Ukraine's Higher Education System: Reforms in Progress

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Higher Education in Ukraine: Facts and Figures

- Higher Education Institutions – 352
  - Public – 164, Private – 92 + 26 local gov't
  - Number has decreased by +/- 25% since 2014

- Students 1,112,972 (not incl. cadets)

- Academic staff – 110 thousand

- National Academy of Sciences
  - 160 research institutes
  - 29 870 staff, incl. 15 530 researchers
  - 260 coop agreements with HEIs

- 5 Specialized Academies of Science
  - Law, Medicine, Agrarian, Education, Art

- Integration of NAS and Sectoral Academies with HEIs is a priority
  - Currently lacks political will

Feb. 2022 – Apr. 2024:
- Damaged schools: 3798
- Completely destroyed: 365

584 children killed, 1284 injured
19,634 illegally deported

Early / rapid relief efforts by international partners

- UK-Ukraine University Twinning

- EU University Networks

- EUA member rapid relief:

  - Erasmus+ Int'l Credit Mobility

  - Bilateral "Exchange" Programmes

- Joint Research Projects – Jean Monnet / DAAD / Fulbright / NATO / OSCE / USAID / SSHRC

- Removal of Russian HEIs and QA agencies from EU organizations

- "Ukrainian Global University"

- Access to open scientific bases and educational platforms

- Ukrainian studies centers

- Visiting Professorships and (limited) non-residential Fellowships
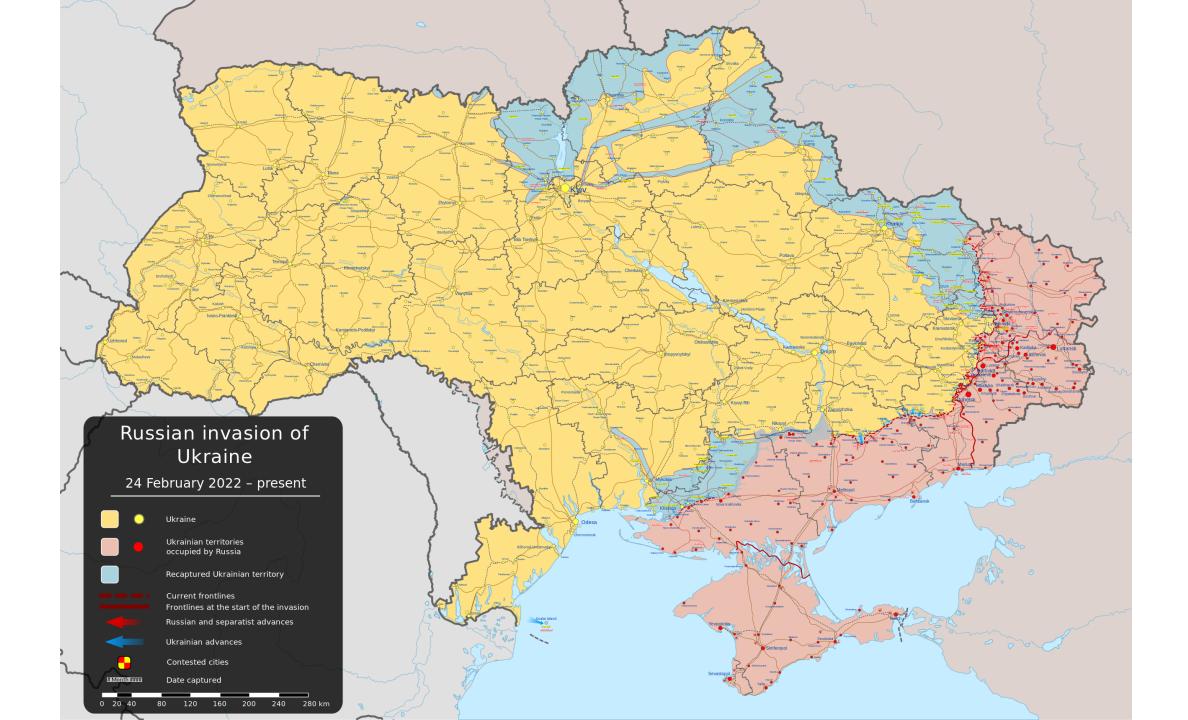
War-related challenges

Relocation of students, faculty members and staff:

- Distorted learning, research, administration
- Risk to coherence of academic communities (compounded by COVID)
- Risk of brain-drain

Financial issues (system level):

- State funding for HEI's reduced > 40% in 2023
- Exodus of int'l students
- Admission of Ukrainian students abroad increases stress to HEIs

Hosting Ukr. students on int'l mobility, but maintaining home HEI identity

Russian invasion of Ukraine

24 February 2022 – present

Ukraine

Ukrainian territories
occupied by Russia

Recaptured Ukrainian territory

Current frontlines
Frontlines at the start of the invasion

Russian and separatist advances

Ukrainian advances

Contested cities

Date captured

Month

0 20 40   80   120   160   200   240   280 km

Looking into the medium and longer term:

Joint degree programmes	Joint research and human capital	Institution-level development
• Countering risk of brain drain through COIL at BA level • Targeted funding for joint MA/PhD programmes (e.g. ErasmusMundus, PhD cotutelles)	• Infrastructure and capacity building (!) • Targeted funding for joint research between twinned HEIs • Non-resident (!) fellowships for Ukrainian researchers	• Expanded twinning with Ukrainian HEIs • HEI merger guidance • Support for comprehensive university autonomy • Access to international networks & models

Key Reforms since 2014:

New Law on Higher Education:

- Completion of Bologna
  - 3 cycles – Jnr BA + BA/MA/PhD + DSc
  - ECTS – mobility & joint programs

- University autonomy
  - Academic but not yet financial

- New QA system
  - National Quality Assurance Agency established
  - 4000+ accreditation experts trained
  - New Standards (420 individuals involved)

Law "On scientific and scientific-technological activities" (2015):

- National Science Council

- Participation in Horizon 2020

Law "On Education" (2017):

- "New Ukrainian School"

- Competence-based programming

- 12 year school trajectory

2019-2022

- NAQA prepared for entry into ENQA

- PhD reform – adoption of a new legal framework for dissertation defenses

Priority reform areas in Higher Education:

- Completion of "works in progress"
  - University Autonomy – financial autonomy and improved institutional governance

- 2024 MinEdu initiatives:
  - Reform of educational trajectory – shift to credit accounting (30-80 per year)
    - Reformed content for "regulated professions" - Medical doctors / lawyers / teachers
  - Secondary school completion testing – 3+1 subjects (3+2 in 2025 onward)
  - Expansion of "cooperative" education programs – study + work for credit
    - Particular emphasis on STEM and Computer Science – MA level
  - Transformation of funding mechanism – introduction of grants (co-financing)
  - Autonomy experiment – 2024 is a key year
  - Mergers – modernization of network, establishment of centers of excellence

European Commission Recommendations

Chapter 26 – Education and culture

The EU supports cooperation in education and culture through funding programmes and the coordination of Member State policy through the 'open method of coordination'. The EU and the Member States must also prevent discrimination and ensure quality education for children of migrant workers, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Ukraine has **some level of preparation** in the area of education and culture. The education system and youth policy are broadly aligned with EU objectives. Ukraine's cultural policy reflects the general priorities of the New European Agenda for Culture. Ukraine has a good level of cooperation with its European partners on sport. The country is broadly aligned with EU policy on training and qualifications. **Some progress** has been achieved in all these areas.

In the coming year, Ukraine should in particular:

→ develop a plan for a relevant statistical data collection, analysis and sharing mechanism for education and training;

→ start implementing a plan to optimise the network of education institutions;

→ adopt legislation to modernise and regulate professional education (vocational education and training).

MinEdu strategic priorities

- Autonomy – rewarding quality and performance (Top-20)
  - Pre-conditions for network modernization – division of HE/VET
  - Incentivizing reputation management – priority of capital improvements

- Student agency
  - Individual trajectories (30-80 ECTS per year + de-emphasize "specialities" in favor of educational programs, incl. interdisciplinary programs and expansion of electives)
  - Harmonizing "specialities" with ISCED
  - Introduction of grants in non-critical speciality areas with maintenance of full funding for others

- Quality of teaching and learning
  - Digitalization and centralized (rather than standardized) testing
  - NAQA entry into ENQA / National Qualifications System

- Academic community development
  - Training for university leaders / HEI management evaluations (EUA standards)
  - Incentivizing research / balance with teaching (bill 9600)

- War relief – shelters, reconstruction of damaged infrastructure.