

Pekka Aula

Ukraine needs support – what can the scientific community do

Greeting from the Secretary General

The war in Ukraine has had a profound impact on society and has dramatically affected the country's scientific community as well. Laboratories have been destroyed, infrastructure damaged and many scientists have been forced to leave the country. Despite the difficult circumstances, researchers in Ukraine are striving to continue their work. In this situation, support from the international scientific community is essential.

A seminar hosted by ETH Zurich in March 2025, entitled “Strengthening Ukraine’s Science and Innovation System: A Workshop,” brought together science stakeholders and government representatives from the United States, Europe and Ukraine to discuss how Ukraine’s science and innovation system can survive the crisis and find a new direction. The seminar identified several ways in which the international scientific community can show its support. Meanwhile, it is worth considering what role the Finnish Academy of

Science and Letters could play in this context.

CONCRETE WAYS TO SHOW SUPPORT

The international scientific community can show its support in many different ways; one key means is to strengthen bilateral cooperation projects with Ukrainian universities, the National Academy of Sciences and research institutes. For example, the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is planning a programme similar to the Fulbright programme that would offer international researchers the opportunity to visit Ukraine for extended periods. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters could also participate in this work – particularly by supporting the integration of young Ukrainian researchers into international networks and research communities.



Participation in international coalitions also provides a channel for supporting the reconstruction of Ukraine's research infrastructure, strengthening the research community, and developing the national science advisory system. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters could play a significant role in this, particularly as a developer of international multidisciplinary science advice. Modern solutions for science advice provide decision-makers with research-based knowledge quickly and efficiently. This is exactly what is needed to support decisions made in the middle of a crisis.

Strengthening science diplomacy is also an important means of providing support. This means highlighting the importance of supporting Ukraine to decision-makers also at the national level and ensuring that the scientific community in Ukraine remains part of the international science networks. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters has experience in such lobbying, including cooperation with the central government of Finland.

INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL OF SCIENCE ACADEMIES IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT

The seminar in Zurich taught us that the continuity and development of science is important for Ukraine's long-term stability. Through science, we can find solutions to the social and economic challenges caused by the war and build a foundation for future growth. This requires strengthening both human capital and intellectual capital.

Supporting science in Ukraine is not only a scientific endeavour, but also a

humanistic and social pursuit. At the heart of this multifaceted support is the idea that education, research and international cooperation can help build more permanent structures that support peace, justice and reconstruction.

In this work, the strength of academies of science lies not only in their financial resources but above all in their intellectual capital: their expertise, multidisciplinary and extensive international networks. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters has the opportunity to offer these resources for common use – for example by providing experts for international workshops, building cooperation with NAS and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, and continuing its efforts to strengthen science advice also in Finland.

SCIENCE PLAYS A ROLE IN UKRAINE'S RECONSTRUCTION

The role of science in Ukraine's reconstruction should be given greater prominence also in Finnish political debate. Science is not currently part of Finland's support packages for Ukraine, but it could play an important role as part of sustainable, future-oriented support.

The international community has shown that science can be a powerful force in supporting stability and development. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters also has the opportunity to contribute to this work by making its expertise and networks available for the reconstruction of Ukraine. Supporting the Ukrainian scientific community is an investment in peace, stability and future opportunities. There are many things that the interna-

tional scientific community – Finland included – can do to ensure that research and education will remain part of Ukraine’s reconstruction. Even small actions can have far-reaching consequences.

Secretary General Pekka Aula participated in the seminar entitled “Strengthening Ukraine’s Science and Innovation System: A Workshop,” hosted by ETH Zurich in March 2025.

*17 April 2025
Pekka Aula*