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Preserving Cultural Heritage and Caring Communities' Collective Memory amidst War in Ukraine

23 May — 6 July 2025
Venice, Palazzo Zorzi, Castello 4930

Installation of the exhibition curated by Paolo Coia

More than three years into the full-scale war, Ukraine's cultural sector has suffered immense destruction—from historic cities and heritage sites to museums, archives, the creative industries, and living heritage that bind communities together. This widespread destruction and damage also concerns heritage sites protected under the World Heritage Convention and sites marked with the emblem of the 1954 Hague Convention or listed on the International List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection.

Yet, amid this devastation, Ukrainians continue to show extraordinary resilience, with culture recognized as a cornerstone of hope, resilience and recovery.

Since February 2022, UNESCO has supported Ukraine through a dual approach: protecting cultural heritage in all its forms, and sustaining artists, cultural bearers, and professionals investing in training, livelihoods, and community engagement. These efforts aim to safeguard not only monuments, collections, and living heritage, but also the right of every individual to access and participate in cultural life—even in times of war.

UNESCO's response focuses on culture in all its forms. The Organization is supporting professionals on how to protect buildings and safeguard living heritage, delivering protective equipment, digitizing works of art and archives, promoting enhanced accessibility and inclusion in cultural spaces, upgrading existing museum storage, advising the national authorities in updating policies and strategies, supporting inventorying, supporting artists and cultural professionals, integrating living heritage in education, and coordinating the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

In parallel, UNESCO is leading urgent structural assessments and stabilization works at key cultural sites, to ensure the maximum preservation of historic materials and prevent further damage. These interventions are guided by the CURE framework and the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, which promote an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to recovery —linking the cultural, environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

This exhibition presents a snapshot of UNESCO's emergency and recovery cultural interventions in Ukraine. It reflects a human-centred, multidisciplinary, community-driven approach rooted in inclusivity and solidarity, placing culture at the heart of sustainable reconstruction. In times of war, protecting access to culture is not just a right: it is a vital act of resilience, peacebuilding, and preparing the ground for a more inclusive future.

UNESCO wishes to thank its donors to the programme in Ukraine: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Bulgaria, Canada including Quebec, Chile, City of Minami Awaji (Japan), Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Eberhard-Schoeck Foundation, Estonia, European Union, Finland, Fondation Marc Ladreit de la Charrière, France, Germany, Global Partnership for Education, Google, Google.org via Tides Foundation, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Qatar Fund for Development, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UNHCR, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Zoller & Frölich GmbH.

Exhibition Launch (17:00 to 17:30)

Opening Remarks by

Mr. Pietro Pipi, Director of AICS Kyiv
Representative of Ministry of Culture
& Strategic Communications (TBC)

Ms. Magdalena Landry, Director of the
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science
and Culture in Europe

Followed by exhibition visit

Panel discussion (17:30 to 18:50)

17:30 - 18:15

The role of culture in preserving the social fabric of communities in conflict contexts: challenges, strategic priorities and possible way forward

Panelists:

Ms. Natalia Chukhray – Vice-Rector, Lviv Polytechnic National University
Ms. Chiara Dezzi-Bardeschi – Head of UNESCO Antenna in Ukraine
Mr. Stefano Della Torre – Chairholder, UNESCO Chair Architectural Preservation and Planning in Heritage Cities, Politecnico di Milano/Mantova Campus
Mr. Giorgio Gianighian - former full professor, Architectural, urban and Landscape Conservation, IUAV
Mr. Luigi Oliva – Director, Italian Central Institute for Restoration (ICR)

18:15 - 18:50

World Heritage Sites in emergency contexts: from immediate response to the development of integrated and sustainable management systems

Panelists:

Mr. Mykola Bezv – Head of the Department of Architecture & Conservation, Lviv Polytechnic National University
Mr. Stefano Musco – Head of the UNESCO Office at the Italian Ministry of Culture
Mr. Fausto Elisei - Pro-Rector, University of Perugia
Mr. Niccolò Casiddu - Director of the Department of Architecture and Design at the University of Genova

Networking cocktail (19:00)