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The scale and unexpected dynamic of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, was a surprise for the entire international community. However, there had already been signals that could indicate that Russia would not stop at the 2014 occupation of Crimea or involvement in the armed conflict in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions in eastern Ukraine by supporting the self-proclaimed liberation forces. In fact, since 2014, we have lived with the feeling of apparent, illusory peace and security in Eastern Europe. It would seem that World War II in the 20th century was an experience that should never be repeated. For decades, Europe has built a community where the best way to anticipate and resolve any conflicts was to develop multidimensional cooperation among the several EU Member States and neighbouring countries. The strengthening of European peace, stability and security was to be served by far-reaching collaboration in the forums of numerous international organizations (EU, OECD, Council of Europe, OSCE, UN, etc.), the institutionalization of interstate relations, as well as the development of initiatives such as the European Neighborhood Policy. The latter also concerned the Eastern Partnership initiative,

including Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The overriding value was to be a dialogue based on respect for human rights and compliance with international law. Unfortunately, as recent events have shown, not all countries share this opinion, which has shaken European integration and the balance of international forces at the regional and global levels.

As ordinary people, Poles, whose nation has been affected by the brutality of World War II, we oppose any form of violence, especially that directed at innocent civilians - women, children, families, the elderly, the sick and all vulnerable groups. As researchers specializing in EU studies, knowing the genesis of the European integration process and understanding the EU's values, we can see the superiority of peace over war. Any war brings only destruction, pain and misfortune. It ruins what has been built hard for many decades and limits the possibility of developing people's well-being. The current humanitarian crisis in Ukraine caused by the Russian aggression and its consequences for other countries, such as Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Moldova, receiving many thousands of refugees, strengthens our conviction that the process of European integration should progress and include Ukraine and other countries willing to continue this cooperation.

Today, when the struggle for Ukraine's independence is underway, we would like to express our support and solidarity with our colleagues and friends from academic centres and research institutes in Ukraine, with whom we have had research and teaching cooperation for many years, including projects within Jean Monnet Actions of the Erasmus + Program. Despite the hostilities in Ukraine, our colleagues continue to conduct their scientific and research activities, which deserve admiration, recognition, and full support. It is a time when, in addition to humanitarian aid provided by universities and ministries, e.g. in Poland, it is necessary to involve our friends more widely in activities that internationalize their scientific and educational work. Polish universities and other academic entities in the world offer Ukrainian researchers the opportunity to work abroad, create scholarship and exchange programs for doctoral students and develop the possibility of continuing studies for students from Ukraine. These are essential activities, but they should not lead to a brain drain of Ukrainian higher education and the academic community. We still believe that Ukraine will be an independent and sovereign state that will soon have to deal with the country's reconstruction on a large scale - the technical infrastructure of its universities and research institutes and the social and academic fabric. Therefore, the solutions and support offered to researchers and students should be temporary, enabling them to continue their activity during the war and later return to Ukraine, to their home, to invest in future social, economic and scientific development.