

Ukrainian Studies in Europe

Situation report

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1. Introduction

This report presents and analyses the existing Ukrainian studies programmes in European countries. It seeks to understand how these programmes are structured, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and reflect on possible areas for improvement.

By "Ukrainian studies," we refer to the study of the Ukrainian language, literature, history, culture, and the relationships between Ukraine and other countries in the context of international relations or related fields.

This report will also address key questions, such as: has there been a resurgence of interest in Ukrainian studies at European universities? Can universities meet the growing interest in Ukraine and the demand for Ukrainian specialists in various fields?

The report provides a comprehensive analysis along with two appendices:

- Appendix 1 – "Mapping": A detailed list outlining Ukrainian studies by country and university,
- Appendix 2 – "Questionnaire": A sample questionnaire used to gather data from various institutions.

While the list of universities is not exhaustive, it highlights key European institutions where Ukrainian studies have already been established or where Slavic studies exist, creating the potential for introducing Ukrainian studies.

2. Context

Since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and even more so since its large-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Ukraine has found itself at the centre of international attention. The "Ukrainian question" now raises significant issues regarding security, geopolitical stability, sovereignty, and economic, energy, and humanitarian challenges at both the European and global levels.

The relationship between Ukraine and the European Union, which was previously defined by partnership and free trade agreements, has experienced unprecedented intensification. Europe has actively committed to supporting Ukraine, not only through substantial military and financial aid but also through cooperation programmes in areas such as justice, energy, healthcare, education, and governance.

Ukraine, the largest country in Europe by land area, is preparing to take a historic step by beginning official negotiations for its EU membership. This opportunity for integration presents numerous possibilities for both Ukraine and Europe across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. Additionally, it places Ukraine at the centre of discussions about the future of the European project, including its enlargement and its capacity to uphold core values.

It is within this context that the EUkraine Forum European cooperation partnership was launched in November 2024. Coordinated by Inalco, in collaboration with the Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv, Charles University and the University of Warsaw, this project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme aims to support the development of Ukrainian studies in Europe and, indirectly, Ukraine’s current accession procedure to the European Union. Activities will include the organisation of a conference on Ukrainian studies in Warsaw in 2025 and a development plan for Ukrainian Studies to European universities and decision-makers to respond to the new needs of this discipline.

In addition to supporting the preservation of Ukraine's linguistic and cultural heritage, the EUkraine Forum project meets the growing demand for area interpreters and specialists, both in connection with the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and in the context of Ukraine's potential accession to the EU.

3. Methodology

The analysis presented in this report is based on the information available on university websites, gathered through extensive online research, and the responses provided by institutions that answered the questionnaire developed by Charles University in Prague (see Annex 2). This questionnaire was sent to the heads of departments involved in Ukrainian studies at Charles University in Prague, Inalco, and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, who forwarded it to their partner universities. This combined approach offers both a qualitative and comparative perspective on the current position of Ukrainian studies within European higher education.

4. Ukrainian studies analysis

4.1 Ukrainian studies in European countries - Current situation

The survey conducted as part of the EUkraine Forum project shows that the availability of Ukrainian studies varies significantly across European countries in terms of scope and academic structure. Only a few universities currently offer comprehensive, independent, and specialised programmes in Ukrainian language and culture (at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels). Among the key institutions where full programmes in Ukrainian studies are offered are:

- Austria: University of Vienna,
- Bulgaria: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski,
- Croatia: University of Zagreb,
- Czech Republic: Charles University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno,
- France: Inalco (National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilisations),
- Germany: Humboldt University of Berlin, University of Leipzig, Ukrainian Free University (ULU, based in Munich and founded by the Ukrainian diaspora),
- Hungary: Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest, University of Nyíregyháza,
- Poland: University of Warsaw (Institute of Ukrainian Studies), Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, University of Wrocław, University of Kraków (Institute of Eastern Slavic Studies, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (UMCS) in Lublin,
- Romania: University of Bucharest, Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.

These universities aim to train specialists in the Ukrainian language, culture, literature, and history. They offer in-depth courses designed to equip students with skills in translation, intercultural communication, political analysis, and social history. These competencies enable graduates to pursue careers in various fields, including international relations, journalism, cultural institutions, and NGOs.

Some universities, although they do not offer distinct programmes or degrees in Ukrainian studies, allow students to study the Ukrainian language or civilisation as part of combined or dual degree programmes, often in conjunction with other Slavic languages or within humanities and social sciences programmes. This is the case for:

- France: Sorbonne University, Faculty of Humanities (starting in the 2025 academic year),
- Germany: Europa-Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt, University of Munich, University of Tübingen, Justus Liebig University of Giessen, University of Greifswald, University of Leipzig,
- Poland: John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Jagiellonian University in Krakow (Faculty of International and Political Studies).

Additionally, several universities offer Ukrainian language courses as part of optional modules, courses on Ukrainian civilisation integrated into regional programmes (East European Studies, Post-Soviet Studies), or through research projects, doctoral schools, or scientific laboratories. These initiatives, although often occasional or limited, reflect a

growing trend toward integrating Ukrainian studies into academic circles across Europe (see Annex 1 for the detailed list).

Despite these examples, the teaching of the Ukrainian language remains very limited or even absent in many European countries:

- **Belgium:** For instance, only the Free University of Brussels offers Ukrainian language courses, despite the presence of European institutions in the country. Moreover, these courses are exclusively part of continuing education and are taught in the evening.
- **Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, and Portugal:** According to the data available to us, no university in these countries offers Ukrainian language courses or cultural modules. Higher education in these countries predominantly focuses on Western European languages and cultures.
- **Latvia:** Despite the country's proximity to Ukraine and the presence of a significant Ukrainian diaspora, Ukrainian is also not taught in universities. Discussions are ongoing to address this gap, but the Latvian government has not yet allocated funding to establish Ukrainian studies. The lack of resources and structural constraints make it challenging to introduce new courses.

4.2. Ukrainian as a foreign language in Ukrainian universities – Current situation

Several Ukrainian universities offer Ukrainian language courses as a foreign language for international students:

- At the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukrainian is taught in various academic programmes within the Department of Applied Ukrainian Studies.
- At Kharkiv National Aerospace University, Ukrainian is a core subject in the undergraduate programs for international students.
- At Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute, Ukrainian is taught across all fields, including technical disciplines.
- At the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukrainian is taught in the Theory and Practice of Education undergraduate programme, specialising in Language, Literature, and Comparative Studies. At Odessa National Polytechnic University, Ukrainian is taught across all disciplines for foreign students.
- At the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukrainian is taught across all disciplines for international students, particularly at the Institute of International Relations, where it is integrated into the International Law programme (taught in English).
- At Uzhhorod National University, Ukrainian is part of the undergraduate programme in International Economic Relations.
- At Zaporizhzhia National University, Ukrainian is offered as an elective for the 2025-2026 academic year.

In addition, several other universities offer preparatory programmes that enable international students to acquire the necessary language skills to enroll in Ukrainian higher education institutions (see the list in Annex 1).

4.3. Renewed interest in Ukrainian studies since 2022

The analysis of the available data confirms that there has been a renewed interest in Ukrainian studies in Europe, primarily due to the geopolitical context, especially since the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022. In response to this event, several universities have introduced new courses or strengthened their Ukraine-related programmes. For example:

- The University of Lorraine (France) launched a French-Ukrainian diploma in international management and business following the war.
- University of Eastern Finland now offers a minor in Ukrainian language and culture.
- Sciences Po (France) will introduce a program focused on Ukrainian affairs, featuring specialised speakers, starting in the 2025-2026 academic year.
- Sorbonne University will offer Ukrainian as an optional mandatory secondary language in the Department of Central European Studies beginning in the 2025 academic year.
- Europa-Universität Viadrina (Germany) incorporates Ukraine into its International Relations and European Studies programs.
- The University of Tartu (Estonia) has developed or expanded several modules, such as Ukraine: A Nation at the Border, Ukraine: The European Border (MOOC), History of Ukraine Since the 19th Century, and Ukrainian for Beginners.
- The University of Graz (Austria) offers a specialisation in Ukrainian law and culture for students from all disciplines.
- University of Palermo (Italy), which did not offer any Ukrainian studies programmes prior to 2022, has introduced courses and seminars in response to the increased interest, including the creation of three free MOOCs in Ukrainian language (A1, A2, B1), accessible to the public.

Additionally, several universities in Germany, Spain, Finland, Italy, and Sweden have incorporated introductory Ukrainian language and culture courses into their academic offerings.

While some universities, such as the University of Milan (Italy) and Lund University (Sweden), have not seen a significant increase in enrollments in Ukrainian studies, institutions with a long-standing tradition of teaching Ukrainian have experienced substantial growth in student numbers. For example:

- Masaryk University (Czech Republic) reported a 30% increase in Ukrainian studies enrollments after 2022, despite ongoing challenges related to humanities funding.
- Inalco (France) saw its undergraduate enrollment rise from 10-20 to 40-45 students.
- The University of Tartu (Estonia) experienced a doubling of students in Ukrainian courses, with 79 students enrolled in new in-person courses on Ukraine, while 251 students participated in the MOOC on Ukraine.
- IRES Institute at Uppsala University (Sweden) and Södertörn University (Sweden) observed a renewed interest in Ukrainian-related research topics among master's and doctoral students.

- The University of Siena (Italy) had no demand for Ukrainian studies before 2022 but saw a significant increase in interest in 2022, though demand slightly decreased in 2023.
- The University of Oxford (UK) saw a surge in interest in Ukrainian studies following the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, prompting the university to introduce new courses, lectures, and seminars.

This renewed interest can be attributed to the current geopolitical context and to the proactive initiatives of universities that are increasingly aware of the strategic importance of training specialists in Ukraine. In response to this growing demand, scholars actively promote Ukrainian studies by organising conferences, publishing research, and inviting international experts. These efforts are designed to deepen understanding of Ukrainian issues, cultivate qualified professionals, and foster intellectual exchange within the international academic community.

4.4. Weaknesses

Although the range of programmes appears broad initially, it is insufficient to produce the specialists needed in the current context. This issue is likely due to the limited financial resources available to universities, which restricts the implementation of comprehensive training programmes.

Even in institutions where Ukrainian is offered as a dedicated undergraduate or master's programme, such as Inalco (France), the number of teaching hours remains significantly lower than other languages in similar programmes, particularly Russian, Polish, or Czech.

Several recent initiatives, such as the Franco-Ukrainian program at the University of Metz, rely on temporary funding and lack long-term sustainability. Similarly, the Ukrainian programmes at Sorbonne University (France) were launched with grants, but these funds are only available for a limited four-year period. The same situation applies to the University of Florence (Italy).

This leads to the conclusion that while student interest in Ukrainian studies has increased significantly since the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, lack of funding remains a major obstacle to the long-term development of these programmes. Universities are actively seeking financial support to ensure the continuity and expansion of these courses.

Conclusion

The report reveals that interest in Ukrainian studies in European universities has significantly increased, particularly since 2022. These studies are now expanding across various fields, such as linguistics, politics, history, literature, and culture. This multidisciplinary approach allows a deeper understanding of Ukraine within its European and international contexts.

However, while some universities have made significant progress in responding to the growing demand, many institutions still face financial challenges that limit the development of comprehensive and sustainable programs, as temporary grants do not guarantee the long-term viability of these courses.

For Ukrainian studies to develop sustainably, it is crucial to secure stable funding and support ongoing academic initiatives. Such support, particularly at the European level, could fully address the demand for Ukrainian specialists across various fields and enhance understanding current geopolitical, cultural, and social issues.

Furthermore, universities must consider how to make Ukrainian studies more attractive. This could involve, for example, the establishment of inter-university degrees, an increase in the volume of courses, and the creation of specialised modules tailored to meet the growing demand for experts in the field.



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