



Introduction

We have been busy at the Free Ac project! Since our last update, we have made significant progress in understanding the experiences of displaced Ukrainian academics and analyzing the effects of the Russian invasion on academic freedom. This newsletter brings you updates on our latest research findings, successful events, and upcoming activities that aim to build bridges between Ukrainian institutions and the international academic community.

From our comprehensive baseline study revealing the realities faced by displaced Ukrainian academics, to our vibrant Summer School in Poznań that brought together academics and students from across Europe, we are witnessing both the profound challenges and remarkable resilience of Ukraine's academic community. As we move forward, our focus remains on creating sustainable support systems and ensuring that Ukrainian academic voices continue to be heard and valued on the global stage.





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

What happens when thousands of Ukrainian academic staff and students are displaced by war? This Baseline Study explores the lived realities of displaced members of academia from three Ukrainian partner universities: International Humanitarian University (Odesa), Sumy State University, and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.

The study reveals the human and institutional toll of the war: interrupted academic careers, unstable employment contracts, loss of research opportunities, language barriers, legal uncertainty abroad, and the risk of long-term brain drain. Despite these challenges, the study highlights remarkable resilience. Many displaced academics and students continue teaching, studying, and publishing, often under precarious conditions. Although intentions vary, a considerable number of respondents express a strong motivation to return and contribute to rebuilding Ukraine's academic landscape once security conditions allow.

The study also offers evidence-based recommendations for reintegration, academic support, and maintaining ties with Ukrainian institutions. It was presented at the FreeAc Summer School in June 2025 and is now available online.



[Link to the study in English](#)

[Link to the study in Ukrainian](#)





Best Practices Examples : Mapping the integration of displaced Ukrainian members of academia into the higher education sector

Case Studies from Austria, Greece, Italy, and Poland

What can we learn from how European countries have supported displaced Ukrainian academics since the start of the war? Our comparative analysis across Austria, Greece, Italy, and Poland highlights both encouraging achievements and critical challenges in responding to the crisis triggered by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The desk research highlights real examples of how academic institutions and national authorities have offered support, from scholarships, fast-track recognition of qualifications, and flexible admissions to language courses, mentorship, and dedicated student services.

The lessons drawn from these four EU countries point to a critical need to move from reactive support to sustainable, structured collaboration and to ensure that Ukraine's academic potential is not just protected but actively fostered, even during war.

[Link to the desk research
in English](#)

[Link to the desk research
in Ukrainian](#)



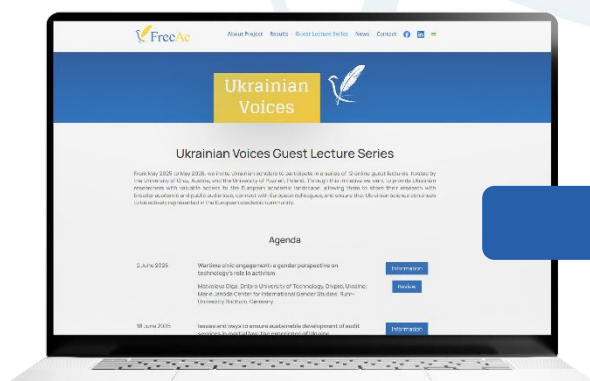


Ukrainian Voices lecture series

How can academic voices endure and inspire during times of war? The Ukrainian Voices: Academic Freedom in a Changing World lecture series brings together Ukrainian scholars to share their research and reflections on resistance, recovery, and the role of science in wartime. Hosted by the University of Graz and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the series runs May 2026 and features 12 online guest lectures spanning diverse disciplines. The aim is to amplify Ukrainian academic voices, foster international dialogue, and ensure that Ukraine remains visible and valued in Europe's academic landscape.

Recent Lectures:

- The first lecture, titled "Wartime Civic Engagement: A Gender Perspective on Technology's Role in Activism", was hosted by the University of Graz on 2 June 2025. The speaker, Dr. Olga Matveieva (Marie Jahoda Center for International Gender Studies, Ruhr-University Bochum / Dnipro University of Technology), focused on democratic transformation processes in Eastern Europe through a gender lens, with particular attention to collaborative governance and civic engagement.
- The second lecture, titled "Issues and Ways to Ensure Sustainable Development of Audit Services in Martial Law: The Experience of Ukraine", was delivered by Prof. Olena Antoniuk (Department of Accounting and Audit, National University of Water and Environmental Engineering) and hosted by Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań on 18 June 2025.
- The third lecture, titled "Potemkin Village of Russian Science: The Case of Editorial Boards", was part of the summer school at the University of Poznań and was presented by Dr. Inna Makarenko (University of Helsinki / Sumy State University) on 24 June 2025. She revealed that many international members of Russian journal editorial boards were unaware of their roles, inactive, retired, or deceased.
- The fourth lecture, titled "Storytelling Academic Freedom in Wartime: A Media Analysis of Ukraine," was also part of the summer school at the University of Poznań and was presented by Dr. Petro Katerynych (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv) on 25 June 2025. He analyzed how Ukrainian media portray academic freedom, emphasizing themes of resilience, oppression, and international solidarity during wartime.



[Link to webpage and recordings](#)



Workshop Series to bridge gaps in Ukrainian Universities

In response to the challenges posed by the Russian aggression against Ukraine's higher education system, all project partners jointly identified key areas where students, academic staff, and university administrators would benefit from targeted training. As a result, the FreeAc project launched a comprehensive Workshop Series to build long-term academic capacity.

Running from May 2025 to November 2026, the series offers workshops led by international experts on important topics including AI in higher education teaching, academic writing for students, using AI in academic writing, higher education teaching with modern technology, hate speech and propaganda online, psychological support, gender sensitive higher education didactics, how to re-integrate veterans in HEI, navigating funding opportunities, and proposal writing. These workshops are open to participants from all three Ukrainian partner universities, strengthening skills and resilience across institutions.

Recent Workshops:

- On May 6, 2025, the University of Graz successfully conducted an online webinar titled "Teaching with Technology in Higher Education." The event aimed to empower academics by guiding them on strategically integrating technology to improve teaching effectiveness and increase student engagement. The webinar drew over 70 participants from the three Ukrainian partner universities of the FreeAc project: Sumy State University, International Humanitarian University (Odesa), and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.
- On May 12, 2025, the University of Graz hosted an interactive online workshop called "Academic Writing in English," designed specifically for 30 students from the same Ukrainian partner institutions to enhance their academic writing skills and strengthen their ability to communicate research effectively.

[Read more on the Free Ac news page](#)



Free Ac Summer School : Poznan, June 2025

From June 23 to 27, 2025, Adam Mickiewicz University (AMU) in Poznań hosted an international Summer School focused on Academic Freedom in Times of War. The event brought together students, lecturers, and researchers from Ukraine, Austria, Poland, Italy, Greece, and Germany to explore the complex challenges facing academic freedom amid armed conflict.

The Summer School offered a unique platform for academic dialogue, presenting diverse legal, political, ethical, and institutional perspectives on the protection of academic freedom during wartime. The interactive programme combined expert lectures, engaging discussions, and cultural exchange, fostering cross-border learning and solidarity among participants. This collaborative effort will culminate in a forthcoming joint publication.

[Read more on the Free Ac news page](#)

Summer School Student Testimonials

What does academic freedom mean to you?

To me, academic freedom means being able to learn, ask questions, and share ideas without fear. It helps us think freely and grow.

Academic freedom is the ability to teach, learn, and research without borders, guided by critical thinking, curiosity, and a strong sense of responsibility to society.

The possibility to express myself in an institutional academic setting in a free way. To study freely and also be able to criticise my university and lecturers. To have the access to knowledge and the freedom to protest





For me it means freedom to research, teach, and seek education (knowledge).
Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination. Institutional autonomy.
Campus integrity. Freedom of academic and cultural expression.

The opportunity to speak uncomfortable ideas that may not fall under the dominant narrative freely in universities.

The ability to express myself, form critical thinking and being able to gain knowledge without interference and restrictions

What was your experience of the Free Ac Summer School?

I'll take home lots of good memories, new friends, and a better understanding of what academic freedom means. It also gave me more confidence to share my ideas and speak up.

I'm taking home much more than just knowledge. The summer school gave me a deeper understanding of academic freedom, especially in the context of war. But what made this experience truly meaningful were the people - passionate, thoughtful and open-minded participants and speakers. I will also carry with me memories of powerful discussions, personal stories, and the sense of belonging to a community that values education, freedom, and solidarity.

Motivation to stand up for academic freedom
democracy and friendship

The importance of protecting academic freedom as one of the key pillars of having a prosperous democracy. If I would become a high-ranking governmental official, I would definitely prioritize academic freedom with various policies, specifically during the times when a country experiences a crisis (be it an economic hardship or even a war / armed conflict).





Upcoming Activities

Upcoming research and activities planned for the coming months.

Analysis of the Effects of the Armed Conflict on Academic Freedom in Ukraine

Desk research „Analysis of the Effects of the Armed Conflict on Academic Freedom in Ukraine“ is currently underway to deepen understanding of the challenges to academic freedom during wartime and to develop recommendations for supporting and retaining the country’s scientific potential, building on the prior experience of the project consortium members.

The Ukrainian Voices Guest Lecture Series continues...

More online lectures are coming up over the next few weeks. Next up are

“Art Against Artillery: Cultural Resilience in Times of Crisis” by Olha Volynska (14.10.2025)

And next one

“Using Science in Propaganda and Stolen Ukrainian Universities in the Russian War against Ukraine” by Oleksii Plastun, Sumy State University (29.10.2025)

and much more.

For the full programme, or to catch up online, visit our webpage.

Make the most of the workshop series at Ukrainian Universities





Upcoming Workshop Series

The FreeAc Workshop Series continues this autumn with exciting new trainings tailored to the current needs of Ukrainian higher education. These online workshops are open to students and academic administrative staff from the three Ukrainian partner universities: Sumy State University, International Humanitarian University (Odesa), and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.

Academic Writing with generative AI (24.10.2025)

This webinar will introduce students to the basics of how generative AI works, including its strengths and limitations. We will reflect on the implications of AI use for academic writing and learning, with a focus on ethical, institutional, and practical considerations

Hate Speech and Propaganda Online (25.11.2025)

The workshop will provide an overview of international and European legal frameworks on online expression and explore practical strategies to counter hate speech and propaganda on social media.

Workshop: AI in Higher Education Teaching, 3 December 2025

This workshop will cover the technical foundations of generative AI, the implications of its use in higher education contexts by both instructors and students, and key pedagogical considerations and good-practice tips for developing a class policy on AI use.

In December 2025, two workshops on psychological support for students and university staff will also be organised.



**Stay Tuned
for More Updates!**



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right to education



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