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Dutch knowledge institutions suspend partnerships with Russia and Belarus

Help and support for Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian students and staff

The Russian military assault on Ukraine has profoundly shocked knowledge institutions in the Netherlands, as represented by Universities of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Dutch Research Council, the Dutch Federation of University Medical Centres and The Young Academy. This is a direct assault on liberty and democracy, which are the fundamental values undergirding academic freedom and cooperation. Dutch knowledge institutions remain fully committed to providing help to Ukrainian students and staff.

The universities, university medical centers, universities of applied sciences, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Dutch Research Council have decided to suspend all formal and institutional partnerships with educational and knowledge institutions in the Russian Federation and Belarus immediately until further notice. They do this in response to the urgent appeal of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. The knowledge community in the Netherlands supports this appeal, whilst also lamenting the consequences that it will entail for education and research. Research flourishes through international cooperation and the open exchange of knowledge, insights and ideas. This is why we are not limiting ourselves to implementing this decision, but are also supporting Russian and Belarusian researchers, teaching staff, students and organisations that have spoken out against the invasion of Ukraine.

What does this mean for students, staff and organisations?

At present, approximately 917 Ukrainian, 1,653 Russian and some Belarusian students are studying at Dutch research universities and universities of applied sciences. In addition, Dutch knowledge institutions employ several hundred Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian staff. Dutch research universities, universities of applied sciences, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Dutch Research Council and university medical centres have scores of formal partnerships with Russia and Belarus. The consequences of the decision will include the following:

- Russian and Belarusian students, teaching staff and researchers currently in the Netherlands will be able to remain here and the institutions where they are working or studying will support them to the best possible extent.
- Dutch students, teaching staff and researchers in Russia and Belarus are urgently advised to return to the Netherlands if it is safe to do so. For more information, visit the website of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs:
<https://www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl/landen/rusland/reizen/reisadvies>.
- All forms of partnership in education and research with Russia and Belarus are to be suspended immediately. What this means is that activities encompassed by these partnerships will cease until further notice. No further financial transactions can be made and no further exchange of data and knowledge can be effected.

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- No further collective events (scholarly or otherwise) are to be held, with participants from Russian and Belarusian institutions being barred from participation.
- No new cooperation projects are to be initiated, nor will any new initiatives be initiated within the compass of existing cooperation projects.
- Researchers affiliated with Russian and Belarusian institutions will not be invited to serve as examiners or committee members for the assessment of research proposals.
- Within the context of its multinational partnerships, the Dutch research community will work to ensure a united front when it comes to the relationship with Russia and Belarus.

Help for Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian students and staff

By contrast, our long-term, fruitful partnership with Ukrainian researchers and organisations will continue unabated, to the extent that circumstances allow. Support will also be provided to Russian and Belarusian students and staff. This will take the following forms:

- At present, there are approximately 917 Ukrainian students and a few hundred Ukrainian staff in the Netherlands. They are living in great uncertainty regarding the consequences of the war for their families and for their personal situations. All institutions are in contact with these Ukrainian nationals and are providing support where required.
- All research universities, the relevant universities of applied sciences, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Dutch Research Council are making funds available to Ukrainian and Russian students and staff in the Netherlands who are experiencing acute financial difficulties as a result of the war, e.g. due to not having access to their bank accounts.
- Moreover, the knowledge institutions are keen to offer a safe place to Ukrainian students, teaching staff and researchers who have fled their home country. In a collaboration between The Young Academy, UAF, universities, university medical centers, universities of applied sciences, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Dutch Research Council, there will be a national hub for the reception of both students and employees. So that they can find a place within Dutch institutions as quickly as possible. To this end, we also join existing initiatives such as the international Science for Ukraine movement.
- Dutch research and education institutions are in close contact with their fellow institutions in Ukraine. If the latter can gain anything by drawing on Dutch researchers' knowledge or contacts, then those researchers will make these available to them. Examples could include knowledge on cybersecurity or on acute care and trauma care.

Cooperation with Russian and Belarusian students, teaching staff and researchers

While institutional partnerships with Russian and Belarusian organisations are to be suspended, a great many cooperation projects in education and research are based on peer-to-peer relationships with Russian and Belarusian researchers. Many of them have put their lives in jeopardy by publicly criticising the invasion. Consequently, the institutions are keen to give their staff full freedom to continue their existing personal correspondence with these researchers where appropriate.

Particularly in times of war and conflict, it is important for us to keep communicating with these researchers.

Institutions will have to assess on a case-by-case basis whether communication and cooperation with Russian and Belarusian researchers can be continued. If need be, research universities, universities of applied sciences, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Dutch Research Council and university medical centres can reach out to the Platform Safe and Open Higher Education for support with such assessments. They can also obtain advice from the national Knowledge Security service desk (www.loketkennisveiligheid.nl).