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Communicating Science at Risk

White Paper

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Project: Science at Risk

scienceatrisk.org

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Current situation

Currently, we are at an existential point in survival of our sector and our country. However, possibly for the first time, our problems are of interest to the outside world, which is rediscovering Ukraine.

Science in Ukraine is in the greatest crisis of the century in the conditions of an unprecedented war and humanitarian catastrophe. The functioning of science in general, scientific organizations and scientists in such extreme conditions is associated with many risks. They fundamentally disrupted the usual procedure of scientific activity and pose a threat to the lives of Ukrainian scientists.

This is exacerbated by numerous pre-existing problems of insufficient funding of Ukrainian science, scientists being forced to barely get by, as well as ineffective, inconsistent and incomplete attempts of institutional reforms. There is not enough clear interaction and cooperation with international organizations.

Expertise on preserving science in crisis is developed by individual institutions, essentially under fire — it is important to communicate this anti-crisis experience to the world scientific community and reflect on the experiences of other countries that can be emulated.

Now is the time to start working towards a relaunch of the Ukrainian science after the war.

Ukrainian science needs high-quality communication, that is, one that would clearly outline its boundaries, possibilities and limitations, sincere communication. This is possible only if communication is carried out while maintaining Ukraine's agency. It is critical to tell the world stories about Ukrainian science and Ukrainian expertise. Currently, this task is assigned not to the designated ministry, not to the international departments of universities and research institutes, but to the Ukrainian Institute under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as one of many facets of cultural diplomacy.

The most successful practices of communication support for reforms in Ukraine and the world have not been analyzed.

Attitudes and stereotypes about Ukrainian science have not been identified.

Institutional support tools have not been developed, there are no models of how to do it.

No tools or practical recommendations for scientist groups have been collected.

The state should adapt more flexibly and use international institutional *Science at Risk* networks.

There is a need to generate ideas that can already be implemented with limited financial and non-financial resources that are currently available or can be quickly engaged. It is also important to start forming a pool of ideas for the future and tasks for the state, in particular regarding legislative changes in the field of science and innovation. Ukraine has to create a pool of project proposals which can be interesting and funded by private donors. It is also important to have these ideas discussed with key actors in this sector in Ukraine and promote them on the external market.

Vision

At the end of 2023, the working group «Communicating Science at Risk» envisions itself as a professional structured team of like-minded peers. It has a sufficient level of expertise and motivation to work for the promotion and establishment of systemic communications in the field of science and innovation in the conditions of wartime and post-war Ukraine, for the sake of the intellectual community associated with Ukrainian science.

The key goals for the development of a multi-level communication strategy have been identified. Professional teams of communications specialists have been engaged. Communication with the public and key stakeholders has been significantly improved by promoting the developed key messages and communication campaigns.

The launch of the communication strategy and its derivatives (marketing plan, communication plan, branding, press plan, digital strategy, crisis communications plan) is coordinated with other concepts, strategies and plans, in particular organizational ones pertaining to the activity of the Ukrainian network and the Science at Risk platform.

The implementation of the strategy contributes to the achievement of the main goals of the organization, cooperation with partners, public awareness of the essence of our work, activation of investment in this sector, restoration of the equipment base; it affects the emergence of a permanent active core audience and a pool of public experts in the sector. Implementation of the strategy is aimed at supporting competitiveness, sustainability, cooperation, dissemination, visibility, accessibility, diversity, and development of the audience.

A stable flow of information for key partners, mechanisms of constant interaction with media of various levels have been ensured. Content is generated for representatives of various target audiences who are interested in various aspects and focuses of scientific activity. A list of the most important target groups has been formed, which must include internal audience — scientists and people involved in this sector. Guidelines for the creation and distribution of a history of accomplishments by specific scientists or in specific science fields together with the media have been developed. The most effective channels of communication with each target group have been selected.

Partnerships and an updated attractive modern recognizable brand of the Ukrainian science have been developed as part of the brand of Ukraine (as indicated in the Lugano project).

Target audience

- Ukrainian scientists;
- Ukrainian media;
- Foreign media;
- International donors;
- Ukrainian scientific governmental organizations (research and educational institutions);
- Ukrainian scientific non-governmental organizations;
- International scientific organizations;
- Ukrainian science-intensive and socially responsible business and business associations;
- Ukrainian civil society organizations and think tanks that have successful experience in reform advocacy;
- Public authorities;
- Marketing and communications sector, IT sector.

Primary, key, and secondary stakeholders

Ukrainian scientific sector

Ukrainian scientists *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. key speakers—scientists and experts who are ready to actively cover the topic and conduct public discussions, are ready to engage in public communications with the media;
2. a pool of scientists with primary or additional specialization as promoters of science;
3. scientists who will volunteer to be ambassadors of Ukrainian science and its individual sectors;
4. promising young scientists interested in developing recognizable personal brands and entering the public sphere;
5. scientists with managerial skills, experience in conducting communication and advocacy campaigns;
6. Ukrainian analysts ready to study the state of Ukrainian science;
7. Ukrainian scientists interested in documenting Ukrainian science at risk, personal stories.

Media sector

Ukrainian media *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. Media managers, editors, and journalists with a scientific background and scientists with an additional career in the media;
2. The most influential editorial offices of the Ukrainian media;
3. Niche media for the promotion of science;
4. Professional scientific media;
5. Blogs for the promotion of science and critical thinking on social networks;
6. Influencers promoting science, critical thinking, subjects related to Ukraine;
7. Blogging groups on various digital platforms of the biggest social networks.

The international community

Foreign media *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. The most influential editorial offices of the world scientific media;
2. Key media of strategic partner countries with a high representation of scientists among their authors;
3. Niche media for the promotion of science in various subject areas;
4. Specialized professional scientific media of the international level.

International donors *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. International foundations whose focus is supporting scientists and institutions at risk;
2. International foundations whose focus is supporting information security, fight against disinformation, supporting civil society institutions and democracy.

International scientific organizations *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. International scientific organizations in which Ukrainian and pro-Ukrainian scientists are actively involved.

Civil society sector (civil society institutions)

Ukrainian scientific non-governmental organizations *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. Scientific NGOs, whose statutory tasks include the promotion and advocacy of the scientific sphere;
2. Socially involved advocacy NGOs representing the interests of various social groups in the authorities who want to participate in strategic planning and policy development in the interests of their target groups.

Ukrainian civil society organizations and think tanks that have successful experience in reform advocacy *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. Non-governmental organizations;
2. Advisors and consultants at state bodies.

Government sector

Ukrainian scientific governmental organizations (academic and university science) *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. Communication management at NASU;
2. Communication management in university research.

Public authorities *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. High-level public authorities;
2. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (Parliament);
3. The President of Ukraine, Office of the President;
4. The government, government officials, civil servants of the highest level.

Business sector

Business sector of marketing and communications, IT sector *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. Partners in the implementation of information and communication technologies.

Ukrainian science-intensive and socially responsible business and business associations *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. Socially responsible business investing in public-private partnerships and civil society projects;
2. Ukrainian science-intensive business;
3. Business associations, their web resources and communication networks.

General public

Respondents of public opinion polls *(primary stakeholders)*:

1. Other citizens participating in the feedback, interested in expressing their evaluations and suggestions on the topic of science at risk;
2. Informed public activists, motivated to be active in feedback and dissemination of information;
3. Parents of candidates on the labor market from among young people with scientific ambitions and interest in a scientific career.

Research methodology

- Expert interviews in key areas;
- Survey via Google Forms online (targeted);
- SWOT analysis;
- Collection of communication cases for further analysis;
- Expert survey of active scientists, communication specialists, media managers using the «snowball» method in order to find messages and priority channels of communication and to receive feedback;
- Basic media analysis of previous communications experience;
- Discourse analysis of the media — finding out the share of materials in the information field with a positive, neutral, negative tonality;
- Primary identification of stable stakeholder groups with lasting social and institutional interests for clear targeting of communication measures.

Communication channels

- Web platform of the project;
- Official web resources and social networks of pilot institutes;
- Media with a focus on science;
- Niche media for the promotion of scientific knowledge;
- Personal pages of key speakers and stakeholders on social media.

Risks

Internal TOP-5

- The lack of new leaders and managers of Ukrainian science in the media landscape and public sphere, who would work according to modern standards and have recognizable and influential personal brands and would like to act as ambassadors of changes in the communication of Ukrainian science;
- Critically low pay for scientists in the field relative to average salaries on the Ukrainian labor market, which carries a reputational risk. The risk of brain drain of project advocates to other sectors and other countries with better conditions;
- Predominance of current affairs over strategic goals and latent conflict of interests between vertical (formal hierarchical) and horizontal (informal) internal communications, considering that one of the key target groups is scientists;
- The insufficiency and weakness of niche media and specialized platforms for the promotion of Ukrainian science;
- Lack of communication budgets available in scientific institutions. Lack of relevant experience, knowledge, skills, qualifications necessary for rebuilding the communications of science at risk.

External TOP-5

- Low representation of the subject of science at risk in the public space through public event platforms (expert panels and briefings, seminars and conferences, community events, events with regional and national or international background);
- The decline in government grants for science and a complex and excessively regulated external support mechanism, in addition to the reduction of government funding in Ukraine. American and European scientists trying to promote new projects of cooperation and support of Ukrainian science will be forced to cancel them due to the fact that the Ukrainian legislation may directly contradict the legislation of Western countries or charters of universities and science associations to which they belong;

- Low level of citizens' trust in the scientific sphere and scientists and, in general, unidentified public attitudes and stereotypes regarding Ukrainian science;
- The status of a scientific expert becoming vague and devalued in the Ukrainian media, particularly due to the lack of awareness among journalists and the absence of scientific and cultural journalism;
- Cyber threats related to data protection, digital security, public communications. Primarily, this applies to scientists working in the military sector.

For more detail, see the SWOT analysis (in Ukrainian).

A set of tools and solutions

Strategic vectors

- Providing communication support to Ukrainian science at risk carried out at the strategic, program, and project levels;
- Development of teams and a pool of experts ready for public communications and setting up workflow;
- Creation of a directional strategy and a communication strategy, as well as testing of isolated cases;
- Creation of original content as possible, communicating the expertise of Ukrainian scientists;
- Brand positioning;
- A recognizable brand;
- Making the voice of Ukrainian scientists prominent in Ukraine and worldwide;
- Tone of voice and brand identity;
- Development of brand advocates;
- Identifying the brand's emotional territory;
- Market segmentation and in-depth analysis of the target audience;
- Work with external and internal audience triggers;
- Development of crisis communications guidelines.

What will contribute to the realization of the vision:

- Engaging facilitators and identifying the leaders of sub-vectors working with expert teams;
- Identifying the promotion of the brand of Ukrainian science for the key target audiences based on approved strategic vectors as a strategic priority;
- Using detailed segmentation of the target audience as expedient at the level of the communication program and projects;
- Understanding the range of effective formats and their use in the marketing White Paper and short-term projects, as well as a more long-term communication strategy.

Solutions:

1. Formats of science promotion in the media space and, on a broader scale, in society of wartime and post-war Ukraine;
2. Formats of internal horizontal and vertical communications;
3. Formats of external inter-institutional, inter-governmental and international communications of Ukrainian science at risk.

- Developing a list of practical proposals and key messages and activities regarding the main groups of stakeholders and the expected change in behavior;
- Establishing sustainable cooperation with key stakeholders.

Solutions:

1. Creation of expert focus groups based on the main thematic areas of cooperation with key stakeholders;
2. Development and launch of pilot projects;
3. Development of partnership formats.

- Conducting a number of preliminary studies, for their findings to feed into a comprehensive communication strategy for Ukrainian science at risk.

Solutions:

1. meta-analysis of the experience of successful initiatives in different countries;
2. analysis of the experience of international initiatives working for Ukraine in 2022.

Main contradictions

Potential obstacles to realizing the vision:

- disorganized internal communication;
- insufficient prioritization of brand promotion;
- insufficient experimentation with communication formats and products;
- insufficient motivation of key stakeholders;
- incomplete communication strategy.

Expected positive effect from the change

The new model for communicating science at risk will facilitate:

- overcoming a certain vacuum of factual material and analytics about the Ukrainian reality of science at risk;
- forming a better understanding among donors of what needs to be financed;
- prioritization of attention to the communication vector as one of the strategic vectors for Ukrainian science at risk;
- development of general messages at all stages of the communication strategy;
- development of communication matrices for working with key stakeholders.

Step-by-step plan for realistic cases for 2023

Formation and promotion of personal brands of Ukrainian and pro-Ukrainian scientists in Ukrainian and foreign media

- creating video presentations in Ukrainian for expert databases and contact libraries of reputable Ukrainian media;
- creating video presentations in English for expert databases and contact libraries of reputable foreign media;
- creating guidelines for the production of video presentations as a media product for Ukrainian video productions as well as Ukrainian and foreign media;
- setting up a network of partner media that will regularly engage Ukrainian scientists as experts.

Creation of a training program for the formation and development of personal brands of Ukrainian scientists on the Prometheus platform. Those who passed the course successfully should receive an opportunity to conduct a primary study of their personal brand, develop a content plan to promote their personal brand, arrange a professional photo shoot, form a portfolio and a CV for Ukrainian and international audiences, record video presentations.

- development of educational and practical parts of the course, selection of teachers and mentors, taking into account the experience of winter schools «Brand of a Scientist and Digitalization of Education»;
- recording of educational videos of the online part of the course;
- a grant for the first wave of scientists selected through the competition;
- in cooperation with universities — courses with an optional advanced level based on specific requests.

Initiation of a project to document the personal stories of Ukrainian scientists and their experience in scientific and public activities over 2022–2023.

- establishing cooperation with memory institutions;
- establishing an initiative group of the project; seeking financing, development of project documents, particularly on the procedure of archiving and their further use; handling the issues of sampling, security and ethical issues;
- preparation for the work of researchers, starting the recording of interviews.

Studying stereotyping of the images of science and scientists in Ukrainian media. Learning how stereotypes and selective interpretations affect public opinion.

- identifying the main stereotypes in the image of Ukrainian scientists and science with positive and negative, functional and dysfunctional media effects which form the communication context;
- determining the role of opinion leaders in the dissemination of the identified stereotypes.

Conducting a discourse analysis of the subject and a content analysis of the frequency of scientists being engaged as experts by media of various levels (national, regional, local, niche).

- identifying the specifics of the thematic breakdown in the context of the studied problem;
- this can be done not only by research groups, but also by graduate and postgraduate students as part of their research papers;
- the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods during the research of media publications will make it possible not only to describe, but also to categorize and structure the array of data according to the selected parameters.

Conducting a sociological study of the image of Ukrainian science and the image of Ukrainian scientists among high-ranking civil servants, MPs, representatives of international foundations, embassies.

- expert survey (using the standardized interview method) of responsible officials (150–200 people);
- this can be done in cooperation with specialized research centers and sociological agencies.

Development of a communication strategy for promoting the topic of Ukrainian science in wartime, with a focus on key stakeholders.

Appendices:

Questionnaires of participants in expert interviews as part of the working group on the preparation of the White Paper (in Ukrainian).

SWOT analysis (in Ukrainian).

A list of 2022 cases proposed for the analytical study (in Ukrainian).

Coverage of Ukrainian science in foreign and national media (in Ukrainian).

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