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BUSINESS RESPONSE TO SUPPORT THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS IN THE BALTICS: OPENINGS TO ACADEMIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Abstract. During crises, we usually witness the mobilization of a range of social actors and institutions to mitigate their repercussions to society. When it comes to the higher education sector (HE), initiatives and measures to tackle refugee crises have been long in place and institutionalized on national and European level; indicatively, EU policies for the HE sector regarding refugee inclusion exist for decades (European Commission, European Education Area, n.d.). In contrast, actions carried out by the corporate sector are not mapped extensively, nor have been coordinated on national or European level. The present paper explores the uncharted field of business support actions to tackle the Ukrainian refugee crisis in Europe, by taking the Baltic countries as an example. In doing so, we explore the capacity of the corporate sector to collaborate with academia and civil society to jointly address the refugee emergency. The paper presents the analysis of 100 actions that have been identified and categorized based on a typology of actions for a social purpose. We bring our focus on the Baltics as they have been particularly impacted by the Ukrainian war but have also been at the forefront of humanitarian support to Ukrainian refugees in Europe since February 2022.

Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is at the origin of a global multi-level crisis. Mostly affected are neighboring countries, among which the three Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania). Naturally, this unprecedented situation has a profound impact on the Baltic region, causing challenges on all possible levels and requiring urgent and systematic responses from several sectors. In the overall crisis response landscape, we will discuss, through a cross-country analysis, the meaning and practices of resilience demonstrated by the private sector in the Baltics, and the degree of cooperation with the higher education sector and civil society in the region.

In this context, we delve into a sector-specific understanding of the term resilience. In particular, we focus on business resilience which is the ability of companies to withstand disruptions and continue operations during crises- a definition that also applies to the higher education sector [1, p. 8; 2, p. 46]. The literature review provided in this paper examines how business-academia-civil society collaboration can enhance refugee integration and overall societal resilience in response to the Ukrainian crisis in the Baltic region. In the same token, we also present studies that outline the opportunities and challenges of cooperation that arise.

Business response to the Ukrainian crisis

Historically speaking, there is a long track of corporate response to crises. Philanthropy may be the best known, yet this paper aims to bring to the forefront other types of corporate social responsibility, especially those bringing together civil society and academia. Thus, the Ukrainian crisis has witnessed the mobilization of the corporate sector through a wide spectrum of actions at

global scale. Indicatively, there are ongoing but non-systematic inventories of business measures in support of Ukraine. Precisely, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) maps actions that have been undertaken by significant stakeholders that have joined forces with the UN and humanitarian foundations in Ukraine to provide much needed support and relief (WBCSD, n.d.) [3]. Likewise, the Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals (ACCP) collects and showcases a series of actions by companies worldwide [4]; actions that testify the active involvement of the corporate sector to assisting Ukraine and its people.

In this context, Mariotti S. [5, p. 765], Ben Hassen T., El Bilali H. [6], Reardon T., Vos R. [7, p. 6] argue that the corporate sector can contribute to resilience in various ways, namely through investing in infrastructure, supporting local communities, and developing local supply chains. The authors also suggest that companies can work together with local governments and civil society organizations to develop strategies for crisis response and ensure a sustainable post-conflict recovery.

According to our understanding, companies can be multipliers of societal resilience in times of crisis. In this context, Ovcharuk O. V., Ivaniuk I. V., Burov O. Y., Marienko M. V., Soroko N. V., Gritsenchuk O. O., Kravchyna O. Y. [9, p. 432] present a joint project between a university and a business organization to support entrepreneurship in conflict-affected areas in Ukraine. The project provided training and mentoring to entrepreneurs in Ukraine, as well as new business opportunities for Estonian companies in the region. Examples like this one, manifest the need of knowledge and capacity exchange between companies and universities as an effective means to restore and enhance economic opportunities and social wellbeing in war-torn Ukraine.

Nevertheless, cooperation is not immune to barriers and challenges faced by the interested parties, especially during crises. Scholars have identified key challenges to business-academia-civil society cooperation in the framework of the Ukrainian crisis response actions in the Baltics. Precisely, Drach I., Borodienko O., Petrie O. [10, c. 204], Kazantseva L., Pisarevska N., Samoilenko L. [11, c. 102] highlight the importance of addressing power imbalances and ensuring equitable distribution of resources and benefits. Interestingly, they argue that cooperation between the corporate and higher education sectors could reinforce existing power structures and exacerbate inequalities, particularly in crisis-affected regions.

Thus, by approaching the business sector through its connection to other society players, we foresee highlighting the value of creating synergies among them; synergies that will serve as amplifiers of resilience for all three types of stakeholders.

Beyond business response: overview of the role of academia to the Ukrainian crisis

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, universities in Europe have assisted Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons in various ways. Thanks to their expertise and far-reaching networks, universities are one of the most valuable social actors that can mobilize effectively in order to provide support not only to refugees who are closely associated with academia (students, researchers) but also to wider refugee communities.

In the case of the Ukrainian war, universities are also called to mitigate the consequences of the crisis in the Baltic region. In particular, Ociepa-Kicińska E., Gorzałczyńska-Koczkodaj M. [8] highlight the importance of academic research and innovation in addressing complex societal challenges, such as the Ukrainian crisis. In their paper «Forms of Aid Provided to Refugees of the 2022 Russia–Ukraine War: The Case of Poland» (2022), they argue that academic institutions can provide valuable insights and expertise to support crisis response efforts, as well as contribute to building long-term resilience in affected communities.

Furthermore, European universities and the business sector are actively supporting Ukraine and its people in the framework of EU-funded projects. In particular, in the context of the eCHOing (Recovery of cultural heritage through higher education-driven open innovation, <https://echoing.eu/>) project, Zourou, K. and Oikonomou, S. (2022) have created an online learning module on «Open innovation in academia-society cooperation: examples of cultural heritage preservation in situations of crisis». Similarly, the EU-funded AGILE (Higher education resilience

in refugee crises: forging social inclusion through capacity building, civic engagement and skills recognition) project aims to foster academia-society cooperation in order to develop resilience and sustainability mechanisms in the face of ongoing refugee crises. Finally, actions in support of Ukrainian refugees who seek to continue their studies' journey in Europe are carried out by student associations and university networks, such as the MEnS (Migrants dans l'Enseignement Supérieur) network in France that provides French language lessons to Ukrainians.

Business-academia- civil society response

Effective crisis response measures require collective action by multiple actors that unite their forces around the same goal and values. Thus, business, academia and civil society response to the crisis can be enhanced with the active involvement of as many people, stakeholders and institutions as possible. This is why, except for top-down and institutionalized actions, several actions by companies, universities and civil society organizations for the benefit and support of Ukrainian refugees have been undertaken as bottom-up, students- and staff-led actions.

Indicatively, initiatives addressed to any citizen have emerged, such as the donation boxes set up by the Estonian Medical Students' Association in collaboration with the University of Tartu (UT, February 28, 2022). The Hackathon4Ukraine, a competition open to any volunteer and organized by university students of the Warsaw University of Technology and Imperial College London (WUT, April 7, 2022) is an example of business- academia -civil society cooperation at varying degrees.

Scope and methodology

The aim of this paper is to explore the spectrum of business actions, especially those bringing together companies to civil society and academia for the benefit of Ukrainians in the three Baltic countries. The present paper is part of the EU-funded Baltics4UA project (Supporting Ukraine through citizen engagement at Baltic Universities, 2023–2025, <https://baltics4ua.eu/>) and is closely interrelated to its webinar on «Business and academic resilience to support the Ukrainian crisis response in the Baltics».

To this end, we conducted a desktop research on actions that the corporate sector has carried out in the Baltics to provide assistance to Ukrainians. Our research foresees identifying types of «social action», as the demonstration of activities that bring a societal benefit to a community. We collected actions in a 8-item typology that is an optimized version of a typology outlined by Vytautas Magnus University (VMU, Support to UA, n.d.), Lithuania, as part of the university's actions for Ukrainians. The typology adopted in this paper includes the following actions:

1. Studies' support;
2. Accommodation and sanitary services;
3. Leisure and entertainment activities;
4. Educational and learning services;
5. Financial support and legal counseling;
6. Psychological support;
7. Open innovation actions, and
8. Employability possibilities.

Overall, we gathered 100 business actions aimed at addressing the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis in the Baltics as well as in Ukraine. In this context, there are some limitations worth outlining before moving on with our analysis. The mapping of business actions was indicative rather than exhaustive, and limited in time (carried out in February 2023 for actions having been implemented since February 2022).

The analysis covers the following dimensions. First, geographical coverage: we targeted exclusively actions implemented in the Baltic region as well as support measures from the Baltics to Ukrainian territory. Second, the participation of academic partners in the actions (in the sense of spotting and bringing to the fore business-driven actions in which academic partners are part of). Third, the type of action (cf. the 8-item typology). We prioritized innovation through a collection of a wide spectrum of business actions that encompassed forms of innovation, such as open and social innovation (e.g. hackathons, crowdfunding, media and arts events, co-creation activities resulting in

products and solutions). The range of actions have been intentionally open by the authors, as a means to enable forms of bottom-up, participatory action (in which business and/or academia can act as an enabler), to resurface.

Analysis

1. Geographical coverage

The majority of the actions were carried out in Latvia, with 69 actions identified, compared to just 8 in Lithuania and 23 in Estonia (fig. 1).

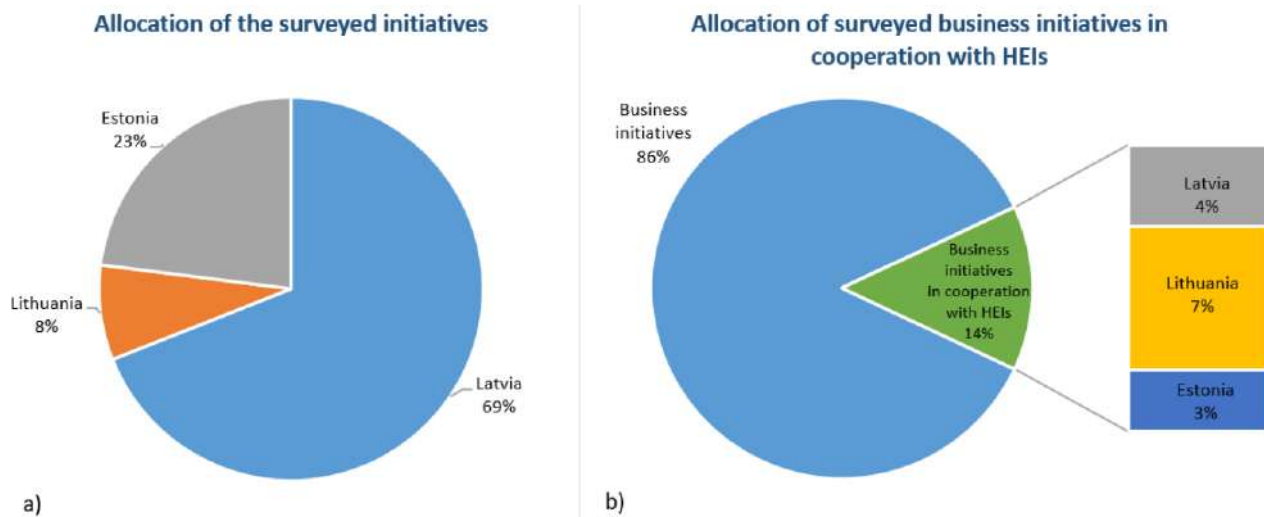


Figure 1. Allocation of the collected business actions (a) and in cooperation with HEIs (b)

Source: Formed by the authors on the basis of a desk study

2. Business-academia cooperation

A minor percentage of these actions were implemented in cooperation with higher education institutions (HEIs). Precisely, only 14 out of the 100 actions were carried out in partnership with HEIs. Of these, seven were located in Lithuania, four in Latvia, and three in Estonia. According to the analysis, we observe a dynamic space for further collaboration between the corporate and higher education sectors in the Baltics; a space that has been already set up and delivering important actions but that also needs to be enhanced in scale, number of actors involved and impact. Thus, it can be stated that by joining their forces, business and HEIs can leverage their respective strengths and resources to develop innovative solutions, build networks of support, and strengthen the resilience of affected communities.

At the first phase of the desktop research, we have been encountered with several initiatives by companies that offered a series of discounts to products and services for Ukrainian refugees. Before proceeding to our review, we decided to leave them out of our analysis as they do not align with an understanding of actionable means of (humanitarian) support. On the contrary, they can be labelled as marketing strategy-related initiatives. In our view, social action requires a more active stand towards the challenges of the Ukrainian crisis in the Baltics. Thus, we focused on actions that make use of more engaging and action-oriented approaches to the crisis.

3. Action type

In total, we identified 8 different types of action carried out by the corporate sector in the Baltics. Through the analysis of the 100 business actions, we outlined the specific types of action as presented in the figure below (fig. 2).

Thus, there is evidence that companies engage in a variety of actions to tackle the Ukrainian crisis in the Baltics. In particular, the majority of actions falls under the categories of «Accommodation and sanitary services» (27 actions identified) as well as «Leisure and entertainment activities» (25 actions identified), thus indicating that companies are focused on

providing services and relief measures to improve the quality of life of Ukrainian refugees. Additionally, we witness a significant number of companies providing educational and learning services (18 actions identified), usually in collaboration with higher education institutions.

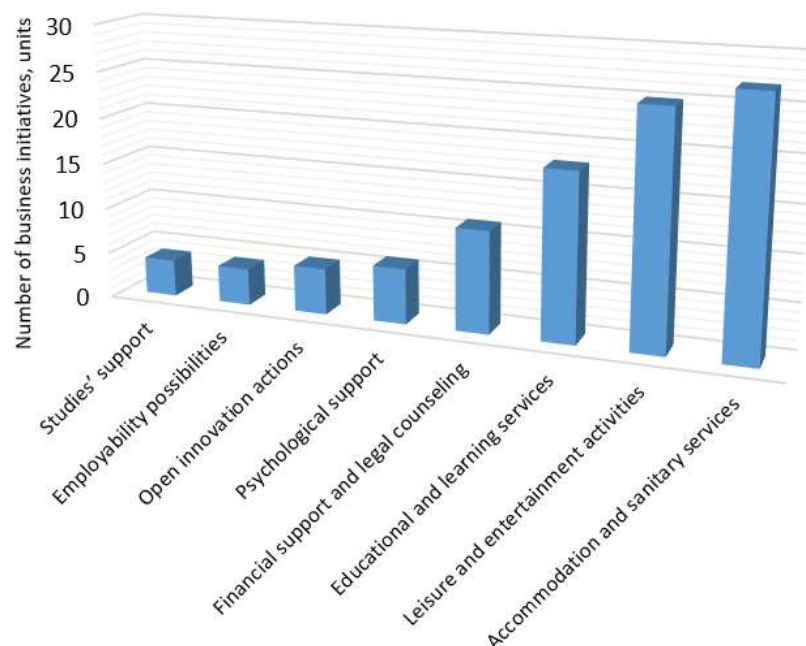


Figure 2. Types of action by the corporate sector

Source: Formed by the authors

Another aspect of business support entail the provision of financial and legal counseling (11 actions identified), as well as psychological support (6 actions identified), given the trauma and stress experienced by individuals affected by the war. On the other hand, we observe fewer open innovation (5 actions identified) and employability-related actions (4 actions identified). Nevertheless, these actions carry the potential to create long-term sustainable solutions, as they include participatory approaches that enhance civic engagement and involvement of wider social actors in the process.

Overall, the diversity of the types of actions implemented by the corporate sector is an expression of the capacities and willingness of companies to actively address ongoing societal needs related to the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis in the region.

Representative actions of business-academia-civil society cooperation for Ukrainians in the Baltics

Through our research, we have spotted particular actions that are designed to foster stronger connections between companies, higher education institutions and civil society organizations in the region.

In particular, one such action is the collaboration between TSENTER and Garage48, both of which are closely collaborating with the Estonian Academy of Arts. Through this partnership, TSENTER and Garage48 are leveraging their expertise in entrepreneurship and innovation to support the development of new business ideas and solutions that can address the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

Likewise, IdeaPort Riga, Bite Latvija, and Webmultishop, in partnership with RISEBA University of Applied Sciences in Latvia, have developed a software platform designed to provide psychological support to Ukrainians affected by the war. The action is called «Psychological Support for Ukrainian War Victims», and is designed to offer a range of tools and resources to help people cope with the psychological trauma of the conflict. The platform features a variety of interactive tools and resources, including self-help guides, virtual counseling sessions, and support forums where individuals can connect with others going through similar experiences. The platform

is available in Ukrainian, Russian, and English, and is accessible to anyone with an internet connection. This action is particularly noteworthy for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the power of cross-sectoral collaboration, with business and an academic institution coming together to develop a solution that addresses a critical need. Second, it underscores the importance of addressing the psychological impacts of crises, such as the one in Ukraine, and technology's role in delivering support to those in need.

In Lithuania, Norfa, a supermarket chain, provided support for Ukrainian children through summer camps. Norfa has worked in partnership with Vilnius University to identify children in need and provide them with the opportunity to attend summer camps in Lithuania, where they can enjoy recreational activities and receive support and care from trained professionals. Similarly, Moody's Lithuania, a global financial services company, partnered with the Business School of Vilnius University to provide support for Ukrainian students. Specifically, Moody's Lithuania has offered financial support, mentorship opportunities, and internships to Ukrainian students studying at Vilnius University's Business School, helping to build their skills and networks and prepare them for successful careers.

Conclusions

The analysis of types of corporate actions presented in this paper demonstrate the hidden potential for companies, academia and civil society organizations to work together to address the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis in the Baltics. The typology based on which the categorisation of actions took place is an expression of a first, systematic identification of the types of actions undertaken in situations of crises by quadruple helix actors. The 8-item typology applied in this study aims to be as inclusive and all-encompassing as possible, thus seeking to reflect the multi-dimensional and diversified support provided by the corporate sector to Ukrainians in the Baltics.

In this context, the typology includes actions that range from exclusively education-oriented measures, to humanitarian aid and employability opportunities for Ukrainian refugees, thus presenting the wide spectrum of corporate support. The results show that companies have focused on providing primary needs services to improve the quality of life of those affected by the crisis, while fewer actions focused on open innovation and employability. Overall, there is evidence that there is still significant room for improvement and greater collaboration between business, universities and civil society in the region.

Through this paper, we aim to emphasize the value of cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing the challenges posed by the war in Ukraine. While the corporate sector is active in support of Ukrainian refugees in the Baltics, greater collaboration with higher education institutions and civil society is needed to establish effective, impactful and sustainable responses. With this contribution, we foresee triggering further understanding and developments towards this direction. Hence, this was a first mapping of actions and a publication showcasing outstanding examples of business-academia-civil society cooperation for Ukrainian crisis response in the Baltics is expected in autumn 2023.

Acknowledgements

The publication is a result of the Erasmus+ project Baltics4UA (Supporting Ukraine through citizen engagement at Baltic Universities, project number 2022-2-EE01-KA220-HED-000096422) funded by the European Union. This project has been funded with the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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JEL Classification: L26, M13, O32

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ВНУТРІШНЯ ЕКОСИСТЕМА АКАДЕМІЧНОГО ПІДПРИЄМНИЦТВА

INTERNAL ECOSYSTEM OF THE ACADEMIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Анотація. Досліджено теоретичні аспекти формування внутрішньої екосистеми академічного підприємництва. Охарактеризовано основні організаційні форми, націлені на координацію, адміністрування, підтримку та розвиток внутрішньо-університетської підприємницької діяльності.

Abstract. The theoretical aspects of the formation of the internal ecosystem of academic entrepreneurship are investigated. The organizational forms aimed at coordination, administration, support and development of intra-university entrepreneurial activity are characterized.

Розвиток академічного підприємництва покращує регіональні та національні економічні показники, а також стимулює формування інноваційно-орієнтованого типу економіки. Активізація та розширення діяльності університетів з комерціалізації результатів власних наукових досліджень і знань актуалізує необхідність вивчення питання підтримки та розвитку ака-