



## WP2A4. Landscape analysis: Examples of citizen engagement initiatives for Ukraine organized by Baltic Universities

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Baltics4UA: Supporting Ukraine through citizen engagement at Baltic Universities

# Deliverable Factsheet

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Abstract:	The publication presents 6 case studies, including 5 world cafe discussions held on the premises of Baltics4UA partner universities and one webinar hosted by business partner Web2Learn. The cases explored the experiences and needs of Ukrainian citizens studying and working in the Baltics and cooperation between higher education institutions and businesses to tackle the Ukrainian crisis.
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## Consortium

The consortium governing the project is adequately representing a wide range of expertise, as 5 Higher Education Institutions (Tallinn University, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Kaunas University of Technology, University of Tartu, University

of Latvia) join hands with a web education specialist (Web2Learn). This mix of knowledge, skills, experiences and networks guarantees a layered approach toward a diverse range of stakeholders.

	Name	Short Name	Country
1	Tallinn University	TLU	Estonia
2	Lviv Polytechnic National University	LPNU	Ukraine
3	Web2Learn	W2L	Greece
4	Kaunas University of Technology	KTU	Lithuania
5	University of Tartu	UT	Estonia
6	University of Latvia	UL	Latvia



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## Revision History

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### Disclaimer:



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## List of Abbreviations

The following table presents the acronyms used in the deliverable in alphabetical order.

Abbreviations	Description
HEI	Higher education institution
IDP	Internally displaced person
NGO	Non-governmental organization



## Executive Summary

This publication aims to collect and describe ideas and examples of how universities, in cooperation with public and/or business organizations, can contribute helping Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens living in their country and those who have come to the Baltic region.



## 1 Introduction

The Baltics4UA project partners (University of Tallinn, University of Tartu (Estonia), University of Latvia (Latvia), Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania) and the Lviv National Polytechnic University (Ukraine)) aim to gain a deeper insight into the experiences of Ukrainian citizens when they arrive in the Baltics, the needs and experiences of the people affected by the war and the challenges and barriers they are facing. It is also important to assess how higher education institutions and their communities in the Baltic region are engaged in the management of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, what actions are already being implemented, and where further attention and ideas should be focused.

### 1.1. Scope

This publication contains case studies on citizen participation, which will be significant for assessing the impact of social action as a crisis management tool.

The publication is based on the results of workshops organized by the Baltics4UA partners on their premises.

### 1.2. Audience

The target audiences for this document are higher education institutions, business and non-governmental organisations, and the general public seeking to play an active role in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, looking for ways to engage the public and raise their awareness, and to build resilience to crises.

### 1.3. Structure

The document consists of an introduction, a methodology, an empirical part describing 6 case studies based on workshops organized by Baltics4UA partners. The paper concludes with a conclusion that highlights the key insights and ideas from the all 6 workshops and discusses the possibilities of implementing these ideas in the next stages of the project.





## 2 Methodology

The world cafe methodology was chosen to generate and harvest ideas from diverse groups of people, who are committed to the crisis in Ukraine. This method was chosen because it is simple, flexible, efficient, and suitable for large discussion groups.

World Cafe events modelled by integrating 7 world cafe principles. According to Brown (2010), 7 World Café design principles are the basis of the pattern embodied in the World Café process. Clarified context, a welcoming and supportive space, powerful and well thought-out questions, encouraging everyone to contribute their ideas and thoughts, connecting diverse perspectives, listening carefully, and sharing collective discoveries to all members are the heart of World Café.

According to the principles of World Café, the basic model was created with 5 components following:

1. Setting. The environment of the event should be welcoming and friendly. As an example, the real cafeteria environment could be replicated. As many tables as there were planned topics or questions, should be prepared.
2. Welcome and introduction. The host of the event should welcome all participants and introduce them to the topic and process of the event.
3. Small group rounds. The process begins with first round of three or more. Each round should take around 20–30 minutes, then 5 minutes for groups to move to another table. There is a recommendation to have a table host, who could moderate the table discussion.
4. Questions. A question at the beginning of each round, specially designed to fit the specific context of the World Café and the desired objective. The same questions can be used in more than one round, or they can build on each other to focus or direct the conversation.
5. Harvest. After all table rounds are finished, the individuals are invited to share their insights or other results of the discussions with the rest of the large group. These results are reflected visually in a variety of ways.

The World Cafe format allowed for a broad look at the problems of Ukrainian people settled in the Baltic States, as well as the challenges faced by people who have come to the Baltic region, as well as by those who have stayed in Ukraine and are suffering from the hardships of war. World cafe discussions were held at all Baltics4UA partner universities. The partners organized the world cafe discussions according to the world cafe methodology. Each partner was free to choose which aspects related to the assistance to Ukraine to explore. The following are insights, and ideas from each partner's world cafe.



### 3 World Café workshops

#### **Case 1: A workshop on lifelong learning of Ukrainian war refugees at Tallinn University, Estonia**

The first workshop was organized by Tallinn University on 23rd of March 2023. The discussion was moderated by Junior lecturer Lianne Teder, Assoc. Prof. Larissa Jõgi and Prof. Kai Pata from Tallinn University's Institute of Educational sciences and prof. Daniele Monticelli from Humanities institute.

33 participants attended from institutions and organizations related to education like Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, Estonian Refugee Council, Integration Foundation; Tallinn University; Tallinn University of Technology library, Tallinn Folk High School, Viimsi municipality government, teachers; students in educational sciences.

The workshop focused on the issues related to some aspects in education. The workshop aimed to map out the challenges and opportunities from a lifelong education perspective and to find solutions on how the university, social partners, and involved students, in cooperation with other groups in society, can better support different groups of war refugees in their education and learning paths in their new destination country. Participants were encouraged to share ideas how different institutions may cooperate with universities and find some possible solutions to tackle Ukraine humanitarian crises. Participants incorporated their personal and institutional experiences into their ideas for collaborative activities.

As the format of the workshop was based on the World Café method, there were prepared four tables with four topics: general and formal education, adult and lifelong education, non-formal education and youth work, and last, but not least, language studies.

Participants were divided into small groups and had 30 minutes for the discussion in each topic. Then 5 minutes were given to change the table, and another round, lasting 30 minutes, started until all participants visited all tables. In total, there were 4 rounds of discussions.

At the first table, participants discussed the main challenges related to formal education. The language barrier was mentioned as one of the key challenges. Estonian kindergartens do not allow children to speak their mother tongue, and schools teach subjects in Estonian or translate them into Russian.

Another important aspect is that the Estonian education system is very different from the Ukrainian one, which makes it a challenge to integrate Ukrainian pupils into Estonian schools. The panellists shared the observation that Ukrainians often drop out of compulsory education and opt for e-learning options. Ukrainians lack information about education and further learning opportunities, which leads to low motivation to develop personal and professional career plans.

In the context of formal education, social problems such as parental disapproval, loneliness or the desire to return to Ukraine are demotivating Ukrainians to integrate into the Estonian education system.



However, good examples were also shared. Ukrainian young people tend to have a high level of education, so they adapt quite smoothly to Estonian education. To reduce the language barrier, Estonian universities offer adaptation years for language studies, organise language cafés for Ukrainians to learn Estonian, and provide mentoring and support activities for Ukrainians.

Discussion participants suggested that formal education institutions and their members could support Ukraine by organising courses for parents on preparing their child for a career and further education, preparing information on study opportunities in a format that is convenient for Ukrainians and disseminating it in the most accessible ways. Higher education institutions can also initiate research activities, collect and analyse statistical data on the needs and expectations of Ukrainians and share the results with stakeholders.

On the second topic participants highlighted some challenges in adult learning section such as differences between Estonia and Ukraine in culture, information flow, technological development, requirements, and standards in different field including higher education. The other problem is lack of human resources in teaching section: there are not enough teachers for teaching various disciplines, moreover, there is no mechanism created, how to ensure education for those who stay in Ukraine. However, participants named good examples in adult teaching and lifelong education. Estonian Ministry of Education and Research have organized training courses for Ukraine people to become educators at youth summer camps; also offered support to youth camps to engage Ukraine children. Additionally, the workshop highlighted some good examples of Ukrainians' integration and socialization at schools in Estonia. For instance, it showcased the opportunities provided to them in labour market and also mentioned a book fair organized to support Ukraine.

HEIs can offer special support for Ukraine students (scholarship, hot line, information minutes, vocabulary), support general integration and raise general awareness both ways for and about Ukraine (events, community support, visibility).

In the section of non-formal education and youth work, participants mentioned that the main challenges in non-formal education field include adaptation, socialization, switching into Estonian language or using Russian language in Estonia, low motivation, lack of feedback, influence of parents. Additionally, negative prejudices about youth centres cause low motivation for Ukrainians to use youth centres' services.

Some good examples were highlighted in this section. To increase youth participation, some activities are done already, like youth projects, daily camps. Also, applying attractive methods, like design thinking, gamification in educational activities dedicated to young people were met positively.

HEIs in this section could pay attention to organizing non-formal education courses for young people in a supportive manner (e.g., using innovative and attractive methods, gamification). Universities together with partners could organise practical non-formal workshops for young people (involving charity, family-studies, language camps and coffees, "language friends").

To integrate Ukrainian children and young people into different educational institutions the idea was suggested to involve mentors – cultural mediators who could help Ukrainian youth to understand the culture and discover the possibilities of participation in Estonian society better.



Language is a crucial element for successful integration into a country's education system and labour market. Estonian is the official language in Estonia, but schools also teach English and Russian.

Language courses are offered to Ukrainians who have come to Estonia. However, participants noticed some issues and challenges for learning language, and these could be grouped into following categories:

- social issues like language courses take place too far from home, the family's sceptical attitude towards the need to learn the language and these leads to low participation rates in language courses,
- personal attitude and motivation issues, e.g., the benefit of learning language for Ukrainians is not emphasized, lack of information about language courses, too difficult to study, language courses are developed without taking into account the needs and preferences of Ukrainians, lack of time to study, fear that the cost of the course is high,
- educational / organizational issues, e.g., too heavy workload for teachers, lack of educators, Estonian schools are not ready for teaching multicultural class.

Participants discussing language topics shared some examples about language courses supported by employers or Unemployment Insurance Fund, that are free of charge for Ukrainians. Furthermore, organizations provide childcare services while their parents attend language courses or participate remotely. Teaching language is integrated in some hobby classes, during summer camps. *Estonian language friend's program* is launched (<https://integratsioon.ee/en/language-friends-program>). This programme was launched in 2020 by the Integration Foundation. The Language Friends Program gives people an opportunity to practise their Estonian with volunteer Estonian language mentors via e-channels or phone. Some Ukrainians are very motivated to know the Estonian language better, so they learn in everyday activities, with coworkers and friends.

In this field, universities could become a supportive space for organizing events to promote the benefits of learning Estonian. HEIs could integrate language studies into curricula (professional and combined language courses, special language adaptational year, combining practice and in service training with teaching and offering teachers replacement at schools, in teachers' training curricula could be included in a special course about teaching multicultural classes).

On panellists' opinion universities could initiate research and developmental studies including Ukraine people and employers wishes and expectations and help to renew methodologies for teaching language.

To summarize the workshop, the main obstacle in Estonian educational system for Ukrainians is the transition of Ukrainian children from primary to secondary education. The other insight was made that career education in educational institutions must be made more accessible so Ukrainian children can find learning and career opportunities. In this case, more people's advisory support is needed to help Ukrainian children find what they need from digital information and to make the right choice of learning options in vocational training institutions and gymnasiums. The Tallinn People's University has proposed as one of its lifelong learning opportunities the possibility of providing supportive training to pupils for their integration into society. An example would be training for parents to understand Estonian study and career opportunities better.



Five ideas were selected by participants after the discussion:

- The bank of methods to share experiences and exchange good practices between youth workers all around Estonia. The idea bank could be made from intercultural non-formal education practices with youth work students in the LIFE Problem Based Learning course at Tallinn University.
- Students run training courses in the folk academy in the frame of the in-service training.
- The series of gaming nights to support integration and socialization at university may go wider.
- Trained support person for refugees together with Integration Foundation, Refugee Council, and non-formal educational institutions.
- Support the government to create a vision and policy for supporting Ukraine refugees.

The need for a collaborative institution was also raised, where different parties from the public sector, universities and non-profit organisations, and organisations representing Ukrainian communities would come to a common table to work on Ukrainian lifelong learning opportunities in Estonia.

## Case 2: World Café in Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine

The workshop organized by Baltics4UA partner Lviv Polytechnic National University (LPNU) took place at the LPNU premises on 30th of March 2023. 30 participants, including student volunteers, internally displaced persons and university representatives attended the workshop.

LPNU during this workshop was focusing on clarifying the role of the university, students and the academic community in overcoming the humanitarian crisis. The workshop was organized using World Cafe method. Participants were divided into five groups, to discuss five different topics in turn. Topics were prepared to answer more deeply to the main goal of the event and were represented on five tables by hosting person.

Participants of the discussion in the section about the role of students in crisis response emphasised the features students have mostly, and how these features could help in the active crisis. In the face of war adaptability, quick response, free mind, risk taking, healthy egoism and resilience are quite important. Also, when working with refugees and IDPs, it is important to turn off empathy and be cool, because "It is not possible to help everyone 100%, if you try so, you may lose your resources quickly". While volunteering during the Russian-Ukrainian war, it is crucial to set a high level of organization, mobility and awareness. Therefore, communication links should be established with high quality for prompt information and appropriate use of human, material resources and time. The best way to engage students into volunteering is personal communication, showing positive results, and promoting volunteer actions. Recognition and social support of volunteers is quite an important factor for engagement - to make them known, heard and recognized for their work.

However, participants agreed that high expectations should not be set for any volunteer work. It is better to set small, clear, and achievable goals, so the result would be visible quickly. That would be motivating factor to engage students more. Also, there was a suggestion to listen to young and open-minded people, as they can bring some brilliant ideas.



Participants shared their insights about psychological state of majority of Ukrainians, as they have been experiencing various kinds of extreme fear due to constant air raids and shelling, high levels of anxiety because of the power cuts, heating problems in winter, water and gas cuts, the economic crisis resulting from inflation in Ukraine of more than 40%, and the loss of many jobs, among other challenges. Ukrainian citizens have been under tremendous stress, with sudden changes in their normal way of life, leaving their homes, friends, jobs, housing, and (often unskilled) work. For the first year or two, refugees will always face the dilemma of returning or never returning to Ukraine. The problem of choice does not allow them to think in one direction. Refugees often consider returning to their homes, so they do not seek to adapt to a new life in a new place.

Participants during discussion categorised refugees into four groups:

- Refugees who have been given a "chance" to start a better life anew in another country and who will do their best to adapt as soon as possible and stay in that country or in a new place in Ukraine (it is necessary to take into account the social status, profession that a person had in Ukraine, because if a person has been striving for a certain social status all his/her life, it can be difficult to experience its loss);
- refugees who are willing to return home as soon as possible and perceive this period they spend abroad as a "break", an opportunity to see the world, learn languages, and "think about life", because they do not want to start working at a lower level than they were in Ukraine.
- people who are able to adapt well in critical situations and overcome difficulties in life. These people are prepared themselves to set lower standards to their career in a new place (even working unqualified jobs if it is necessary) to get in action quickly. They do not let themselves to fall into depression.
- people who are psychologically broken and are not motivated to do anything, have lost their belief for a better future.

Given that each refugee has a different story to tell, it is impossible to formulate a single approach to addressing the psychological problems of refugees. It is important to understand the motivations of refugees and their plans.

It is also essential to create refugee centres that combine social, psychological, and legal assistance. The creation of such centres will help bring together people who have experienced a common 'grief'. These centres should include a mutual support group, which can be of great assistance in organising and navigating through life.

Participants of the discussion in this section have emphasised the importance of finding a way to combine studying and volunteering, because volunteering has become an important part of their lives and they would like to devote a lot of time to it. There was also the need to research the phenomenon of volunteering, the volunteers themselves, their motives for volunteering, and the psychological and legal aspects of assisting. Volunteering is an excellent way to gain experience and develop professional skills. Refugees and IDPs should connect in communities, with activists involved to unite people, organize joint events, help, and support each other.





The exhaustion and tiredness of university teachers and volunteers during the war in Ukraine is extremely high. For this reason, participants suggest establishing positions of psychologist, social worker, and lawyer at the University to structure the works on a permanent basis.

Talking about the university as a tool for engaging the public in active action, discussion members agreed that universities take an active position in civic initiatives both in peacetime and in times of crisis. Students are actively involved in the creation and development of the state, attracting active citizens to take part in various initiatives. Effective engagement into social activities for students could be achieved through the personal example of university academic staff. Also, it is crucial to communicate and disseminate information about activities the university community initiates to tackle war related problems. Attractive and accessible information could attract for example IDPs' families to participate in events and spread the message further outside university. Constant communication with specific communities will allow for targeted assistance.

Universities can become an educational platform for preparing internally displaced students for external independent testing using the material, virtual and intellectual resources of the university. Development of an information resource on the educational needs of IDPs and volunteers, like the *Zhuravli* platform (<https://juravli.help/ui/home>), will allow moving by specific directions and attracting specific resources.

To solve problem of psychological exhaustion and tiredness of those, who are directly involved in the work with IDPs, it is necessary to create a support and motivation system for volunteers and active teachers.

In the section about the role of research many ideas for research topics were given. There are many opportunities for the University's researchers to get involved in solving the problems of war-torn Ukraine through science. The panellists stressed the relevance of research in various disciplines, such as research on water and soil pollution, flora and fauna restoration, sociological research on people's homes, education, and public health. Given the unfavourable conditions for research, appropriate research methods, such as social network surveys, should be rethought and selected.

The panellists say that most IDPs are quite passive, so it is important to activate them by inviting them to relevant events, encouraging them to act, and highlighting the meaning and benefits of these activities. Students could be involved in visiting rural schools with IDPs and implementing relevant projects.

The panellists in this section stressed the importance of objectively reflecting the history of Ukraine and Russia in school education programs. It was suggested that history should be rewritten to show the objective pictures of Russia and Ukraine. It is advisable to create new war museums with the involvement of students, in schools (in the hinterland, in rural areas). Universities can play an expert role in attracting investment, organizing grants for technical support for children distance education (for example, ensure laptops).

As a higher education organisation, the University can actively contribute to initiating and implementing changes in the education system, from the development of teaching materials for students to education policy. Education is one of the most important areas, and it is therefore necessary to adapt as quickly as possible to the changed circumstances and to consider the



needs of internally displaced persons and other people affected by the war. Attention could be focused on the digitisation of educational resources, including open online courses. Moreover, university has a potential to become a leader of social action movements and a consolidator of mass claims to bring the aggressor country to its responsibility. The university can provide the necessary organisational, methodological and scientific support to such social movements. This would help to achieve mass involvement and (ultimately) justice.

Volunteering is a driving force in overcoming crises such as the one Ukraine is currently experiencing. It not only mobilises help for individuals and families in need, but also brings members of the university community together and strengthens the sense of unity. The university is an organisation that brings together representatives of different communities, which provides an opportunity to better understand and address the needs of different groups of IDPs. The panellists emphasised that it is crucial to initiate changes in educational policies to recognize volunteering as non-formal education at the state level and the University could be the one to initiate those changes.

The consensus among the panellists is that what is needed is not abstract inputs, but clear and achievable goals. One of the examples could be an idea to create centres for assistance to war victims in every town of Ukraine. According to this, it is necessary to stimulate the work of volunteers at the social level, to provide them with psychological and legal assistance.

Volunteering gives impetus to the formation of a new area of social work. And the University can initiate changes in educational policies to recognize volunteering as non-formal education at the state level.

Universities face the primary needs of refugees and IDPs, namely the need for accommodation (academic buildings, library, university dormitories have served and continue to serve as a place of residence for refugees) and food (student volunteer centres provide necessary food). The University can play an active role in the development of universal rules for the admission of refugees and IDPs.

As an educational platform, University can provide training for university staff and students who work directly with IDPs, be a base for retraining IDPs and refugees in professions that are relevant to the regions where IDPs live, and develop basic mechanisms for employment of refugees and IDPs.

### **Case 3: World Café in the University of Tartu, Estonia**

University of Tartu (UT) team organized a workshop on 3rd of April 2023 at Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu. 31 participant including UT students, staff from the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, Center for Applied Social Sciences (CASS), Center of IT Impact Studies (CITIS), Office of Academic Affairs, and Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, as well as 2 representatives (co-founders) of NGO Ukraine Maja attended to the event.

The workshop's main aim was to initiate a dialogue between university staff and students on the university's approach towards the Ukrainian community, which has arrived in Estonia since Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine in February 2022. The aim was to assess the





successes of the University's actions, to discuss the challenges encountered and to identify areas for future improvement.

The event started with a panel discussion with 4 UT experts who were practically involved in dealing with the UT's response to the crisis in various aspects. Panellists provided background information on various aspects of the crisis response, including research, psychological and legal support, and role of students and the public.

All participants of the event were divided into 4 groups, led by designated table hosts. Four tables covered a topic in each:

- The Role of Students in Responses to Crises
- University as a psychological and legal support hub
- University empowering the general public to take action
- The Role of Research

Participants were divided into the small groups and shared their thoughts on different aspects of UT's involvement in supporting the Ukrainian community in Tartu.

In the first topic participants were discussing about UT experiences involving Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian students into crisis response. Some good examples were mentioned. First, a special rectorate committee with Ukrainian staff and students was established to understand needs and coordinate UT's response to the crisis. The committee is having regular meetings to consult with the Ukrainian university community and to be informed about the latest developments. Moreover, University management sent a message of reassurance to Russian staff and students acknowledging that they were not to blame and inviting them to become involved in various UT initiatives. Ukrainian doctoral students organized some seminars about Ukrainian language and culture for University students and opened a new beginners' Ukrainian language course (100 persons registered for Estonian language course and 70 people registered for English course). Volunteers from the Institute of Linguistics were gathered to help Ukrainian schoolchildren in Estonian schools. Students organised workshops to train teaching assistants in topics related to pedagogy, psychology, and Ukrainian culture (e.g., basic phrases).

The main challenges in this section mentioned are about newly arrived Ukrainian students struggling to find their way in the ongoing study process. Also, there is a risk to experience "war fatigue", so it is crucial to keep society's attention on.

The ideas on how to involve more students in crisis response were to establish a centralised hub for better communication between students in need and volunteers. Also, Ukrainian students studying in regions should get more attention. The idea about integrating students in the region into wider UT community and finding ways to interact effectively was suggested by participants.

On the second topic participants were focusing on psychological and legal support for Ukrainians at University. University of Tartu established a special committee consisting of Ukrainian staff and students to identify the most pressing needs and to ensure synergy and mediation between the university and Ukrainian community in the face of crisis. Committee is focusing on several most important areas related to academic affairs (e.g., organising tuition fee



waivers and cost of living scholarships for Ukrainian students), providing psychological support in most accessible ways (e.g., online; after working hours), ensuring information about services being disseminated properly and effectively and encouraging departments of University to be more flexible and empathetic in their support of Ukrainian staff (e.g., offer more breaks, give more time to carry out work tasks).

In this section, participants gave some ideas for university to address psychological and legal needs of Ukrainian students and staff. There is currently an international staff support club "Live Positive" at University of Tartu. A similar club could be set up for Ukrainian staff and students to create a support space outside of formal psychological counselling. It was felt that such an informal support space is currently lacking in university. Psychological counselling services should be promoted or communicated in a more effective way, especially, how to access the services. More help with finding work/part time jobs is needed (e.g., creating a database with jobs and internship opportunities), assistance with preparing CVs and resumes for applying for the job is needed. Some training on teaching sensitive issues in classroom for UT staff should be worthy.

In the topic about university and society cooperation opportunities to take action, the panellists agreed that the university is an organisation that can empower society to mobilise and take action in the face of a crisis. And first, it could be communication and raising awareness about the crisis and response to it. University of Tartu Centre for Eurasian and Russian Studies (CEURUS) is making podcast interviews with Ukrainian experts and activists continuously. Moreover, University of Tartu staff and students are actively publishing commentaries and public opinion pieces in national Estonian daily newspaper Postimees. University has already organized several roundtables and panel discussions to talk about the war, also actively using social media channels to keep this topic about war active.

University of Tartu is cooperating with NGOs and other organizations that are focusing on supporting actions to Ukraine and Ukrainian community in Tartu/Estonia. University is providing free office premises for Ukrainian cultural NGO "Ukraina Maja" (Ukrainian House), collaborating with NGO "Vaba Ukraina" ("Free Ukraine"), with NGO "Aitan Kaitsta" to make camouflage nets at UT premises. University initiates programme for Ukrainian start-ups and closely cooperates with Tartu City Welcome Centre, to help integrate recently arrived Ukrainians.

To strengthen synergy between the university and civil society, participants suggested to involve citizens in research by initiating citizen science projects related to Ukraine, and invite more NGOs to host activities and events supporting Ukraine. It was suggested also that University should organize more events to involve the public, bridging academic and public opinion, and think about developing more fundraising opportunities.

In the last topic, participants were focusing on research area. In the field of social sciences, Center for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) at University of Tartu highlighted how government institutions in Estonia were facing the influx of tens of thousands of foreigners/refugees. CASS helped address this need by starting an applied social science research and conducting surveys and interviews with 10,000 Ukrainian refugees about their expectations, needs, satisfaction, job opportunities, etc. in cooperation with Estonian ministries and the University of Turku in Finland. CASS also employed 1 Ukrainian team member to assist with this research. In the area of



political science, the research on disinformation and Russian propaganda and Estonian elections was done. Also, researchers conducted some research projects on cyber security, digital warfare. Ukrainian researchers in Estonia are supported by ETAG, that is giving extra funds for including Ukrainian researchers on Estonian Researcher Council Projects.

However, during discussion people expressed their opinions that more research topics could be relevant during war. Some ideas were given like anthropological studies about the behaviour of refugees, Economic studies of the contribution of refugees to the Estonian economy, sociological studies of reasons why refugees come to or stay in Estonia compared to other destinations, and why they choose to return. Research on the state and issues of Ukrainian children in Estonian schools could be initiated too. Language politics in Estonia, Ukrainian/Russian language – politization, effects for Ukrainian refugees could be also relevant and important topics to research.

Based on the discussions, three larger themes emerged regarding the role of universities in crisis response:

- Crisis response is most effective when it is quick and flexible. Support initiatives must respond to different crises, evaluate, and pivot to addressing changing realities. In UT's case, the special committee convened by the rectorate, involving Ukrainian staff and students, was vital for making quick and ad hoc decisions to coordinate the university's response to the crisis. It meant that some rules could be overlooked or bypassed to ensure that support could be provided quickly to those that needed it (e.g., tuition waivers, scholarship fund, extended application deadline). This was possible thanks to the strong support and close collaboration between the University of Tartu management and main decision-makers, Estonian government, and staff/student representatives, who were able to closely report on the immediate needs of the Ukrainian community.
- Empathy and compassion are crucial. This was reflected in the personalised approach of the UT support services. The International Office provided Ukrainian-language info seminars (online and in-person) to advise on study opportunities at UT and provided career advising in Ukrainian. They also waived some of the formal admission requirements on an individual basis, e.g., need to provide a notarised translation of documents, accepting scans rather than asking for original documents to be sent, and creating an online English test. A staff member from the Office of Academic also pointed out that it is important that we also continue to keep an eye on the large number of newly enrolled Ukrainian students at UT and monitor how they are doing over the whole duration of their studies.
- Hazard of war fatigue and normalising the situation. The discussions also highlighted how important it is to keep these support initiatives going more than one year after the start of the war. One of the biggest challenges raised was the danger of war fatigue and of normalising the situation. One Ukrainian participant referred to this as the "war-life balance", highlighting the importance that volunteers continue to support one another to keep energy up.



## Case 4: World Café at Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

Kaunas University of Technology organized a workshop on 6th of April 2023 at its premises. The aim of the event was to initiate a discussion between the University staff and students on how the University can help Ukrainians who have come to Lithuania as a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, as well as to discuss the steps to be taken in order to help the people who have stayed behind in Ukraine.

In the discussion, 31 participants took part, representing various groups within the University community: administrative staff, library staff, lecturers, researchers, representatives of student organizations, Ukrainian students studying, and researchers conducting research at the University.

The discussion, using a world café format, focused on 5 themes: educational, cultural, general needs (accommodation, financial, legal and psychological support) of Ukrainian war refugees, research support, support of the remaining Ukrainian population. The participants were divided into groups and had a chance to express their views on the diverse approaches in which the University supports or could support the Ukrainian community.

In educational topic, the financial aspect was dominating. Participants, especially students, expressed the need of financial support for Ukrainian students coming to study in Lithuanian universities. The expectations of students are to study free there, and Lithuanian universities meet this need by providing tuition free studies for Ukrainians for one year.

However, not only financial topic is important. Students emphasized the importance of mentorship, emotional and social support. Ukrainian people, who have left their home and came to Lithuania, feel isolated, so they are willing to have more Lithuanian friends, who could help to adapt in a new environment and be accepted into community.

The other issue students mentioned is language barrier. First, the lack of study modules provided in English at KTU. Teachers and Study department of KTU, could expand the number of modules in English to attract more foreign students. Also, students mentioned that learning Lithuanian would be a great opportunity to know Lithuanian culture and integrate. To this, special courses for Ukrainians would be valuable.

The other aspect the participants discussed is spending time after school. They have nothing to do after lectures or school. University could organize some activities after school for students and even children like sports, robotics or alike. Universities could cooperate with NGOs for this purpose as well.

Discussing the cultural needs of Ukrainian citizens, participants highlighted the importance of fostering Ukrainian culture and the need to present it to the members of the societies in which they settle. Participants identified several categories: culinary heritage and handcrafts, Ukrainian language, history and music. The idea of organising conversation clubs at the University where Ukrainians and Lithuanians could communicate and learn from each other in Lithuanian and Ukrainian was suggested. Another idea that could be implemented by the university community together with Ukrainians would be a series of seminars or lectures in English about Ukrainian history, culture, art and other topics related to Ukraine and its heritage.



Ukrainian students see the need to create a special online shop or platform to sell handmade products created by Ukrainian refugees, not only to showcase Ukraine's cultural heritage, but also to give people the opportunity to earn some money.

The University could accept valuable books and artworks for temporary storage and/or display on the premises of the University, thus protecting them from possible destruction in Ukraine.

Participants believe that one of the effective ways to introduce Ukrainian culture to the Lithuanian community is to organise events dedicated to Ukraine. This could range from a national day with national dishes in the student dormitory to a Ukrainian national week with a broad programme, which could include not only dishes and crafts, but also concerts and exhibitions. Not only the university community, but also Ukrainians from outside KTU could be invited to the events. And the funds from the sale of food and crafts could be used to support Ukraine.

In the section of general needs for Ukrainian refugees, participants shared their personal experiences of settling in Lithuania. The biggest challenges were too much information upon arrival, difficulties in understanding the procedure for obtaining a residence permit, lack of information in Ukrainian or Russian. Ukrainians were happy to be able to learn Lithuanian for free at A1 level.

Ukrainian students said that there are a lot of information systems at KTU, so it is complicated to remember all of them. Information about university systems could be explained or presented in video in Ukrainian language, as Ukrainian students felt lost due to the large number of information systems.

KTU assigns a mentor to each visiting student, which is a very welcome initiative as not all Lithuanian universities provide such support. It would be useful to have a group and/or individual counselling session with a psychologist (this idea was mentioned by all the groups) in Ukrainian or Russian, as now there is only a possibility to communicate with a psychologist in English. Moreover, a proposal was made to organise meetings for Ukrainian students at the university.

Students report that the process of obtaining a residence permit in Lithuania is quite complicated. To make it easier to obtain a residence permit after spending one year in Lithuania. More information should be available in Russian and Ukrainian at the Migration Department.

When talking about accommodation, Ukrainian students explained that dormitory accommodation was free of charge only upon arrival at university, but now after a year it is possible to apply for a 40% or more discount on dormitory accommodation.

Participants suggested that a unified system could be set up where Lithuanians could offer their home or a room to host Ukrainians. However, such platform is already established. The Charity organization "Stiprūs kartu" (website address <https://stipruskartu.lt/>) has already created the platform where Lithuanians can offer their rooms, flats or houses for Ukrainian people all around Lithuania.

Talking about financial support, the participants expressed the idea that scholarships could be awarded based on the students' academic performance. They noted that it has been more than



a year since some students arrived, and there is a disconnect between highly motivated students and those who are completely unmotivated. Additionally, they suggested providing discounts on dormitory living could also be made based on academic performance.

The questions discussed in the fourth section were about university opportunities to support Ukrainian researchers, and research topics that could be relevant and useful in overcoming the crisis caused by the Ukrainian war.

Studies and research in Ukraine are disrupted, many students/teachers/researchers have left Ukraine. Participants commented on the lack of coherent and coordinated information for researchers. It would be useful to set up a special platform to provide information inviting researchers to participate in research projects and to promote the availability of grants.

The panellists believe that science has a lot of potential to address the problems caused by war. Topics related to Ukraine's economic transformation and joint initiatives with business were proposed. The university should focus more on the development of defence technologies that could be used for security and focus on preventing propaganda.

Not only Ukrainian researchers can be involved in research. Students should be engaged too. Involving students in research at all levels of study, starting from undergraduate studies, giving them opportunity to work in laboratories would develop their competences in research methodology, academic writing skills. Ukrainian researchers should be given the opportunity to attend conferences, make presentations and produce publications.

The last topic was focused on the needs of Ukrainians who remain in Ukraine. Ukraine has around 300 universities, some of which have been destroyed. During lectures, air raid alerts often cause people to stop activities and run for cover. The country's infrastructure is ruined, electricity is intermittent and internet access is not always available. Participants noted that colleagues remaining in Ukraine lack the necessary equipment for study and research and have limited access to electronic sources of information. The university community could offer distance learning courses in English, but the problem is that the Lithuanian and Ukrainian education systems are very different.

The university could make use of its contacts, e.g., the KTU Economics and business faculty has relations with Ukrainian researchers. All contacts, especially personal contacts, should be exploited and moral support should be given.

The most connecting activity would be getting involved in projects. Some kind of common platform or system should be set up where the activities and projects of both parties can be accessed. The projects should be carried out online since the internet is currently the primary means of communication for Ukrainians staying in their country.

Summarizing the event, participants of the workshop discussed not only educational issues, but also the University's contribution to the preservation and promotion of Ukrainian culture. It also touched upon general issues of support to the Ukrainian community, discussing practical actions, what the University community is doing and/or can do to improve the lives and livelihoods of Ukrainians, and what initiatives the University could provide for the basic needs of Ukrainian people. The discussion highlighted the need for psychological support and legal aid for the Ukrainian people.





It also included questions about the involvement of Ukrainian scientists in research at the University, assistance to Ukrainian scientists conducting research in Lithuania or their possibilities to contribute to joint research through the creation of virtual research networks. Opportunities to initiate and carry out research aimed at rebuilding the Ukrainian economy and helping the population return to normal life were discussed.

Involving a wide range of stakeholders with different backgrounds and perspectives, the discussions helped to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the problems faced by the Ukrainian community in Lithuania.

### **Case 5: Experience of the University of Latvia in crisis response and support of Ukrainian community, Latvia**

The World café workshop in the University of Latvia (UL) took place at its premises on 19th of May 2023. 30 people attended the event, including 25 students, 4 lecturers and 1 student council representative.

The aim of the event was to find out how education institutions are empowering students and citizens for social action during crises, while also exploring the good practices implemented by the University of Latvia in crisis response. Additionally, the discussion sought to share the valuable research experience from Ukraine in Riga, providing participants with insights and lessons learned for enhancing crisis management strategies in educational settings. The event was held as an informal activity promoting knowledge exchange, collaboration, and the dissemination of best practices in empowering students and citizens for social action during crises.

The workshop was well attended by Ukrainian scholars and students from the University of Latvia, who provided valuable insights on how to strengthen support mechanisms for the Ukrainian community.

Four topics were given on World Café tables during the event. Groups discussed the following questions:

1. What type of research initiatives the university has taken since the start of the war to highlight its impact on Ukrainian community living in Latvia?
2. What are the UL's existing ties with and support to civil society organizations, focusing on supporting actions to Ukraine and Ukrainian community in Riga/Latvia?
3. What were the most important (in your opinion) crisis response initiatives undertaken by UL?
4. How did UL involve Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian students and staff in crisis response?

During the event, participants learned about university research on the impact of the Ukrainian war on Ukrainians living in Latvia. The main topic of discussion was the research project "The War in Ukraine – Measuring Measures for Neighbouring Countries", which is currently being prepared at the University of Latvia. It is worth noting that students actively participated in this research initiative. In addition, students appreciated the surveys carried out by University departments, such as the Students' Representative Office, to find out the sentiments of Ukrainian students in Latvia. Participants also expressed their understanding of future research



aimed at determining Ukrainians' willingness to stay in Latvia after the war. Although not in universities, another group highlighted two relevant studies: 'Latvian society-state relations in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war' and 'Public attitudes towards the war in Ukraine'. In terms of further areas of research in the context of the war in Ukraine, the students suggested some valuable ideas. They stressed the need for research on the integration of Ukrainians into Latvian society, the quality of the assistance provided in Ukrainian refugee centres and the reception possibilities of Latvian refugees.

In order to maintain public interest and avoid desensitisation, it was recommended that NABA radio should include a weekly report on the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine. This would include experts and Ukrainian students, thus ensuring a comprehensive approach to the topic.

In order to promote cultural exchanges, it was suggested to organise more events where Latvians would be introduced to Ukrainian culture and vice versa. In addition, Radio NABA could play Ukrainian music more often, thus promoting cultural awareness on air.

Recognising the challenges Ukrainian students face in terms of isolation, it was suggested to integrate networking events into the learning process. These events would be compulsory, provide support to Ukrainian students and help them cope with feelings of isolation.

As a recommendation for the future, it was suggested that a mentoring programme be set up where each Ukrainian student would have a dedicated contact person or confidant. This programme would provide individual support and advice, help smooth the transition to a new school and improve the overall experience of Ukrainian students at university.

## Case 6: Webinar on business and academic resilience to support the Ukrainian crisis response in the Baltics

Baltics4UA's Greek partner Web2Learn 2023 organized a webinar on 11 April 2023 with five guest speakers. The speakers represent business or non-governmental organizations having experience in working together with universities to support Ukraine in the humanitarian crisis. There were 51 participants from all the Baltics region in this webinar.

The speakers shared their experiences of cooperation with higher education institutions, discussed opportunities for business enterprises to get involved in activities and initiatives with universities, and explored the potential challenges and benefits of cooperation with universities. Mārcis Miķelsons-Germs, Head of User Experience Design at digital design agency Cube, talked about the role of *Stopify*, a mental health support and crisis intervention organisation, in supporting academic resilience in response to the Ukraine crisis in the Baltic States.

CEO & Co-Founder at *Choizy* Oleksandr Pavlenko, shared his experience of interaction with a local school and plans to develop partnership with other educational institutions in the Baltic and Eastern Europe.

Mantas Našlėnas, International Energy Cluster Coordinator, CEO "Fidum", Ltd., presented the project to support Ukraine in reconstructing its energy infrastructure. This project is developed together with experts from Kaunas University of Technology.

Ganna Tron, Senior Specialist at the International Cooperation Department, Marketing Unit, and *Unibbudy* Platform Coordinator at Vytautas Magnus University, shared the efforts at Vytautas





Magnus University to support Ukrainian refugees in the Baltics through academic resilience and the role of business sector in this crisis response.

The last presentation came from Kadri Tiisvelt and was presented by Kateryna Boichenko, COO and Member of the Board at *Garage48* about the initiatives and support provided to Ukrainian refugees. Some examples could be entrepreneurship programs for existing and new women businesses in Ukraine, hackathons to rebuild Ukraine and more.

The webinar was successful in achieving its overall goal of helping participants reconsider their own work and vision for promoting academic resilience in response to the Ukrainian crisis in the Baltic region.



## 4 Conclusion

Universities play an important role in building societal resilience to crises. Summarizing all 6 cases, it can be noted that the HEIs community, students, teachers and researchers, have been actively involved in supporting Ukrainian citizens arriving in the country, helping them to integrate into their new environment and creating the best possible conditions for them to continue their studies.

The idea of volunteering was promoted in almost all workshops, not only by inviting the university community to volunteer, but also by disseminating and promoting this form of social activity in society. It was suggested that volunteering as non-formal education could be developed by academic institutions.

Ensuring timely and easily accessible psychological support for Ukrainian refugees and survivors is vital. In the face of war, it is easy for people to lose their motivation to act and achieve their goals, and it is important to support, inspire and motivate them morally and emotionally.

Mentoring is quite an effective way to help Ukrainian nationals arriving in the Baltic States. This idea was emphasised by Estonian Universities, as they represented some good examples from their practise. Universities should consider setting up or developing a mentoring programme so that each Ukrainian student has a dedicated contact person or confidant to whom they can turn if they have any questions.

The common finding across all 6 events was that it is important not only to actively involve the University community, but also to develop cooperation with the business sector, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to achieve better results in strengthening resilience to the humanitarian crisis.

Finally, it is crucial not to stop talking about war, not to fall into "war fatigue", by stimulating the empathy and compassion in the academic community and society.. Even small but targeted actions help to build resilience to crises.

All five World Café events organised by the partner universities, together with the webinar from Web2Learn, succeeded in achieving the common goal of helping participants to rethink their work and visions on how to foster academic resilience in response to the Ukraine crisis in the Baltic region.



## Reference 1

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