

Report
Development plan for Ukrainian studies in Europe

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INTRODUCTION



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Rationale

The main aim of the report is to present recommendations for the future of Ukrainian Studies in Europe, targeted at key policymakers and decision-makers. The EUkraine Forum project is a cooperation partnership between Inalco University (France), the University of Warsaw (Poland), Charles University (Czech Republic) and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine), supported by the EU Erasmus+ programme through the Key Action 220. Since November 2024, this project has supported the development of Ukrainian Studies in Europe to meet the growing demand for expertise on Ukraine, motivated both by the current geopolitical context and the need for informed knowledge on Ukraine's linguistic and cultural specificities. The project included an analysis of existing programmes and the organisation of a European conference in Warsaw in May 2025. The ***Development Plan for Ukrainian Studies in Europe*** marks the project's final step and provides the framework for strengthening Ukrainian Studies programmes and collaboration on the European continent.

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Methodology

Our recommendations are based on an analysis of the current state of Ukrainian Studies, including their structural strengths and weaknesses, and their needs regarding knowledge production. This report is based on a combination of sources and consultations. It draws on the findings of the Erasmus+ project EUkraine Forum, especially the reports ***Ukrainian Studies in Europe: Situation Report*** and Conference "Planning the Future of Ukrainian Studies in Europe" (2025). It also incorporates insights gathered through ongoing consultations with teachers and researchers in Ukrainian Studies across Europe, as well as with policymakers, NGOs, and representatives of the business sector. In addition, the report builds on a comparative assessment of the institutional position of Ukrainian Studies in different European contexts, with particular attention to their degree of institutionalisation, disciplinary profile, and relevance to current policy needs. On this basis, the report identifies key structural challenges and formulates recommendations for European, national, and university-level decision-makers.

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SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES



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Definition and state of Ukrainian Studies in Europe

We define Ukrainian Studies in a wider sense, which includes both traditional aspects and the new needs arising from the impacts of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This political reality has increased the demand for multidisciplinary and policy-oriented knowledge. While the support and expansion of policy-oriented courses and study programmes dealing with Ukraine is understandably a strategic aim of European institutions and national governments, this does not mean that the traditional components of Ukrainian Studies – such as language, history (particularly the twentieth and twenty-first centuries), culture, literature, and regional and local expertise – should be neglected. The above-mentioned disciplines ensure the necessary language competence and an understanding of the identity, intellectual heritage of the Ukrainian nation, and regional diversity. All of this is indispensable for supporting social cohesion as well as post-war stabilisation and recovery. Thus, the creation of new programmes should not negatively affect Ukrainian Studies centres that have existed for decades. On the contrary, existing Ukrainian Studies centres should not only be preserved, but recognised as strategic hubs of expertise and coordination within the future European Ukrainian Studies ecosystem. Their long-term linguistic, archival, cultural, and academic expertise constitutes the indispensable institutional foundation upon which new multidisciplinary and policy-oriented initiatives should be built.

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The transformation of Ukrainian Studies – from a field that occupied a relatively marginal position in European academia until 2022, a position that persists despite the efforts of many scholars – into a discipline of strategic relevance brings several challenges. The reality of war and Ukraine's EU candidate status has fundamentally altered Ukraine's position, shifting it from being a regional case study to becoming a strategic partner in enlargement, reconstruction, and security policy. However, institutional transformation, including the academic sector, has not kept pace with these geopolitical changes. In European countries where the study of Ukraine held a more prominent position – mostly in Central and South-Eastern European universities and some Western academic centres (INALCO, UCL SSEES, Cambridge University) – Ukrainian Studies were, and still are, primarily focused on language and philology. In other European universities with a focus on Eastern Europe, teaching about Ukraine has played a marginal or supplementary role within broader Slavic or Russian Studies programmes. A third, not insignificant category of European universities has organised, at best, mostly project-based, temporary courses on Ukraine. Overall, Ukrainian Studies, or teaching about Ukraine, has faced and still faces a number of general problems: structural constraints (limited permanent academic positions, fragmented coordination across Member States, and weak integration with policy schools and applied disciplines) and disciplinary imbalances (dominance of Russian-oriented studies and lack of policy- and contemporary-oriented programmes). Thus, this paper seeks not only to identify structural deficiencies in contemporary scholarship on Ukraine, but also to offer several recommendations to policymakers and decision-makers for essential changes in Ukrainian studies and the production of knowledge about Ukraine.

Policymakers and decision-makers

The document is addressed primarily to policymakers and decision-makers who have the power to implement the necessary changes. We classify them into four broad categories, each associated with a distinct agenda: supranational governance (European Union, EU), national governance, higher education regulators and funding agencies, and strategic philanthropic and institutional funders. At the EU level, the actors most relevant to our purposes include the following institutions and bodies: the Directorate-Generals of the European Commission – such as the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), and the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD); the European Parliament committees on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and on Culture and Education (CULT); as well as the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Research Council (ERC). At the national level, the key institutions comprise the ministries responsible for education and research, foreign affairs, and defence, as well as national research councils. The institutional and academic decision-makers we consider to be relevant encompass university and faculty leadership – such as rectors, deans, and their teams, including vice-rectors and vice-deans responsible for research and internationalisation, education, science, and accreditation – as well as independent higher education accreditation bodies. Last but not least, strategic philanthropic and institutional funders constitute open society foundations, funding organisations linked to the business sector, NGOs, and other relevant actors. Cooperation with additional key players – including regional and local politicians and officials, representatives of the business sector and their professional associations, and relevant Ukrainian counterparts such as ministries, embassies, universities – is also crucial.

RECOMMENDATIONS



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Institutionalisation of Ukrainian studies and sustainable funding

As stated above, there are fundamental differences in the level of institutionalisation of Ukrainian Studies across Europe. While some countries have fully comprehensive Ukrainian Studies programmes or specialisations at one or more universities, others can offer only Ukrainian courses within combined or dual-degree programmes (often alongside other Slavic languages or within broader humanities and social sciences programmes), and some countries have no or very limited offerings of Ukrainian courses. This variation results from a combination of factors, such as the traditional focus on Ukrainian Studies at some educational institutions and the needs of countries in certain regions (for example Poland and the Czech Republic, which have significant Ukrainian minority populations). Regardless of the circumstances, the existing level of academic institutionalisation in Ukrainian Studies falls short of meeting Europe's current needs. The strengthening of Ukrainian Studies across regions, countries, universities, and faculties must build on the existing structures and knowledge production related to Ukraine. Establishing a coherent and sustainable system of Ukrainian Studies, with clearly defined roles for each programme and ensuring their integration and complementarity rather than competition, demands thorough discussion by policymakers and decision-makers at European, national, and university levels.

Considering the diverse contexts and needs of various regions and countries, the results were to be guided by several principles. First, a structured and sustainable European Ukrainian Studies network should be established, moving beyond short-term project-based initiatives. At the same time, at least one permanent chair in Ukrainian Studies should be created in each EU member state (or, where appropriate, within regional clusters of smaller states). In Central Europe, given its specific geographical, historical, and cultural context, maintaining and further developing more than one chair or institute of Ukrainian Studies is justified. Second, multiannual funding should be secured through EU frameworks such as Horizon Europe and Erasmus Mundus. Finally, co-funding mechanisms with Ukraine should be implemented – for instance, a five-year funding programme for Ukrainian Studies, including scholarships, research programmes, and visiting professorships, during which the Ukrainian state cannot provide co-financing. Overall, increased funding for Ukrainian Studies should be a priority for European and national political institutions. Alongside long-term institutional goals such as permanent chairs and multidisciplinary programmes, universities and governments should also support immediately implementable measures, including visiting lectureships, elective modules, digital teaching cooperation, bilateral agreements with Ukrainian universities, shared online courses, and mobility schemes. Particular attention should also be paid to strengthening cooperation among Ukrainian Studies centres across Europe through joint teaching initiatives, research partnerships, staff exchanges, and multilateral academic networks. Rectors and deans, as well as associations of universities and faculties (e.g., humanities faculties), are encouraged to discuss the strengthening of Ukrainian Studies within existing structures and the critical reassessment and epistemological diversification of Russian-, Slavic-, and East European Studies curricula, including the overcoming of long-standing Russo-centric frameworks that have marginalised Ukrainian and other non-Russian perspectives.

Strengthening of area and multidisciplinary concepts

Some experts advocate a shift from a traditionally humanities-oriented focus towards a field that actively informs policy, security, and economic engagement. This would include knowledge of the fundamentals of EU law, the intricacies of the accession process, rule-of-law reforms, and the socio-political impact of European integration. It would also require expertise in post-war economic models, investment attraction, sector-specific recovery (such as energy, agriculture, and technology), and the transparent governance of reconstruction efforts. In addition, Ukrainian Studies should address the evolving European security architecture, the nature of modern warfare (including lessons learned from Ukraine), defence industry integration, and long-term regional stability. In this sense, Ukrainian Studies must anticipate future needs and contribute to building a resilient and fully integrated Ukraine within a stronger and more secure Europe. Achieving this transformation requires sustained commitment from universities, national governments, EU institutions, and the private sector. A robust and adaptive field of Ukrainian Studies is therefore not merely an academic priority, but an investment in informed decision-making, regional stability, and Europe's long-term strength.

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As we have argued above, strengthening multidisciplinary approaches does not imply the marginalisation of the traditional components of Ukrainian Studies. Nevertheless, it is necessary to systematically integrate insights from the social sciences – including political science, law, economics, and security studies – into Ukrainian Studies in order to build comprehensive, multidisciplinary knowledge about Ukraine. We do not propose replacing established traditional Ukrainian Studies programmes; rather, we advocate strengthening area-based and multidisciplinary approaches within humanities- and philology-oriented curricula. One strategic principle for the reform of study programmes may be a layered model – namely, the integration of both approaches into programme curricula: Layer 1: Humanities Core and Layer 2: Applied and Policy-Oriented Fields. The specific design of study programmes will vary according to the needs, strategies, and capacities of particular countries, regions, and universities. Larger universities offering structured and in-depth study of Ukraine – or, more broadly, of Eastern and Central Europe – within philology, political science, or area studies programmes can cooperate to provide students with broader or more specialised study tracks integrated into their primary field of specialisation, for example in the form of modules, micro-credentials, or elective courses. The cooperation and integration of diverse approaches into study programme curricula represent one of the most important challenges for faculties, departments, and centres – not only within individual universities, but also across universities at the national, regional, and European levels. The internationalisation of knowledge production about Ukraine can particularly benefit universities with little or no tradition in Ukrainian Studies.

The proposed multidisciplinary transformation should not be interpreted as a call to replace or marginalise existing Ukrainian Studies programmes. On the contrary, the development of broader interdisciplinary frameworks should build upon the expertise accumulated within established Ukrainian Studies centres, which should remain key institutional actors in the future development of the field. Different institutional models may coexist depending on local capacities, traditions, and academic structures. While some universities may choose to expand Ukrainian Studies toward policy-, security-, legal-, economic-, and reconstruction-oriented perspectives, others may continue to develop philological, cultural, literary, and historical approaches that remain indispensable for the field as a whole. Nevertheless, the long-term strategic objective should remain the strengthening of connections between these complementary approaches in order to create a more comprehensive and resilient European knowledge infrastructure on Ukraine. The transformation of Ukrainian Studies into a strategically relevant field does not diminish its academic autonomy. On the contrary, it reflects the growing recognition that rigorous humanities-based expertise is indispensable for informed policymaking, reconstruction planning, security analysis, and long-term European integration.

The Attractiveness and Effectiveness of Ukrainian Studies Programmes for students

The preceding paragraph also addressed the issue of the attractiveness and effectiveness of Ukrainian Studies programmes for students. The incorporation of multidisciplinary components into the traditionally conservative framework of Ukrainian Studies, in itself, contributes significantly to the field's attractiveness. Furthermore, we propose incorporating internships into Ukrainian Studies programmes in cooperation with state institutions, the business sector, the media, think tanks, integration centres, NGOs, humanitarian organisations, publishing houses, and cultural institutions. The entire study programme should emphasise practical aspects, including complement traditional lecture-based teaching with seminars, simulations, project-based learning, internships, field research, and collaborative formats that strengthen analytical, practical, and professional competencies. We also propose the replacement of the bachelor's thesis with a system of continuous assessment, either through written examinations or a final comprehensive exam at the end of the programme. Alternatively, assessment could take the form of work on a longer-term project, culminating in a public presentation and defence at the conclusion of the bachelor's studies. In contrast, the M.A. programme should focus more on developing scientific skills and producing a final diploma thesis. It is also crucial to incorporate technological innovations, for example, by leveraging the benefits of generative AI in teaching. AI should be understood as a tool supporting research, teaching, archival work, and knowledge dissemination rather than as a substitute for scholarly expertise. Its use should reinforce, rather than replace, critical thinking, linguistic competence, and deep cultural knowledge.

One of the most important factors contributing to the attractiveness and effectiveness of Ukrainian Studies is investment in early-career researchers and scholar mobility. This includes fellowships for displaced Ukrainian scholars, joint M.A. and Ph.D. programmes and training initiatives, mobility schemes for field research in Ukraine, internship pipelines with EU institutions, participation in Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programmes, and close cooperation with foreign and Ukrainian universities on joint projects – in short, the overall internationalisation of Ukrainian Studies. Dedicated programmes supporting academic mobility and scholarly exchange among Ukrainian Studies researchers working at different universities across the European Union should also be encouraged. The presence of thousands of displaced and relocated Ukrainian scholars across Europe represents a historic opportunity for the structural strengthening of Ukrainian Studies. European universities and governments should therefore move beyond temporary fellowship schemes and develop long-term integration pathways, including tenure-track opportunities, joint appointments, institutional partnerships, and sustainable research positions. Such measures would simultaneously strengthen European expertise on Ukraine and prevent the long-term loss of academic capacity caused by the war. Integration of Ukrainian scholars should be developed in close cooperation with existing Ukrainian Studies centres and local academic communities in order to strengthen the field as a whole and avoid the emergence of parallel or disconnected structures of expertise. Since 2022, Ukrainian migration has significantly transformed European educational and social environments. Ukrainian Studies programmes can therefore also contribute to developing expertise in intercultural communication, multilingualism, integration, and migration-related challenges, while continuing to maintain their broader academic and strategic mission.

In practical terms, we propose providing certain preferences or incentives for initiatives related to the Ukrainian agenda, in light of its strategic importance, the limited experience of scholars and students in competing with more developed fields, and the impact of the ongoing war, which further complicates their position. For example, faculty and university administrations, in cooperation with the government and EU institutions, could consider guaranteeing one or two Ph.D. projects in various academic fields, as well as opening one postdoctoral position per year or every two years. European and national grant agencies could also consider guaranteeing a certain number of designated projects, reducing bureaucratic requirements for submissions, and providing support in preparing projects with Ukrainian themes. We also recommend investment in data and infrastructure development, including the establishment of secure data repositories on reconstruction, as well as support for digital humanities and archival preservation initiatives. Encouraging student involvement in fieldwork connects engaging practical projects with effective outcomes, enhancing students' skills while producing valuable results.

Sustainability of Ukrainian Studies

The development of, and investment in, Ukrainian Studies must be guided by clearly established sustainability criteria. This requires long-term planning and coordinated discussion among all key policymakers and decision-makers, i.e., coordinated European- and national-level platforms that formulate sustainable projects and development and financing priorities, while preventing small, isolated initiatives. We propose implementing such plans at European, national, and university levels with a medium-term horizon of five years and a long-term horizon of ten years. The objectives of these plans should ideally follow the principles of being forward-looking rather than crisis-driven, strategic rather than charitable, institutional rather than ad hoc, and investment-based rather than grant-dependent. Support for Ukrainian Studies should not be based primarily on cultural solidarity, but on strategic capacity-building for Europe's future, which is also the future of Ukraine. The need for planning and coordination not only prevents hundreds of uncoordinated and fragmented initiatives with limited impact, but also enables the concentration of human and material resources to address the current state of Ukrainian Studies, which is characterised by understaffing, underfunding, and a lack of broader positive impact on European societies. This does not mean that we advocate the centralisation and bureaucratisation of the decision-making process in Ukrainian Studies, but rather a genuine partnership and collective effort at all levels of policy- and decision-making to achieve the desired results. This also requires monitoring and evaluation procedures, along with the implementation of long-term institutional sustainability indicators. These indicators should track not only how financial resources affect the quality and effectiveness of funded projects, but also the establishment of permanent chairs, the creation of multidisciplinary programmes, the delivery of policy briefs to EU and national government institutions, the employment of graduates in Ukraine-related positions, and the production of joint EU-Ukraine research outputs. Indicators may also include the number of stable Ukrainian Studies programmes operating at European universities, the development of multilateral EU-Ukraine academic networks, and the sustainability of long-term institutional partnerships. In addition, the quality of all these results must be assessed. The strategic relevance of Ukrainian Studies should not be viewed as temporary or dependent solely on wartime circumstances. Europe's long-term need for linguistic competence, regional expertise, historical understanding, and institutional knowledge concerning Ukraine will remain essential regardless of future geopolitical developments. Their continued development should be understood not as an alternative to innovation and multidisciplinary expansion, but as a prerequisite for their long-term success.

CONCLUSION



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At the end of this report, I summarise the key recommendations and principles that policymakers and decision-makers should follow when formulating their strategic plans:

1. **Strengthen institutional structures** – establish stable and sustainable Ukrainian Studies centres in European universities, integrated into national and European academic networks, while also maintaining, further developing, and providing additional funding for already existing centres and programmes.
2. **Promote a multidisciplinary approach** – combine traditional humanities with political, economic, and security studies to provide comprehensive knowledge of Ukraine and its current challenges.
3. **Support mobility and career development** – invest in mobility programmes, scholarships, and postgraduate projects, including support for early-career and displaced Ukrainian scholars, to expand Europe's expert network.
4. **Enhance programme practicality and attractiveness** – introduce internships, field research, project-based modules, and the use of technological innovations (e.g., generative AI) to improve the quality and relevance of education.
5. **Ensure sustainability and strategic planning** – apply clear sustainability principles, coordinate at European, national, and university levels, and implement monitoring and evaluation of programme outputs and outcomes.
6. **Safeguard and strategically support existing Ukrainian Studies units** – ensure stable, long-term organisational and financial support for established Ukrainian Studies centres and programmes across Europe. These institutions constitute critical hubs of expertise, knowledge continuity, and academic infrastructure, and their sustained development is essential to prevent the marginalisation of Ukrainian Studies and to strengthen Europe's long-term analytical capacity on Ukraine.

The future development of Ukrainian Studies in Europe should not be understood merely as the expansion of an existing small academic field, but as the creation of a durable European knowledge infrastructure capable of responding to the political, social, cultural, economic, and security challenges connected with Ukraine and the wider East European region in the twenty-first century.

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