

Interview with Prof. Nechyporenko and Dr. Anna Grebinyk and Dr. Sergii Grebinyk #solidaritywithukraine

On the specially created website www.th-wildau.de/solidaritywithukraine, the university bundles all important information about the war in Ukraine. In today's news you will find a short interview on the current situation with three of our Ukrainian academics: Prof. Alina Nechyporenko and the married couple Dr. Anna Grebinyk and Dr. Sergii Grebinyk.

How are you doing and how are you dealing with the current situation?

Alina Nechyporenko: The Ukrainian people are now going through the most difficult times in their history. To deal with the current situation, I follow the example of my parents, who are under fire for the 9th day in Kharkiv. I quote them: **"The main thing is to stay calm, no panic and cowardice, that ultimately leads to death"**. Our activities here in Germany must be coordinated in such a way that all refugees and victims, especially children and the elderly, are helped. For this I thank my colleagues both from TH Wildau and from all over Germany for their support and real help.

Alina and Sergii Grebinyk: The situation in Ukraine is very difficult. Our families and many friends are under constant fire in Kyiv and Kharkiv. Since we have no way of helping them directly or persuading them to flee, we are now extensively involved here with other support. Apart from demonstrations or donations, we can make a difference in organising support for Ukrainian students and academics in a very efficient way because of the quite good network resources we have. We set a framework and the necessary resources to carry out this support in Germany. At the moment, it is our priority task. We are keeping our fingers crossed that we will be able to change it soon.

What do you think is particularly important at the moment?

Alina Nechyporenko: In the context of the emerging nuclear threat, we consider the closure of airspace over Ukraine to be the most important measure at the moment. This will help save the lives of children and the elderly. My parents and I believe that closing the airspace over Ukraine is now a matter of European security!

Alina and Sergii Grebinyk: The free world's assistance to Ukraine is our top priority. The most important thing now is to close the airspace over Ukraine, as most of the destruction of civilian infrastructure is caused by cruise missiles and air strikes. Russia is waging a war without moral standards and ignoring international law by destroying civilian sites and using banned weapons. These airstrikes are killing many innocent civilians and children. In addition, the Chernobyl power plants and the largest nuclear power plant in Europe in Energodar have been taken hostage. Moreover, the power plant in Energodar has even already been shelled with Russian weapons and set on fire. Only a "NO-FLY ZONE" over the Ukrainian skies can, in our opinion, protect innocent civilians and the world from a nuclear catastrophe.

The second point is to increase the pressure on the Russian economy and to block not only selected but all Russian banks from the SWIFT system. Furthermore, the EU should stop buying gas and oil from Russia. Reducing dependence on Russian energy is realistic.

[Editor's note: See/read the interview with Annalena Baerbock, Foreign Minister of Germany, from 6 March 2022, for example: <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/baerbock-sanktionen-russland-ukraine-krieg-100.html>]

In your view, what contribution can employees and/or students of our university make in the best possible way in the current situation?

Alina Nechyporenko: We believe that the staff and students should primarily address the citizens of Russia and especially the scientific and student community. Russians are in a closed information space created by Russian propaganda. They do not know the truth about what is happening in Ukraine. At this very moment, Russian propaganda is also spreading a fake that Europe does not support Ukraine.

We ask all workers and students to become a voice of conscience and determination for Russian students and universities and to appeal to the Russian academic community to oppose actual intervention and call on their authorities to end the war. Their unbiased awareness of the terrible and devastating consequences for Russian science and education will serve as influential and critical evidence for resolute anti-war protests. Please encourage them to seek reliable and fact-checked news. Every citizen of Russia must fight against Putin's propaganda.

Alina and Sergii Grebinyk: The support for Ukraine from the entire civilised world in general and from the academic community in particular is overwhelming. But Ukraine is on fire, the crimes against the Ukrainian people continue and they need your help. Everyone can help, whether by signing a petition, taking part in a demonstration, making a donation or helping refugees.

Many education and research grants are directed towards support programmes and services aimed at refugee or stranded students and researchers from Ukraine. When Russia attacked, the Deutsch-Ukrainische Akademische Gesellschaft e.V. (DUAG, <https://ukrainet.eu>) began to build the resources to provide a nationwide support resource for organising and channelling aid; specifically targeting students, academics and researchers from Ukraine. At any organisational level, from the individual to the group leader or up to the university presidium, assistance can be organised, such as special enrolment conditions and further education for students, bridging positions for PhD students and researchers, and the provision of accommodation. We also invite you to join our #StandWithUkraine task force at DUAG (contact person is Dr. Anna Grebinyk).