

DEVELOPMENTS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Dear colleagues and students,

In an earlier message regarding the impact of the war in Ukraine on Ghent University activities, I promised to keep you informed should any new developments take place. With this message, I want to update you on some recent developments.

On Friday 4 March, the rectors of a large number of Russian universities signed an open letter in which they pledged their support to the Russian state, the Russian army and the Russian president in the war with Ukraine. In it, they also called upon students to be patriotic and support their motherland. Based on the content of this open letter and the advice of Ghent University's Committee on Human Rights Policy and Dual-Use Research, Ghent University decide to adjust its policy on collaborations with Russian institutions.

In doing so, we must differentiate: (i) institutional cooperation, and student exchanges or cooperations between academics within this framework; and (ii) individual contact between academics or individual students who (would like to) study at our university.

Individual contact between academics remain possible. Additionally, individual students who wish to study at our university remain welcome to do so. To refuse access to students based on their nationality alone would run contrary to everything that pluralistic university education stands for. Therefore, Ghent University will never refuse students based solely on their nationality.

Institutional cooperations with Russian universities that support the invasion in Ukraine, and student exchanges or cooperations between academics that takes place within that framework, are no longer possible. The latter is particularly the case for Russian universities that have signed the aforementioned open letter, that issue sanctions on critical academics and/or that actively limit the academic freedom of their researchers. Similarly, new institutional cooperations with these universities can no longer be established.

Promoters of institutional research cooperations between Ghent University and such institutions will be contacted by the secretary of the Committee on Human Rights Policy and Dual-Use Research. Exchange coordinators involved in the execution of institutional agreements in the area of student mobility between Ghent University and such institutions will be contacted by the International Relations Office.

At the same time, it is important to state, and even to emphasise, that cooperation with Russian universities that do not support the invasion of Ukraine and do show respect for the academic freedom of their researchers remains possible. Russian universities, academics and students that emphatically do not support the invasion should not be punished, but must, instead, explicitly be shown appreciation and support.

This adjustment to Ghent University policy has no consequences for Russian students and employees/researchers who study or work at Ghent University at the moment, and, therefore, also not for Russian students who are here in the context of institutional cooperation. These students can continue their studies, for so long as they have the necessary residence permits.

Furthermore, I would once again like to emphasize that Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian students and employees/researchers who study or work at Ghent University can always call on support, both pertaining to their mental wellbeing (via UCare@ugent.be) and for practical issues (via actueel@ugent.be). The latter email address is also the go-to address for all Ghent University-related questions regarding the impact of the war in Ukraine, also those pertaining to (future) Ukrainian refugees who would like to study or work at Ghent University.

In closing, I would also like to draw attention to [our overview page](#) of initiatives by different Ghent University employees and students in support of the victims of the impact of the war in Ukraine.

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Rector