

Irish Federation of University Teachers calls on Irish universities and colleges to offer sanctuary to students, researchers and lecturers from Ukraine.

The Irish Federation of University Teachers, IFUT, is calling on Irish universities and colleges to offer sanctuary to students, researchers and lecturers from Ukraine.

General Secretary, Frank Jones says that the demand for such a response has come from members of the union working as academics and researchers in higher education who are speaking from a deep sense of frustration at the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the hardship that is being visited on the people of that country.

Mr. Jones says: "Watching the images in the media of the fear and hardship which is being inflicted upon the Ukrainian people, it is natural that our members feel a deep sense of frustration. In such circumstances they naturally think of responding in a manner which would benefit our colleagues and counterparts (staff and students alike)."

"IFUT's proposal is that researchers and academics could be offered work in their areas of specialisation for a temporary period, initially of one year's duration. We would also envisage that some students could be offered the opportunity to continue their studies in Ireland until such time as the situation in Ukraine returns to some acceptable level of safety and stability."

"We are also calling on Irish higher education institutions to make research facilities and access to libraries available on a temporary basis to Ukrainian researchers who may be unable to research, work or live in their own country. Again, the active support of Government departments and agencies would be indispensable for this to work."

IFUT recognises that, for its proposal to be implemented, the initiative would have to be supported not only by the various universities themselves but also by the Department of Further and Higher Education and the Federation is writing to both Minister Simon Harris and to the Irish University Association (IUA) to seek their support for the initiative. We are also confident that our colleagues in other trade unions and in the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) would be supportive of our call.

IFUT will also be proposing that other Higher Education trade unions internationally should take up the same call for practical solidarity. In this regard we are writing to the higher education and research committee of Education International.

Mr. Jones added; "Obviously, we are aware that there may be a sensitivity on the part of some members and institutions regarding issues of neutrality and non-alignment. However, we feel that there would be enormous support for a response to the current crisis which is practical in nature and reflects the sense of internationalism and collegiality which are the hallmarks of higher education right across the world."

Ends.