

European Cultural Heritage Days

Russia's cultural war against Ukraine

SUMMARY

European Cultural Heritage Days allow millions of people across the continent to celebrate their cultural heritage every September. This year Ukrainians will not be able to enjoy the celebrations, as Russia's aggression has killed or displaced innocent people and declared war on their culture. Since this cultural cleansing began in Crimea in 2014, the Russian army has damaged or destroyed hundreds of cultural, artistic, scientific, educational and religious institutions, sites and works. Artists, and cultural and heritage professionals are unable to pursue their occupations. The Russian aggressors have looted artefacts from public and private collections, added them to Russian collections and declared them part of Russian history and culture.

While international conventions set a legal framework on how to protect cultural sites and works from damage, destruction or looting, and define the responsibilities of belligerents or individuals involved in trafficking, the situation in Ukraine has alarmed international organisations, non-governmental organisations, governments and EU institutions. Assistance and urgently needed funding has been made available to help Ukrainian museums and cultural institutions protect and preserve their cultural assets, to catalogue them and report damage in view of reconstructing destroyed or damaged sites.

However, as Russia's war is also being waged on cultural grounds, and the cultural front is very important for Ukrainians, it is also necessary to promote contemporary Ukrainian culture, arts and artists to ensure the country's cultural traditions and heritage continue to thrive and provide both moral support for the population and a basis for the post-war recovery process.



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Introduction







This year's European Cultural Heritage Days (17-18 September) give pause for reflection on the cultural dimension of Russia's war in Ukraine. While millions of Europeans will be able to enjoy the diversity and richness of their cultural heritage across the continent, Ukrainians have witnessed the destruction of their cultural assets, targeted by the Russian army that invaded the sovereign country on 24 February 2022. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), between 22 February and 5 September 2022, 79 religious buildings, 13 museums, 36 historical buildings, 32 buildings dedicated to cultural activities, 17 monuments and 9 libraries were damaged in the fighting (see Figures 1 and 2). Many more damaged historic and heritage buildings have been reported by the [Ukrainian Cultural Foundation](#), but have not yet been verified. Meanwhile, the heavy bombing and shelling have continued, mostly in Eastern parts of the country, causing more damage. The destruction of [libraries](#) and educational institutions is also part of a deliberate campaign of [cultural cleansing](#), whereby the aggressor aims at erasing any trace of the culture nurtured in the invaded area and building barriers to any new creation or artistic expression.

Figure 1 – Cultural heritage damaged in Russia's war against Ukraine – examples



Source: [UNESCO](#), September 2022

Figure 2 – UNESCO Cultural heritage sites and sites on the UNESCO tentative list

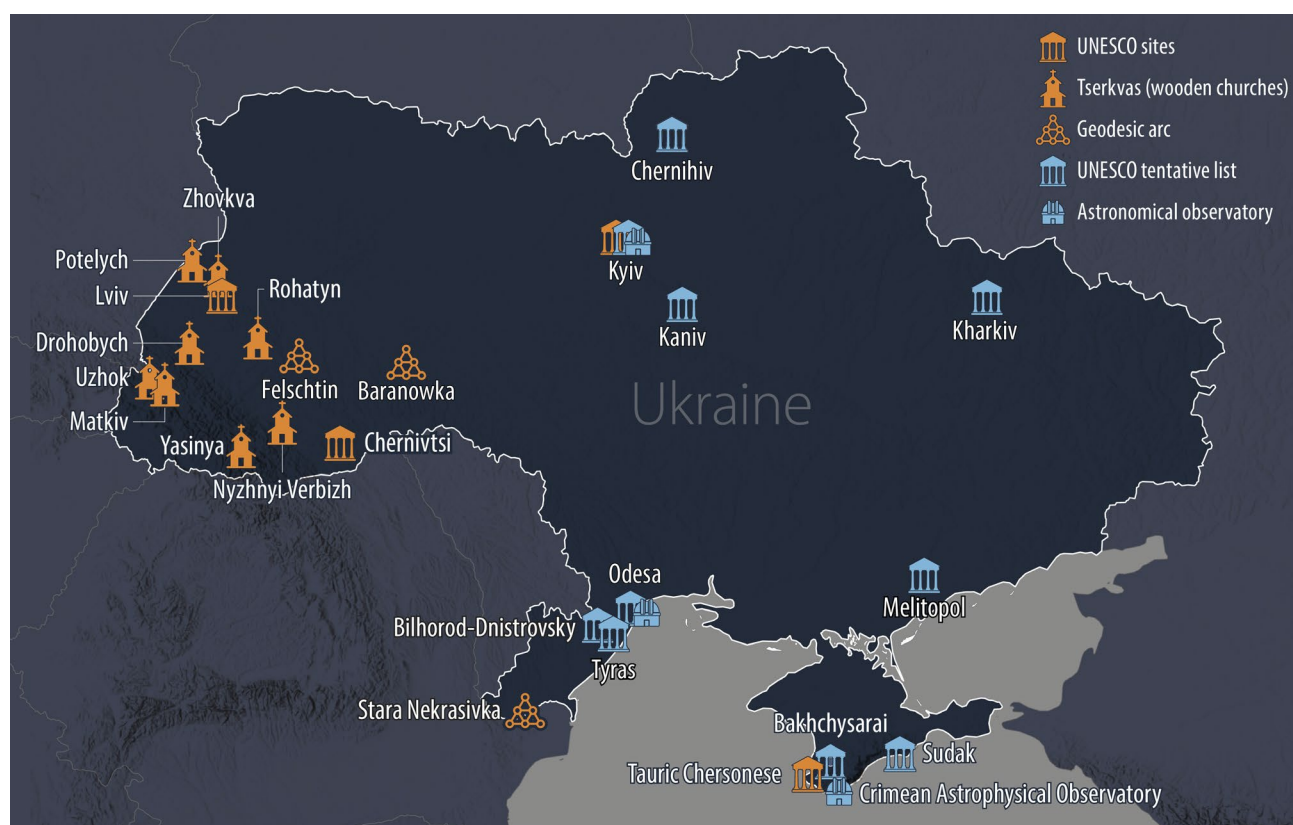
Region	Religious sites 	Museums 	Historic buildings 	Cultural infrastructure 	Monuments 	Libraries 	Total
Chernihiv	5	3	3	1	1	1	14
Kyiv	14	2		2	6	3	27
Kharkiv	16	2	13	8	4	2	45
Zaporizhzhia	1	1	2		1		5
Zhytomyr	2						2
Donetsk	25	2	9	11	3	2	52
Luhansk	11		3	7		1	22
Sumy		2	4		2		8
Mykolaiv	1		1	2			4
Vinnytsia	2						2
Odesa		1					1
Dnipropetrovsk	1						1
Total	78	13	35	31	17	9	

Source: [UNESCO](#), September 2022.

Ukraine's long history begins as the cradle of Orthodox Christianity, and evolved as a part of Poland, Russia and the Soviet Union. Its multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-confessional society contributed to its rich heritage, including remnants of ancient history. Reporting on the current Russian aggression, the UNESCO report lists the destruction of: an 18th century [Turkish well](#) monument in Hurivka; the '[Bismillah](#)' Islamic Cultural Centre in Severodonetsk; wooden [All Saints' Hermitage](#) and the [Holy Dormition Lavra](#) in [Sviatohirsk](#); the Federation of [Greek Societies](#) of Ukraine Cultural Centre in Mariupol; the [Drobytskyi Yar](#) Holocaust Memorial, the memorial to the [Victims of Totalitarianism](#) (built in 1991-2000) in Kharkiv; the 1870s L. E. Koenig manor, famous for its links to [Russian artists](#); and part of the [Trostyanetsky Museum](#) and Exhibition Centre.

The scale of damage to buildings varies. A fire resulting from constant and heavy bombing destroyed the 16th century wooden buildings at [Sviatohirsk](#), while the [Odesa Fine Arts Museum](#) suffered minor blast wave damage to architectural elements such as windows and doors. However, with a missile strike on the port, Russia also endangered Odesa's historic centre, which features on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List. UNESCO has placed seven Ukrainian locations on its list of [World Cultural Heritage](#) sites, along with eight biosphere reserves and four intangible heritage practices. Seventeen more sites are included on the [UNESCO tentative list](#) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 – UNESCO Cultural heritage sites and sites on the tentative list in Ukraine



Source: [UNESCO](#), September 2022.

War on Ukrainian art and artists

Besides the well-documented destruction of the Mariupol Drama Theatre, the V. G. Korolenko Central City Library and the Arkhip Kuindzhi Centre for Contemporary Art and Culture were also destroyed in the city. The [Kuindzhi Art Museum](#), opened in 2010, housed Kuindzhi's Ukrainian realist paintings, along with more than 600 paintings by historic and contemporary Ukrainian artists. Kuindzhi's masterpiece 'Red Sunset on the Dnieper' is safe in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, but his paintings are assumed to be part of [more than 2 000 artworks](#) Russian troops have allegedly looted from museums in Mariupol.

The whereabouts of [25 paintings](#) by self-taught Ukrainian artist Maria Primachenko, held in the Ivankiv Historical and Local History Museum, is also uncertain, as the Russian military set fire to the building, almost destroying the work of an artist admired by Picasso. In its statement of 3 March 2022, [UNESCO](#) deeply regretted 'reports of damage to the works of the celebrated Ukrainian artist, Maria Primachenko, with whose anniversary UNESCO was associated in 2009'.

Cultural appropriation

The Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014 leaves no doubt about the intentions of the Russian regime regarding cultural assets in invaded territories. A 2021 [UNESCO report](#) on Ukrainian cultural heritage in Russian-occupied Crimea mentions cultural appropriation as its 'long-term strategy to strengthen its historical, cultural and religious dominance over the past, present and future of Crimea'. The document highlights the illegal export of artefacts from the peninsula, to be exhibited in Russia accompanied by Russian curatorial narratives, unauthorised archaeological excavations using heavy equipment, and efforts to erase traces of Crimean Tatar culture – all breaching international cultural conventions.

Such actions, unprofessional restorations and other instances of destruction of important archaeological sites threaten the integrity of the UNESCO world cultural heritage sites at Tauric Chersonese and other historical sites. They demonstrate that the war is being pursued to propagate and bolster the Russian ideological narrative claiming cultural, linguistic and religious unity between Russia and Ukraine, as [clearly stated by the Kremlin](#) in June 2021.

Museum staff and conservation specialists are concerned that the Russian army could [target](#) some collections on the grounds of their political narrative of Ukrainian sovereignty. Some professionals have occupied museum buildings to protect artefacts from looting. Nevertheless, the Melitopol Museum of Local History reported that Russian soldiers found and looted rare [Scythian gold](#) artefacts dating to the 4th century BC, which had been hidden by the museum staff.

Fighting on the cultural front

Manipulating cultural, linguistic and religious aspects of ethnic identity for political reasons is not a new tactic in raising interethnic tensions and waging war. That is why, from the outset of the war, Ukraine has promoted its culture and artists, showing its own identity and its artists' contribution to human heritage. Ukrainian musicians could leave the country to join Ukrainian musicians living abroad, forming the [Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra](#) and touring across Europe and the United States with a series of concerts featuring Ukrainian composers.

The [Kyiv Philharmonic Orchestra](#) took a similar initiative. It started its European tour in Warsaw in April 2022, to reclaim Ukraine's cultural sovereignty. The musicians consider their fight, on what they call the 'cultural front', as important as the fighting on the ground. The musicians, who continued to play in Kyiv under heavy bombing at the beginning of the war, will return to Ukraine after accomplishing their mission to 'maintain its participation in Continental cultural heritage' and perform as part of 'a large European family'.

International reactions

The international community reacted swiftly to the news of cultural heritage destruction. At the outset of the Russian invasion, [UNESCO](#) issued a statement recalling international obligations towards cultural heritage during armed conflicts, as stated in the 1954 [Hague Convention](#) and its 1954 and 1999 protocols.

Legal aspects

Several treaties and conventions, starting with the [1899 Hague Convention](#), aim to protect heritage sites, [artistic, scientific](#) and [religious and educational](#) institutions and historic monuments from destruction and looting. However, new legal instruments became necessary, as these only identified the belligerent parties' obligations concerning the protection of cultural sites and property during hostilities.

The [1954 Hague Convention](#) (Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict) provided the first legal framework to set additional rules. It referred to methods to identify cultural property in need of protection, to mark it (with an internationally recognised emblem – a blue shield), to register its protection under the Convention, and to evacuate the

Targeting Ukrainian artists

It is unclear if the gunfire that struck a statue of famous Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko in Borodianka outside Kyiv was directed purposefully. However, it is certain that in July 2022, a group of Russians destroyed a memorial to Vasyl Slipak, a Ukrainian opera singer known for his performances at the Opera Bastille in Paris. Slipak had volunteered and fought against Donbas separatists in 2014 and was killed in June 2016, being posthumously awarded the 'Hero of Ukraine'. Raphaël Glucksmann MEP (S&D, France), reacted to the destruction of the memorial by proposing to honour the singer's memory with a monument in Paris.

Source: [Operawire](#), 13 July 2022; [Radio Classique](#), 15 July 2022.

property in case of direct threat. The International Committee of the Blue Shield was founded in 1996 to help implement the blue shield provisions. It included the possibility of, and a procedure for, the evacuation of endangered cultural heritage. Its accompanying [Protocol \(1954\)](#) provides for the restitution of cultural property placed in another country for protection.

The [1999 Second Protocol](#) to the 1954 Hague Convention introduced the notion of enhanced protection for cultural heritage of the greatest importance for humanity. The Second Protocol entered into force in 2004. It clarifies states' duties during peacetime concerning the safeguarding of collections and inventories to facilitate their recovery; planning of emergency measures; and legal instruments on removal for protection and the bodies responsible.

Criminal law perspective

The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and [Preventing the Illicit Import](#), Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property resulted from concerns about states' responsibility for the protection of cultural property on their territory against looting and trafficking, in the context of the growing market demand for, and the illicit trade in, cultural heritage artefacts. The Convention addresses the public law perspective (it refers to legal responsibilities and the obligations of a state or the public in general). It includes provisions on the establishment of inventories, export certificates, monitoring of the trade in cultural and art objects, penal or administrative sanctions, and restitution. It advocates capacity-building measures for police and customs and provides a framework for international cooperation. The text establishes the responsibility of those who engage in illegal trade of cultural property looted from occupied territories, provides for the implementation of export and import control systems and art dealers' legal obligations to keep a register proving each item's origin.

The 1970 Convention lacked important elements referring to occupying powers' responsibility to protect cultural property in occupied zones, aspects of private law, covering individuals' legal obligations and responsibilities in cases when individual owners acquire stolen or illegally exported cultural property. The [1995 Unidroit Convention](#) (the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects) addressed these aspects.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) [Rome Statute](#), adopted in 1998, established the first treaty-based permanent international court hearing cases of persons accused of the most serious crimes of international concern, such as [genocide; crimes against humanity](#); and war crimes. Article 8 establishes its jurisdiction in respect to war crimes, including the destruction of historic, religious, scientific or artistic buildings. In 2016, the ICC delivered its first judgment on a war crime intentionally directing attacks against Timbuktu's [religious and historic buildings](#) in Mali.

Neither Ukraine nor Russia are party to the Rome Statute. However, Ukraine issued a declaration [accepting the ICC's jurisdiction](#) in 2014. The Russian Federation has signed but not ratified the Unidroit Convention, and it is not party to the 1990 Protocol.

The EU is actively involved in strengthening the fight against illicit trade in looted artefacts and stolen art. In 2019, the European Parliament adopted an [own-initiative resolution](#) suggesting solutions, such as interoperable digital databases facilitating provenance research, based on a cataloguing system covering public entities and private art collections. This was the Parliament's contribution to the European Commission's work related to the fight against the financing of terrorism, part of the 2015 [European agenda on security](#) and of the 2016 action plan covering [cultural assets](#) among other illegal financing sources. Parliament stressed reliable statistics are needed, as according to the Commission's estimates, [80-90%](#) of global antiquities sales are of goods of illicit origin.

Helping protect cultural heritage and artefacts

Some [sources](#) claim Ukraine did not do enough to preserve and protect the buildings and artefacts from potential war damage provoked by fire before February 2022, with the war taking museums [by surprise](#). The Russian invasion [accelerated efforts](#) to move the most important pieces of art to safe places. [Lviv's National Gallery](#), the largest museum in Ukraine, housing paintings by Francisco Goya, Peter Paul Rubens, and Georges de La Tour in its collections, hid its most valuable artworks, while UNESCO warned against the risk of [illicit trafficking](#).

From the onset of the war, the [Ukrainian Cultural Foundation](#) has documented the country's cultural losses. An interactive and updated map shows the scope and extent of damage and destruction of cultural sites, monuments and institutions. Similarly, the [Ukrainian Institute](#) documents the war's destruction and promotes Ukrainian culture and artists.

The [Backup Ukraine](#) initiative uses 3D technology to allow everyone equipped with a smartphone to document a site or an artefact and generate a 3D model for a digital archive. The high-quality scans can be projected in a physical space for educational purposes and used to reconstruct destroyed cultural artefacts. The project creators are exploring the possibility of creating 3D models of destroyed churches and buildings that have not been scanned, using digital footage from the past. Ukrainian citizens have joined the [initiative](#), developed by a creative agency in partnership with UNESCO and Blue Shield.

The [International Council of Museums](#) (ICOM) issued a statement on 24 February 2022 detailing many helpful free and accessible online tools such as: ICOM and UNESCO Museums' Security and Disaster Preparedness in Running a Museum: Practice Handbook; International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) First Aid to Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis – Toolkit; or UNESCO and ICCROM Endangered heritage: emergency evacuation of heritage collections. This latter publication was [translated into Ukrainian](#) thanks to [cooperation](#) between [ICCROM](#) and UNESCO, with the Maidan Museum in Kyiv. Professionals across the country in areas with limited or no access to internet will receive 2 000 printed copies in an effort to help them to find solutions. In cooperation with its National Committee in Ukraine, the [ICOM](#) is preparing an [Emergency Red List](#) of Cultural Objects at Risk for Ukraine, to help [combat illicit trafficking](#).

The UNESCO [Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property](#) in the Event of Armed Conflict discussed the situation in Ukraine at an extraordinary meeting in March 2022. It stressed 'the

Stolen artworks finance wars

According to UNESCO, 19 000 archaeological artefacts and works of art were recovered in 2019, when customs officials and criminal police dismantled several international trafficking networks across the world.

However, this represents only the tip of the iceberg, as less than half of the Interpol member states provide data on the matter. Nevertheless, illicit trade in cultural goods is considered to rank third among international criminal activities, following drugs and arms trafficking.

The 'black' art market attracts unscrupulous art connoisseurs and investors, and increasingly appeals to terrorist and mafia organisations, providing them with funds to finance their armed actions. It is particularly profitable during armed conflicts when cultural institutions are targeted and are vulnerable to looting. Local populations, impoverished by war, find much-needed revenue through illegal excavations and looting. However, such large-scale trafficking network operations cannot take place without the involvement of experts, museum curators and gallery owners, whether in good faith or not.

The same year, global art sales were estimated at over US\$64 billion. Some 82% of these transactions occurred in the USA, United Kingdom and China, home to the majority of collectors. However, the trade's move to the internet makes it difficult to estimate the scope of the phenomenon.

Source: [50 years of the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods](#), UNESCO, October-December 2020.

importance of scaling up international assistance' and granted preliminary financial assistance to 'support emergency measures, including *in situ* protection and the evacuation of cultural property'.

The organisation provided information on seven [UNESCO cultural heritage sites](#) in Ukraine. It cooperated with local authorities to provide the [blue shield](#) sign to mark historic sites with the emblem in an effort to protect them from war damage. Together with its partner United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), UNESCO is following the situation on the ground using satellite monitoring. It also assesses professionals' needs regarding equipment and material required to protect endangered artefacts, as well as assisting their Ukrainian counterparts.

The above-mentioned organisations have cooperated with the [Heritage Emergency Response Initiative](#) (HERI), created in Ukraine at the outset of the Russian invasion, which aims at promoting the [preservation of Ukrainian cultural heritage](#) during the war, and addressing the post-war recovery.

A UN [human rights expert](#) warned that violations of cultural rights in Ukraine and the violation of Ukrainians' right to self-determination and identity, as well as of academic and artistic freedoms, linguistic rights, and falsification and distortion of historical facts, would have lasting effects and undermine future peaceful coexistence. The 'damage inflicted by Russian forces on city centres, cultural sites and monuments and museums, housing important collections' will have a '[devastating impact](#) on the recovery'. The report praised Ukrainian cultural professionals for their efforts to preserve the country's cultural heritage and to restore artistic expression. On 1 July 2022, UNESCO registered [Ukrainian borscht](#) cooking culture on its 'List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent safeguarding', arguing that the war and consequent population displacement threatened this tradition.

Many organisations across the world are concerned with threats and damage to cultural heritage and artefacts. The [Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative](#) (SCRI) mission is to protect architecture and artefacts from various disasters and war damage. In Ukraine, it has been using geospatial information system data to assess damage to cultural sites. Financial support is also very important. The International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Zones ([ALIPH](#)) has earmarked US\$2 million for the emergency protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage and heritage professionals.

Reactions across Europe

Countries across Europe spontaneously offered help and assistance to Ukrainian museums and their staff. The [Network of European Museum Organisations](#) (NEMO), supported by the EU, [lists support actions](#) devoted to Ukrainian museums and their staff, as well as artists. The main categories of actions aimed at the protection and preservation of Ukrainian cultural heritage and artefacts cover:

- digitisation, documentation and inventory of collections;
- provision of protective materials, packing materials, fire extinguishers, sand sacks;
- coordinating and tracking shipments;
- storage space;
- documenting damage and looting;
- sharing good-practice and experience;
- online training and webinars.

EU-UNESCO cooperation against art looting

The EU and UNESCO cooperate in projects and co-organise conferences and training for experts from academia, the art market, the financial sector, judiciary and law enforcement, as well as international organisations and government officials. Participants discuss potential measures to further strengthen the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property worldwide. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) has undertaken joint initiatives to strengthen the regulatory environment and promote capacity-development.

Source: [UNESCO](#), January 2022.

Museum professionals and contemporary creators and artists whose mission is to guarantee the continuity of the country's cultural development and its future cultural heritage also need support, which includes:

- financial aid for museum staff and cultural sector workers;
- accommodation and work for museum professionals and their families;
- scholarships and internships for cultural and museum professionals, researchers, students, historians and librarians;
- fund-raising events, charity concerts, film screenings, auctions and exhibitions.

National governments and cultural foundations across Europe have organised support for Ukrainian artists and contemporary arts, in an effort to secure the future of Ukrainian cultural heritage. Thus, in March 2022, the [French Ministry of Culture](#) set up an emergency reception programme with a budget of €750 000 to help Ukrainian artists and their families. Similarly, [Polish cultural institutions](#) and foundations benefited from ministry of culture funding to organise [artists' residencies](#). Poland, which shares borders and history with Ukraine, has been strongly involved in supporting Ukraine's war efforts, providing humanitarian aid and assisting Ukraine in [rescuing its cultural heritage](#).

The European Cultural Foundation (ECF) initiated the '[Culture of Solidarity Fund](#) – Ukraine special edition' to help artists in exile find cultural space to create, to support independent media and artistic and cultural expressions and overcome disinformation and cultural fragmentation. Allianz Kulturstiftung, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, Zeit Stiftung, GLS Treuhand, and Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung joined the initiative.

Other European cultural organisations, such as Culture Action Europe and Europa Nostra joined the Foundation to address [a plea](#) to the President of the European Commission, calling for the EU to demonstrate solidarity with cultural actors from Ukraine. They called upon the EU and its institutions 'to join forces to include the emergency needs from the world of art, culture and cultural heritage within the EU humanitarian support to Ukraine'. They suggested a new public-philanthropic mechanism to pool funds for culture and cultural heritage.

European Union actions

The EU reacted to the Russian aggression against Ukraine by providing aid to the Ukrainian people and their culture. The European External Action Service (EEAS) launched the [#ARTSVSWAR](#) campaign, providing a platform to share evidence of destruction or ideas for the reconstruction, looking towards Ukraine's cultural revival. On the International Day for Monuments and Sites (18 April 2022), the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, highlighted Russia's [purposeful targeting](#) of Ukrainian cultural heritage.

Thanks to the [EEAS](#), an exhibition by 42 Ukrainian artists could remain outside the war zone. These artworks, exhibited in Denmark from 29 January to 1 May 2022, became 'homeless', while the artists' whereabouts are unknown due to the war. The EEAS 'adopted' the Unfolding Landscapes exhibition, allowing for its temporary relocation to a museum in Brussels.

In a 21 April 2022 statement, [Education and Culture Commissioner](#), Mariya Gabriel marked the UN World Day of Creativity and Innovation by expressing solidarity with Ukrainian artists, culture sectors and cultural heritage professionals. She stressed the common European identity and announced measures to support Ukrainian artists and help protect the country's cultural heritage. Among [many actions](#), often co-funded by the EU, the Commissioner mentioned the European Commission's support for EU Member States in delivering emergency equipment and material for the protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage under the EU [Civil Protection Mechanism](#) (UCPM). Cultural heritage has also been a focus of civil protection mechanism projects devoted to multi-national, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral guidance to develop preparedness measures for [the protection of cultural heritage](#) during emergencies and to intervene globally, in case of international emergency.

During the French Presidency of the EU, the [European Ministers responsible for Culture](#), Audiovisual and Media, changed their agenda at their informal meeting of March 2022, to debate the threat to Ukrainian cultural heritage. They recalled UN Security Council resolution 2347 of 2017 on damage and destruction of cultural heritage and the potential legal consequences for perpetrators. They expressed their support for Ukrainian artists, journalists, and cultural and media professionals, cultural institutions and cultural heritage sites, together with their international partners. The ministers supported the idea of using European culture, audiovisual and media programmes to support artists, and professionals active in these fields.

The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport [Council](#), taking place with remote participation by the Ukrainian Minister for Culture, approved the declaration in April 2022. Ministers discussed measures already taken by Member States and the EU in favour of the Ukrainian cultural sector, as well as joint action to ensure the coherence, complementarity and coordination of efforts during the crisis.

Europe Union funding programme support

The Competence Centre for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage ([4CH](#)) is funded under the Horizon 2020 research-funding programme. It aims to establish modern infrastructure to facilitate cooperation between cultural heritage institutions using a multidisciplinary approach to conservation and preservation of historical monuments and sites. Immediately after the Russian invasion, it launched a [Save Ukrainian Monuments](#) (SUM) initiative to duplicate digital documentation (texts, images and 3D models) on Ukrainian heritage on safe servers placed in the EU. It has already transferred [terabytes of cultural heritage data](#) to the Italian National Institute of Nuclear Physics (INFN), the 4CH coordinating institution, the Poznan Supercomputing Centre (Poland) and the University of Luxembourg.

The digital heritage platform, co-funded under the [connecting Europe facility programme](#), Europeana, also [supports](#) the initiative and has presented a choice of Ukrainian cultural heritage items from its collections, including ethnographic materials, scientific and technological archives and Ukrainian migration stories. The Europeana initiative is launching a new [Working Group](#), which will support existing initiatives and develop new, concerted actions that respond to the current needs of the Ukrainian digital heritage sector.

[Dnipro History Museum](#) obtained EU funding to launch a platform of art therapy and a series of theatrical local performance tours. It aims at integrating internally displaced persons, who at present account for 80% of museum visitors. Currently the town is home to over 115 000 refugees.

The [creative Europe programme](#) deadlines for application for cultural cooperation projects were extended to allow Ukrainian artists to participate in calls for cooperation projects. A permanent Creative Europe Desk Ukraine was created to provide advice to Ukrainian applicants and disseminate information about the programme. Two [Ukrainian publishing houses](#) (from Lviv and Kyiv) already feature among the winners of the 'Circulation of European literary works' competition, and will receive grants of €130 000 for their projects. Their publications will be promoted in all countries participating in the creative Europe programme.

Music against the war

The EU-funded European Union Youth Orchestra (EUYO) launched a 'Peace in Europe' project on 25 March 2022. The opening concert in Italy was dedicated to the memory of David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament and Honorary President of the EUYO. It has also assisted the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, enabling young artists to pursue their education and musical practice.

Source: [European Union Youth Orchestra](#), Peace in Europe Project, May 2022.

European Parliament

The European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education held a hearing on 17 May 2022 on 'Culture in times of crisis – [cultural solidarity in support of Ukraine](#) and beyond'. Three cultural non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC), the EEAS and Ukrainian artists debated the preservation of Ukrainian cultural heritage, support for artists in Ukraine and in Europe, and ways to address emergency situations. Participating artists are documenting and archiving cultural heritage looted by the Russian army to appropriate Ukrainian culture. They are also documenting Russian efforts to present Ukrainian artists as Russians, depriving the invaded country of their cultural history. However, the Members stressed that European support for war-torn Ukraine has not granted culture its [proper place](#).

Together with the Pinchuk Art Centre (Kyiv, Ukraine) and MuHKA (Antwerp, Belgium), Bozar (Brussels, Belgium), and the Office of the President of Ukraine, the European Parliament has taken part in the '[Imagine Ukraine](#)' exhibition. The European Parliament's visitor centre, the [Parlamentarium](#), has shown part of the three-part project continuing the cultural front against Russia's war in Ukraine.

Thank you tour

Between May and June 2022 Ukrainian musicians took part in a 'thank you' tour to express their gratitude for the help provided to Ukrainian refugees, performing in front of the European Commission building.

Source: [EEAS](#), #ThankYouTour, May 2022.

Rebuilding monuments, reviving diversity of cultural life

As the war continues its destruction, Ukrainians are continuing to resist attempts to deprive them of their history, culture and traditions. They claim their place in Europe and demand European support to rebuild.

The [Ukrainian Cultural Foundation](#) reports damage to and destruction of cultural sites belonging to Ukrainians, Russians, and other religious and ethnic groups, which UNESCO then verifies. Russian shelling does not discriminate between the [16](#) national and minority groups that have co-existed in Ukraine for hundreds of years. An April 2022 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [report](#) lists damaged or looted individual cultural property among the numerous criminal acts perpetrated by the Russian occupying forces. This is also an element of Russia's cultural warfare, depriving individuals of important elements of their identity.

The [Ukraine Recovery Conference](#) (URC) held in Lugano, Switzerland, on 4-5 July 2022 and attended by heads of state or government of many countries as well as the European Commission President, resulted in a [Lugano Declaration](#) setting principles for recovery. The document recognised 'the catastrophic destruction of ... cultural heritage', and set the principle that 'the recovery process has to ... ensure ... respect for human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights'.

Commenting on Ukraine's post-war recovery, [Rana Amirtahmasebi](#), an urban policy analyst specialising in urban regeneration and [post-conflict rebuilding](#), previously affiliated with the World Bank, insisted [culture and arts](#) need to be part of the recovery. Soft measures need to accompany 'hard measures' such as rebuilding strategic infrastructure, since 'this is especially important in the case of conflicts, because the social cohesion and moral compass of the communities are broken'. Moreover, 'cultural reconstruction can be just as critical, both to the immediate survivors and to the wider global community'. Mentioning the importance of documentation that would enable the reconstruction of sites and monuments, she added, 'it's not just about saving the famous monuments that are ruined. It's more about saving a way of life. It's about building back the whole cultural landscape of the city afterwards'. For a country, under financial pressure in making its [choices about which heritage sites](#) to finance, the options for reconstruction will be limited. The Ukraine Ministry of Culture and Information Policy has launched a [public debate on cultural projects](#) for the country's recovery plan.

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