



Executive Summary

Online Networking Forum HUMBOLDT4UKRAINE: Supporting researchers – ensuring the future of an innovative Ukraine

October 2023

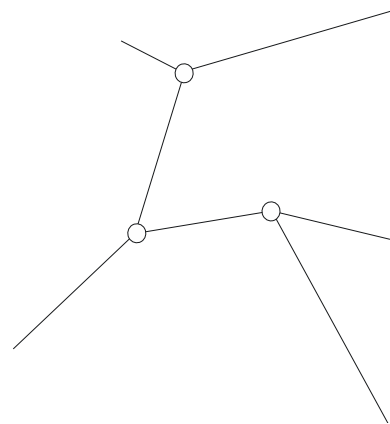
This executive summary is based on the contributions that were made by the session chairs, impulse speakers and participants during the Forum discussions or were submitted in writing to the Humboldt Foundation.

In October 2023, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) hosted the online networking forum “HUMBOLDT4UKRAINE: Supporting researchers – ensuring the future of an innovative Ukraine”. AvH mobilised over 120 participants, 40% of whom are currently funded by AvH or are Humboldt alumni. Participants based in 22 countries registered for the event, with almost half coming from Ukraine, followed by Germany (27%), the Czech Republic (7%), Poland and France (2% each). Based on the registration data, almost 85% of the participants were Ukrainian researchers, with the majority (83%) indicating that they are currently displaced, with 15% being displaced within Ukraine and the remainder residing in other European countries.

Participants examined existing support schemes which include both individual fellowships and collaborative grants. The discussion then focussed on what needs to be done to place science squarely at the heart of Ukraine’s reconstruction efforts, establish access to relevant skills and knowledge, and foster evidence-based policy-making. The active participation and lively discussions showed that networking activities continue to be of enormous importance for Ukrainian researchers. Their insights provide valuable information that can be used to underpin future efforts to support Ukrainian researchers and the science system of Ukraine in the best possible ways. The participants urged having Germany, being a country with a long history of research collaboration and a supporter of education and science reform in Ukraine, lead the country’s post-war rebuilding and transformation efforts in its science and higher education sectors.

Key conclusions from the Forum:

1. There is continued strong demand for support for researchers who remain in Ukraine. Developing measures to better support researchers and organisations in Ukraine is vital to maintaining a critical mass capacity for any future rebuilding efforts.





2. While it is vital that the problems caused by the war be tackled, the long-standing structural challenges – such as chronic underfunding, diminishing attractiveness of research careers, and limited career opportunities for PhD-level professionals outside of academia – should also be appropriately addressed.
3. Improving working conditions for scientists and the legal framework in Ukraine is imperative to establishing Ukraine as an internationally attractive destination for talent and is a pre-condition for “brain circulation”, and for fostering the return of highly skilled Ukrainians from abroad.
4. Ukraine’s integration into the European Research Area (ERA) and globally should be given top priority and linked to its EU accession plans.
5. Supporting international cooperation between research teams/groups (in addition to individual researchers) is of crucial importance. Besides bolstering the development of science in Ukraine in general, this type of support is essential to building academic capacity and expanding international professional ties.
6. Establishing well-funded hubs of excellence and key laboratories in collaboration with international groups/labs to serve as “centres of crystallisation” could be an important step towards the necessary transformation.
7. It is essential that science management be professionalised and targeted training offers be developed for science managers.
8. Ukraine could strongly benefit from the development of effective mechanisms for evidence-based policy-making and should strive to turn a crisis into an opportunity by establishing novel, effective “Science for Policy” mechanisms.
9. It is crucial that international experts be involved in a (new) audit of the Ukrainian science system and in peer reviews.
10. The research diaspora offers significant potential for fostering international collaboration (as partners) and supporting the transformation of the Ukrainian science (as experts).

As one of the direct outcomes of the Forum, participants announced their intention to form a working group to produce a position paper on “Science to Policy for Ukraine” to raise awareness among academic and political actors. Moreover, if such a working group proves to be effective, it could become a standing expert group for advising both Ukrainian and international stakeholders.

