

**DAAD Centre for International Academic Cooperation (KIWi)**

**KIWi Connect – Ukraine: From Threat to Empowerment: How Science in Distress Can Drive Innovation and Strengthen Science Diplomacy**

**17. December 2025, 10:30 – 12:00 CET, Copenhagen Business School, onsite**

In the face of the existential threat posed by Russia's aggression, Ukraine and its scientific community have demonstrated remarkable resilience and innovative capacity since 2022. This has, for example, enabled Ukraine to emerge as a frontrunner in drone defense — a field in which it is now regarded as a model for Europe. Russia's war of aggression has once again revealed that science and higher education are not insulated from geopolitics, but are deeply interlinked with questions of security, resilience, and sovereignty. Ukrainian researchers face the dual challenge of continuing their work under attack while contributing to the survival of both their scientific system and their civil society. The same applies to scientific communities in other countries experiencing crises, whether driven by internal or external factors.

For Europe, the war in Ukraine underscores the need to rethink science diplomacy and to add new approaches and objectives to the goals of bridge-building and mutual understanding. Our societies are confronted with the challenges of an increasingly multipolar world marked by crises, disruptions, and global power struggles. Science diplomacy can and should also serve as an effective means of strengthening the resilience of science and broadening the scope for action in both diplomacy and research by fostering knowledge, expertise, and connections with a wide range of stakeholders across the international science landscape. The situation in Ukraine has required the scientific community to develop considerable innovation and negotiation skills, demonstrating both steadfastness and flexibility.

This raises the question: can other countries also learn from researchers at risk and science in crisis in order to develop new, innovative, and effective approaches to science diplomacy? How can science diplomacy be designed and implemented as a powerful tool to advance not only the interests of science but also national, European, and global objectives? How can science safeguard its independence, and why is this independence of particular value for politics and diplomacy?

Science diplomacy can, among other things:

- expand the scope for action through the knowledge, expertise, and networks it generates;
- contribute through innovation to strengthening the position of a country, community, or union of states — scientifically, economically, and politically — thereby improving its international negotiating capacity.

This round table brings together Ukrainian, European, and international voices to reflect on the lessons learned from crisis for science diplomacy and to explore the paths ahead.

**Moderator:**

**Benedikt Brisch**, DAAD/KIWi, Head of Division Knowledge Exchange and Network,  
German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

**Participants:**

**Prof. Dr. Alexandra Antoniouk**, Head of the Scientific Committee of the National Council of  
Ukraine for Science and Technology Development, Kyiv, Ukraine.

**Mateusz Bialas**, Director of Polish Academy of Sciences Representative Office in Kyiv.

**Lucian Brujan**, Senior Expert International Relations, German National Academy of Sciences Leo-  
poldina.

**Dr. Oksana Illnar-Vusyk**, (formerly Dr. Oksana Bilous), Postdoctoral Researcher, Faculty of Phys-  
ics, University of Vienna, Co-founder, Ukrainian Science Diaspora in Austria.

**Serhiy Lukanjuk**, Head of International Office, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University.

**Dr. Vitalij Suprun**, ukrainian Postdoc researcher on Science Diplomacy.