

United in solidarity with higher education and research in Ukraine

We are European universities alliances spread out across the diversity of 35 countries of the continent, connecting and uniting universities from the European Union (EU) and beyond up to Ukraine. We all believe in excellence, openness, and collaboration to drive ambitious programmes for seamless education and research and build a resilient and competitive Europe.

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian federation in February 2022, we have been standing in solidarity with Ukraine, as the vast majority of the higher education sector in Europe has done. For the last three years, we have directly assisted thousands of students, academic colleagues and friends, and more than 100 higher education institutions in coping with physical destruction, lack of equipment and human resources turnover and burnout due to martial law consequences.

Beyond assistance in the war context, cooperation has been enhanced between European and Ukrainian universities. Since 2021, Ukrainian higher education has been involved in nearly 2.000 Erasmus projects in total. Ukrainian universities have taken the lead as coordinators in 15 capacity building projects. We are aware that many more reforms are needed and therefore more capacity-building efforts required, and we will continue participating in that.

In addition, cooperation has taken place in the frame and according to the innovative objectives of our alliances. Today, 35 alliances out of 65 have one or more Ukrainian universities either as full or associated partners, or are actively cooperating in areas that are central to their activities. To name but a few, these refer to peer learning or development in digital education, interdisciplinary joint programmes, the governance of university networks, the setting up of flexible learning pathways. Balanced win-win cooperation is the way we work.

This Open letter, and our previous joint statements released in 2022 and 2024 with follow up dissemination events, illustrate the inter-alliances efforts to share, and the capacity to learn from our respective best practices with Ukraine. It also aims at reaching out to the universities in Ukraine not yet in the loop. We as alliances state our continued solidarity with Ukraine, in an unstable and preoccupying international geopolitical context. In this perspective,

- We call for the EU and its Member states to play an active role in supporting the current Ukrainian needs in the higher education sector and more particularly for the displaced universities. We advocate for education and research being fully part of the solution in the resilience and the reconstruction initiatives for Ukraine, as it is stated in the Ukraine facility plan.
- Based on our fields of excellence in education and research, we can contribute to cooperation projects funded under the Ukraine facility investment schemes and are happy to connect our national contact points and work with them. We are willing to assist our counterparts and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in covering current needs in re-skilling, up-skilling and in research.
- We call for the specific neighbourhood programmes and the financing in the context of the accession negotiations of Ukraine to the EU to offer opportunities for calls to which alliances could apply. It would help us structure our action and make a more concrete commitment in view of the preparation for accession.
- We call for the European Commission, on an exceptional flexibility basis, to allow using the alliances' funding under Erasmus+ for performing activities with involvement of the Ukrainian

partners and for events in Ukraine where the added value to our projects objectives is justified. In fact, some Ukrainian partners have already best practices to share which can be beneficial to our deliverables.

After several years of cooperation, we are ready to play an active role in assisting in a crisis, learning from each other and growing for a common European future. We know what can be done and that we can do it, and we need support in achieving it.

The Open letter is supported by the following 35 alliances:

