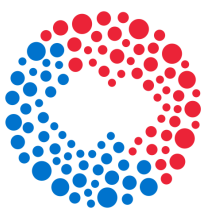




# Support of displaced scientists

## Lessons learned from the Russian aggression in Ukraine

Project of **Czexpats in Science & Bakala Foundation**  
supporting incoming Ukrainian scientists in Czechia  
April 2022 - June 2024



**CZEXPATS  
IN SCIENCE**



**Bakala  
Foundation**

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

At *Czexpats in Science*, we value international mobility as a cornerstone of open, world-class, and ambitious science. Our core mission is to build and support a community of scientists conducting research abroad.

On February 24, 2022, we, like the rest of the world, were shocked by the Russian aggression in Ukraine. It quickly became apparent that hundreds of thousands, including many scientists, would be displaced. We began brainstorming ways to help.

We realized we could help best by utilizing our main strength, which lay in building a scientific diaspora community. We connected hundreds of Ukrainian researchers fleeing to Czechia with our network, facilitating housing, job opportunities, and other urgent assistance.

We are deeply grateful to the *Bakala Foundation* for recognizing the need for dedicated support required to make our efforts sustainable. Their financial and organizational contributions allowed us to support the Ukrainian scientific community in Czechia for the next 2.5 years until this day. Please read on to learn how we adapted our activities to meet the evolving needs of these scientists.

Many partnerships and friendships between Ukrainian and Czech scientists have been forged during this crisis. When Ukraine emerges victorious and everyone can safely return home, we hope these bonds will endure, enriching the research ecosystems in both Ukraine and Czechia. Then, we will not only have helped colleagues in need, but also fulfilled our core mission: to build and support scientists abroad and inspire science to be open, world-class, and ambitious.

Slava Ukraini!

Matouš Glanc, director of Czexpats in Science

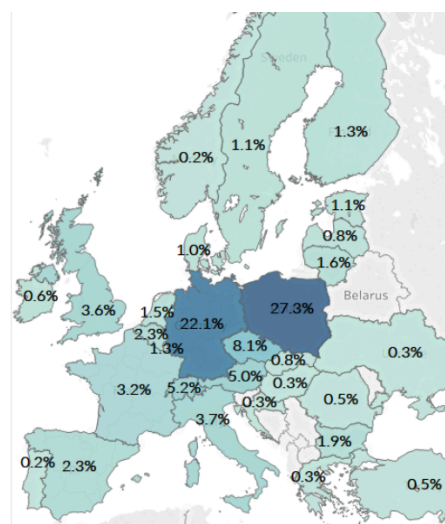
# Support to displaced Ukrainian scientists in Czechia

On February 24, 2022, the world woke up to the largest land conflict in Europe since the end of World War II. The roots of the Russian aggression in Ukraine dates back to 2014, when Russian soldiers occupied Crimea and triggered the war in Donbas. However, on February 24, this conflict escalated into a full-scale invasion and Russia attacked the entire territory of Ukraine. Thousands of Ukrainians were fled with only a few necessities, embarking on a dangerous journey westward under the bombardment of rockets. Up to one-third of Ukraine's population was gradually displaced. The entire world was in shock, and neighboring countries swiftly responded by taking in refugees, providing them with accommodation, food, and eventually job offers.

Alongside Germany and Poland, Czechia has welcomed the largest number of Ukrainian refugees, including many experienced scientists. The Czech government's assistance was quickly supplemented by offers to host these displaced researchers through research grants, visiting positions, and lab job offers within the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS), universities and individual working groups. The launch of a portal for Ukrainian scientists and students at [researchin.cz](https://researchin.cz) greatly facilitated orientation within the Czech scientific community.

This portal consolidates information on social support, administrative tasks to be completed upon arrival in Czechia, and job opportunities within the Czech academic and research sectors. This initiative was sponsored by the then Minister for Science, Research, and Innovation Helena Langšádlová and prepared by the ministerial adviser Taisiia Kryvoshei. Since the beginning of the full invasion of Ukraine, the portal has been visited by more than 28,000 users.

Similarly, suitable positions for Ukrainian scientists were advertised on the [Researchjobs.cz](https://Researchjobs.cz) website in cooperation with Czexpats in Science. We also exchanged potential job offers and grant calls with the major international initiative [ScienceForUkraine](https://ScienceForUkraine.org).



*The proportion of displaced Ukrainian researchers in European countries in 2022 (Maryl et al., 2022)*

By May of 2024, according to [UNHCR calculations](#), nearly **6 million Ukrainian refugees** reside in European countries. **The Czech Republic hosts the third highest number with 339 305 refugees (accounting for 5.7 % of total)**. Similarly, the Ukrainian science diaspora in Czechia is the third largest in Europe after Germany and Poland, comprising an estimated **8 % of displaced Ukrainian scientists** ([Maryl et al., 2022](#)). Most of the displaced scientists come from the Social Sciences (29 %) and Natural Sciences (25.4 %) ([Maryl et al., 2022](#)).

In March 2022, [the Czech Academy of Sciences](#) launched the [Researchers at Risk Fellowship programme](#), providing funding for **Ukrainian scientists to undertake 53 internships** at 24 different research institutes of the CAS during the first two years of the conflict, with a total support amount of 44.5 million CZK. **39 scientists at risk from 7 different countries will receive funding under a second call from April 2024.**



*"In addition to active involvement of Ukrainian researchers, the [Researchers at Risk Fellowship programme](#) has been positively evaluated by the CAS institutes for facilitating the establishment of new, valuable contacts. Ukrainian colleagues who continue their collaboration with CAS institutes after the programme ends are funded through various institutional or grant resources. Some institutes have also applied for the second round of the [Researchers at Risk Fellowship programme](#), which has approved 39 fellowships starting in April 2024 for scientists from 7 different countries where scientific work is at risk."*

**David Honys (Member of the Academy Council responsible for international cooperation of the CAS)**

Charles University swiftly initiated [assistance for Ukrainian citizens](#) by offering temporary accommodation in student dormitories, providing Czech language courses, and granting scholarships and research grants. These resources enabled Ukrainian students and scientists to pursue their studies and research in Czechia. As of 2024, approximately **100 Ukrainian scientists** are employed at Charles University, with some having been part of the institution prior to the outbreak of the war. Additionally, a Rector's Directive has facilitated **cooperation between 20 Ukrainian and Czech scientists**. As part of this initiative, Ukrainian scientists have the opportunity to undertake short internships in Czechia.



*"So far we have acted rather spontaneously, stemming from the natural reaction to the shock of the war. Now, we would like to establish structured frameworks that can operate more systematically, ideally on a nationwide scale throughout the Czech Republic. The [Czech Rectors' Conference](#) could play a pivotal role in facilitating the necessary coordination among all universities and higher education institutions in the country." (cited from [cuni.cz](#))*

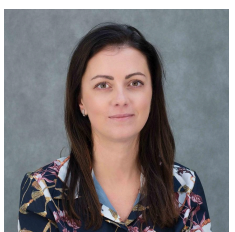
**Eva Voldřichová-Beránková (Vice-Rector for Foreign Affairs, Charles University)**

Masaryk University also played a significant role in supporting Ukrainian scientists through the [Masaryk Helps Ukraine programme](#). As part of this programme, the university has gradually **employed 120 Ukrainians, including academics (32), scientists (29), as well as representatives of supporting, administrative and working professions (60).**



*“Masaryk University perceives helping as part of its third role. We have not only found employment for our colleagues, but also helped them individually to find housing, school facilities, leisure activities, etc. At the same time, we organized informal gatherings to connect Ukrainian employees not only with each other but across the MU community. I believe that by establishing cooperation and contacts, we were all enriched, despite the fact that this was and is happening on a war background.”*

**Barbora Šolcová (Director of Personnel Management Office, Masaryk University)**



*“As part of the [Masaryk Helps Ukraine | Masaryk University programme](#), we have facilitated the employment of 3 scientists who have joined three of our research groups. Through CEITEC, we provided support in processing and extending work permits to ensure that these scientists could work in the Czech Republic without any problems. The whole process was very smooth also thanks to the assistance of our Welcome office at CEITEC MU, led by Zdeňka Bártová. Every Ukrainian scientist had full support in dealing with the residence permit in the Czech Republic, which is not an*

*easy matter.”*

**Andrea Dvořáková (Head of HR Department, CEITEC MU)**

# I. Urgent individual help of Czexpats in Science to researchers at risk



**CZEXPATS  
FOR UKRAINE**

*"Czexpats in Science expresses solidarity with the Ukrainian people, who are facing an unprecedented and unprovoked attack on their country. We offer help to Ukrainian scientists and students fleeing war in finding work and study opportunities in the Czech Republic. Write to us at [ukraine@czexpats.org](mailto:ukraine@czexpats.org)."*

The beginning of the invasion in Ukraine also brought about a quick reaction from the [Czexpats in Science](#) team and the whole community. During the first day of the invasion, we published a [statement condemning Russia's aggression](#) and reached out to the [German-Ukrainian Academic Society UKRAINET](#) to offer our support. Soon, we were contacted by the first Ukrainian scientists fleeing their country and asking for our help finding a safe haven in Czechia or neighboring countries. In the first weeks after the attack, we received dozens of such requests a day, and we tried to help individual incoming scientists with basic questions requiring accommodation and employment opportunities through our network. **Our support was acute and individual** and we tried to give each Ukrainian scientist the best possible information as well as, most importantly, some hope that people were ready to help and that they could find safety in Czechia.

This initial effort was driven solely by the enthusiasm of a team of volunteers who were leveraging our network to find suitable opportunities for a growing number of Ukrainian scientists. It quickly became clear that such an approach is not sustainable and we sought ways to ensure a long-term solution. This acute help was thus soon joined by a more systematic mapping of available job positions in cooperation with the [ResearchJobs.cz](#) portal.

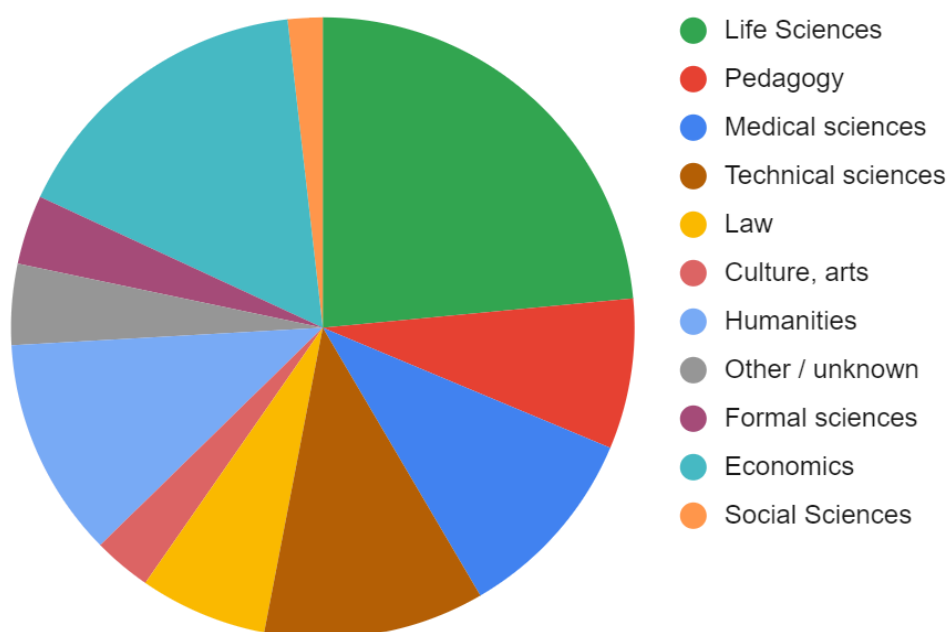
Eventually, we were very happy that the [Bakala Foundation](#) decided to financially support these activities and we were able to appoint a project coordinator Matouš Glanc, later followed by Petra Luláková who maintained and continues to maintain contact with Ukrainian scientists and had the capacity to organize the necessary assistance. In addition to our initial activities, these two coordinators organized a **buddy programme** where Ukrainian scientists could request to be paired with a Czech colleague with a similar scientific background to serve as a guide to the local environment. Initially, there was a great interest in the buddy program, and we successfully matched **22 Ukrainian-Czech researcher pairs who remained in longer-term contact**.



*“When the war in Ukraine started, it was clear that our foundation had to join the aid effort in some way. Considering our dedication to promoting quality education among young people, it felt natural for us to endorse the outstanding Czexpats in Science project, whose principles have long resonated with ours. Moreover, Ukrainian scientists were easily left behind during the war, which is another reason why we wanted to support them.”*

### Václav Pecha, director of the Bakala Foundation

Since the onset of the conflict, we have been in individual contact with a total of **166 Ukrainian researchers or students** from various fields. Through our efforts, we have contributed to securing **new positions for 45 of them (22.6%)**, either abroad or in Czechia. Notably, nearly a quarter of the applications originated from Life Scientists, and this field accounted for the highest success rate, with **44% of the successful applications falling within this Life Sciences domain**. As the project progressed, our outreach expanded, and we were in some form of contact with over **300 Ukrainian scientists**, as described in later chapters.



*Research fields of 166 Ukrainian scientists who contacted Czexpats in Science between March 2022 and May 2024 for support with job search during the project*

After the first months of the conflict, during the summer, the number of incoming Ukrainian refugees began to decline, with many even returning to Ukraine. Simultaneously, the number of requests for job search assistance from Ukrainian researchers significantly decreased. This signaled to us that the project had transitioned into the **post-acute phase**.

## II. Czexpats in Science activities towards long-term sustainable support

After the initial shock and enormous support provided in the early months of the conflict, we observed significant shifts in the needs of the Ukrainian scientists and at-risk institutions, as well as in the willingness and capacities of the Czech society and research environment to offer various forms of assistance. After the first months when we were approached by a steady stream of fleeing scientists, we noticed a sharp decline in such inquiries over time. Concurrently, the availability of urgent short-term accommodation was gradually running out, and job opportunities had become scarcer. However, a substantial number of Ukrainian scientists remained in Czechia, seeking further employment and integration into the local scientific community. Adapting to these changes, we shifted our focus from acute individual help towards **more sustainable, systemic, long-term support for Ukrainian researchers both in Czechia and those who remained in Ukraine.**

To facilitate the integration of our Ukrainian colleagues into the Czech scientific community, we started to organize regular monthly **UA-CZ Science Meetups** at [the Bakala Foundation](#) Student Hub. These gatherings featured science lectures delivered by both Czech and Ukrainian scientists, followed by informal networking sessions. Over time, these events gradually gained their regular attendees and helped to establish new contacts among displaced scientists. They provided a platform for mutual sharing of professional and social experiences, as well as opportunities for discussions with Czech scientists. Subsequently, we began broadcasting these meetings online to allow Ukrainian scientists from across Czechia and Ukraine to participate. **Each of the 13 UA-CZ science meetings was joined by 15-30 on-site participants and around 10 online participants from Ukraine and Czechia.**

These efforts were further strengthened by the first Czexpats in Science [Summer Meetup](#) which took place on August 30, 2022, in Prague. With the main topic “New beginnings” and English as the official language, it was the first event organized by Czexpats in Science aimed not only at Czech scientists but also foreign scientists living in Czechia. This one-day conference is a perfect example of the benefits that helping people in need (not only Ukrainian scientists) can bring us. The success of the meetup among foreign scientists living in Czechia was instrumental in our decision to offer more events for this social group as well and the initial motivation came from the goal of fostering further integration of Ukrainian scientists in the Czech academic environment.



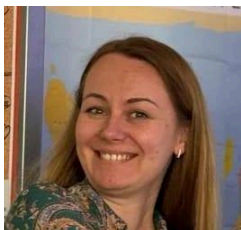
*UA-CZ Science Meetups organized by Czexpats in Science regularly on a monthly basis at Bakala Foundation from June 2022 to September 2023 (later followed by CZUSS meetings)*

In addition to the activities outlined above, we made efforts to publicize them to both the scientific community and the general public through various channels, including [Česká televize](#); [VědaVýzkum.cz](#); [Deník.cz](#), and social media platforms like [Twitter](#) & [LinkedIn](#). We also utilized the [Czexpats in Science Newsletter](#), [CAS webpage](#), along with Czexpats in Science community meetings. These communications contributed to position offers to displaced researchers and resulted in the success of the Buddy program. At the same time we monitored and promoted Czech support programs among Ukrainian scientists on our mailing list and with the beginning of 2023, we launched a [Newsletter for Ukrainian scientists](#) (8 newsletters, **>350 subscribers**, ~65% opening rate). This newsletter served as a vital tool for streamlining communication with the Ukrainian community, providing updates on available positions, funding opportunities, language courses, and other relevant information such as scientific conferences, events, and psychosocial support services. Additionally, we organized two presentations of **popular science outreach** by Ukrainian scientists for the **wider Ukrainian public** at [the Svitlo community center](#) as part of the series **Вчені в Чехії**.



*Presentations of popular science outreach in Svitlo, Coordinator Matouš Glanc in Czech TV and Czexpats for Ukraine newsletter*

Throughout the first year of the conflict, we also focused on finding other possible ways of support through networking with other international organizations and Ukrainian institutions. We coordinated our activities with the [Scienceforukraine.eu](https://scienceforukraine.eu) community and responded to the requests from Ukrainian academics to help them find partners to establish **long-term institutional cooperation** with Czech institutions. Initiating discussions with the **Czech Erasmus Office**, we assisted 4 Ukrainian institutions in advertising on the [Erasmus Partner Search database of the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research](#) and reached out to several Czech institutions on their behalf. However, our experience indicated challenges in obtaining the necessary know-how to build Erasmus+ and other international partnerships within many Ukrainian scientific institutions, as well as difficulties in receiving feedback from Czech institutions. Consequently, we evaluated our remote networking activities as ineffective. Instead, we found that negotiating direct visits proved more beneficial. For example, we **arranged a successful internship for a colleague** from the University of Mukachevo at the [Faculty of Arts, Charles University](#), which significantly advanced ongoing negotiations for a formal long-term cooperation between the two universities.



*“Last year I took part in the programme of the Rector’s Office of Charles University for Ukrainian scientists. Thanks to Czexpats in Science, I contacted dr. Ondrej Tichy from the Dept. of English language and methodology of ELT, Faculty of Arts, Charles University. Together we elaborated the job shadowing project. I spent a week at the hosting department in April 2023, visited lectures and seminars, studied the educational programs; I was also assisted with everything by colleagues from the faculty, even a meeting with the representatives of the International Office was organized for me. The experience I got during my visit played an important role for my promotion and now I’m holding the position of the head of the department of English language, literature and methodology of teaching at Mukachevo State University. As a result of our cooperation we already had the guest lecture by dr. Tichy and are currently planning one more with another professor and also plan joint publication and cooperation for possible Erasmus+ projects. Besides, I also fell in love with the gorgeous city of Prague, which is now my ‘home away from home.’”*

**Nataliia Hertsovka, Head of the Dept. of English language, literature and methodology of teaching at Mukachevo State University**



*Short visit of Nataliia Hertsovka at Department of English language and methodology of ELT, Faculty of Arts, Charles University*

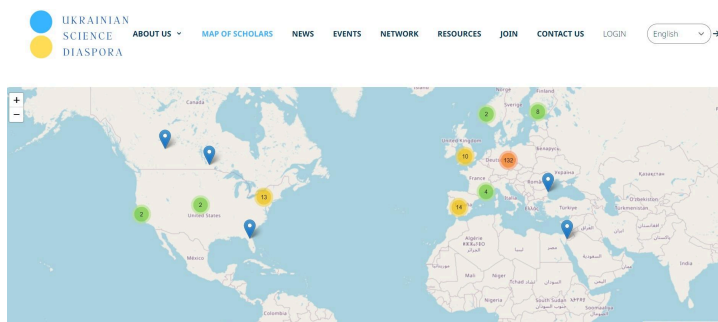
Some of the activities that proved particularly beneficial for networking Ukrainian researchers included **consultations on community building** in the context of a scientific diaspora provided by Czexpats in Science to representatives of the [Council Of Young Scientists](#) at the Ukrainian Ministry of Education. These consultations may have contributed to their launch of a platform to connect displaced Ukrainian scientists, the [Ukrainian Science Diaspora](#) and a [Map of Scholars](#), directly inspired by our [Map of Scientists](#). Additionally, we have been in regular contact and established collaborations with [Ukrainet](#), [SAR Europe](#) and the [Alexander von Humboldt Foundation](#), which played crucial roles in establishing and administering the MSCA4Ukraine fellowship scheme. All these contacts were very useful later on in inspiring and motivating the transfer of our activities to Ukrainian scientists in Czechia, as detailed in the following section.



*“With the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, Czexpats in Science themselves took the initiative to support Ukrainian scholars who fled to the Czech Republic. And then they began to willingly share their experience with the ‘Ukrainian Science Diaspora’ initiative. Thanks to this, Czexpats in Science support of Ukrainian scientists is by no means limited to the borders of the Czech Republic. The experience of the Czechs is actively used both for the formation of communities of Ukrainian scholars outside Ukraine and for the creation of the web platform ‘Ukrainian Science Diaspora’.”*



**Yevheniia Polishchuk and Igor Lyman, co-founders of the Ukrainian Scientific Diaspora initiative**



One of the most important sources of support for Ukrainian scientists during the first year of the Russian aggression in Ukraine was the [MSCA4Ukraine](#) funding scheme, a part of the prestigious **Marie-Sklodowska-Curie action from the European Commission**. This scheme aims to facilitate displaced researchers from Ukraine to pursue their research in EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries, while maintaining ties with research communities in Ukraine and preventing permanent “brain drain”. Additionally, the scheme seeks to reintegrate funded researchers back into Ukraine to aid in rebuilding and safeguarding the country's research and innovation capacity, at a point when security conditions enable it. Collaborating closely with the Czech Association of Research Managers and Administrators ([CZARMA](#)), Czexpats in Science played a significant role in disseminating information about the [MSCA4Ukraine call](#). We provided support to Ukrainian researchers and Czech host institutions throughout the application process. As a result of our efforts, Czech institutions submitted a high number of proposals of above-average

quality, positioning **Czechia as the second-most successful country** after Germany in terms of the number of MSCA4Ukraine projects recommended for funding, scoring **18 successful applications**. This call enabled Czech institutions to offer positions to excellent Ukrainian scientists, some of whom continue to play pivotal roles in establishing and strengthening the Ukrainian scientific community in Czechia.



The poster features the title 'MSCA4 UKRAINE' in large blue and white letters, with a map of Ukraine in the background. Below the title, it reads 'Czech research institutions open for Ukrainian researchers'. The text continues: 'Many excellent supervisors at Czech research institutions are willing to host talented Ukrainian doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. Find and contact your potential supervisor as soon as possible on <https://sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine/list-of-host-organisations/>. Prepare a MSCA4Ukraine project proposal together with a host institution. Compete for a 6-24-month European Fellowship. Strengthen your professional research career in the Czech Republic. The first cut-off date for project evaluation is on Friday 11 Nov 2022. Successful fellowships are expected to start from February 2023.' Logos for the Czech Republic, Ukraine, CZEKPATS IN SCIENCE, and CZVRMA are at the bottom.

Czech science was enriched by **17 Ukrainian scientists who received financial support through the MSCA4Ukraine call**, comprising 16 postdocs and 1 PhD student. Out of the 124 fellowships awarded, only one Czech grant was rejected by the applicant. The project majority was **supported for a duration of 2 years, with the majority falling within the Life sciences field**. These projects were distributed across various regions: with 4 awarded to Masaryk University and CEITEC in Brno, 2 each to the Technical University in Liberec, the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague and University of Chemistry and Technology Prague, 1 each to the Biology Centre CAS in České Budějovice, the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, The Crop Research Institute in Prague, The Silva Tarouca Research Institute in Prague, the University of West Bohemia and the University of Pardubice.



#### Numerical simulations of the cellular membranes:

*„The fellowship aligns perfectly with research interests and represents a continuation of my previous work. I’ve been working in Pavel Jungwirth’s group since April 2022. Initially, I was kindly provided with 1 year visiting scientist funding from IOCB, which was later extended by an additional 2 years through the MSCA4Ukraine funding. Prior to this, I have gained extensive experience working abroad, accumulating approximately 6 years of international experience across several countries. During my career, I have been fortunate to secure multiple fellowships and fundings, including two Horizon-2020 grants. Despite being in Czechia, I maintain regular contact with my home institution, where I have a PhD student supervised remotely. I enjoy working in Czechia a lot. The scientific environment is excellent, comparable with the best European research institutions and all the procedures are familiar. I don’t have any major difficulties.“*

**Semen Yesylevskyy, UOCHB Prague and Institute of Physics of NAS of Ukraine**



### **Nanocomposite adsorbents for selective removal of heavy metals and radionuclides from contaminated waters:**

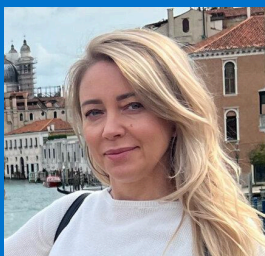
*“In Ukraine, my focus was on **experimental geochemistry**, and this scientific field aligned with the research conducted in **the Lab of prof. Vladislav Chrastný**. I have already experience from international labs. The current joint project will allow me to master new innovative research methods and to work on the most modern analytical equipment, which is currently lacking in Ukraine. The gained experience will make it possible for me in the post-war period to look for an opportunity through joint grants to create a new modern laboratory in my Ukrainian institute. Moreover, the project will broaden my scientific network and facilitate the exchange of ideas.”*

**Yuliia Bondar, CULS Prague and Inst. of Environ. Geochemistry of NAS of Ukraine**



**Structural Virology:** *“At CEITEC MU, I am starting to be involved in the structural studies of **bacteriophage assembly inside Staphylococcus aureus cells**. This is a totally new field of phage biology for me, with switching to the human bacterial pathogenic system. The theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience in structural biology gained during the fellowship at CEITEC will positively impact my project at the Inst. of Microbiology and Virology of the NAS of Ukraine and my scientific career. This is my first internship abroad and the adaptation went smoothly thanks to the supervision of **Dr. Pavel Plevka** and the kind help of my new colleagues. I am also grateful to the Welcome Office of CEITEC MU, which took care of me during the challenging relocation process and helped with the bureaucratic things. I maintain the connection with my Ukrainian institution thanks to my double affiliation and continue to advocate the interests of Ukrainian early-career scientists as a secretary of the Council of Young Scientists”.*

**Marychka Zlatohurska, CEITEC MU in Brno and Inst. of Microbiology and Virology of the NAS of Ukraine**



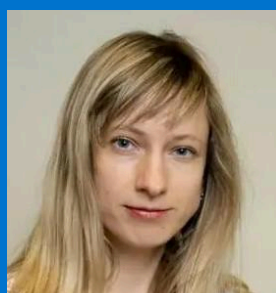
**Tick-borne diseases, Babesia:** *“I have a background in veterinary parasitology and the topic of ticks and tick-borne diseases which overlaps with the focus of my current laboratory in Czechia. I spent one year in the Laboratory of Molecular Biology of Ticks at the Biology Centre of CAS where my fellowship takes place. During this time, I attended several specialized courses and gained important expertise in techniques that enabled me to work with parasites and develop a project for the MSCA4Ukraine scheme. Upon returning to Ukraine after my internship, one of my primary tasks will be to implement the acquired scientific and methodological knowledge at my home university. This will help to establish a new direction for the research, contributing to the advancement of science in Ukraine and fostering real cooperation with leading scientific institutions.”*

**Viktoriya Levytska, Biology Centre of CAS and Podilia State University**



**Osteosarcoma cells:** *“My project, conducted in the Lab of Cell Differentiation under supervision of Dr. Lucie Knopfová, aims to generate **osteosarcoma cells** with a knockout of the adaptor protein Ruk/CIN85, which contributes to metastasis and drug resistance, and to investigate its role in these cells. This is my first MSCA grant, although I have previously participated as a team member in several international grants. Notably, I had the opportunity to collaborate with my current supervisor during the SCOPES 2014-2017 grant period, and in 2014, I completed an internship in Czechia. Since April 2022, I have been employed by MU as part of the **“Masaryk Helps Ukraine”** program, which has afforded me enough time to integrate into the team and familiarize myself with the university, as well as to study Czech language. This support has enabled me to continue work on topics initiated in Ukraine, and I am hopeful that we will be able to sustain our collaboration on this topic upon my return to Ukraine. I enjoy the Czech science environment, and I am happy to learn European standards of academic integrity and open science.”*

**Iryna Horak, MU Brno and Palladin Inst. of Biochemistry of NAS of Ukraine**



**Biotechnologies of waste recycling:** *“I maintain a long-term collaboration with Dr. Hynek Roubik from the Biogas Research Team stemming from our involvement in two previous Czech-Ukrainian joint projects and a PhD student co-supervision. Our joint project primarily focuses on the anaerobic digestion processes of organic waste for biogas production. Additionally, I am exploring the potential utilization of phosphogypsum, a bioproduct of industrial phosphoric fertilizers manufacturing. The BRT team has experience with practical projects, including those in Ukraine, Moldova or Vietnam, applicable to my future career in post-war Ukraine. I look forward to a fruitful outcome of the project. I try to keep up-to-date with the scientific activities of my university in Ukraine and I continue to supervise my Ukrainian PhD and Master’s students”.*

**Yelizaveta Chernysh, CULS Prague and Dep. of Ecology and Environmental Protection Technologies, Sumy State University**

In the upcoming chapter, we will introduce two additional MSCA4Ukraine fellows **Anastasiia Hubina** and **Volodymyr Volkovskyi**, co-founders of the Czech-Ukrainian Scientific Organization.

Towards the end of the first year of the conflict, we observed a shift in the support needs of Ukrainian scientists. Interest in the buddy program gradually diminished, leading us to gradually phase it out. We believe this change may be attributed to displaced Ukrainian scientists in Czechia having already established sufficient connections for adaptation and orientation. Consequently, we decided to advance to a new phase by transferring our activities to the Ukrainian community of scientists in Czechia.

# III. Transition of our activities to the Ukrainian community



Throughout the project, the demands and needs of Ukrainian scientists underwent continuous evolution. Attendance at regular Meetups declined after the first year of the Russian aggression in Ukraine. We realized that our role needed to expand beyond mere assistance. We aimed to involve Ukrainian scientists in the organization of Meetups, engaging them in discussions on relevant topics, and simply make the regular meetings more “their own”. Consequently, we **gradually transferred our community-building activities**, such as the

UA-CZ Science Meetups and collaborations with other initiatives, to members of the Ukrainian science diaspora themselves. We encouraged regular participants to get involved in the Meetup organization. During the summer 2023, we facilitated several Zoom calls

to connect Ukrainian scientists in Czechia with various Ukrainian diaspora groups and initiatives worldwide. These included presentations by established organizations like [German-Ukrainian Academic Society](#) (Ukrainet) and the global research community [Ukrainian Science Diaspora](#), offering inspiration and networking opportunities.

As a result, during the September 2023 Science Meetup, the foundation of a new [Czech-Ukrainian Scientific Society](#) was announced by its co-founders: two MSCA4Ukraine fellows [Anastasiia Hubina](#) and [Volodymyr Volkovski](#) and a CULS Phd student [Oleksandra Rieznyk](#). The co-founders were later joined on the committee of by historian [Volodymyr Poltorak](#) and lawyer [Nataliya Isayeva](#), as well as by geneticist [Nataliia Melnyk](#) who formed the Brno section. The new CZUSS initiative organized its first independent meeting in November 2023 and was registered as an NGO recently.

These steps not only revived interest among Ukrainian scientists in the meetings but has also enabled the continued support of displaced Ukrainian scientists. In addition to organizing meetings, the newly formed [Czech-Ukrainian Scientific Society](#) provides updates on its [website](#), publicizes available job offers and grant opportunities through its [Telegram and Facebook groups](#), supports new members and helps answer questions about work, housing and life in Czechia. The aim was not only to establish the organization but also to integrate the new CZUSS NGO into the Czech scientific environment and further deepen the long-term cooperation between Czech and Ukrainian scientists.



*“CZUSS does not want to be “just” a diaspora organization “only for Ukrainians”. Our aim is to become a bridge, a facilitator, a hub of cooperation between Czech and Ukrainian science.”*

**Volodymyr Volkovski, president of CZUSS and MSCA4Ukraine fellow, Dept. of the Study of Ancient and Medieval Thought, CAS**



*“I would not call our organization a diaspora because it unites not only different waves of Ukrainian scientists in Czechia but also Czech scientists. Our members do not have to be only Ukrainians. **The idea is to integrate the Ukrainian scientific community into the European one.** One of our initial aims was to enable people who found themselves in a completely new situation abroad to understand how science works here and what opportunities they have to continue their scientific career. To achieve this, we invited speakers to demonstrate how to progress your career in Czechia, what funding opportunities exist, and more. **We also aim to engage scientists who remain in Ukraine and to encourage collaboration between them and those who are here, both Czech and Ukrainian scientists.** Maintaining these connections is crucial because scientists in Ukraine continue working under challenging conditions, including daily shelling, blackouts, and a lack of materials and funding. This is especially critical in natural sciences, where sophisticated equipment is an essential part of research. We plan to continue organizing lectures for both Ukrainian scientists in Czechia and in Ukraine, inviting Czech scientists to show the opportunities of collaboration, funding, networking, and mentoring.”*

**Anastasiia Hubina, co-founder of the Czech-Ukrainian Scientific Society, MSCA4Ukraine fellow at Department of Polymers, UCT Prague**

## Czech-Ukrainian Scientific Society Team:



**Volodymyr Volkovski**, MSCA4Ukraine fellow Dept. of the Study of Ancient and Medieval Thought, CAS Prague



**Volodymyr Poltorak**  
Dept. of Middle East, CAS Prague



**Anastasiia Hubina**  
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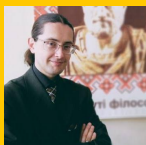


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## Interview with the president of Czech-Ukrainian Scientific Society (CZUSS)



**Volodymyr Volkovski**, MScA4Ukraine fellow at Department of the Study of Ancient and Medieval Thought, CAS Prague:

*How do you evaluate the activities of Czexpats in Science? What did you find helpful, what did you feel was missing and how important was our role for you in establishing CZUSS?*

The role of Czexpats in the creation of CZUSS cannot be overestimated - it is decisive, key, central and all other possible compliments. I was pleasantly surprised when I had received the news via the network of our Institute of Philosophy at CAS that there was a meeting at the Bakala Foundation and it was due to the Czexpats network that I received a lot of useful proposals. In short, Czexpats has incredibly and crucially helped me in adapting to the Czech scientific environment, in finding various opportunities, etc. And it was at a Czexpats meeting where the idea of creating such an organization was born.

As for "what did you miss", it is quite difficult to say. From my point of view, everything was OK, given that these were activities aimed at different sciences and organized in risky conditions. The only thing that can be noted is that if at the beginning academic structures regularly shared and communicated your messages and events, then later they stopped doing so. Instead, to "reach" the final beneficiary, you need to use intra-academic networks, mailings, etc. Therefore, in the future, do not leave cooperation with academic networks, as they have the greatest coverage. In addition, for non-affiliated researchers, the social media of relevant Ukrainian NGOs should be used more widely.

*How many members do you have now and what topics do you usually discuss?*

Our young NGO board counts 6 active permanent collaborators and our community counts about 30 members, among them about 90% of Ukrainian scholars and 10% of Czech scholars. If we take the widest circle, i.e. the people listed in the email list, it is about 80 people.

Mostly, we discuss the mechanisms of our organization's establishment. In second place are the opportunities available for researchers in the Czech Republic, sharing experiences, life hacks, tips, etc. In third place are talks about cooperation with other partners, from Czexpats to foreign academic NGOs and other institutions. In other groups of Ukrainian scholars, such as the group united around the Slavic Institute of CAS, the situation might be somewhat different. There are considerations about the possibilities of cooperation with scholars who remained in Ukraine, the searches for rooting and integration into the Czech (scientific) environment, and finally, discussions about who we have become here, who we are and what we should do.

So far, I have observed a growing demand from academics for “what to do to remain in Czech science, to integrate, to be useful for the Czech scientific environment, to contribute to the Czech scientific community”. We must understand that this demand is not a question of “labor migration” or “brain drain”, it is a question of security, and as long as the security situation in Ukraine is as it is, this demand will grow. That is why I am not the only one who is worried about these processes of shifting the focus of activities to Ukraine. We must support scientific cooperation, involving scientists both from Ukraine and those who are already safe in the EU, so as not to provoke a situation of “pushing” people into a condition of danger and threat. Moreover, given the catastrophic situation with Ukrainian science, it is much more useful and advantageous for those scientists who remain in Ukraine to cooperate with their EU colleagues.

***Is it important/beneficial for you to connect with foreign diasporas? If so, in what ways?***

At this point, I might be somewhat contradicting our other colleagues, but I would say that we are a diaspora, and as a diaspora, on the one hand, we cooperate with other parts of the Ukrainian diaspora and with other (non-Ukrainian) diasporas, on the other hand, and on the third hand, with the Czech academic community, which is open to cooperation and collaboration.

Firstly, we are a diaspora at least sociologically, taking into account the share and features of participants. Secondly, cooperation with other diasporas (and expats) is very important to us, both in terms of sharing experience and information, and in terms of potential joint projects, issues, and problems. Let’s be honest, this is not just about science - it’s about the broader issue of civil society, the topic of rights and freedoms, including those of refugees and expats. Different EU countries have different situations with the protection of rights and freedoms, and the wave of refugees only highlights hidden, implicit problems with human rights in some European countries. In particular, this concerns the level of implicit xenophobia, inclusiveness, openness of society, ease of adaptation and inculturation, etc.

We, as Ukrainians, who have the unfortunate opportunity to compare the experiences of scholars and non-scholars in different EU countries and beyond (Britain, Norway, Switzerland, the USA, Canada, etc.), can afford to make certain generalizations and conclusions. This, by the way, is the subject and grounds of a pretty good socio-humanitarian research. But, just as importantly, **CZUSS does not want to be “just” a diaspora organization “only for Ukrainians”.** Our aim is to become a bridge, a facilitator, a hub of cooperation between Czech and Ukrainian science, but more about that in the next section.

***How do you perceive your role for the community of Ukrainian scientists in the Czech Republic and what would you like to achieve? How could Czech scientists and especially Czexpats in Science support you in this?***

**I'd like to make a few distinctions here:**

- 1) the "community of Ukrainian scholars in the Czech Republic" and the "organization" CZUSS.
- 2) the "older" and "new" generation,
- 3) persons with special needs, etc.

Keep in mind that a Ukrainian community is divided into two unequal parts - the so-called "older" generation, which has been here for a long time and is pretty well adapted, and the so-called "new" generation, which came here because of a traumatized shocking situation and is now in a suspended condition. The needs, tasks and problems of these two "generations" seem to be quite different, especially in terms of security and confidence in the future.

In addition, there are *categories with special needs*, including people with disabilities, families with children, and refugees from regions of Ukraine bordering Russia and the frontline. These categories need special support and help to ensure the permanence of their stay in a safe space. In fact, working with and protecting these categories may be the next priority for both government programmes and NGOs' activities.

**As for what we would like to achieve, I would highlight the next levels:**

- 1) to expand the circle of "organization" to the size of the circle of "community of Ukrainian scholars in the Czech Republic", at least of those who arrived in Czechia after 24.02.2022.
- 2) build a good network of cooperation with other NGOs of Ukrainians in the Czech Republic
- 3) to develop a high-quality system of mutual support, networking and cooperation between Ukrainian scholars in the Czech Republic
- 4) to engage Czech scientists in this community by creating a network of Czech-Ukrainian scientific cooperation.

Of course, this is impossible without the active support of Ukrainian scientists themselves, Czech scientists who are not indifferent to this matter, and broad cooperation with foreign partners (Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian organizations). Therefore, everything depends on the readiness of different communities to actively engage in interaction, to participate in the process of building a community, not just expressing passive consent and formal support.

Therefore, cooperation with Czexpats is and will be strategically important for CZUSS. This could include joint events, possibly joint submissions, sharing experiences in the field of communications and applications. As I said above, there are several areas where there is an interesting subject for research and activity, such as the experience of refugees in different countries, the human rights perspective, protection of particularly vulnerable categories (and this is something that should be proposed to the *Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport* and the *Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs* - that vulnerable categories are not only those over 65+ and pregnant women, but also families with children and those from particularly "fortunate" regions). Depending on the commitment of our partners, cooperation can be global (up to the level of national and European policy) or local.

## IV. Future prospects for Ukrainian Science in times of uncertainty

Throughout the project we were in contact with more than 300 Ukrainian scientists. However, according to statistics, many more scientists have likely relocated to Czechia or are interested in relocating. The number of scientists and scientific support staff who have left Ukraine after February 2022 could be around 17 500, according to the calculations of [Maryl et al. \(2022\)](#). If 8% of these displaced scientists are **in Czechia, up to 1 400 Ukrainian scientists** could have arrived in our country during this period. Many of these scientists may no longer be working in their trained fields, leading to a phenomenon known as “*brain wasting*”. On the other hand, many scientists have been able to continue their scientific work in Czechia and have established further cooperation with Ukrainian institutions.

### Emigration of Ukrainian Scientists

The full-scale war has disrupted most of Ukraine’s activities, including **science**. In 2021, before the war, **Ukraine had 60 000 researchers and 35 000 support staff** ([Maryl et al., 2022](#)). By the end of 2022, around **18.5 % of Ukrainian scientists had fled the country**, with 74 % of them being female. Many of these scientists are among the most active researchers in Ukraine and are now working under temporary contracts abroad. Of these scientists who remained in Ukraine, **approximately 15 % have left research entirely** ([de Rassenfosse et al. 2023](#)). A large number of remaining researchers lost their institutional buildings, which served as the basis for their research, and had to reduce their research time about 20 % due to the war, thus facing significant difficulties in continuing their research ([Maryl et al. 2022](#)). Research conducted by [Ganguli and Waldinger \(2023\)](#) suggests that there was an approximate 10 % decline in the number of papers published by Ukrainian scientists compared to the pre-war period.

Not everyone has the same opportunity to emigrate during wartime conflicts. The best scientists are certainly part of the population that is highly employable abroad, and countries lose them at a higher rate during wartime, contributing to the phenomenon known as “*brain drain*” ([De Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#)). This trend will significantly harm the future of Ukrainian science. Therefore, our further support should be directed towards preventing or reversing this process as much as possible. If we can maintain the connection between displaced Ukrainian scientists and those in Ukraine, emigrating scientists could then play a role as

international bridges. They can connect their home country with international knowledge and experience, and Ukraine could eventually benefit from this huge emigration wave in the end.

Estimating how many scientists will return to Ukraine is challenging, with published numbers varying widely and likely to change as the conflict and displacement continue. According to [Maryl et al. \(2022\)](#), 73% of Ukrainian researchers stated that they do not plan to return to Ukraine and wish to continue their research abroad. In contrast, only 9 % of Ukrainian scientists expressed this intention in the study by [de Rassenfosse et al. \(2023\)](#). The majority of these Ukrainian scientists residing abroad reported that their stay at host institutions enhances their research skills. Therefore, their intention to return after the end of the war could present an opportunity to improve Ukrainian science ([de Rassenfosse et al. 2023](#)) and mitigate the risk of substantial “*brain drain*” from the country.

The perception of this situation is underscored by a statement made by the head of the [Network of Research Managers in Ukraine](#) (PNRM) Ganna Tolstanova during our online meeting when asked how Ukrainian scientists who have not left the country perceive the situation. The PNRM NGO was established in recent years with the aim of uniting science managers from different higher education institutions in Ukraine to share experiences and ideas.



*“PNRM unites and supports researchers and science managers in Ukraine. Different universities in Ukraine have different experiences, and we aim to use this platform to share ideas and become more competitive. This support is very important, especially because of the war. A lot of support goes to those who have gone abroad, and people often forget about the researchers who have remained. We are under stress all the time, but we want to keep believing that we are okay, that we stayed in Ukraine, and that we are not*

*the losers.”*

#### **Ganna Tolstanova, Vice-Rector for Research, Taras Schevchenko National University in Kiev and Head of NGO PNRM**

More than 80 % of Ukrainian scientists still remain in Ukraine, making it particularly important to foster collaboration between them and Ukrainian scientists abroad, as well as with other research institutes worldwide, to encourage the exchange of knowledge. This collaboration, along with a wide range of temporary scholarships, remote visiting programs, and access to libraries, allows the scientists who remain in Ukraine to keep up with scientific progress and maintain and enhance their research skills ([de Rassenfosse et al. 2023](#)). For example, we highlighted Nataliia Hertsovska from Mukachevo State University, who received support through the Rector's Office programme of Charles University for Ukrainian scientists. Repeated short visits to the Czech workplace and the interest of the Czech side in Natallia's work motivated her to continue her research and lecturing. This enthusiasm greatly helps Nataliia to keep her students motivated back home in Ukraine.

However, these activities still entail significant bureaucracy, which needs to be removed as soon as possible. Many PhD students already lack a supervisor, posing a risk of losing an entire generation of PhD students in Ukraine. There are great examples focusing **on avoiding “*brain drain*” and instead fostering “*brain circulation*”** by establishing

collaborations between European and Ukrainian institutions. Three major grant calls exemplify this approach:

- 1) The European Commission's Marie-Curie Skłodowska [MSCA4Ukraine fellowship programme](#), with its first call resulting in 124 awarded researchers, concluded in February 2023. The second call, aiming to support an additional 50 researchers, is set to open in June 2024
- 2) [The virtual UA institute, organized by Polish Academy of Sciences and U.S. National Academy of Sciences](#), supports 18 Ukrainian research teams. These teams are expected to be prepared for relocation to Ukraine after the war
- 3) [The Virtual Ukraine Institute for Advanced Study \(VUIAS\)](#) provided 14 scholarships in September 2023 to researchers, whether they are based in Ukraine or abroad. It is planned that VUIAS will be relocated to Kiev to contribute to the rebuilding of Ukrainian science once the war is over



*“The program offers tools and resources enabling outstanding Ukrainian research groups to carry out scientific projects. Planning this program, we aimed to consider, among other things, the dual affiliation of all team members and the possibility of conducting research in Ukraine. I am convinced that the work of these outstanding scientists will contribute to the development and reconstruction of science in Ukraine” (cited from [pan.pl](#))*

### **Marek Konarzewski, President of the Polish Academy of Sciences**

According to Anastasia Hubina from CZUSS, in addition to joint grants, the priority now should be to focus on the establishment of **joint master and student programmes and shared laboratories between Ukraine and other countries.**

In addition to supporting internships, grants, and joint study programmes, we must also consider the future need for financial support for Ukrainian scientists who wish to return to Ukraine and contribute to the renewal of science. Lucian Brujan from the German National Academy of Sciences emphasized during the Phillip Schwarz and Inspireurope Stakeholder Forum 2024 the importance of focusing on *“brain gain”* projects in the future. This involves investing in scientists who are interested in returning to Ukraine to help manage the renewal of the Higher Education system there, thinking on a much longer-term scale. Brujan recommends being proactive and preparing proposals as soon as the environment in Ukraine is safe. However, he also stresses the importance of consulting with scientists in Ukraine to understand their needs rather than imposing our opinions. It's crucial to approach Ukraine as equals during negotiations and consider what they can offer us to build bilateral cooperation on an equal footing. Supporting Ukrainian scientists should be seen not just as an act of charity, but as an opportunity for European countries to attract high-quality scientists and establish cooperation with Ukrainian institutions, benefiting both sides.



*"As part of the [Masaryk Helps Ukraine programme](#), we have enlisted a Ukrainian scientist from the Institute of Food Biotechnology and Genomics, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev. She is contributing to our research on plant hormone regulation, bringing expertise particularly in the area of in vitro explants and hormone regulation of plant regeneration. Additionally, her knowledge of minor crop genomics acquired at her home institute and her connections within the scientific community in Ukraine are proving to be valuable assets. We intend to maintain this collaboration in the future, as it represents an important methodological and intellectual enrichment for our research."*

### **Jan Hejátko, Group leader of Functional Genomics and Proteomics of Plants group, CEITEC MU**

Both sides have much to learn and adapt to, and there is a valuable exchange of knowledge that can occur, particularly from Ukraine's experiences in war and military matters. In the words of CZUSS co-founder Anastasiia Hubina, it's important to recognize that the science system in Ukraine differs significantly from the European system. Therefore, the involvement of Ukrainian scientists in aid proposals is crucial for effective support. Additionally, it's essential to inform Ukrainian scientists about funding opportunities from European budgets, as this knowledge is still relatively scarce in Ukraine. This will help bridge gaps and facilitate more effective collaboration and support.

As an illustration, David Livingstone from the Department of English and American Studies at the Faculty of Arts of Palacký University in Olomouc, chose to relocate directly to Ukraine to support Ukrainian university students at the Vasyl Stefanik Precarpathian National University in Ivano-Frankivsk. What led him to make this move?



*"I've come to realize that although helping Ukrainians here is great, helping universities in Ukraine is perhaps even more important in the long term. Ukraine has already lost millions of talented people who either enlisted or emigrated. Looking ahead, when peace is restored, the so-called brain drain will pose a significant challenge for Ukraine. I believe it is important for us in the West, especially within academia, to support our colleagues in Ukraine, helping them maintain their academic reputation and preventing the outflow of talented students and researchers from the country. I came to Czechoslovakia in 1990 and witnessed many mainly positive changes. Our current position is owed, in part, to the support of entities such as the European Union and the United States, among others. I consider it our duty to reciprocate the assistance we've received. We must strive to aid Ukraine to the best of our abilities, not only militarily and financially, but also intellectually. I hope that my efforts will contribute, even if only in a small way, to achieving this objective." (cited from an article in [Vedavyzkum.cz](#))*

### **David Livingstone, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc**

In this final report, we have summarized not only our activities in support of Ukrainian scientists throughout the project period but also how we have perceived the evolution of their needs since the beginning of the armed conflict. Additionally, we have examined the assistance the Ukrainian scientists have received from major Czech research and higher education institutions, as well as from the European Marie Skłodowska Curie Program [MSCA4Ukraine](#) fellowships in Czechia. In the first months following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there was a significant global effort to support Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. However, as is often the case in long-term conflicts, a certain tiredness of the conflict develops over time and the situation becomes the “new normal”. Our experience has shown that while acute aid is easier to devise, providing long-term sustainable support to a country in war presents a greater challenge. **The hardest part is yet to come.** Our big challenge now is to sustain our support and shift our focus towards more systemic, top-down assistance rather than just bottom-up initiatives. Ukrainian scientists need, and will continue to need, support, perhaps even more than at the beginning of the conflict. Our greatest challenge is to persevere and not abandon them. Therefore, the purpose of this report is not only to summarize past activities but also to call for further cooperation with the newly formed [Czech-Ukrainian Scientific Society](#) and to explore additional avenues of support and collaboration with Ukrainian scientists in general.

Petra Luláková, coordinator of help to Ukrainian scientists