

Global Ukraine News, Marta Diomochko

Science without borders

Conversation partners:

Co-initiators of the UKRainian Academic International NEtwork (the UKRAINE Network) and co-founders of the German-Ukrainian Academic Society (www.ukrainet.eu),

- Neurobiologist Olga Garaschuk, Professor at the University of Tübingen, the President of the Society
- Chemist Matthias Epple, Professor at the University Duisburg-Essen, Vice-President of the Society
- Physicist Oksana Seumenicht (Ciupka), PhD in Biology, International Relations Manager, Max Delbrueck Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC) in the Helmholtz Association (Berlin), Managing director of the Society

Marta Diomochko:

1. *How did the idea of creating the organisation come about?*

Oksana Seumenicht (Ciupka):

The idea of the UKRainian Academic International NEtwork (The UKRAINE Network)¹ emerged at the beginning of 2015. There was a feeling that Ukrainians worldwide, awakened by the recent events, this time were prepared to make an effort to support the real change in Ukraine. Although at first everyone primarily aimed at helping with the humanitarian aid, gradually the awareness grew that it might be more useful, if everyone will do what s/he does best. In our case - it meant sharing the knowledge and expertise and involving our professional contacts in the internationalisation of science and higher education. First of all, our network aims at fostering international academic cooperation and speeding up Ukraine's integration into the European (and global) Research Area. Also, a certain role in realising the need for such a network played the so-called "hybrid warfare", namely the fact that there is not much known abroad about Ukraine, the achievements of Ukrainian science and scientists of Ukrainian origin are practically unknown - neither in Ukraine nor worldwide. Around that time, at one of the events in Berlin for scientific attachés from the embassies of various countries I was asked where I came from. When I replied "*from Ukraine*", I was kindly answered "*Ah, yes, we have heard of Ukraine, furthermore our kitchen-helper actually comes from Ukraine*". Perhaps this episode became for me the one last straw and prompted me to act, so Ukrainians are known not only for their hard work and good cooking skills, but also as inventors and winners of many of the famous scientific awards, as professors and heads of departments of leading Western universities, as institute directors of the Max Planck Society, one of the most respected scientific organisations in Germany. Thus, our goal is also to consolidate and spread this information to improve the visibility of Ukrainian scientists and their achievements both in Ukraine and abroad.

However, as one says in Ukraine, "*один в полі не воїн*" / *the voice of one is the voice of none*, therefore it was necessary to find other persons supporting these ideas. The first cohort of supporters consisted of my institute colleagues and neuroscientists Vitalii and Maryna Matyash, Tetiana Kovalchuk (now Kosten, a Consulting Associate at the Charles River

¹ <http://ukrainet.eu/>

Associates Consulting in Munich, she, by the way, developed our logotype), the biologist Dmytro Puchkov from the Leibniz Institute for Molecular Pharmacology (FMP) at the Campus Berlin Buch, and my acquaintances the linguist Olesia Lazarenko and the historian Andrii Portnov, who represents the Forum of the Transregional Studies and heads the “Prisma Ukraïna—Research Network Eastern Europe”². Olesia and Dmytro are currently coordinating the local group of our network in Berlin and Brandenburg. Our colleague here, the neuroscientist Olga Garashchuk, professor at the University of Tübingen and director of the 2nd Institute of Physiology there, not only reacted positively to the idea of the network, but made a considerable effort and devoted significant time to further develop and implement our joint activities. In fact, the idea of founding the German-Ukrainian Academic Society (Die Deutsch-Ukrainische Akademische Gesellschaft e.V.), which will be discussed below, as a non-governmental non-profit organisation to support the network in Germany, belongs to Olga.

First of all, we felt it is important to organise a kind of networking event/ conference with colleagues and representatives of leading scientific organisations. Such a meeting aimed to draw attention to the German-Ukrainian academic cooperation and offered a platform to discuss the prospects of intensifying them. At the same time we wanted to understand whether in Germany there is a critical mass of scientists ready to support the idea of such a network. It is important to emphasise the key feature of our shared vision of this network: we see it as truly international, i.e. not limited neither by the nationality/ origin of its members, nor by state borders (although we start from Germany, but as one says in Ukraine “Нашого цвіту по всьому світу”/ *The flower of our nation blooms all round the world*). In this sense, we are not a true Diaspora organisation, and we are open and strongly encourage the participation of our fellow non-Ukrainians, who have long been cooperating with Ukrainian researchers or interested in establishing closer ties with colleagues in Ukraine, or study our language or history, etc.

One should be aware that scientists are "global nomads" and represent perhaps one of the most mobile occupations. Unlike almost any other profession, in modern science it is the norm to graduate from a university in one country, get a Master's degree in another, further improve academic skills in the third country e.g. as a post-doc, and after reaching a certain academic level and recognition, to receive a professorship on a competitive basis in a country, where there are best conditions for carrying out your research and teaching. For example, at the MDC, where I currently work, about a half of graduate students (more than 350) are foreigners, and about a third of research group leaders are non-Germans. The phrase "science without borders" became already almost a cliché, but it is interesting to note that, for example, “...the post of Foreign Secretary of the Royal Society [one of the oldest scientific organisations in Europe, O.S.C.] was instituted in 1723, nearly 60 years before the British Government appointed its first Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”³. Scientists often identify themselves as experts, specialists in e.g. physics or history, and this belonging to the expert circle is one of the defining features of identity. I stress this here, because when I started sharing the idea about the network with some former compatriots, there were also some sceptics: *"I am interested to communicate with colleagues in my field, and I do not care whether they are Ukrainians or not"* or *"I already got joint grants with colleagues in Ukraine, I employ Ukrainian graduate students, and I do not see the "added value" of such an*

² <http://www.forum-transregionale-studien.de/en/forum/programs-and-initiatives/prisma-ukraina.html>

³ New frontiers in science diplomacy, Publication of The Royal Society of Great Britain, 2010, https://royalsociety.org/~media/Royal_Society_Content/policy/publications/2010/4294969468.pdf

organisation". However, remembered from the childhood Symonenko's lines "Можна все на свімі вибирати, сину, вибрати не можна тільки Батьківщину"/ *You can choose most things in this world, my son, but the thing you can't choose is your Motherland*" still determines to a certain extent the self-identification of many representatives of the Ukrainian research diaspora and we found many truly motivated colleagues willing to join efforts.

Our first Networking event^{4,5}, where our network was launched, took place in Berlin in January 2016. The number of participants – more than 200 persons – surpassed our most optimistic expectations, and such a considerable resonance astonished our German partners, with whom we organised this, without exaggeration, remarkable German-Ukrainian scientific event. The participants, including leaders of key scientific funding organisations and of the German government, discussed a wide range of topics related to perspectives of German-Ukrainian academic cooperation, exchanged ideas on the main directions of necessary reforms in higher education and science in Ukraine. Scientists, who supported the establishment of the network, spoke in different panels: mathematician Olexandra Antoniuk, the president of the Humboldt Club of Ukraine, which unites former fellowship-holders of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation; mathematician Olga Byegunova, advisor at the MT AG; biologist and biotechnologist Yury Gleba, academician of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and founder of a few biotech companies; mathematician Yuri Kondratiev, professor at the University of Bielefeld; microbiologist Andriy Luzhetskyy, professor at the University of Saarland and research group leader at the Helmholtz Centre for Infectious Research; physicist Denys Makarov, research group leader at the Helmholtz Centre Dresden-Rossendorf. By the way, both Andriy and Denys won prestigious ERC starting grants. During this two-day event we also organised informal round-tables devoted to academic career development, both in academic and industrial setting. Generally speaking, support of early-career researchers, both in Ukraine and the members of our network abroad, is one of the key goals of our network.

2. Who do you cooperate with in Germany ?

Certainly, the realisation of our first initiative would have been much more modest without decisive support of the main German organisations, which support science and international academic cooperation: foremost the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the German Research Foundation (DFG), as well as two relevant German federal ministries – the Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AA). It is thanks to the success and our joint organisation of this first Networking event, which brought together students and young scientists, heads of research laboratories and university departments, directors of institutes, representatives of ministries from both Germany and Ukraine, that we were able to attract attention and demonstrate the real extent of mutual interest to the German-Ukrainian cooperation. We believe it is not just by chance that our initiative originated in Germany and gained such a serious support from German research funding organisations. Germany is a leading cooperation country for Ukrainian scientists, based on the number of joint publications with foreign scientists. And for Ukrainian students Germany is second only to Poland as a study destination country, at the same time Ukraine holds the seventh place among the countries of origin of foreign students in Germany. After the collapse of the Soviet Union a large proportion of Ukrainian researchers relocated to Germany and established their academic

⁴ http://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/dfg_magazin/internationales/160128_ukraine-treffen/programm.pdf

⁵ <https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/28328688.html>

career here (third place after the USA and Russia). We will continue to keep close contacts with the aforementioned organisations in Germany as well as with, for example, the DAAD Information Centre in Kyiv, the Humboldt Club of Ukraine, the German Embassy in Ukraine and Ukraine's one in Germany, colleagues from Ukrainian universities, Councils of young scientists in Ukraine, Ministry of Education and Science, Foundation for Basic Research of Ukraine, etc.

3. *How has the process of the organisation building taken place?*

The Ukrainian Academic International Network is still in its early days, but we believe our first joint activities will attract a wider range of researchers, not only in Germany, but also in other countries. Our network exists primarily in virtual space: a LinkedIn group⁶, which currently counts more than 280 members from nearly 20 countries, serves as a basic information platform, as well as a regular electronic newsletter, with more than 420 subscribers (January 2016). We envisage our network as a dynamic multi-dimensional matrix, which is maintained by proactive members, who join forces locally as regional groups, organise research area-specific and so-called "strategic" groups (research funding, promotion of science, etc.), alumni clubs of Ukrainian universities, etc. We already have an active local branch in Berlin and Brandenburg, mentioned above, which organises a regular Lecture series "First hand science" in Ukrainian, which is supported by the Ukrainian Embassy in Berlin. Several colleagues volunteered to be representatives in a number of cities in Germany and there is a "national contact point" in the UK. Currently, local branches in Dresden and the Ruhr region (Düsseldorf, Essen, and Bonn) are in the process of being formed. It is important to stress that we believe in the so-called "bottom up" and grass-root approach and try on the one hand effectively support the initiative of individual scholars, and on the other - to initiate effective and sustainable formats of activities, which could serve as a convenient and reliable platform for knowledge exchange and sharing of experiences, to help with finding cooperation partners, and so on.

As to ensure that our network could count on a stable and legally underpinned support in Germany, already during our first Networking event in January, on Olga Garaschuk's proposal an initiative group of some 30 researchers and university professionals decided to establish the German- Ukrainian Academic Society (Die Deutsch-Ukrainische Akademische Gesellschaft e.V.). 16 scientists from 10 cities in Germany held the founding meeting of our society in July 2016. The legal process of formal registration of the society as a non-governmental charitable organization is currently undergoing*. Our colleague here Olga Garaschuk was elected the President of the Society, and chemist Matthias Epple as the vice-president. Physicist Nelia Wanderka, senior researcher at the Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin for Materials and Energy, was elected as the treasurer, and me, as its managing director. Four of us constitute the executive board of our society.

Olga Garaschuk:

⁶ <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8473594>

* After this interview has been published on 7 February (in Ukrainian), the Society has been formally registered in Berlin.

With pleasure I would like to note that our vision of the role and goals of our network, summarised by Oksana in the October issue of the *Research Europe*⁷ was noted and positively highlighted in the presentation given by the head of the expert group of the European Commission and former Director General of the Academy of Arts and Sciences of the Netherlands Mr. Hans Chang during the presentation⁸ of the audit report on scientific system of Ukraine⁹.

4. What are the main directions/ projects of your activities?

Oksana Seumenicht (Ciupka) and Olga Garaschuk:

One of our key objectives – is to inform, so we pay great attention to the dissemination of information about important events in Ukraine (such as the creation of the National Board for Science and Technology, amendments to legislation related to reforms in science and higher education, etc.), show examples of successful cooperation, introduce the Ukrainians-winners of important international prizes and awards, announce important international scientific events, both in Ukraine and organised in cooperation with the Ukrainian colleagues. It is also important for us to spread the knowledge about the research funding sources, international scholarships and grants for training and academic cooperation, and share first-hand experience and best practice on developing grant applications. This is done through our regular Newsletter, press releases, publications, web page (which is under development), the organisation of seminars and presentations, individual consulting, etc.

Members of our network also initiated and organised or participated as speakers in a number of joint summer schools for young scientists, specialised courses for undergraduate and graduate students, organised the training of Ukrainian scientists in their labs, etc.

Olga Garaschuk:

It is particularly worth mentioning the Summer School "Perspectives for young scientists in science and education"^{10,11} for students from Belarus, Poland and Ukraine, held in Strasbourg and Essen, and organised by the vice-president of our society and our co-discussant Prof. Matthias Epple; the first German-Ukrainian summer school-seminar "Perspectives for young scientists in life sciences"^{12,13}, organised by me and Oksana in collaboration with colleagues from Ivano-Frankivsk, as well as the first practical course in Cancer immunotherapy¹⁴, offered by the active member of our network Prof. Viktor Umansky (DKFZ, the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg, member of the Helmholtz Association) in Kyiv; workshops on preparing grant applications¹⁵, held in Kharkiv, Kyiv and Lviv by Dr. Irina Dovbischuk (University

⁷ "Grassroots and governments bolster ties with Ukraine" by Oksana Seumenicht, *Research Europe*, 20 October 2016: <http://www.researchresearch.com/news/article/?articleId=1363547>

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RrwAD406Mg>

⁹ http://bookshop.europa.eu/is-bin/INTERSHOP.enfinity/WFS/EU-Bookshop-Site/en_GB/-/EUR/ViewPublication-Start?PublicationKey=KIAX16002

¹⁰ <https://www.uni-due.de/de/presse/meldung.php?id=9516>

¹¹ <http://ukrainet.eu/files/newsletters/5.pdf>

¹² http://biochem.if.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=290:biochemif&catid=21:home5

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqBogxtcmSA>

¹⁴ <http://ukrainet.eu/files/newsletters/6.pdf>

¹⁵ <http://daad.org.ua/de/veranstaltungen.htm>

of Bremen), organised by the DAAD Information Centre in Ukraine. It is noteworthy, that the first two events also were supported by DAAD grants. The common goal of all these measures is to educate future scientific elite by addressing the most talented and socially active young scientists (so-called multipliers) and offering them knowledge both in core subjects (e.g. Life Sciences) and the so-called "soft skills", - skills on how to correctly communicate with colleagues, present scientific information, and so on.

Oksana Seumenicht (Ciupka):

Also interesting, in my opinion, was the first contest¹⁴ of blitz-presentations given by doctoral students, we organised in Berlin last September as part of a UkraineLab¹⁶ forum in collaboration with MitOst e.V.¹⁷ and supported by the Embassy of Ukraine in Germany. Five finalists - Ukrainian graduate students, who are studying different subjects at higher education institutions in Germany, from biotechnology to law, had five minutes to introduce themselves and to convey the essence of their scientific work to a wide range of lay audience. The jury consisted of scientists and experts from both exact and social sciences. Olena Lenchuk (Technical University of Darmstadt), who studies the properties of new composite materials and Oksana Huss (the University of Duisburg-Essen), whose thesis is devoted to investigation of corruption as a phenomenon in general and in Ukraine in particular, were awarded the first prize each. The second prize went to Mykhailo Dumchev (Leuphana University of Lüneburg), for his presentation on the detection of subatomic particles. The monetary part of the prizes – EUR 1,500 for the first two, and EUR 500 – for the second place was generously provided by biotech company Nomad Bioscience GmbH, founded by professor Yuri Gleba, the academician of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. We hope that we will be able to organise this contest every year, expanding its geography. It would, for example, be quite appropriate, in my view, for our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support such an activity, because achievements of our young scientists are the best advertisement of our country and these measures will certainly promote a more positive image of Ukraine in the world.

5. *What is your target audience?*

Oksana Seumenicht (Ciupka):

On the one hand – a scholarly environment, students and lecturers in any research areas from universities and research institutes, and, as noted above, regardless of the origin. On the other – a broader parts of the society, both in Ukraine and abroad. In our opinion, at times of economic crisis and war, it is especially important to share the thought among the general public that one of the preconditions of overcoming these crises is the revival of the scientific potential of the country, promotion of international partnerships, which in turn will underpin structural changes in both the society and the economy. Surely, this process is neither fast nor automatic. But there is no doubt that top-qualified professionals and a solid scientific basis (at least in some key areas, such as materials science, biotechnology and information technology), closely integrated into the European and world educational and scientific landscape, are a prerequisite for the success of Ukraine as an independent state and as an international partner, whom one is not giving the humanitarian aid, but respects and cooperates on equal terms. It is also important to provide more positive news about our country abroad, so the

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/UkraineLab/>

¹⁷ <http://www.mitost.org/en.html>

first association with Ukraine is, for example, the Churyumov-Gerasimenko comet and not the corruption or Chernobyl.

6. *How Ukraine is represented in the German academic space? In how far the "Ukrainian question"/ Ukrainian studies are popular among German scholars and how often the information about Ukraine can be found in German publications?*

Olga Garaschuk:

This is definitely a complex and multifaceted question lacking a simple answer. Therefore I will focus on few examples. The "Ukrainian question" you mentioned can be split into the following topics: (i) Ukrainian studies in the wider sense, including the study of language, history, customs, culture, etc .; (ii) scientific cooperation with Ukrainian scientists in different scientific fields ranging from logistics, economics, mathematics, physics to law and life sciences, and (iii) the interest in the current situation in Ukraine, including corruption, development of the civil society, the war in the East, the situation Crimea, information warfare, and so on. In Germany there is a genuine interest in in-depth study of all these issues, but it would be an exaggeration to say that this interest is shared by the large part of the academic community. For instance, at the Department of Slavonic Studies of the Greifswald University the Ukrainian language has been taught in depth for long time and there is the Summer School of Ukrainian Studies "Ukrainicum" organised annually (last year, by the way, it was for the 21st time). However, the funding for this programme has recently come under threat and it was saved at the last moment thanks to the funding line offered by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AA). The lack of an adequate knowledge-base on Ukraine, a very limited number of experts in Ukrainian studies in Germany and a strong wish to improve the understanding of motivation behind the actions of the Russian Federation outside its borders led to a decision of the German Federal government to establish a new Research Institute - The Centre for East European and International Studies in Berlin (by the way, the need to raise the competence and train more experts in this area was reflected in the current coalition agreement¹⁸ of the ruling parties in Germany).

At my home University of Tübingen, the Department of Slavonic Studies is also deeply involved in the study of the Ukrainian language and literature, but the recently opened course of spoken language cannot boast of the oversubscription. In addition, experts in Slavonic studies, historians and lawyers at the University maintain close research links with the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Kyiv and Lviv universities, etc. The same is true for the natural sciences. Germany has a fairly large Ukrainian scientific diaspora; there are relatively numerous joint research projects with Ukrainian scientists, and so on. However, it should be noted that the financial and political support for these projects is provided mainly by the German side. I wish that the Ukrainian side reciprocates these efforts, a stronger effort is given to both supporting the language policy (why will Germans going to Ukraine study the Ukrainian language, if it is not used as a rule even by local officials?) and to simplifying customs regulations on the import of scientific equipment, reagents, etc. not to mention the financial support for joint research projects.

Matthias Epple:

¹⁸ <http://www.zois-berlin.de/ueber-uns/warum-ein-neues-institut/>

Ukraine is increasingly present in the German (academic) society, but it is noteworthy that many Germans (including scientists) still believe that every person from the former Soviet Union is Russian. Consequently, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia and other countries must make themselves more present as individual states in the common conscience. In general, after Euromaidan, Ukraine is increasingly perceived as an individual country (and not a part of Russia), but this perception still needs to be strengthened. The image of Ukrainian science in Germany is generally positive, but (as with Russia), still associated with Soviet-style academia (like a National Academy of Sciences that we do not have in Germany). The fact that many senior scientists in Ukraine are far beyond the retirement age in Germany (65 to 67 years) does not help. Ukraine needs to be represented by young people who are enthusiastic for science and believe in their country, while still working there and not in emigration.

The fact that Ukraine is an independent country, looking to Europe, and not a satellite of Russia, needs to be repeated constantly, to raise public awareness. For comparison, this is not the case for the Baltic States anymore, but many Germans believe that Belarus is not an independent country but simply a part of Russia (or a dependent satellite country without its own direction, strictly following the orders from Moscow).

7. *Is it difficult to be a Ukrainian scientist abroad? Are there any significant differences from the similar occupation in Ukraine?*

No, not at all. Frankly speaking, it is much easier than currently in Ukraine. Of course, a lot depends on age, language skills and adaptive abilities of the person. Young scientists (students, graduate students, young PhDs) adapt instantly, quickly acquiring the scientific communication style, the quality standards and learn to work as a team. Since the research groups in Germany are very international, social adaptation happens fast as well. Also at almost every campus there is organised Ukrainian diaspora community, which also helps with adapting to new conditions. Regarding significant differences from similar activities in Ukraine, it is first of all the access to modern equipment and availability of reagents. It is clear that large-scale purchase of equipment requires more resources, but the elimination of customs barriers and targeted support for transport from Germany and other countries of the equipment donated by sponsors already now could significantly improve the technical base at Ukrainian universities and research institutes. Remember that Ukrainian scientific community has quite a bit to offer to the world even with the meagre funding for science in recent decades. If we move to a more sustainable funding and rationally dispose the existing resources, we can quickly reach a qualitatively different situation. Members of our network and other scholars of Ukrainian descent are eager to provide necessary information and relevant "know how". Incidentally, the question of how to turn the "brain drain" into "brain circulation" was actively discussed by the participants of the above-mentioned recent summer school-seminar "Perspectives for young scientists in life sciences" in Ivano-Frankivsk (see above). Consolidated results were assembled in a so-called "white paper"¹⁹, which contains a number of tips on the implementation of the new scientific doctrine^{20,21,22} of the Ukrainian government, offered by the Ukrainian and foreign (German and Israeli) experts. By

¹⁹ http://ukrainet.eu/files/White_Paper_Aug2016.pdf

²⁰ <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/848-19>

²¹ <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1060-12>

²² <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1556-18>

the way, to some extent they overlap with the already mentioned recommendations of the international audit⁹.

8. *What advice can you give to those Ukrainian researchers, who wish to pursue their career in Germany?*

Olga Garaschuk:

They are a few. First for the youth: foremost, learn English. This is of a critical importance for research activities not only in Germany, but also in Ukraine. Knowledge of German is certainly desirable, but lack of it will not be an obstacle at an early stage of your scientific career. Second, learn for knowledge, not for graduation. We have traditionally had a good academic school, which is not inferior and sometimes even superior to an average Western academic school. Pay attention to the study of the exact sciences, it can provide you with an advantage in comparison to scientists from other countries. Third, try at the very early age (of course here I mean your scientific career) to get to an international summer school. This will offer you an opportunity to assess your strengths and weaknesses and understand what scientific topics are at the forefront both in terms of research funding and employment. Try to get an internship abroad. In Germany, the lion's share of such programmes is funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Do not be afraid that you will not be accepted, or that you do not know something: there is a wonderful time in everyone's life when you can really know not much, but the perseverance and the desire to learn is of paramount importance. All the above tips are also valid for more senior scholars, but in their cases, the path often runs through collaboration, joint projects, etc.

Matthias Epple:

In Germany, even at the PhD level, research is more independent than in Ukraine. Young people should be willing to express and present their own ideas to potential supervisors who will usually welcome this. English is a must, but German knowledge (even acquired during the PhD) will help to accommodate in Germany, both in science and in private life. Ethics in science is taken very seriously in Germany, including the avoidance to duplicate others' results. A critical consideration of own results with the (international!) state of the art is necessary to avoid work in a worn-out direction. A rigorous approach to these points will help to integrate into the German scientific system. If young people want to stay in Germany after their PhD, a strong knowledge of German is required; a strong knowledge of English is a prerequisite, which is expected from everybody without even mentioning it.

Oksana Seumenicht (Ciupka):

From my side, especially based on my previous experience as a coordinator of an international graduate programme at the MDC, I would like to wish our students as soon as possible to overcome inferiority complexes – I have heard e.g.: "You have such a strong competition, I would not dare event to try." Science is indeed a highly competitive field, but as they say in Ukraine "you do not have to be the God to do pottery". For example, it is our compatriot mathematician Ostap Okhrin, who became the youngest professor in Germany²³, professor

²³ <http://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/job/uni-blitzkarriere-deutschland-juengster-professor-liebt-die-mathematik-a-594755.html>

Alexej Verkhratsky at the University of Manchester in the UK is among the top 30 most cited European researchers in the field of basic neuroscience²⁴ and there is already some dozen of Ukrainians who won the most prestigious grants of the European Research Council (ERC starting grants).

PHOTOS:

Main photo:

Some founding members of the German-Ukrainian Academic Society e.V. at the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research in Berlin on occasion of the conference “German-Ukrainian Dialogue: Perspectives for education and science” (from left to right:

Prof. Dr. Oleg Davydov (Univ. Gießen), Dr. Oksana Seumenicht (MDC, Berlin), Prof. Dr. Yuri Kondratiev (Univ. Bielefeld), Dr. Roman Dubasevych (Univ. Greifswald), Dr. Tetyana Yevsa (MHH/HZI), Dr. Denys Makarov (HZDR), Prof. Dr. Olga Garaschuk (Univ. Tübingen), Prof. Dr. Anna Hayduk (H. Heilbronn), and the co-founder of the Ukrainian Science Club Prof. Dr. Natalia Shulga (2nd from right) and Vira Makovska (Univ. Greifswald, first on the right).

Photo: Courtesy of Igor Magrilov, www.berlin-visual.com

Collage (page 2):

At the first Networking event, 28 January 2016, Berlin. Photos courtesy of the DAAD/Zensen

Group photo (page 2)

Participants of the summer school “Perspectives for young researchers in science and education”, organised by Professor Matthias Epple, 23 August 2016. Photo: courtesy of M. Epple/ University Duisburg-Essen

Group photo (p.3)

At the intensive course on cancer immunotherapy, organised in Kyiv by Professor Viktor Umansky, German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ, Heidelberg) and by students of the Bogomolets National Medical University from the INgenius platform for the development of medicine and science in Ukraine. Photo: courtesy of Moe Nabil, INgenius

Photo (p. 3)

At the first PhD Thesis Presentation Contest, speaks Mykhailo Dumchev, Leuphana University, second place. Photo: courtesy of Dr Vasyl Motuz

Photo (p. 4)

Participants of the summer school in Ivano-Frankivsk at the practical classes, 25-31 July 2016. Photo: courtesy of Professor Volodymyr Luschak/ Vasyl Stefanyk Prykarpatian National University

²⁴ http://www.labtimes.org/labtimes/ranking/2016_01/