Engaging Ukrainian Diaspora and Internationalization of Ukrainian Science, Community of Interest

Key message of the CoI to the meeting of the High-level Steering Committee of the Coalition, that needs to reflect and hook political leadership for the activities in 2026-2027:

> *Must shortly invite concrete steps connecting strategic internalization of Ukraine (integration into the ERA, EHEA, etc) with obvious synergy of diaspora support and setting up of win-win schemes to counter disinformation using Ukraine's unique experience.*

The 1st Technical-level meeting of the International Coalition for Science, Research, and Innovation (hereinafter - the Coalition) has recognized that:

- Joint international research projects are essential, mobility schemes and twinning to retain staff, attract young researchers and stay integrated in European research and innovation networks;
- Thousands of Ukrainian researchers now work or study in EU countries, while many remain formally affiliated with Ukrainian institutions. Coalition members stressed that these links should be formalised into joint projects, shared access to data and infrastructures, hybrid fellowships, regular teaching/supervision roles and advisory positions, so mobility becomes brain circulation;
- International cooperation, links and networks between researchers in Ukraine, the international research and innovation community, and Ukrainian Science Diaspora should be strengthened to promote knowledge exchange, long-term cooperation, and sustained engagement. Bilateral and multilateral agreements should therefore be used more actively and effectively.

Analysis of the further survey by the Coalition Secretariat identified "Engaging Ukrainian Diaspora and Internationalisation of Ukrainian Science" as a Community of Interest with sufficient support to move forward. Furthermore, several Coalition members underlined that the scientific diaspora should be also used in strengthening Ukrainian science diplomacy and fighting russian disinformation.

Key Ukrainian stakeholders - Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and National Research Foundation of Ukraine has both stressed that focus of the support actions should be drawn on researchers staying in Ukraine and Ukrainian institutions, whereas the strengthening of scientific diaspora would be a derivative to this priority and is also highly valued by the national authorities.

The Ukrainian side has also underlined the key challenges that they observe, namely: limited international experience, insufficient level of English for networking, difficulties in identifying partners, psychological stress and demotivation caused by the war, as well as lack of research management capacities.

National attestation of the HEIs and Research organizations in Ukraine in 2026 has shown that more than 200 entities (as of December 2025) have no experience in Horizon Europe calls and therefore need special attention of the international partners as a short-term need.

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has suggested for mapping of possible connections between Ukrainian stakeholders, their potential partners and science diaspora, as well as for facilitation of online matching activities also to consider wider involvement in support activities:

- State Scientific and Technical Library of Ukraine (SSTL of Ukraine) and its database tool - Ukrainian Research Information System (URIS);
- Ukrainian Institute of Scientific and Technical Expertise and Information (UkrINTEI);
- Interactive tools of Ukrainian Science Diaspora.

The National Research Foundation of Ukraine has underlined its positive experience of joint and hop-on like calls to support internationalization and matching. Horizon Europe Office in Ukraine has also been identified as an effective partner to facilitate internationalization of Ukrainian stakeholders through stronger participation in the corresponding EU Framework Programme.

Ukrainian Science Diaspora has been well established and recognized by many Coalition members as well established network and a soft-stearing mechanism for corresponding scientific diaspora branches in partner countries. Analytical studies carried out by the team have already provided an Impact assessment of the Ukrainian science diaspora on the rebuilding of the research and higher education system of Ukraine[1] as well as an Assessment of expectations from Ukrainian stakeholders from diaspora engagement[2]. Results are indicated in findings where relevant.

The Alliance of German Science Organisations in 2024 has developed an Ukraine Action Plan[3] where chapter 9 “Ukrainian academic diaspora” contains

[1] Presentation of Studies of the Ukrainian Science Diaspora Initiative

[2] https://ukrdiaspora.nauka.gov.ua/static/documents/Analytical_Report_What_Scientists_in_Ukraine_Expect_from_Diaspora.pdf

[3] https://www.allianz-der-wissenschaftsorganisationen.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Press-Release-Ukraine-Action-Plan-and-URC-2024.pdf

some indicative approaches that have been elaborated with displaced scientists working in Germany and German-speaking countries, Czechia and Poland.

Taking into account the abovementioned, Community of Interest has established three pillars of actions, identified several engagement paths, elaborated key findings and suggested recommendations for future actions by the Coalition members.

[Suggested structure: **Pilar** -> Engagement -> Findings -> Recommendations]

Pillar I

Internationalization of Ukrainian science, research and innovation, using diaspora where appropriate

1) Increase of participation in Horizon Europe calls

Findings: Horizon Europe Framework Programme is the key instrument to engage numerous partners and pave the way for long term internationalization of organizations. As the key challenge in Ukraine lies with organizations having no experience in the programme so far, the need for the dedicated actions and mentoring is obvious. Limited international experience, insufficient level of English for networking and professional communication, difficulties in identifying partners, psychological stress and demotivation caused by the war are additional factors that tangle the process.

The Horizon Europe Office in Ukraine maintains a stakeholder database (5,000+ records) and offers partner search, early information on calls and tailored workshops, and is ready to help international partners connect with suitable Ukrainian organisations for Horizon Europe proposals. The NCP network is also established in Ukraine helping to maintain also geographically distributed network over the territory of the country.

Recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has identified a need for a simple guideline and presentation materials for Ukrainian stakeholders on what are the practical steps, tools and useful contacts for internationalization (including EU programs, national and multilateral grants, diaspora engagement, etc.)
2. Setup a project to help mapping and presenting UA entities that need mentoring and require assistance, that have not yet participated in Horizon Europe. URIS database, Ukrainian Science Diaspora can be used

for the mapping. The project may also include small training course for the preparation of Express of Interest papers that can also be later uploaded into the interactive map or shared with the Coalition Members in other formats;

3. Travel grants are not available in Ukraine. Having in mind logistical challenges, this leads to a very low presence of Ukrainian stakeholders (especially those not being part of consortia already) at international conferences, infodays and matchmaking events. The joint calls for travel grants can be considered. Thematic travel grants calls can be set up by partners to guarantee involvement of Ukrainian stakeholders in main national or EU R&I events.
4. Arrangement of study visits and systematic hybrid exchanges. Ukrainian stakeholders can be grouped by thematic or other criteria that correspond to partners' interest. Ukrainian science diaspora can be involved to be in charge of preparation on the host side also serve as a bridge and communicator to ease the stress of the first encounter;
5. Set up the continuous online instruments that help in identifying interested international partners for the upcoming calls. The Horizon Europe Office in Ukraine disseminates available information to all Ukrainian stakeholders via established communication means. Coalition members encouragements are needed to make the partner search more systematic;
6. Explore introduction of extra motivation instruments for involvement of Ukrainian stakeholders. Examples of Norway and Estonia may be used, where national consortium coordinators receive a small national top-up if the consortium includes at least one Ukrainian entity.
7. Partners and Ukrainian Science Diaspora and Coalition members are encouraged to become international reviewers and to spread the news of the need for international reviewers to assess Ukrainian projects for the calls of the NRFU and other competitive granting instruments in Ukraine. This would also allow to better understand the capacity and research potential of UA stakeholders that yet may not have been visible in the international calls and programmes.

2) Capacity building for research managers and grant/project support offices in HEIs and Research organizations in Ukraine

Findings: The total majority of Ukrainian HEIs and research organizations have not yet established grant/project support offices and research managers are rarely available. [update findings from Lviv forum 21 May]. The NCP network in Ukraine and the Horizon Europe Office in Ukraine have a limited ability to help individual research teams with application preparation and grant management. Grant writing camps provided by the EC and partners are not enough on the scale of Ukraine.

Recommendations:

1. Support the development of sustainable research management capacity in Ukraine, including the gradual establishment and strengthening of grant/project support offices within Ukrainian HEIs and research organizations through institutional partnerships, exchange of practices, and targeted capacity-building activities.
2. Develop and support practical training programmes for Ukrainian researchers, research managers, and administrative staff on grant writing, proposal preparation, project implementation, and grant management, including both online and onsite formats.
   Encourage international Coalition members to provide hands-on expertise through mentoring, coaching, peer-learning activities, and direct advisory support from experienced European research managers and grant professionals.
3. Strengthen coordination and outreach efforts led by Ukrainian Coalition members, including the MESU and the NRFU, to identify institutional needs, engage the research community, facilitate communication, and ensure broad participation in capacity-building initiatives.
4. Consider providing financial and organizational support for scalable and continuous support mechanisms that complement the work of the Ukrainian NCP network and the Horizon Europe Office in Ukraine, particularly in assisting individual research teams.
5. Promote long-term institutional cooperation between Ukrainian and European organizations aimed at supporting Ukraine's sustainable integration into the European Research Area through enhanced international collaboration and professional research support structures.

3) Involvement of Ukrainian institutions as full partners in national research and funding programmes implemented by the EU research and innovation funding agencies (Bilateral joint funding schemes)

Findings: Participants noted that many EU research and innovation funding agencies cannot currently fund Ukrainian institutions directly because of their

national regulations and called for legal/administrative solutions to enable their inclusion. At the same time, participants recalled that in a number of cases this obstacle has already been successfully overcome, in particular through international joint calls for proposals administered by the National Research Foundation of Ukraine in cooperation with international funding partners

Recommendations:

1. R&D funding agencies are invited to support Ukrainian researchers through donor-funded calls, joint calls or hop-on facility–type mechanisms. Both public and private funding organisations are encouraged to channel such support via the NRFU, which acts as a reliable partner and an effective national implementing instrument, operating in line with internationally recognised standards and best European practices. The NRFU has demonstrated a strong capacity and extensive experience in the design and implementation of competitive funding schemes, all of which are based on excellence-driven selection, transparent procedures and robust peer-review evaluation.

4) Enhancing diaspora involvement in the internalization of Ukrainian research community

Findings: The Ukrainian scientific diaspora remains an underutilized mechanism for strengthening international research cooperation and Horizon Europe participation. Only 26.5–34.8% of respondents reported involvement in joint grant proposal preparation, indicating limited engagement in international funding activities. Respondents identified language barriers, insufficient grant-writing capacity, weak institutional support, fragmented coordination and administrative burdens as key barriers. At the same time, universities increasingly view diaspora researchers as a strategic resource and demonstrate demand for more structured and institutionalized engagement mechanisms.

Recommendations:

1. Support diaspora-mediated mechanisms for Horizon Europe capacity building

   Target actors: Ukrainian Science Diaspora Network, Horizon Europe Office in Ukraine, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, universities and research institutions in Ukraine.

   Priority actions may include:

- supporting a **Ukrainian-speaking mentorship pool** within the diaspora network (researchers, PIs, project managers);
- facilitating thematic matchmaking and **"science speed-dating"** initiatives for building 1) consortia and 2) science area networks;
- supporting **Academic English and grant-writing** programmes;
- encouraging institutional support and incentive schemes (reduced teaching load, recognition, financial support).

Expected impact: strengthened proposal development capacities, improved institutional readiness, and enhanced integration into European research programs.

2. The UA side should provide diaspora with a clear priority for engagement. Promotion materials as well as overview of national stakeholders' landscape and contacts are needed;

3. Implement a pilot project to prepare a model for internationalization of Ukrainian HEI using its research diaspora links. Prepare a step-by-step guide for internationalization to be presented on off-line event in Ukraine and later copied for other HEIs.

4. Support flexible and project-based models of diaspora joint engagement (diaspora scientist+scientist in Ukraine)

   Target actors: Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, universities, research institutions, Ukrainian Science Diaspora Network, international partners and funding organizations.

   Stakeholders should support flexible and diversified pathways of engagement that move beyond permanent return models and facilitate gradual and circular forms of contribution. Priority actions may include:

   - promoting participation of diaspora researchers in joint projects, state programmes and recovery initiatives;
   - facilitating temporary research missions, visiting appointments and short-term mobility schemes;
   - supporting project-based collaboration and dual-affiliation arrangements;

   Expected impact: strengthened diaspora participation in recovery and reconstruction processes, reduced barriers to engagement and expanded opportunities for long-term scientific cooperation.

5. Partners are encouraged to use dedicated Erasmus+ instrument KA210 Small scale partnerships for support of Ukrainian research diaspora hosted by HEI.
6. Support [of the Ukrainian Science Diaspora] in setting up a regular (annual) online conference/forum to present diaspora and their capabilities to Ukrainian stakeholders. The event can also serve a platform to share best practices of diaspora involvement and identification of blocking factors.
7. Set up a series of projects with the involvement of Ukrainian science diaspora for mentoring and sharing best practices of European stakeholders in the Ukrainian language as a way to mitigate possible lack of language skills on the Ukrainian side. Mentoring could be built up into more systemic twinning schemes that would allow both entities to exchange regularly, address common challenges and build up common understanding of cooperation. Mentors may be also tasked to arrange online brokerage sessions in the host organization for Ukrainian organizations.
8. Organizing in coordination with diaspora UA Science promotion conferences and exhibitions in the host organization, regional development offices, etc;
9. Introducing obligatory benchmarks for UA diaspora support mechanisms in their host organization, that would require concrete actions for UA science, research and innovation internationalization as a KPI.

5) Dual affiliation to promote UA institutions engagement. Ministry of Education and science of Ukraine initiative for creation of Science Ambassadors for HEIs and Research organizations, among its relocated abroad researchers;

Findings: [extract the findings of the diaspora survey, details that prevent diaspora engagement were mentioned].

Recommendations:

1. Universities should be encouraged to integrate diaspora engagement into internationalization strategies through diaspora mapping, the introduction of **Scientific Ambassador** roles with dual affiliation, and participation in networking initiatives supporting long-term collaboration.

2. Hosting countries and entities are encouraged to acknowledge the Ambassador status and keep the person involved in all possible activities to support Ukraine, as well as involving the person in matchmaking, mentoring, etc. That would also make the role of Science Ambassador more responsible and meaningful for both sides.
3. Shall that be agreed individually with respect to GDPR and other privacy concerns, information about existent Ambassadors may be flagged on the URIS database, Ukrainian Science Diaspora and Horizon Europe Office in Ukraine online tools.

6) Using education as a first step: Erasmus mobility, joint master's degrees, remote or external PhDs – how to transform into a sustainable internalization model that would serve the entire ecosystem.

Findings:

Recommendations:

1. Partners are encouraged to use dedicated Erasmus+ KA220 grants for Ukraine - Cooperation Partnerships designed to support Ukrainian educational, training, and youth organizations affected by the war. These projects enable international consortiums to develop innovative practices, integrate displaced students, promote academic freedom, and build cross-sector institutional capacity across Europe. It is equally important to include Ukrainian organizations as a partner (for example the original entity of displaced researcher) in this grant.
2. Organize a Scholars at Risk/MSCA4Ukraine alumni forum to reestablish the connection with Ukrainian institutions and Ukraine Science Diaspora. So far the impact of those mechanisms for the Ukrainian community has been very limited.
3. Partners are encouraged to discuss with HEIs and National Erasmus+ Agencies the possibility of having special emphasis on grant preparation training or research project development in the applications for International Credit Mobility (ICM). The Ukrainian side is also encouraged to communicate with HEIs and individual researchers about the importance of this opportunity.
4. Prepare Coalition or/and national recommendations to include internationalization aspects into Mobility Agreement/Learning Agreement - i.e. as a part of the mobility a person has to make a presentation/pitch of its Ukrainian entity or write a promotion video.

5. Consider organizational support for better involvement of currently inactive Ukrainian HEIs into Erasmus+ Alliances for Innovations calls as it paves a good way for further internationalization.
6. Explore possible support actions in the University Alliance, consider actions to involve more Ukrainian HEIs in the Alliances.

Pillar II

Potential pathways for diaspora return to Ukraine and engagement in recovery and reconstruction

1) Identifying potential challenges and conditionalities for UA diaspora return;

Findings: barriers to the return of Ukrainian scientists are highly multidimensional. Financial concerns account for approximately 45–50% of responses and include low salaries, weak research funding and insufficient incentives. Additional barriers relate to limited research infrastructure and working conditions (25–30%), as well as security concerns and uncertainty associated with war (20–25%). The findings indicate that expectations of a permanent return alone do not align with the realities and constraints faced by many diaspora researchers.

Recommendations:

1. Convey a survey to assess the expectations of Ukrainian research community towards science diaspora returning, including their expected role in recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine.
2. Ukrainian stakeholders should be supported in the development of concepts for the recruitment of Ukrainian academics from abroad. Along with conceptual support, financial support must also be considered in this regard, since support for returnees and the continuation of already established international research collaborations is mutually beneficial.
3. Analyse current international support mechanisms for Ukrainian researchers that encourage them to flee Ukraine and consider amending them to avoid or revert brain drain factors.

2) Looking for international practices (Choose Europe for Science, etc), how brain gain is achieved.

Findings: Though not necessarily applicable for the needs of Ukraine, Chose Europe for Science initiative by the European Commission and Member States can be used as a model example of brain gain mechanism.

Recommendations:

1. Use of methods, instruments and established funding mechanisms in Choose Europe for Science at the EU and national level could be considered to support Ukrainian researchers returning home when the situation allows. Consider setting up a ring-fenced budget share in Choose Europe for Science for "Choose Ukraine for Science" spin-off.

Pillar III

Science Diplomacy and fighting russian disinformation

1) Strengthening science diplomacy and mobilising diaspora expertise for Ukraine's recovery and European integration

Findings: The Ukrainian scientific diaspora already functions as a network of science diplomats across all four pillars of science diplomacy, although unevenly. The strongest contribution is observed in **Diplomacy for Science**, including support for international consortia, Horizon Europe participation, mobility and access to global research networks. In contrast, **Science in Diplomacy** remains less developed, as existing expertise lacks structured pathways into policymaking processes.

Importantly, science diplomacy has been identified as a strategic priority in the Roadmap for Ukraine's Integration into the European Research Area (ERA) by 2027, where diaspora engagement is recognized as one of the key implementation mechanisms. However, despite this policy recognition, institutional pathways for systematically integrating diaspora expertise into policy development, recovery and reconstruction processes remain limited. This constrains both Ukraine's and the EU's ability to leverage diaspora knowledge for evidence-based policymaking on security, governance, reconstruction and European integration.

Recommendations:

1. Operationalize science diplomacy priorities under the ERA Roadmap through structured diaspora engagement mechanisms

Target actors: Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, European Commission, Ukrainian Science Diaspora Network, public authorities, universities and research institutions.

Stakeholders should support the **implementation of science diplomacy priorities outlined in the Roadmap for Ukraine's Integration into the European Research Area (ERA)** through structured engagement of the Ukrainian scientific diaspora. Priority actions may include:

- facilitating the integration of diaspora scholars into **thematic advisory and working groups** at national and international levels;
- promoting joint expertise models involving **diaspora researchers and researchers in Ukraine** for evidence-based policy recommendations;
- strengthening institutional pathways linking diaspora expertise with recovery, security, reconstruction and EU accession priorities;
- supporting diaspora organizations as permanent actors within science diplomacy and science-policy ecosystems;
- support to Ukrainian Studies and Ukraine Centers in the hosting institutions as a platform to build up a community and have a reliable source of information about Ukraine

Expected impact: stronger implementation of ERA priorities, improved science-policy interfaces and enhanced use of diaspora expertise in Ukraine's recovery and European integration processes.

2) Light but useful coordination between UA Government and Diaspora on fighting russian disinformation is needed;

Findings: The EU actions envisaged in the [draft] Council Recommendation on a European Union framework for science diplomacy[4], art. 24 (b) suggests to "enable a regular exchange between scientists and diplomats…". Survey within science diaspora has shown that amid willingness to engage, they lack general steering, governmentally-proofed information and sustainable funding to act continuously.

Recommendations:

1. Set up a pilot project for 2026-2027 to develop the Ukrainian Science Diplomacy Framework for Diaspora and key elements for countering

4 https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/9ef96e1f-dd81-4550-9eeb-47fd66453004_en?filename=ec_rtd_com-2026-97-science-diplomacy-recommendation.pdf

russian disinformation in science. Potential actors may include Sumy State University, Hennadii Udovenko Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine and other relevant actors, including civil society.

3) Support to Ukrainian Studies and Ukraine Centers in the hosting institutions as a platform to build up community and have reliable source of information about Ukraine

Findings: Significant progress has been made by the Fund of the President of Ukraine for Education, Science and Sports in supporting Ukrainian Studies and coordinating related initiatives. At the same time, a growing ecosystem of Ukraine-focused academic structures has emerged across Europe and beyond. This includes Ukrainian Studies programmes and Ukraine Centres, as well as diaspora-led scientific networks and associations such as the Ukrainian Science Diaspora in Austria, the Ukrainian Science Diaspora in France, Foundation "Ukrainian Scientific Diaspora in Poland", Ukrainian Science Diaspora in Luxembourg, Ukrainian Researchers in Sweden, Ukrainian Science Diaspora in the Netherlands, The German-Ukrainian Association for Business and Scienceб The German-Ukrainian Academic Society, Science and Education Community of Ukrainians in Finland, Ukrainian Science Diaspora in Portugal, Ukrainian Science Diaspora in Brazil, Interdisciplinary scientific network "Vision Ukraïne: Education, Language, Migration", Ukrainian Branch of the Lithuanian Scientific Society, Czech-Ukrainian Scientific Society, Geneva Center for Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, Ukrainian Science Diaspora in Spain, Ukrainian-British Academic Society UBAS.

These organisations play an important role in fostering academic cooperation, supporting internationalisation, strengthening science diplomacy, facilitating researcher mobility, and providing reliable information about Ukraine within host countries. They also represent valuable entry points for expanding the Coalition and building long-term institutional partnerships.

While strong volunteer engagement exists, many of these initiatives rely on individual efforts and project-based activities. The main challenge remains the lack of sustainable funding and institutional support necessary to ensure continuity, professionalisation, and long-term impact.

Recommendations:

1. Support the development and long-term sustainability of Ukrainian Studies programmes, Ukraine Centres, and diaspora-led scientific organisations and networks, including national Ukrainian scientific diaspora communities, as strategic partners for internationalisation, science diplomacy, Coalition expansion, community building, and evidence-based communication about Ukraine.

Useful materials:

1) Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. (2026). *Pro zatverdzhennia Prymirnoho polozhennia pro naukovoho ambasadora zakladu vyshchoi osvity, naukovoi ustanovy* [On approval of the model regulation on the scientific ambassador of a higher education institution, research institution] (Order No. 568, April 3, 2026). https://mon.gov.ua/npa/pro-zatverdzhennia-prymirnoho-polozhennia-pro-naukovoho-ambasadora-zakladu-vyshchoi-osvity-naukovoi-ustanovy
2) Polishchuk, Y., Lyman, I., Ilnar-Vusyk, O., Romaniuk, O. (2026). Science Diplomacy for Ukraine's European Integration: The Role of the Science Diaspora. Policy Brief - https://uscida.at/uscida-led-policy-brief-on-the-ukrainian-science-diaspora-is-now-published/
3) European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. (2025). *A European framework for science diplomacy: Recommendations of the EU science diplomacy working groups*. Publications Office of the European Union. https://doi.org/10.2777/9235330
4) Ukrainian Science Diaspora. (2025). *Що насправді очікують вчені в Україні та українські ВНЗ від наукової діаспори?*Analytical_Report_What_Scientists_in_Ukraine_Expect_from_Diaspora.pdf
5) Ukrainian Science Diaspora. (2025). *Impact assessment of the Ukrainian science diaspora on the rebuilding of the research and higher education system of Ukraine*. https://ukrdiaspora.nauka.gov.ua/static/documents/Impact_Assessment_Ukrainian_Science_Diaspora_on_Rebuilding.pdf
6) UNESCO & Junior Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. (2024). *Analysis of war damage to the Ukrainian science sector and its consequences*. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ukraine-restoring-scientific-infrastructure-will-cost-over-126-billion-unesco
7) Engagement of the Alliance of German Science Organisations in strengthening and rebuilding the science and higher education landscape in Ukraine, 2024. *Ukraine Action Plan.*

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