

University libraries in times of crisis: Supporting Ukrainian refugees through open innovation

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Web2Learn: 10 years innovating in digital education

- Established in 2014.
- We develop:
 - e-learning services
 - customized software (digital skills).
- **Active in EU grants** (Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, national funds).

Areas: professional training, citizen and open science, social innovation

16 ongoing EU-funded projects

> 3000 end users reached

Sectors:
Higher Education,
VET, School Education, Adult Education



Our EU-funded projects for Ukraine

W21

- **Baltics4UA**: Supporting Ukraine through citizen engagement at Baltic Universities, <https://baltics4ua.eu/>
- **GROMADA**: European universities supporting legal and community capacities for Ukraine's environmental recovery, <https://gromada-erasmus.eu/>
- **Welcome!**: Preparatory online school for children with migration background, <https://tinyurl.com/4h263rb8>
- **Data4UA**: Capacity Building for Data-Driven Cultural Heritage Management in Ukraine, <https://www.data4ua.eu/>



Plan of today's talk

Citizen science as a form of **citizen engagement** during warfare:

- **Understanding** citizen science
- Practising citizen science **during war**: Examples from Ukraine
- Forging **academic resilience** through open innovation

Our approach: citizen science manifested as:

- Citizen observations- **data collection**
- **Advocacy**

Citizen science (CS)

Fostering public engagement
in scientific research



Frits Ahlefeldt, Hiking.org

Definition

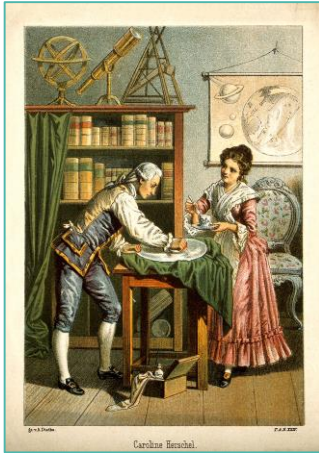
- Collective actions that bring together **ordinary people** and **scientists**.
- Citizen groups collaborate with the scientific communities by providing **observations, data and/or analysing them**.
- Citizens **collect and analyse data**, interpret and share research results. (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021).
- **10 principles of CS** (ECSA, 2015).



Background

18th century

Citizens observing
nature & sky



Caroline Herschel.



20th century

CS defined by Alan
Irwin (UK) & Rick
Bonney (USA) in '90s

21st century

Mainstreaming in
grassroots
communities schools,
universities, policies

Sources:

- UCL [History of citizen science](#).
- NASA. [Citizen Scientists of History](#)

Why it matters?

- An empowering pathway for both **citizens** and **science** built through public participation in scientific research. **People become agents and advocates of scientific breakthroughs!**
- **Multipurpose potential of**
 - a) advancing research;
 - b) combating misinformation;
 - c) fostering active citizenship and citizen advocacy;
 - d) opening up science to society.



Example: Water quality monitoring

Massive online participation

- World Water Monitoring Day
- Citizens are **equipped with monitoring tools** to record and analyse water quality (e.g. lakes, rivers, sea, creeks, streams, etc.).
- Data are registered online and accessible on the initiative's website.
- Link: <https://www.monitorwater.org/>



Beyond environmental research

Citizen science during the
Ukrainian war



War consequences on Ukrainian communities

- Conflicts pose a serious threat to the **natural and cultural heritage** of war-torn communities.
- Challenges in warfare: casualties and harms to wildlife, land mines, toxic hazards, water intoxication, human displacement (among others)
- **Environmental and health issues** disconnected from war related discourses.

Source: Zourou, K., Oikonomou, S. (2022). [Citizen science for environmental and health issues in conflict zones. ECSA Conference 2022](#). Berlin. Germany.

Monitoring environmental damages in Ukraine



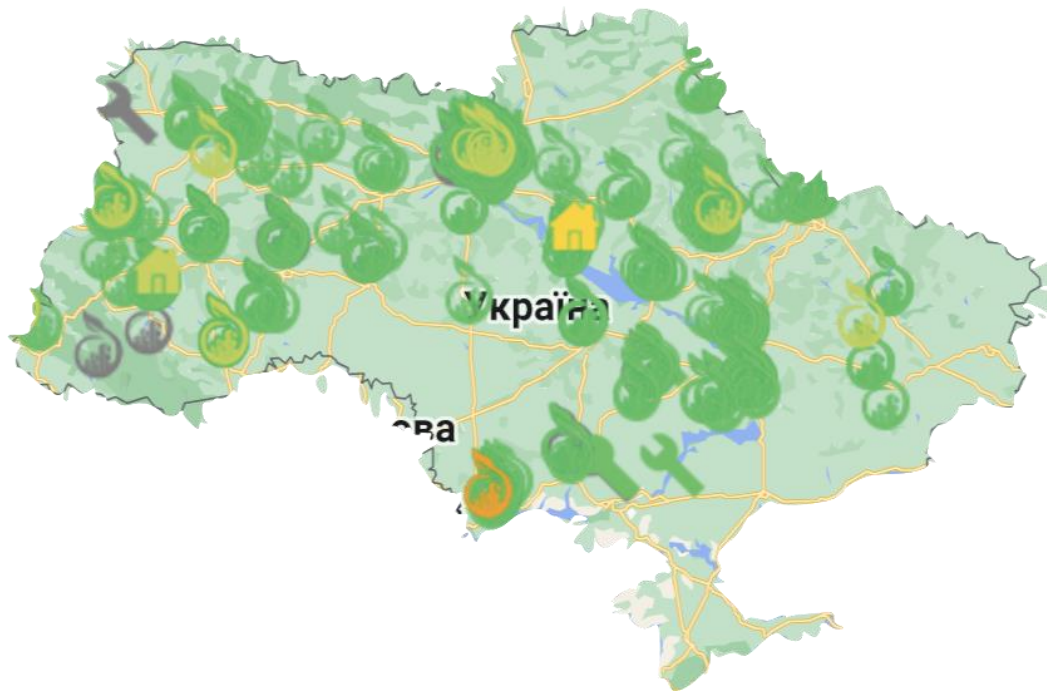
#1 Safecast; #2 Clean air for Ukraine



SAFECAST



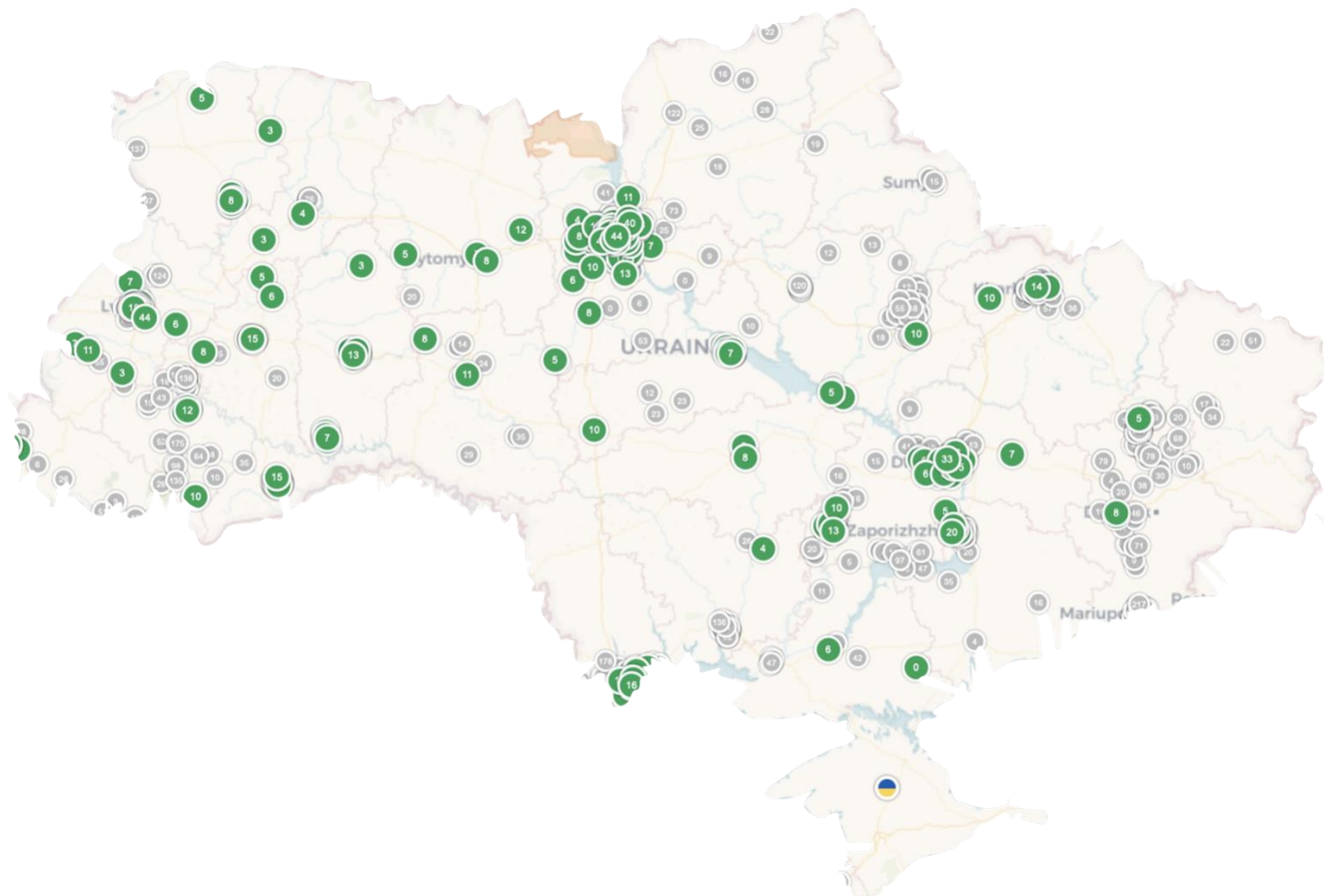
**CLEAN AIR
FOR UKRAINE**
cleanair.org.ua



#3 SaveEcoBot: Monitoring radiation levels and fires

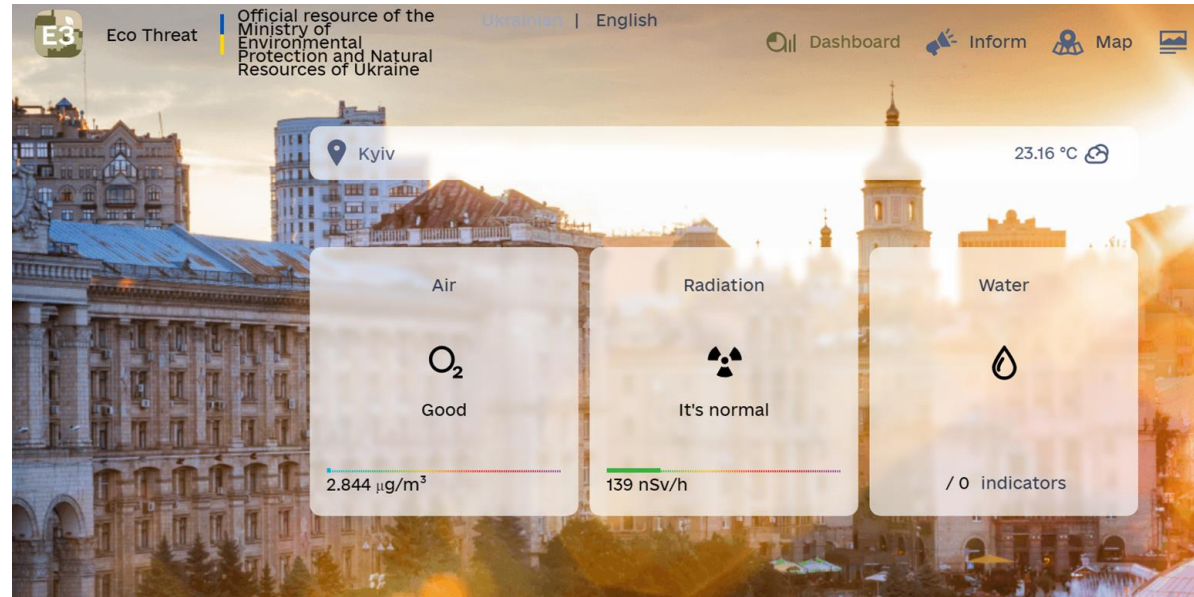


SaveEcoBot



#4 Ecozagroza: Monitoring air-water-radiation

- Collection and recording of information about **environmental threats in real-time.**
- By the Ukrainian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources.



Link: <https://ecozagroza.gov.ua/>

#5 Ukrainian student-driven citizen science actions

Testimonial from the Odessa State
Environmental University:

[Video](#)



Citizen science for advocacy and resilience



Image by pixabay

Beyond data collection: University libraries for citizen engagement in warfare

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- University libraries as **hubs of innovative actions** for refugees and displaced individuals:
 - Setting up crowd-based actions (hackathons, crowdfunding campaigns)
- **Multiple roles for libraries**
 - from mobilising resources,
 - to awareness raising, and
 - offering humanitarian relief.

Citizen science, hackathons, crowdfunding, crowdsourcing, do-it-yourself, art events, psychological counseling, podcast, campaign, public lectures, networking event, summer camp, working groups

Forging academic and societal resilience through open innovation

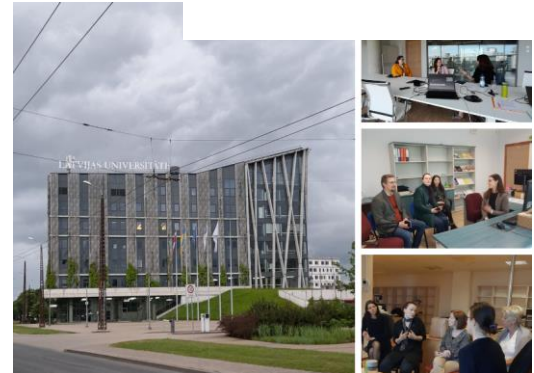


#1 The LibOCS project

W2L

University libraries-citizen science-opening up research

- **Upskilling** Baltic university librarians in citizen science.
- Aim: mainstream citizen science activities in Baltic university libraries **for social good**.
- **How**: Round tables, open access resources, consultations, information campaigns.
- Erasmus+ KA2 (2022-2024)
- Website: <https://www.libocs.ut.ee/>



#2 The AGILE project

W21

Universities-refugee crises-resilience

Kaunas Technology University (KTU) library for Ukrainian refugees:

- *art therapy sessions;*
- *social integration webinars;*
- *cross-cultural workshops*
- Total: **8** actions for **over 150** students



- Erasmus+ KA2 (2022-2025)
- Website: <https://agileproject-erasmus.eu/>



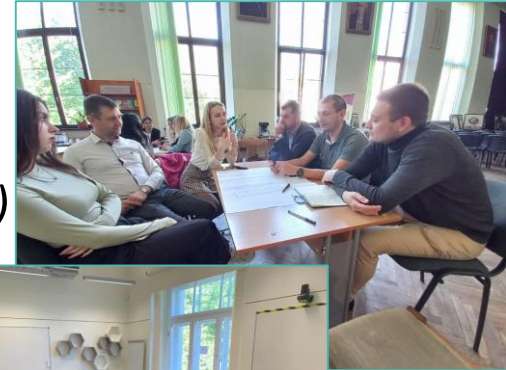
#3 The Baltics4UA project

W2I

Baltic universities-citizen engagement-Ukraine

Kaunas Technology University (KTU) library for Ukrainian refugees:

- *Public lecture on information war (15.11.2023)*
 - *Public exhibition “Fighting Ukraine“ (20.11.2023)*
 - *Community discussion “A Letter to Ukraine” (8.2.2024)*
 - *Meeting volunteers from Caritas (13.2.2024)*
-
- Erasmus+ KA2 (2023-2025)
 - Website: <https://baltics4ua.eu/>



#4 The GROMADA project

W21

Citizen science-Law-environmental justice-Ukraine



- Cultivating knowledge and expertise in legal dimensions of citizen-generated data.
- Students and academic staff meet with citizen science experts to enhance community-driven environmental monitoring and advocacy in Ukraine!
- Erasmus+ KA2 (2023-2025)
- Website: <https://gromada-erasmus.eu/>



References

1. ECSA (European Citizen Science Association). (2015). Ten Principles of Citizen Science. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/XPR2N>
2. Berti Suman, A., Zourou, K., Oikonomou, S., Gold, M., & Castell, N. (2024). Joining forces to meet the needs of (environmental) citizen science in conflict zones. European Citizen Science Conference 2024, Vienna, Austria. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10924956>
3. European Environmental Agency. (2019). Assessing air quality through citizen science. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/assessing-air-quality-through-citizen-science>
4. Zourou, K., Oikonomou, S. (2022). Citizen science for environmental and health issues in conflict zones. ECSA Conference 2022. Berlin. Germany. <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/zourouoikonomou-2022ecsa-2022-no-refspptx/253457506>
5. Zourou, K., Oikonomou, S. (2023). Baltic universities fostering citizen engagement through social actions for Ukrainian refugees. Baltics4UA. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7994655>
6. Berti Suman, A., Rojas, G., Panico, F. (2024). Mapping gaps and opportunities for community engagement in environmental matters in Ukraine. GROMADA consortium. <https://gromada-erasmus.eu/publications/mapping-gaps-and-opportunities-wp2a1/>

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Open, social learning

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