



RIFF

Research
Infrastructures
for the Future
of Ukraine

Masaryk University to continue support for Ukraine through its Conference on Ukraine's Reconstruction in Research and Higher Education

Looking for ways to strengthen Ukraine's research and higher education sector in the post-war period will be the focus of the Conference on Ukraine's Reconstruction in Research and Higher Education, bringing together dozens of experts from across Europe and Ukraine on 17 September in Brno. Organised by Masaryk University, the event will provide a platform for researchers, policymakers and representatives of funding institutions to discuss concrete steps for developing an innovative environment. The conference will take place in Room 343 of the building on Komenský Square and will also be available online to registered participants.

This September's [Conference on Ukraine's Reconstruction in Research and Higher Education](#) is a prelude to the project to support scientific research infrastructures in Ukraine. Masaryk University won a competitive call from Horizon Europe for [Research Infrastructures for the Future of Ukraine: Roadmap for Sustained Growth and Recovery \(RIFF\)](#), a unique project which will run until 2028. This success has cemented Masaryk University's position as a leading supporter of Ukraine and established it as a European leader in coordinating research infrastructures. The project involves 14 partners from Europe and Ukraine, with Masaryk University acting as the coordinator.

"Masaryk University, in line with the values on which it was founded, has stood by the embattled Ukraine since the very first days of the Russian aggression, and our commitment to this support will continue. We have helped hundreds of students and dozens of academic and administrative staff to find refuge and employment in Brno. We have made our faculties, workplaces and study programmes available to them. We are now putting the same energy into cooperation that will help to renew and modernise the Ukrainian science, research and education sectors," said Petr Suchý, Masaryk University's Vice-Rector for Internationalisation and External Relations.

The conference organised by Masaryk University will bring together representatives of academic institutions and universities from Ukraine and the rest of Europe to share experiences, establish partnerships and explore ways to strengthen international cooperation for the benefit of Ukrainian science and research.

The all-day event will feature a series of lectures and panel discussions. "The morning session will provide a general overview of the current situation in research and higher education in Ukraine. This will be followed by the Voice of Ukraine block, during which representatives of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and the scientific community will summarise their perception of the situation as the main actors and their real needs. The afternoon session will feature presentations of various initiatives from different countries in the fields of research and higher education that are currently supporting Ukraine," said Ondřej Hradil, the head organiser of the conference from the MU Research & Development Office, describing the conference's programme.

Ukraine's research and innovation ecosystem has faced challenges since the collapse of the Soviet Union and has recently been significantly affected by the ongoing war with Russia. However, Ukraine's new status as an EU candidate country and the launch of accession talks in June 2024 have spurred renewed efforts to integrate more deeply into the European Research Area. "The RIFF project aims to bolster the Ukrainian research and innovation sector by creating a roadmap for Ukrainian research infrastructure. At the same time, we are implementing a training programme to enable the Ukrainian research and innovation community to design and operate research infrastructures efficiently. We will also promote the roadmap to national and international stakeholders as a strategic plan for the reconstruction and modernisation of Ukraine's research and innovation after the war," explained Ondřej Hradil, the lead coordinator of the RIFF project.

The participants include Ukrainian Ambassador to the Czech Republic Vasyl Zvarych; Vice Rector of Masaryk University Radim Polčák; and Václav Velčovský from the Czech Republic's Ministry of Education. Jan Mrkvička, Director of Relief and Development at People in Need, will also join the debate, as will representatives of Ukrainian institutions, including Grygorii Mozolevych from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and Nataliya Shakhovska, Rector of Lviv Polytechnic. The European Commission, Germany's DLR agency, France's CEFRES, the British Embassy in Kyiv, and other partners from Austria, Sweden, and Poland will present their strategies and projects.

Ukraine has shown extraordinary resilience in the face of continued Russian aggression over the last eleven years. Since open warfare began in 2022, the country has had to devote considerable attention and resources to defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity. These challenges have had a fundamental impact on the development of Ukraine's research and innovation ecosystem. "Unfortunately, we cannot know exactly when the war will end. However, life in Ukraine goes on, including in the areas of higher education and research. As EU countries, we share a common responsibility to support the renewal and development of Ukrainian research infrastructure and other areas of the scientific research environment," added Ondřej Hradil.

Masaryk University has supported Ukraine for a long time. Following the outbreak of war, it admitted almost 500 Ukrainian students through a special admissions procedure and employed over a hundred Ukrainian staff. The MU Language Centre's educators taught more than 50 language courses, the MUNI HELPS Volunteer Centre accepted over 1,000 volunteers ready and willing to help, and the MU fundraising campaign raised CZK 1.4 million. The university also offered the Ukrainian students and staff, as well as their families, accommodation in its dormitories, free interpreting services into Czech and psychological counselling via a crisis line. It also organised a material collection and a concert for Ukraine, as well as a number of other support events.

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RIFF project information

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Abstract

Research and innovation (R&I) in Ukraine has seen challenging times since the break-up of the Soviet Union, most recently facing major damage to R&I infrastructure due to the Russian aggression. However, as the country obtained EU candidate status and started the EU negotiations in July 2024, the ambition to promote its research system and ensure its integration into the European Research Area has received a new impetus.

The RIFF project will facilitate an upgrade of R&I system in Ukraine by offering a fresh and forward-looking perspective on the Ukrainian research infrastructures (RIs). RIFF will deliver “Roadmap for Recovery and Enhancement of RIs in Ukraine” using both (1) bottom-up approach with an open call for proposals, robust training, awareness raising and dissemination strategy towards potential applicants, rooted in a network of eight partners in Ukraine; and (2) top-down approach with a robust consultation process involving a broad range of stakeholders from the government, policymakers and the scientific community. It will reflect also the green and digital transition priorities. The roadmapping process will apply peer-review methodology established by ESFRI and engage panels of internationally renowned experts. RIFF activities will efficiently connect Ukrainian RIs to EU/ESFRI through the implementation team linked to major European RIs and a comprehensive strategy for enabling mobility and knowledge exchange between EU RIs and the Ukrainian scientific community, including training programme for Ukrainian RI managers, operators and policymakers. Finally, we will implement an ambitious promotion programme among national and international stakeholders.

The robust roadmapping approach of RIFF, assisted by leading international experts, will offer credible steps towards recovery and enhancement of RIs in Ukraine. The Roadmap will provide guidance for national funding of RIs, and will also be a trustworthy investment guideline to international donors.

Consortium

- **Masaryk University** (coordinator)
- Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron DESY
- European Future Innovation System Centre
- Gesis - Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften
- Instytut Molekularnoi Biologii i Genetyky na Ukrainy
- INESC TEC- Instituto de Engenharia de Sistemas e Computadores
- Kyiv Academic University
- National Science Center Kharkiv Institute of Physics and Technology
- Lviv Polytechnic National University
- National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine NAS of Ukraine
- National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy
- National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine
- Uniwersytet Jagielloński – SOLARIS National Synchrotron Radiation Centre
- Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca
- National Research Foundation of Ukraine