

Translators caught in the crossfire

How to help Ukrainian colleagues?

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Among the many people that have been affected by the war in Ukraine, there are also numerous translators, and as colleagues we are interested in knowing what their concrete situation is and what – if anything – we can do to help. *Counterpoint* was present at the recent annual CEATL meeting, held from 18–21 May in Sofia, where three Ukrainian colleagues were invited to talk about the urgent situation of Ukrainian translators.

Live from Ukraine

Poet, essayist and translator Ostap Slyvynsky, who is vicepresident of PEN Ukraine, and Natalia Pavliuk, president of the Ukrainian association of translators and interpreters UATI joined via Zoom. Ukrainian translator Oksana Stoianova, who has found refuge in Bulgaria, participated in the meeting in Sofia in person. Together they gave an impressive and moving description of the situation.

As Slyvynsky reported from Lviv, most Ukrainian publishing houses have suspended their activities. The ones that do announce new book publications have hardly any possibilities to publish books,

since one of the big printing facilities has been destroyed, and logistical problems hamper the availability of essential materials such as paper.

On top of the many other hardships people are facing in general, this leaves book translators in a very difficult financial situation. This is especially true for those who have no other sources of income.

How to help?

Our three colleagues suggested several ways of helping Ukrainian translators.

Getting informed

PEN Ukraine has launched a very informative website in English, offering a lot of information on the present situation in Ukraine. Among the many sources are a series of conversations, on Zoom, called ‘Dialogues on war’. In every episode of this series Ukrainian and foreign intellectuals (such as Olga Tokarczuk and Margaret Atwood) talk about the experience of the war and share their observations. They may be found on PEN Ukraine’s [website](#) and via [Facebook](#).

Translating books and informing others

The website also contains a list of recent books from **Ukrainian authors** with useful background: nonfiction works, novels, memoirs, plays and children's books. Making them available in other languages could help the world gain a better understanding.

Translation work for Ukrainian translators

As all three speakers stressed, translators who are out of work and/or have had to flee the country will be most helped by finding translation work. Translators' associations or individuals outside of Ukraine who can help out in this respect, can find translators in this **database**.

Furthermore, the speakers suggested that the European translator associations make themselves visible to Ukrainian translators, both with respect to finding work, and as a means to meeting people in the same line of work. An example of how to do this may be found on the website of the Polish translators' association (**STL**). It's also possible to contact PEN Ukraine or the UATI association directly, who will try to help establish contacts with refugee translators who have left the country.

Donations

PEN Ukraine, together with PEN Belarus, Polish PEN Club, and Open Culture Foundation, have opened a **special account** to support the creative community of Ukraine, their families, and children (scroll down for the English text).

On the initiative of the Ukrainian Book Institute and the Federation of European Publishers / Europäischen Verlegerverbands took the initiative to

have childrens books and young adult literature translated into Ukrainian. Translated books will be distributed freely among refugee children. For more information, please click **here**. The Ukrainian Association for Translators and Interpreters have also set up their own support fund site which can be found **here**.

Keeping literature in circulation

Another project *Counterpoint* would like to mention in this context is the project **#FreeAllWords**, the European Writers' Council (EWC)'s project to translate texts by Ukrainian and Belarusian writers, as well as anti-war Russian voices, into as many European languages as possible, and to disseminate their works, opinions and testimonies. The project is the initiative of the Swiss authors' association A*dS (Authors of Switzerland), Norway's Forfatterforbundet and the Union of Belarusian writers. CEATL has signed up as partner to the project.

The fund of 44,000 Euros was raised from seed funding by the Landis&Gyr Foundation and the Sophie and Karl Binding Foundation, both in Switzerland, and the Fritt Ord Foundation in Norway. The intention is to publish short texts, interviews, reports, essays and poems by Belarusian, Ukrainian and anti-Putin Russian authors into European and international languages and have them disseminated by a wide variety of channels, digital and otherwise. The first texts and translations by 30 authors should be published in up to 31 countries throughout June and July 2022.

More information is available at the **website**.