

Invisible University for Ukraine Convenes Winter School in Budapest on Pluralism, War, and the Global Public Sphere

BUDAPEST , HUNGARY, January 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- At a moment when Ukraine's struggle is increasingly debated across global political, cultural, and academic arenas, the [Invisible University for Ukraine](#) (IUFU) brings together scholars, students, artists, and civil society leaders for its 4th Winter School, "Coping with Difference: Unity, Plurality, and the Public Sphere in Wartime," hosted at [Central European University](#) (CEU), Budapest.

The Winter School situates Ukraine's wartime experience within global intellectual frameworks, addressing urgent questions of conflict, democracy, cultural identity, and postwar reconstruction. "The Invisible University for Ukraine is preparing students not only for the present emergency, but for a postwar situation in which reconstruction, civic engagement, and intellectual leadership will necessarily be international, not just national. This Winter School captures that moment particularly well: it brings together debates on crucial topics at a time when Ukrainian society is actively rethinking how it wants to rebuild itself," says [Balazs Trencsenyi](#), a Professor of History at CEU Vienna and Director of CEU Institute of Advanced Study in Budapest, co-organizer of IUFU.

By integrating academic research, civic practice, and artistic expression, the program offers multilayered perspectives on how societies negotiate differences in conditions of violence and uncertainty. Importantly, IUFU's intellectual output extends beyond the classroom: its scholars and students curate and develop their work through [Visible Ukraine](#), an interdisciplinary online publishing journal that amplifies Ukrainian voices in global public debates and ensures sustained international visibility for Ukrainian scholarship amid ongoing war pressures.

"IUFU represents both an emergency initiative reacting to a particular and hardly imaginable and unanticipated shock of a full-scale invasion dislocating hundreds of thousands of students and destroying the educational and civil infrastructure of the country, and a long-term tradition of offering alternative educational opportunities in situations when the conventional formats become unavailable. The IUFU avoided the simple model of a single university offering its own classrooms to Ukrainian students. From the beginning it was built on an international network of inspired scholars and students who wanted to contribute intellectual and other resources, adds Ostap Sereda, Program director, Associate Professor in History at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv and guest professor at Bard College Berlin. – For many of our students, it has been a genuinely life-changing experience – not only academically, but in terms of agency,

solidarity, and future responsibility,”

A Transnational Academic Community in Wartime

The Winter School brings together 50 selected participants from the IUFU student cohort – undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students whose education has been disrupted by Russia’s full-scale invasion. Through lectures, workshops, public discussions, and cultural events, participants engage with leading international scholars and practitioners to reflect on the war’s historical, political, and cultural dimensions, while developing strategies for resilient academic and civic institutions in Ukraine’s future.

The program explores Ukraine’s place in a complex global landscape, examining connections with the “Global South, debates around “decoloniality and (de-)Westernization, the changing role of “civil society, the politics of “minority rights and civic nationhood, the legacies of “state violence, and the intellectual and political histories of “feminism and gender politics “in Eastern Europe.

Key Program Highlights for Media Coverage

While the program addresses a wide range of themes, the following highlights may be of particular interest for interviews or media coverage. The full program is available in the attached document.

12–13 January | Global Engagement, Law, and Civil Society

The opening days focus on Ukraine’s international positioning and grassroots civic action. Discussions address global perceptions of war, Ukraine’s foreign relations beyond Europe, and the role of legal frameworks in sustaining democratic engagement. Workshops with representatives of Ukrainian volunteer initiatives – including humanitarian, legal, and defense-support organizations – offer concrete, on-the-ground perspectives on how civil society operates under wartime conditions. Evening film screenings (*The Last Prometheus of Donbass* (104’, 2025) with Anton Shtuka, moderated by Nataliia Shuliakova / *So Close You Almost Touch It* (10’, 2025) with Antonina Stebur, Valerie Karpan & Maryna Khrypun (Variable Name Collective), moderated by Sasha Kokhan) provide cultural entry points into these debates.

Among others:

Olexiy Haran (Kyiv-Mohyla Academy) & Volodymyr Lakomov (Director of the Department of MFA / Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary) in conversation with Maksym Yakovlyev (Kyiv-Mohyla Academy).

Valeria Korablyova, Ela Kwiecińska, Balázs Trencsényi & Ostap Sereda with Oksana Volovodiuk & Yuriy Betsko, moderated by Valerie Karpan & Maryna Khrypun

Liubov Halan / Pryntsyp, moderated by Sofiia Arakelian

16 January | Violence, Memory, and Feminist Histories

A central thematic day examines socialist and post-socialist legacies of state violence,

reproductive justice in Soviet Ukraine, and the transnational intellectual history of feminism. These sessions connect historical analysis with present-day struggles over rights, memory, and power, offering rich material for in-depth cultural and historical reporting.

Among others:

Nataliia Kibita (University of Oxford) & Joachim von Puttkamer (Imre Kertesz Kolleg, Jena), moderated by Yevhen Yashchuk

Kateryna Ruban (University of Vienna), moderated by Nadiia Chervinska

Adela Hîncu, Zsófia Lóránd, Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz & Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc, moderated by Nadiia Chervinska

17 January | Political Pluralism and Postwar Futures

The Winter School concludes with forward-looking discussions on political pluralism, postwar scenarios, and comparative perspectives on hybrid war. Collective reflections and planning sessions underscore IUFU's long-term mission: sustaining Ukrainian intellectual life and democratic debate beyond the immediate crisis. The program closes with a public cultural event combining jazz and ethnic music traditions from the Black Sea region.

Among others:

Oleksander Fisun (V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University / CEU IAS), Yuriy Matsiyevsky (Ostroh Academy National University / CEU IAS) & Anton Shekhovtsov (Centre for Democratic Integrity / CEU), moderated by Maksym Snyhir

Nino Gozalishvili (Centre Marc Bloch Berlin) & Rusudan Margiani (ELTE Budapest)

Invisible University for Ukraine & Visible Ukraine

The "Invisible University for Ukraine" is a transnational academic initiative offering accredited courses, mentoring, and community support to Ukrainian students affected by the war. Its scholars and participants are also the core editorial and intellectual force behind "Visible Ukraine, an open-access online journal publishing essays, research, interviews, and thematic dossiers that bridge academic scholarship and public discourse. Together, IUFU and Visible Ukraine work to counter intellectual isolation, challenge dominant narratives, and embed Ukrainian perspectives within global conversations.

Building Global Invisible University

Originally launched in response to the Russian war in Ukraine, the Invisible University model is evolving into a "Global Invisible University, expanding beyond Ukraine to include a Western Balkans track, cooperation with a Belarusian university in exile, and a recently launched Georgian track. This growing international network creates a shared space for discussing democracy-building, social resilience, and new societal narratives in the social sciences. By placing the Ukrainian experience in a broader global context – addressing diversity, multiculturalism, and democratic resilience – the Global Invisible University aims to develop transferable approaches to post-authoritarian recovery and rebuilding societies after violence,

repression, and regime collapse, through education, research, and civic engagement.

About CEU

Founded in 1991 and based in Vienna since 2019, sustaining a number of research units in Budapest, the Central European University (CEU) is a non-profit private university with around 1,500 students from more than 100 countries pursuing bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs accredited both in the United States and Austria. Our more than 200 outstanding faculty members and researchers ensure an excellent student-faculty ratio, and consistent external recognition in the form of prestigious research awards and third-party funded projects. CEU is committed to equal opportunity, diversity, open societies, and freedom of expression – exemplified through initiatives such as the “Invisible University for Ukraine.”

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