their homes and home institutions and seek refuge in other regions or countries. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, out of 80 000 Ukrainian academics, nearly 5 000 are currently abroad. About 30% of all Ukrainian academics work remotely. Nearly 1 500 academics have voluntarily joined military service.[9] There is no exact data on the number of Ukrainian students currently residing abroad. However, estimates suggests that by the end of 2024, around 450 000 Ukrainian students were studying abroad.[10]

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[7]Nikolaiev, Y., Riy, G., & Shemelynets, I. (2023). The impact of war on the higher education sector in Ukraine. *Analytical Report*, 38. Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University.

[8] Nikolaiev, Y., Riy, G., & Shemelynets, I. (2023). The impact of war on the higher education sector in Ukraine. *Analytical Report*, 37. Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University.

[9]Україна: Відновлення наукової інфраструктури коштуватиме понад $1,26 млрд. (*ЮНЕСКО)*. http://surl.li/xqzgte

[10]Попко, В. (2024). Повернути майбутнє: місія здійсненна. Як закладам вищої освіти повернути студентів. *Interfax-Ukraine*. https://interfax.com.ua/news/blog/1023998.html

As has already been indicated, the displacement of members of academia has short-, mid- and long-term implications on the higher education system but also the general development of the Ukrainian society. To understand the situation of displaced members of academia and the challenges they face under the given situation is, thus, crucial for developing any strategies for re-building the higher education sector in a post-war scenario. By reaching out to displaced members of academia from the three Ukrainian HEIs participating in the project we aimed to gather knowledge and insights about how the displacement has impacted on their academic careers, as well as how their current life situations and the challenges they face might influence decisions to return to Ukraine and/or their home institutions in the future.

Accordingly, the Baseline Study aims to:

1. Investigate the geographic location and the continuing as well as new institutional integration of displaced members of academia in both their home institution and potential new HEIs.
2. Assess barriers to academic continuity and explore the challenges faced by displaced members of academia in continuing their academic activities, including access to education, research opportunities, and professional development.
3. Examine the personal and social difficulties experienced by displaced academics and students, as well as the impact of displacement on their academic and professional identities in new environments.
4. Investigate the institutional support received by displaced members of academia receive from both their home institutions and current host institutions, and to examine the availability of resources, support services, and institutional policies aimed at helping them to continue their academic and professional activities despite the challenges of displacement.
5. Explore prospects for return and reintegration by investigating under which circumstances displaced members of academia consider returning to Ukraine and which factors may make such return unlikely.

To fully understand the impact of Russia's full-scale invasion on Ukraine's higher education sector and effectively support its reconstruction, it is crucial to examine the current circumstances and needs of displaced members of Ukrainian academia (students and academic staff) and their continued involvement in academic life.

1.2. Methodology

The methodology for the Baseline Study has been designed to comprehensively understand and address the complex situations faced by displaced members of academia from the three Ukrainian partner institutions. It is embedded in the broader objective of connecting their current

situation with the implications of their displacement for their home institutions and the higher education sector in the short-, mid- and long-term perspective.

This study employs a multi-dimensional approach, integrating an online questionnaire, interviews, desk research, and personal experiences to gather diverse perspectives and insights. The target group of the study comprised displaced members of academia understood as academic staff and students from the three participating Ukrainian HEIs (i.e. IHU, SumDu and TSNUK). Academic staff included all individuals employed at the time of the Russian invasion in February 2022 who were engaged in research and/or teaching at one of the participating HEIs. Students included individuals enrolled in one or more programmes (BA, MA or PhD) at one of the participating HEI. Adopting a broad approach and given the realities on the ground 'displacement' was understood as displacement to a country other than Ukraine and displacement to another region/city within Ukraine.

It should be noted that the three surveyed universities, which are partner institutions in the FreeAc project, differ in their profiles, particularly in terms of size and geographical location. IHU is a private HEI in Odesa. It had 5,660 students before 24 February 2022 and currently has 6,852, an increase of 1,192 students, or about 21%. The number of academic staff rose from 289 to 347, an increase of about 58 members. Situated in a relatively safer southern region, IHU has seen growth in both student and staff numbers. This rise is likely the result of people fleeing more dangerous regions.

SumDu is a state-owned higher education institution. It had 9,689 students before 24 February 2022 and currently has 7,625, marking a decrease of about 2,064 students, or approximately 21%. The number of academic staff fell from 815 to 645, a reduction of around 170 members. Located closer to the front line, SumDu has faced a significant outflow of both students and staff.

TSNUK is also a public HEI. Before 24 February 2022, the university had over 32,000 students, and currently has over 30,000, representing a decrease of approximately 2,000 students, or about 6%. The number of academic staff remained stable, with over 3,000 members. Located in the capital, TSNUK experienced a smaller decrease in the number of students compared to Sumy State University, likely due to its safer position farther from the front line.

By using a combination of survey data, interviews, and a collaborative research approach, this study provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the experiences, challenges, and needs of displaced academic staff and students from the three Ukrainian partner universities of the FreeAc project. It is grounded in a methodology that includes both data collection and analysis, with the main objective of gathering information on the living conditions, learning and working situations, needs, and challenges faced by displaced students and faculty members from IHU, SumDU, and TSNUK.

Online Survey

An online survey was selected as the primary method for the Baseline Study due to its ability to gather comprehensive data on various aspects of displacement and the possibility to reach as many people as possible. As online survey toll LimeSurvey has been chosen and the survey has

been hosted at the servers of the University of Graz which ensured that all applicable data protection regulations have been respected and strictly followed. The online survey has been completely anonymous and no sensitive personal data has been collected.

The online questionnaire has been divided into three parts. A first part was dedicated to get general information about the participant including data regarding the current location of stay and the academic background and position before the displacement. A second part explored the current academic involvement of the participants focusing on the extent and the circumstances of the current academic engagement of participants. In the case of academic staff this means if the employment status of the participant has changed and if so, whether academic core activities (teaching and/or research) would still be pursued and to which extent. For students the questions aimed to explore if they were able to pursue their academic careers despite the war, whether they had to change the discipline, the programme etc. For both groups, this part also aimed to figure the level of the sense of integration into an eventually new academic setting. The third and final part of the survey was dedicated to the personal motivations and future aspirations of displaced members of academia to continue/discontinue their academic careers. It further examined the intentions of participants to potentially return to Ukraine and the factors that might undermine their aspirations.

The survey included differentiated scenarios for academic staff and students.[11] For students, these scenarios illustrated varying degrees of the connection of participants to their home university and host HEI through the enrolment in study programmes, as well as information on educational experiences and academic adaptation following displacement. The scenarios for faculty members addressed diverging employment situations at the home HEI, new host/home HEI or combinations of employment situations including both Ukrainian and other HEI. Each scenario focused on various models of participation in the academic process under displacement conditions, allowing the study to explore how changes in employment or enrolment across different institutions, or engagement with multiple institutions, influenced both faculty members' and students' professional and academic paths.

The link to the survey has been shared by Ukrainian partner universities among their academic staff and students through official mailing lists, the leverage of personal contacts through a snowball system and outreach through social media channels.

The online survey was open between 1st August 2024 till 30th October 2024. A reminder to participate was sent via the Ukrainian partner universities in mid-September 2024, and another one in mid-October.

In total 329 people participated with 93 participants (28.3%) fully completing the questionnaire and 236 (71.7%) partially doing so. The high percentage of only partial responses indicates varying levels of engagement of respondents and/or time constraints. Additionally, the rather modest size of the sample despite the broad outreach strategy and the great number of people

[11] See Annex I.

reached, suggests that the volatile situation in the country and the insecurities people face concerning their future and careers might impede the willingness to engage with a study assessing exactly those insecurities. Even though the sample size does not allow for generalisations, the data gathered provides valuable insights.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews allowed to get a better understanding of the situations of displaced members of academia, the challenges they face in pursuing their academic careers and their aspirations for the future. Between September and October 2024, 22 interviews were conducted with a select group of displaced students and academic staff who had not taken part in the survey. To complement the survey data, these interviews provided additional qualitative insights that enriched the study's findings by exploring personal stories, challenges in adjusting to new academic environments, and strategies for coping with displacement.

The flexible format allowed participants to share their experiences in more detail, highlighting issues related to academic continuity, integration into new systems, and emotional and social adaptation. This qualitative approach was essential for capturing the diverse and complex realities of displacement that could not be fully addressed through the survey alone.

Document Analysis

The document analysis for the Baseline Study focused on the internal policies and officials documents of the Ukrainian partner universities assessing the universities' responses to the displacement of their members of academia. The reviewed documents provided insights into the support mechanisms these universities implemented for their displaced members of academia.

The analysis also examined how these policies had evolved over the three years of war, including changes in academic programs, financial assistance, mental health support, and measures to maintain academic and professional development for displaced individuals.

Personal Experience

The Baseline Study was collaboratively developed and written by representatives of the three Ukrainian universities, some of whom have previously been part of the group of displaced members of academia. This includes individuals who continue their teaching activities remotely from abroad, as well as those who have returned to Ukraine after forced relocation. Their personal experiences of adapting teaching methodologies, working while displaced, and continuing academic activities under wartime conditions served as a valuable source of empirical data for the development of the study.

Ethical Standards

The study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical standards throughout all stages, from planning to implementation. Participants were thoroughly informed about the study's objectives and provided explicit consent to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained to protect participants' personal information. Additionally, participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. These ethical principles were integral to the research process, ensuring the dignity, rights, and well-being of all participants were upheld.

2. Academic Careers, Activities, and Challenges: Perspectives of Displaced Members of Ukrainian HEIs - Case Studies

2.1. International Humanitarian University Odesa (IHU)

2.1.1. Academic Staff

> "Without adequate support, many displaced scholars may permanently integrate into foreign institutions or leave academia altogether, contributing to a long-term brain drain that could significantly impact Ukraine's academic and research landscape."
> (Lecturer at the IHU)

> "Even though I've managed to continue my university work abroad, I constantly feel torn between two worlds. I want to return and contribute to rebuilding Ukraine's education system, but the uncertainty makes it incredibly hard to plan anything long-term."
> (Lecturer at the IHU)

General overview and mapping of the displaced academic staff from IHU

As a result of Russian aggression, 10 academic staff members from the International Humanitarian University (Odesa) were forced to leave Ukraine in February–March 2022. They held academic positions as Associate Professors and Professors and were employed full-time. Only 5 of these 10 displaced academics participated in the survey. This group represents scholars with various levels of academic experience, and their forced displacement led to different career outcomes, including employment at foreign universities, transitions to the private sector, or complete disengagement from academia.

As a result of displacement, the respondents found themselves in various countries, including EU member states such as Austria (2 respondents) and Germany (2 respondents), as well as the non-EU country of Norway (1 respondent). Their legal statuses vary: 4 respondents have temporary protection status in accordance with the EU Temporary Protection Directive, while 1 respondent holds a different type of temporary protection status applicable in a non-EU country.

Regarding their employment status and changes, two respondents have working contracts at HEIs in the EU or non-EU countries. However, their positions are of lower rank than they held before their displacement. Two respondents continue to work under a contract with the IHU, but the amount of working hours and the contract duration have been reduced. One respondent is no longer engaged in academic activity and has transitioned to the private sector.

Identifying needs and challenges regarding academic careers and activities

The challenges and needs related to the academic careers and activities of displaced scholars are multifaceted.

One of the challenges is obtaining a stable academic position. Two respondents have obtained positions at foreign higher education institutions but only with limited scope, such as contracts of 25% or less. The experience of integration into new institutions varies significantly: while one respondent feels fully integrated, one respondent stated to feel as merely structural part of the institution without deeper involvement in the academic community, and some do not feel integrated at all. Access to academic activities is also uneven – one respondent has experienced a decline in their engagement with research and publications, whereas four have maintained or even increased their activity in this area. The loss of academic connections is another challenge, as one respondent has completely lost contact with the Ukrainian academic community, while four respondents maintain varying degrees of connection. Despite all these challenges, four respondents have managed to gain professional benefits from displacement, while one respondent did not experience any positive changes in the academic career and switched to a different field.

Identifying challenges, opportunities, risks, and prospects for returning to Ukraine post-war

The return of displaced academics to Ukraine depends on a range of challenges, opportunities, risks, and prospects for the institution's development. The primary factor influencing the possibility of return is the security situation, as stability is a key condition for deciding to resume work in Ukraine (as noted by 3 respondents). One major challenge is career uncertainty, as some academics who have found employment abroad face limited opportunities for career growth and a lack of guarantees for stable academic activity upon returning. The loss of academic connections also presents a significant obstacle, as some faculty members and researchers have already adapted to foreign academic environments, while others have left academia entirely and transitioned to non-academic employment.

Support policies provided by International Humanitarian University for their academic staff abroad

The support policy implemented by the IHU for its academic staff abroad is determined by the current situation and the challenges the university has faced due to the war. It aims to balance the interests of the educational process and the needs of displaced individuals, taking into account both the necessity of adapting to new conditions and supporting scholars in their professional activities.

The IHU has gradually adapted its policy to support displaced faculty members, although the level of assistance varies. Initially, the IHU allowed displaced staff to retain their contracts, often with reduced working hours or salaries, and provided temporary remote work opportunities to maintain academic activity. The university also facilitated mobility programs and research collaborations for displaced staff. Additionally, the university introduced mental health and legal support services to assist displaced scholars. As a result, two displaced academics retained their

contracts with the IHU, albeit under changed conditions, with reductions in contract duration and scope.

One respondent has ended their employment with the International Humanitarian University due to the university's decision to return to in-person teaching. Since face-to-face learning is considered the most effective way to teach certain subjects, the university faced challenges in providing online work opportunities for all displaced faculty members.

IHU, recognising that the displacement of its scholars represents both a challenge and an opportunity, has made significant efforts to support them. Some scholars have retained their contracts, albeit under altered terms.

The experience gained by displaced scholars abroad can be used to enrich both the university and the broader higher education sector in Ukraine. However, while some changes have been made to facilitate remote work and extend contracts, these measures are still insufficient to fully support displaced scholars in such turbulent times. Without adequate support, many displaced scholars may permanently integrate into foreign institutions or leave academia altogether, contributing to a long-term brain drain that could significantly impact Ukraine's academic and research landscape.

2.1.2. Students

"Sometimes it's hard to stay motivated when everything around you is unknown. But having access to education helped me stay focused and not give up."
(Displaced student from IHU)

General overview and mapping of the displaced students from International Humanitarian University

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 triggered one of the largest displacement crises in recent European history, forcing approximately 200 students from the IHU to flee their home country in search of safety and educational continuity.

This study examines the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of displaced students from the IHU who have been affected by the Russian aggression and have participated in the survey. Displacement has significantly impacted their access to education, psychological well-being, and future prospects. Based on the survey data (28 passed the survey) and personal contacts between teachers and students (19 students were interviewed), several inferences can be drawn in the course of this study.

According to the online survey, 27 of the displaced students are enrolled in the IHU, and one student is enrolled in both an EU HEI and the IHU. The mapping of displacement primarily shows the relocation of IHU students across Europe to countries such as Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Portugal, which became key destinations due to their geographical proximity and established Ukrainian communities, as reported by 7 interviewed students

Identifying needs and challenges regarding studying in their current situations

The information presented in this section is primarily based on data gathered through interviews with 19 displaced students from the International Humanitarian University.

Displaced students studying across Europe face a range of academic, financial, and psychological challenges as they attempt to continue their education in a foreign environment. While many universities have opened their doors to Ukrainian students, the transition remains difficult due to several key factors: academic challenges, financial struggles, psychological and emotional challenges, bureaucratic and legal barriers.

Displaced Ukrainian students face a number of academic challenges when adapting to foreign education systems. One of these challenges is the language barrier, which adds stress and hinders desired academic performance. In addition, there are questions about the differences in grades, curricula and academic expectations, which also complicate adaptation. Students must quickly navigate these variations, which can be overwhelming. Another challenge is the limited recognition of Ukrainian academic credits. Some students face difficulties in transferring their previous academic credits to European institutions, which can lead to delays in graduation or the need to retake courses.

Displaced students from Ukraine face significant financial struggles abroad. High living costs in European cities make it difficult to afford rent, food, and transportation, especially without stable financial support.

In addition to financial issues, many students experience mental health struggles such as trauma, anxiety, and depression due to the war and uncertainty about their future. Adapting to a new educational environment while coping with displacement stress can be overwhelming. The lack of a support network, being far from family and friends, and cultural differences often lead to isolation and loneliness.

Bureaucratic and legal barriers also pose challenges. The uncertainty about whether they can complete their studies abroad or will need to return to Ukraine complicates their long-term academic planning.

Identifying challenges, opportunities, risks, and prospects for returning to Ukraine post-war

As the war in Ukraine continues to reshape the country's educational landscape, many displaced students face uncertainty about returning to Ukrainian higher education institutions. Based on personal conversations with 15 students, four expressed a clear desire to resume their studies in Ukraine after the war. Three male students stated that they would only consider returning after the Martial Law is lifted. Two students mentioned that they have not fully integrated into foreign society and are waiting for the war to end in order to return. In contrast, four students plan to stay abroad permanently, for example in Poland, due to better job opportunities and a lack of prospects in Ukraine. The remaining two students remain uncertain, as they do not expect the war to end any time soon and are still undecided about their future.

The challenges of returning to Ukraine for displaced students from the IHU are significant. Ongoing instability and security concerns, as well as unpredictable geopolitical conditions and the

risk of future escalation, may prevent students from returning. In addition, some students have adapted to new curricula and academic systems abroad, making it difficult to reintegrate into the Ukrainian higher education system. Economic difficulties also pose a serious obstacle.

At the same time, there are some opportunities for returning students who will play a crucial role in rebuilding the Ukrainian education system, using the valuable knowledge, skills and international experience gained abroad. Closer international cooperation between IHU and European universities is being established, which can facilitate double degree programmes, exchange opportunities and curriculum development. The Ukrainian authorities, with international support, could also introduce financial aid, scholarships and incentives to encourage students to return and contribute to the country's recovery.

Nevertheless, risks remain. Ongoing war and instability may disrupt education and job prospects, while post-war Ukraine could face limited academic resources. If many qualified students stay abroad, a brain drain may slow national recovery.

Support policies provided by International Humanitarian University for their students abroad

The support policy implemented by the IHU for its displaced students abroad is shaped by the ongoing challenges and circumstances caused by the Russian aggression. The policy aims to balance the academic needs of students with their personal and professional difficulties, while helping them to adapt to a new educational environment and continue their studies.

For students abroad, IHU provides the opportunity to join classes taught by university lecturers in person on campus via online access. The university ensures access to learning materials and allows exams to be taken online, enabling students to continue their studies despite displacement.

In addition to academic support, the university also provides mental health services to help students overcome the psychological effects of displacement. The university has made significant efforts to help its students maintain their academic trajectory and manage their displacement. While the full range of support needed to ensure long-term stability remains an area for improvement.

2.2. Sumy State University

2.2.1. Academic Staff

General overview and mapping of the displaced academic staff from Sumy State University

At the beginning of 2022, Sumy State University has had about 3000 employees, including more than 800 academic staff. From 24.02.2022 till the end of March 2022 the Sumy region was occupied by the Russian army, and the city of Sumy was surrounded by Russian troops. The overall humanitarian situation was not good (problems with supplying vital goods, food, and medicine), which led to a massive displacement of Sumy citizens to other regions and countries. Most of the displaced academic staff found some safe place in other countries. By the end of 2022, about 150 of the academic staff has relocated to different countries. This amounts to 20% of the total academic staff, yet, the situation differs in various faculties. For example, in the Institute of Business, Economics, and Management, almost 40% of the academic personnel was working remotely from places other than Sumy, while only 3% of the academic staff of the Faculty of Technical Systems and Energy Efficient Technologies has left Sumy.

Considering the large number of academic staff being displaced and the impossibility of their replacement with other qualified staff because of safety challenges, Sumy State University decided to support all members of displaced academia with their contracts and implemented a mixed mode for the educational process to let all the displaced staff do their teaching and research job in remote mode.

Currently, the respondents from Sumy State University reside in different countries, including EU countries like Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Netherlands, Slovakia, Estonia, Spain, non-EU countries, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland.

Their legal statuses vary; 72% hold Temporary Protection Status under the EU Temporary Protection Directive, while 17% have different temporary protection statuses for EU and non-EU countries.

All the respondents from SumDu have a valid working contract with SumDu and a valid working contract at an EU/non-EU HEI. 17% of the respondents mentioned reducing their contract from a 5 to 3-year period.

Identifying needs and challenges regarding academic careers and activities

Displacement changed respondents' engagement in academia in different ways. 44% became significantly less engaged, and 22% more engaged; about half of the respondents feel they are equally or moderately less involved compared to their academic activities before displacement.

89% respondents saved the connection level to the academic discourse and the academic community at Sumy State University or became moderately less connected.

Almost half of the respondents are structurally integrated but do not see themselves as full members of the academic community at the host institution. Respondents from Poland, Estonia, Germany, and the United Kingdom mentioned that they feel like full members of the new

institution and are fully integrated. Three respondents estimate their chances of becoming fully integrated at their new institutions to be low or very low (Poland, Sweden, and Germany).

Identifying challenges, opportunities, risks, and prospects for returning displaced Ukrainian academia after the war to Ukraine

The most significant challenges that have forced Ukrainian academic staff to move from Ukraine are:

1) Disruption of academic activities

   The war has caused considerable disruptions to academic life, with many universities and research institutions either closing or operating under severe constraints, pushing academics to seek opportunities elsewhere. This challenge is especially significant to universities in the eastern regions of Ukraine, where the reduction of student enrolment is substantial. In the future, the trend is going to be enforced.

2) Economic and financial hardship

   The economic fallout from the war has made it difficult for many academics to sustain a livelihood, especially in the educational sector, prompting a search for more stable economic environments.

3) International opportunities

   The global academic community has responded with offers of positions, scholarships, and fellowships, providing a viable alternative for those looking to continue their careers in safer environments. This creates a competitive environment in the global European research and education sector. Ukrainian HEIs can`t compete with European ones regarding salaries and laboratory development.

Nevertheless, 83% of respondents (except three respondents) from Sumy State University mentioned that they are ready to return to Sumy when the security situation improves. This factor shows that the most significant is the security situation, and the academic staff is ready to deal with some other problems if the security situation will let them and their families be safe. The displacement did not significantly change the scientific interests of academic staff, and only 28% of respondents felt some enhancement of their academic career in their new host institutions. Only one respondent mentioned the will to change the career path and refuse from an academic career, while 94% of respondents are ready to continue their academic career.

Support policies provided by Sumy State University for their academic staff abroad

Sumy State University continues to support all the displaced academia by continuing their contracts and provides a mixed mode for the educational process to let all the displaced staff do their teaching and research jobs in remote mode.

This policy lets Sumy State University save the most effective academic staff and involve them in creating new educational and research networks. The educational workload for those who are in European countries or other regions of Ukraine is selected with consideration of their workload in their host institutions as much as possible it can be.

2.2.2. Students

General overview and mapping of the displaced students from Sumy State University

The full-scale invasion of Russia in Ukraine in 2022 caused one of the largest displacements of students on every level. Starting from primary school and ending with master's and PhD students. Parents disturbed about their children's safety moved them into safe regions. Most of the universities in Ukraine have implemented remote or mixed modes of study, letting their students study using modern communication technologies (Moodle, MS Teams, Google Classroom, Zoom, etc.). The main challenge was the safety of students given the risk of shelling and bombing by Russian forces.

Sumy State University had more than 12 000 students on all levels by the end of 2021, including more than 7 000 full-time students and more than 2 000 foreign students. By the end of 2024 more than 11 000, including more than 5 000 full-time students and 279 foreign students are enrolled at Sumy State University.

According to estimates by the faculties, more than 700 students are studying from abroad, and the same number of students is displaced within Ukraine. 17 displaced students completed the survey allowing to understand some of the reasons and challenges affecting Ukrainian students.

88% of participants stated they are enrolled only in Sumy State University; 6% were enrolled in another Ukrainian University; and 6% are no longer enrolled in any university. The list of countries of temporary placement included Germany, Estonia and Denmark. 53% were BA students, 47 – MA or other level. 65% of displaced students who participated in the survey were female, and 35% were male students.

Identifying needs and challenges regarding studying in their current situations

12% of the students were on academic mobility programs, but they did not return to Ukraine for safety reasons. 35% of respondents received some scholarships from a university or government. Only 23,5% of students receive financial support from their country of residence, and 74,5% do not. Accordingly, 29% of students should work besides their studies.

Displacement did not affect much the academic activities of students: 42% were engaged as before the displacement, 23,5% became more engaged, and 17,6% were less engaged.

Identifying challenges, opportunities, risks, and prospects for returning to Ukraine post-war

The survey showed some problems with the integration of students: 29% of the respondents felt neutral (neither integrated nor welcome) relations with local representatives. 6% respondents

pointed out issues with recognising their educational documents (bachelor's diploma in physiotherapy). 56% respondents do not know what would support their level of integration in EU institutions.

It shows that youth experience more problems with integration in EU countries compared to university scholars who mostly do not feel problems with integration after their displacement.

Only 17,6% of students participating in the survey mentioned they have temporary protection status in the EU. Most of the respondents did not feel any improvement in their academic careers after the displacement.

Support policies provided by Sumy State University for their students abroad

After two years since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia in 2022, the availability of stimulating conditions for mobility at Sumy State University has become critically important for supporting the student and academic community and enhancing the university's attractiveness to future applicants.

In 2024, the focus was placed on developing international virtual mobility through collaborative online learning technologies (COIL) – a format that has been successfully evolving at SumDU since 2019. Sumy State University has its own system of distance learning, which allows learning from all over the world using modern training models and virtual reality systems.

In 2024, Sumy State University offered all categories of participants 75 scholarship and grant programs for academic mobility in 20 countries around the world. The total amount of funding that was secured from foreign partner higher education institutions, as well as scholarship and grant programs to support participants in academic mobility for the year 2024, amounts to 24 million UAH (approx. 0,53 mln EUR).

In 2024, it was possible to ensure further growth in the indicator of international academic mobility among students - 885 students from Sumy State University took part in different programs, which is 15.75% of the total number of students at Sumy State University.

Strong support policies for students help them to continue their academic careers at Sumy State University, and 82% of students in the survey still feel a strong connection with their home Ukrainian university. The same high level of students want to return to Ukraine after the war ends and continue their careers in Ukraine.

2.3. Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK)

2.3.1. Academic Staff

General overview and mapping of the displaced academic staff from TSNUK

As a result of the Russian aggression, several[12] academic staff members affiliated with TSNUK were displaced. Among the five participants in the online survey, three hold Doctor of Science degrees, while two have PhD degrees. Their pre-displacement positions included Professors, a Head of Department, an Associate Professor, and a Senior Lecturer. Three respondents had full-time contracts, whereas two others were employed part-time.

Currently, these displaced academics reside in France and Germany but they occasionally visit Ukraine for work-related matters to stay connected with their home universities. Their legal statuses vary: four hold Temporary Protection Status under the EU Temporary Protection Directive, while one has Refugee status.

Regarding their employment status, all participants currently have active working contracts. Four of them have working contracts with TSNUK, while another has a contract with a different Ukrainian HEI. However, their working conditions have changed, including downgraded positions (one participant), decreased working hours (two participants), and altered contract durations (one participant). Only one participant reported an increase in working hours.

In terms of professional activities, participants (excluding one who did not complete the section) continue to engage in core academic functions. Three of them still engage in both teaching and research, while one focuses solely on research. However, engagement levels have varied: two remain as engaged as before, one is moderately less involved, and one reports a significant decline in academic activity.

Identifying needs and challenges regarding academic careers and activities

Challenges for displaced academics include securing stable employment, maintaining professional engagement, and integrating into new academic environments. Academic integration remains a challenge. Only one participant feels fully connected to academic discourse, while the rest experience diminished ties to the academic community. Although two participants feel structurally integrated into their host institutions, they do not consider themselves fully part of the academic environment.

Access to academic research and publications has also been uneven. While some scholars continue their research activities, others experience diminished engagement. Financial stability remains a critical issue, alongside the loss of professional ties with the Ukrainian academic community.

[12] The university does not provide any statistics on this matter.

Identifying challenges, opportunities, risks, and prospects for returning to Ukraine post-war

As for the motivations for continuing their academic careers, one participant cited salary, while another mentioned vocation. The decision to return depends primarily on security conditions as all participants see themselves returning to the academic sector in Ukraine, provided that the security situation changes.

Support policies provided by TSNUK for their academic staff abroad

After the final cancellation of the epidemiological situation caused by COVID-19 in 2023, the University lost the ability to provide remote learning and work options for teachers who left Kyiv and Ukraine for safety reasons. The implementation of remote or online learning is not explicitly prohibited by law and remains within the autonomous discretion of each educational

institution. However, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine recommends[13] prioritising in-person study in rear regions, such as Kyiv, where safety allows. At TSNUK, most approved study programmes do not include a distance learning format, and existing regulations do not justify a permanent shift to online education. While short-term online instruction may be used in response to security risks, core educational activities, including assessments, are conducted on campus. As such, the University requires the physical presence of staff and students in university facilities, in full compliance with current legislation.

At the same time, the University continues to provide support to the affected staff members. All displaced members of academia residing outside Ukraine for safety reasons still have their corporate accounts active, which allows them access university resources and educational services, scientific collections, and internal databases of the M. Maksymovych Scientific Library (including the University Repository), as well as to scientometric databases, access to which is provided based on corporate accounts through library services. This allows for additional opportunities for academics who are temporarily abroad to participate in international projects or initiatives, scientific conferences, forums, round tables, etc., and to affiliate themselves with Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.

2.3.2. Students

General overview and mapping of the displaced students from TSNUK

[13]Підготовка до нового навчального року 2024/2025 у закладах освіти (2024). Міністерство освіти і науки України: офіційна вебсторінка. URL: https://mon.gov.ua/news/pidhotovka-do-novoho-navchalnoho-roku-20242025-u-zakladakh-osvity

The displacement crisis following Russia's full-scale invasion has significantly affected students from TSNUK. Among the respondents, 12 students participated in the study, with the majority relocating to Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, France, and Spain. While most students remain enrolled at TSNUK, some have continued their education at European institutions. Among all participants, there are 3 BA students and 3 MA students, while the remaining participants did not specify their degree program.

Nine students are enrolled only in TSNUK, while one is enrolled in both TSNUK and a European HEI. Five students have changed their programme, while four have remained in the same programme as before February 2022. Those who changed their programme cited shifting academic interests as the primary reason.

Only one participant receives a scholarship from the state.

Three students are working while studying. One BA student is working as a journalist, while another BA student is employed full-time in the hotel.

The student enrolled in both the Ukrainian and a European HEI dedicates equal time for her studies at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and Lazarsky University (Warsaw, Poland). She does not receive any financial support from the country and does not work alongside her studies.

Identifying needs and challenges regarding studying in their current situations

In terms of engagement, students report differing experiences. Four students indicate that they are more academically active since displacement, while three maintain the same level of engagement as before, and one has become significantly less involved. Factors such as access to resources, teaching styles, and institutional support are likely contribute to these variations.

Social integration also varies among participants. Six students feel well integrated into HEI where they are currently studying, whereas two do not feel fully integrated despite a welcoming environment. They identified making friends, participating in more extracurricular activities, and having access to engaging study materials as key factors that could improve their integration. This suggests that fostering stronger peer connections and providing structured academic support programs could enhance the student experience.

Identifying challenges, opportunities, risks, and prospects for returning to Ukraine post-war

When considering their long-term academic and professional futures, five students cited better job opportunities as their primary motivation for continuing their education, with two also emphasizing personal development. Additional motivating factors included a strong interest in their field of study and the importance of language and social connections. However, when asked about returning to Ukraine, only four students envisioned continuing their studies at their home universities, and just two planned to pursue their professional careers in Ukraine.

Support policies provided by TSNUK for their students abroad

After the cancellation of distance learning, student support also faced certain limitations that affected the University's activities. However, by decision of the institutional units within the current legislation, a blended learning format was provided for many specialties, particularly in educational programs that include part-time study. The University administration created conditions for transferring to part-time study and making up academic differences (in particular, extended the deadlines for taking exams for students who submitted such requests). For part-time students, learning and the defense of final qualification works take place using distance technologies, which do not limit their location. These measures allowed students who, for various reasons, could not return to the classrooms to continue their studies in the part-time format.

The University provides special support to internally displaced persons (IDPs). These are a privileged category of students who have the right to study in the state-funded form, subject to available places. The University regularly submits requests to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and, in accordance with the procedure established by law, implements the transfer of IDP students to state-funded places. At the same time, students who qualify as internally displaced persons and who study in state-funded places are entitled to receive social scholarships. The University has systematically organized the process and allocated specialist accountants for this work, streamlined procedures for submitting requests to the local district administration for such scholarships, and for about three years now, IDP students have been receiving social scholarships.

3. Conclusion

The Baseline Study aimed to examine the conditions, needs, and challenges faced by displaced members of academia from three Ukrainian partner universities of the FreeAc project to deepen our understanding of the challenges displaced academic community members face, identify their needs and motives that may influence their decisions to return to Ukraine at some point. Although the sample size was modest, valuable insights were gained and patterns identified. Subsequently we will summarise the main findings before we will turn to certain recommendations deduced from the analysis made in the case studies

3.1. Main Findings

Immediate Impacts of Displacement on Academic Careers

Academic Staff

- Working contracts at both previous and host HEIs were reduced and are limited in time;
- Employment conditions in European HEIs often did not match the qualifications and expectations of Ukrainian scholars;
- The lack of alignment between qualifications and employment conditions led to financial constraints;
- Maintaining presence in the academic community requires additional efforts.

Students

- The general trend is to continue academic studies despite displacement;
- Students face substantial challenges such as economic hardship, language barriers, and difficulties with the recognition of academic credits and degrees.

Challenges with Regard to Integration

- Integration into host HEIs is hindered by language barriers, psychological stress, financial concerns, and, in some cases, double workloads;
- The widespread use of short-term contracts offers limited prospects for stability and often undermines motivation for academic integration.

Return

Even though there is interest in returning to Ukraine once the security situation has improved, and the survey also suggests that both students and staff are interested in continuing their academic careers, there is a risk that the longer the situation continues, the greater the chances are that people will not return. While integration into host societies and host HEIs is difficult under the temporary conditions, it will become even more so over the years, especially when children of

displaced members of academia become integral parts of host societies and students start to build new relationships in host countries.

The findings presented below closely correlate with the key objectives established at the outset of the study, providing a comprehensive understanding of the current situation of displaced Ukrainian academics and students, the challenges they face, and the support mechanisms available to them.

Geographic Location and Institutional Integration

The study mapped the geographic distribution of displaced Ukrainian academics and students across European countries and beyond, including EU member states such as Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and non-EU countries such as Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Their legal situations are diverse. The majority possess Temporary Protection Status under the EU Temporary Protection Directive, while others maintain various alternative temporary protection statuses applicable in both EU and non-EU countries.

Although this status provided immediate safety, it also generated legal uncertainty, which hampered professional stability and deeper integration. The study revealed varying levels of integration into host institutions, with many reporting feeling formally integrated but not fully accepted as members of the academic community. The temporary nature of their legal status creates uncertainty about long-term prospects and hinders deeper integration.

Professional integration poses significant hurdles for displaced scholars. Many academics experience downgraded positions, reduced working hours, and altered contract durations in host countries. Those securing academic positions often hold contracts with reduced scope (25% or less) compared to their previous full-time positions in Ukraine. Maintenance of academic connections with Ukrainian institutions varies significantly, with some academics completely losing professional ties with their home universities.

Barriers to Academic Continuity

The study identified significant barriers impeding academic progress for both students and faculty. For students, concerns include difficulties with academic credit recognition and curriculum differences between Ukrainian and European educational systems. Many students have been forced to change their programs or retake courses due to recognition issues, extending their time to degree completion.

Language barriers significantly impact academic performance and participation for both students and faculty, limiting full engagement with coursework and academic communities. Many students were compelled to work to support themselves financially, which negatively affected academic performance.

For academics, displacement has led to varying levels of academic engagement, with some scholars experiencing decreased research productivity and reduced participation in scholarly activities.

Social and Psychological Challenges

The research revealed that surveyed respondents consistently emphasized feeling physically secure outside Ukraine's borders, a fundamental sense of safety regarding their lives that has become virtually unattainable within Ukraine itself. Despite this crucial improvement in physical security, the study documented significant psychological issues among displaced academics and students, including trauma, anxiety, depression, and isolation. Social integration remains challenging, with many reporting that they do not feel fully integrated or welcomed in their host institutions. These mental and emotional stresses compound the academic challenges, making the educational journey more difficult.

Institutional Support Mechanisms

The study found that Ukrainian universities have implemented various measures to support displaced persons. These initiatives include:

- Introducing remote work opportunities to maintain academic activities;
- Extending contracts for displaced academics;
- Implementing blended and distance learning models;
- Providing scholarships and grants for academic mobility;
- Retaining corporate accounts for academics abroad, providing access to university resources and educational services.

These efforts contributed to sustaining academic continuity and preserving professional ties to Ukrainian institutions.

3.2. Prospects for Reintegration - Recommendations

The study explored factors influencing the potential return to Ukraine, including security concerns, economic opportunities, career prospects, and institutional readiness. While most academics and students expressed a desire to return after the war, their decisions will depend on multiple interrelated factors.

To facilitate reintegration, the study recommends:

- Developing comprehensive reintegration programs that recognise international experience;
- Strengthening international partnerships for joint academic programs and research initiatives;

- Implement long-term hybrid and distance learning models to support ongoing engagement;
- Creating targeted mental health support services;
- Providing clear career advancement pathways and financial incentives.
- Address legal uncertainties stemming from temporary protection statuses to facilitate better integration and continuity.

Despite the significant challenges, the experience of adapting to diverse cultural environments and engaging with foreign education systems offers long-term benefits. Ukrainian students and academics abroad often serve as 'communication bridges' at host universities, fostering mutual academic exchange and strengthening diaspora networks. Their international experience and knowledge will be invaluable for the transformation and modernization of Ukrainian higher education in the post-war period.

Findings highlighted the resilience and perseverance of the displaced academic community. Many students and faculty members continued their studies and teaching activities under temporary and resource-constrained conditions, demonstrating a strong commitment to preserving educational continuity. The importance of sustained support for academic adaptation, including language training, mental health services, and structured initiatives for better integration into host institutions, was emphasized. There is also an urgent need for policies addressing the unique academic and personal challenges of displaced scholars, fostering a more inclusive and supportive academic environment.

As the Russian aggression against Ukraine continues, efforts to support the integration of displaced students and faculty into academic environments, both in Ukraine and abroad, must be intensified. Given the likelihood that the displacement crisis will persist for an extended period, it is critical to ensure continued access to academic, professional, and emotional support to help displaced individuals thrive in their new settings. Future initiatives should prioritize collaboration between Ukrainian and European universities, the development of student and staff exchange frameworks, and improved access to digital learning tools and academic networks.

In addition to short-term assistance, long-term strategies must account for the eventual return of displaced individuals when the political and security situation allows. As Ukrainian higher education institutions rebuild, the expertise gained in international settings can play a transformative role. Collaboration between Ukrainian and international universities will be essential for sharing best practices in educational reform, research cooperation, and curriculum modernization.

Ultimately, safeguarding academic continuity, fostering international cooperation, and upholding academic freedom remain paramount. In these challenging times, protecting the values of education and academic autonomy is crucial not only for displaced individuals but for the future of Ukraine's higher education system and the global academic community. The study suggests that a holistic approach, integrating academic, professional, and emotional support, will be key to preserving the academic mission and enabling displaced scholars and students to meaningfully contribute to their institutions both now and upon their return.

Annex

Baseline Study Questionnaire

Part 1 Current State / General Information

1. Age

a. 17-22

b. 23-28

c. 29-34

d. 35-40

e. 41-46

f. 47 – 52

g. 53-58

h. 59-65

i. Older

2. Gender

a. Male

b. Female

c. Divers/non-identified

3. Area of science

4. Which FreeAc Ukrainian partner HEI have you been affiliated before displacement?

a. International Humanitarian University, Odessa

b. Sumy State University

c. Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

5. Country of current residency

a. Which country is the country of your current main residence?

i. EU Country

Which EU country do you reside in? Add name

ii. Non-EU Country

Which non-EU country do you reside in? Add name

iii.Ukraine

b. In which city do you currently reside?

6. What is your current legal status?

a. Temporary Protection under the EU Directive for Temporary Protection

b. Refugee Status

c. Other (add)

7. What was the reason for your displacement?

a. The Russian invasion in February 2022

b. Other

8. Are you a student or academic staff?

a. Academic Staff

b. Student

Academic Staff

9. Academic degree

a. MA

b. PhD

c. Doctor of Science

d. Other

10. Area of Science

a. Natural Sciences

b. Humanities

c. Engineering

d. Others

11. Which academic position did you have before displacement at the Ukrainian partner HEI?

a. Professor

b. Associate Professor

c. Senior Lecturer

d. Lecturer

e. Assistant

f. Other

12. What was the scope of your working contract?

I. Full-time (100%)

II. Part-time (75%)

III. Half time (50%)

IV. Marginal employment (25% or less)

13. What was the duration of your working contract?

I. 1 year

II. 3 yrs

III. 5 yrs

IV. Other

14. Which of the following applies to your current situation?

I have

a. a valid working contract with a Ukrainian partner HEI. (SCENARIO A)

b. a valid working contract with a Ukrainian HEI different from the partner Ukrainian HEI I was employed at previous to my displacement (SCENARIO B)

c. a valid working contract at an EU/non-EU HEI (SCENARIO C)

d. a valid working contract with a Ukrainian partner HEI and a valid working contract at an EU/non-EU HEI (SCENARIO D)

e. a valid working contract with a Ukrainian HEI different from the partner Ukrainian HEI I was employed at previous to displacement and a valid working contract at an EU/non-EU HEI (SCENARIO E)

f. No valid working contract the moment (SCENARIO F)

SCENARIO A (valid working contract with a Ukrainian partner HEI)

A1. Has the working contract changed after your displacement?

I. YES

A. Has your academic position changed?

i. YES

ii. NO

B. Has the scope of your working contract changed?

i. NO

ii. YES

Has the amount of working hrs under the new working contract

i. Increased

ii. Decreased

C. Has the duration of your working contract changed?

i. NO

ii. YES

Has the duration of the working contract

iii. Increased (e.g. from temporarily limited to permanent contract)

iv. Decreased (e.g. from 5 yrs to 3 yrs)

II. NO

SCENARIO B (working contract Ukrainian HEI different from partner Ukrainian HEI)

B1. At which Ukrainian HEI do you currently have a valid working contract?

Add **name**

B2. Has your academic position changed compared to your academic position previous to displacement?

I. YES

II. NO

B3. Has the scope of your working contract changed compared to the scope of the working contract previous to displacement?

I. NO

II. YES

A. Has the amount of working hrs under the new working contract

i.Increased

ii.Decreased

B4. Has the duration of your working contract compared to the duration of the working contract before displacement changed?

I.NO

II.YES

A. Has the duration of the working contract

i.Increased (e.g. from temporarily limited to permanent contract)

ii.Decreased (e.g. from 5 yrs to 3 yrs)

SCENARIO C (valid working contract EU/non-EU (other than Ukraine))

C1. At which EU/non-EU HEI do you currently have a valid working contract?

Add name

C2. Is the academic position you are holding currently at the EU/non-EU HEI comparable to the academic position held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement?

I.YES

II.NO

A. Is the academic position you are currently holding at the EU/non-EU HEI compared to the academic position held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement of

i.Higher rank

ii.Lower rank

C3. Is the scope of your current working contract at the EU/non-EU HEI comparable to the scope of the working contract held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement?

I.YES

II.NO

A. Has the amount of working hrs under the new working contract

i.Increased

ii.Decreased

C4. Has the duration of your current working contract at the EU/non-EU HEI compared to the duration of the

working contract held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement changed?

I. NO

II. YES

A. Has the duration of the working contract

i. Increased (e.g. from temporarily limited to permanent contract)

ii. Decreased (e.g. from 5 yrs to 3 yrs)

SCENARIO D (a valid working contract with a Ukrainian partner HEI and a valid working contract at an EU/non-EU HEI)

D1 Is it the same working contract at your Ukrainian home university as before your displacement?

I. YES

II. NO

A. Has your academic position changed?

i. YES

ii. NO

B. Has the scope of your working contract changed?

i. NO

ii. YES

Has the amount of working hrs under the new working contract

- Increased
- Decreased

C. Has the duration of your working contract changed?

i. NO

ii. YES

Has the duration of the working contract

iii. Increased (e.g. from temporarily limited to permanent contract)

iv. Decreased (e.g. from 5 yrs to 3 yrs)

D2 At which EU/non-EU HEI do you have currently a valid working contract?

Add name

D3. Is the academic position you are currently holding at the EU/non-EU HEI compared to the academic position held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement

I. Comparable/ the same

II. Of higher rank

III. Of Lower rank

D4. Is the working contract at the EU/non-EU HEI

I. Full-time (100%)

II. Part-time (75%)

III. Half time (50%)

IV. Marginal employment (25% or less)

D5. Is the working contract at the EU/non-EU HEI a

I. Permanent contract?

II. Temporarily limited contract?

SCENARIO E (a valid working contract with a Ukrainian HEI different from the partner Ukrainian HEI I have been employed previous to displacement and a valid working contract at an EU/non-EU HEI)

E1 At which Ukrainian HEI do you have currently a valid working contract?

Add name

E2. Has your academic position at the Ukrainian HEI changed compared to your academic position held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement?

I. YES

II. NO

E3. Has the scope of your working contract at the Ukrainian HEI changed compared to the scope of the working contract held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement?

I. NO

II. YES

A. Has the amount of working hrs under the new working contract

i. Increased

ii. Decreased

E4. Has the duration of your working contract at the Ukrainian HEI compared to the duration of the working contract held at the Ukrainian partner HEI before displacement changed?

I. NO

II. YES

A. Has the duration of the working contract

i. Increased (e.g. from temporary limited to permanent contract)

ii. Decreased (e.g. from 5 yrs to 3 yrs)

E5. At which EU/non-EU HEI do you currently have a valid working contract?

Add name

E6. Is the academic position you are currently holding at the EU/non-EU HEI comparable to the academic position held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement?

I. YES

II. NO

E7. Is the scope of your working contract at the EU/non-EU HEI comparable to the scope of the working contract held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement?

I. YES

II. NO

A. Has the amount of working hrs under the new working contract

i. Increased

ii. Decreased

E8. Has the duration of your working contract at the EU/non-EU HEI compared to the duration of the working contract held at the Ukrainian partner HEI previous to displacement changed?

I. NO

II. YES

A. Has the duration of the working contract

i. Increased (e.g. from temporarily limited to permanent contract)

ii. Decreased (e.g. from 5 yrs to 3 yrs)

SCENARIO F (No valid working contract at a HEI)

F1 Are you affiliated with an EU/non-EU/Ukrainian HEI but without a valid working contract?

I. YES

A. With which HEI?

Add Name

II. NO

F2 Do you receive a scholarship?

I. NO

II. YES

A. By which donor?

i. EU

ii. International Organization

iii. State

iv. HEI

v. Private

vi. Other

F3 Are you currently employed outside the academic sector?

A. YES

i. In which sector are you employed?

Add sector (e.g. education etc)

B. NO

F4 Do you receive financial support by your country of residence?

I. YES

II. NO

Part 2 Conditions and involvement in academic life compared to your academic activity before displacement

Are you still engaged in core academic activities (teaching, research and dissemination of scientific results)?

Yes

No

Which academic activities are you still pursuing?

Teaching

Research

Both

Compared to your academic activities before displacement, how do you assess your current engagement in academia (publications, presentations in conferences etc.)

1.	More engaged
2.	Very much the same
3.	Moderately less engaged
4.	Significantly less engaged
5.	Not at all anymore

Do you still feel connected to the academic discourse and the academic community compared to before your displacement? (networks, debates)

1.	More connected
2.	Very much the same
3.	Moderately less connected
4.	Significantly less connected
5.	Not at all anymore

How do you assess your level of integration in the HEI you are currently affiliated with?

1.	Very good, I feel like a full member of the new institution and I am fully integrated
2.	I am structurally integrated but do not see myself as full member of the academic community at the host institution
3.	I am not integrated at all
4.	Not applicable

Do you see sustainable chances to become an integral part of the academic community of the HEI you are currently affiliated with?

1.	Very high chances
2.	High chances
3.	Moderate chances
4.	Low chances

5.	Very low chances
6.	Not applicable

What would support your integration into the scientific community in your current host institution?

Comments

Have your scientific interests changed because of the displacement and the affiliation with a new institution?

1.	Yes, they have completely changed
2.	They have moderately changed
3.	No, not changed at all
4.	Not applicable

Has the displacement and the affiliation with your current host institution enhanced your academic career?

1.	Yes, my academic career has been enhanced because of my new affiliation
2.	No, not really
3.	Not applicable

Are you still connected with the academic and scientific community in Ukraine despite being displaced?

1.	Yes, very much
2.	Moderately less connected
3.	Significantly less connected
4.	Not at all anymore
5.	Not applicable

Part 3 Motivations and aspirations

1. What are your motivations for continuing your academic career despite being displaced?

Comments

2. Do you see yourself returning to the academic sector in Ukraine provided that the security situation changes?

Yes

No

Students

9. In which programme are you currently enrolled?

I.BA

II. MA

III. PhD

IV. Others

10. Area of science

I. Natural Sciences

II. Humanities

III. Technical Studies

IV. …

11. I am currently

I. Enrolled only in a Ukrainian partner HEI (SCENARIO G)

II. Enrolled only in EU/non-EU HEI (SCENARIO H)

III. Enrolled only in Ukrainian HEI different from Ukrainian partner HEI I have been enrolled in previous to displacement (SCENARIO I)

IV. Enrolled in both an EU HEI and a Ukrainian partner (HEI SCENARIO J)

V. Enrolled in both an EU HEI and a Ukrainian HEI different from the Ukrainian partner HEI I have been enrolled in previous to displacement (SCENARIO K)

VI. I am not enrolled in any HEI anymore (SCENARIO L)

SCENARIO G (Enrolled only in a Ukrainian partner HEI)

G1 Are you still in the same programme as before February 2022?

I. YES

II. NO

A. Have you changed the programme because

i. I changed my interest

ii. I continued with a graduate programme

iii. I completed my studies

iv. The continuation was not possible anymore because of the limited offer available (no classes)

v. other

SCENARIO H (Enrolled only in EU/non-EU HEI)

H1 In which EU/non-EU HEI are you currently enrolled?

Add name

H2 Is it a study programme comparable to the one you have been enrolled in previous to your displacement?

I. YES

II. NO

H3 Have your previous degrees and/or studies been recognized?

I. YES

II. NO

III. Not applicable

H4 What is the duration of the study programme you are currently enrolled in at the EU/non-EU HEI?

I. 2yrs

II. 4yrs

III. Other

H5 Do you receive a scholarship?

I. YES

A. By which donor?

i. EU

ii. IO

iii. State

iv. HEI

v. Private

vi. Other

II. NO

H6 Do you receive financial support by the country of residence?

I. YES

II. NO

H7 Do you work besides your studies?

I. YES

In which sector? Add

II. NO

SCENARIO I (Enrolled only in Ukrainian HEI different from Ukrainian partner HEI I have been enrolled in previous to displacement)

I1 In which Ukrainian HEI are you enrolled in?

Add name

I2 Is it a study programme comparable to the one you have been enrolled in previous to your displacement?

I. YES

II. NO

C. Have you changed the programme because

i. I changed my interest

ii. I continued with a graduate programme

iii. I completed my studies

iv. The continuation was not possible anymore because of the limited offer available (no classes)

v. other

SCENARIO J (Enrolled in both an EU HEI and a Ukrainian partner HEI)

J1 Are you still enrolled in the same study programme at the Ukrainian partner HEI as before February 2022?

I. YES

II. NO

A. Have you changed the programme because

i. I changed my interest

ii. I continued with a graduate programme

iii. I completed my studies

iv. The continuation was not possible anymore because of the limited offer available (no classes)

v. other

J2 In which EU/non-EU HEI are you currently enrolled?

Add name

J3 Is it in the same field as your studies at the Ukrainian partner HEI?

I. YES

II. NO

J4 Have your previous degrees and/or studies been recognized?

I. YES

II. NO

III. Not applicable

J5 What is the duration of the study programme you are currently enrolled in at the EU/non-EU HEI?

I. 2yrs

II. 4yrs

III. Other

J6 Do you receive a scholarship?

I. YES

B. By which donor?

i. EU

ii. IO

iii. State

iv. HEI

v. Private

vi. Other

II. NO

J 7. Do you receive financial support by the country of residence?

I. YES

II. NO

J8 Do you work besides your studies?

I. YES

In which sector? Add

II. NO

SCENARIO K (Enrolled in both an EU HEI and a Ukrainian HEI different from the Ukrainian partner HEI I have been enrolled in previous to displacement)

K1 Which Ukrainian HEI are you enrolled in?

Add name

K2 Is it a study programme comparable to the one you have been enrolled in previous to your displacement?

I. YES

II. NO

A. Have you changed the programme because

i. I changed my interest

ii. I continued with a graduate programme

iii. I completed my studies

iv. The continuation was not possible anymore because of the limited offer available (no classes)

v. other

K3 In which EU/non-EU HEI are you currently enrolled?

Add name

K4 Is it in the same field as your studies at the Ukrainian partner HEI?

I. YES

II. NO

K5 Have your previous degrees and/or studies been recognized?

I. YES

II. NO

III. Not applicable

K6 What is the duration of the study programme you are currently enrolled in at the EU/non-EU HEI?

I. 2yrs

II. 4yrs

III. Other

K7 Do you receive a scholarship?

I. YES

A. By which donor?

i. EU

ii. IO

iii. State

iv. HEI

v. Private

vi. Other

II. NO

K8 Do you receive financial support by the country of residence?

I. YES

II. NO

K9 Do you work besides your studies?

I. YES

In which sector? Add

II. NO

SCENARIO L (I am not enrolled in any HEI anymore)

L1 Are you affiliated with any HEI without enrollment (e.g. preparatory courses)?

I. YES

A. With which HEI are you affiliated?

Add name

II. NO

L2. I am not enrolled in any HEI anymore because

I. I completed my studies

II. I was deployed

III. I could not continue my studies because of my financial/personal situation

IV. My study programme is not offered anymore

V. My degrees were not recognized

VI. I wanted to start working

VII. Other

Part 2 Conditions and involvement in academic life compared to your academic activity before displacement

1. Compared to your academic activities before displacement, how do you assess your study progress?

1.	I am more engaged
2.	I am comparably as engaged as before my displacement
3.	I am moderately less engaged
4.	I am significantly less engaged
5.	Not applicable

2. How do you assess your level of integration in the HEI you are studying at?

1.	I feel very well integrated
2.	I am not fully integrated but welcome
3.	I feel neither integrated nor welcome
4.	I am not integrated at all
5.	Not applicable

3. What would support your level of integration in the University you are enrolled in?

Comments

4. Has your academic interest changed because/after your displacement?

1.	Completely
2.	I still am interested in the same field as before displacement but cannot pursue my academic career in this field
3.	Not at all
4.	Not applicable

5. Has the displacement and the affiliation with your current host institution enhanced your academic career?

1.	Very much the same
2.	Moderately enhanced

3.	Significantly enhanced
4.	Enhanced very much
5.	Not applicable

6. Are you still connected with you Ukrainian home university?

1.	Very much
2.	Somewhat connected
3.	Moderately less connected
4.	Not at all any more

Part 3 Motivations and aspirations

1. What are your motivations for continuing your academic career despite being displaced?

Comments

2. Do you see yourself returning to your Ukrainian home University to continue your studies given that the security situation changes?

I. Yes

II. No

3. Do you see yourself returning to Ukraine to pursue your professional career after graduation your studies provided that the security situation changes?

III. Yes

IV. No

V. Not applicable

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Promoting Academic Freedom in Ukraine

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