

# СТРАТЕГІЇ РОЗБУДОВИ МИРУ: ОСВІТНІ ТА КУЛЬТУРНІ ІНІЦІАТИВИ

## WAR AS A THREAT TO CULTURAL HERITAGE: PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION ON THE PATH TO PEACE

**Ian Gadd**

*Professor in English Literature, Head of Development for European Projects,  
Bath Spa University, Bath, United Kingdom*

**Alina Kruhliak**

*Head of the International and Project Department,  
Teacher of the Department of Romance and Germanic Philology,  
Private Higher Education Establishment "Academician Stepan Demianchuk  
International University of Economics and Humanities"  
Rivne, Ukraine*

The tangible and intangible cultural heritage is the basis of the existence of any nation and human civilization itself. Russia's war against Ukraine is a struggle for identity. On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which marked a new stage in the war that began in 2014. It is the largest war in Europe since World War II. Many objects of Ukraine's material cultural heritage were destroyed, damaged or threatened by the hostilities. The destruction of cultural heritage is one of the elements of the liquidation of a nation. Destruction of cultural heritage sites is a war crime under the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954 [2].

UN resolutions, Council of Europe documents, and the position of the International Criminal Court define cultural heritage as one of the important factors in preserving and strengthening the identity and unity of any state and the European community as a whole [1, p. 5].

Throughout the war, many academic and non-scientific sources published various statistics on the impact of the war on Ukraine's cultural heritage. The report "Assessing the Impact of the Russian Invasion on Ukraine's Cultural Heritage and Creative Industries" that was prepared which was prepared as part of British-Ukrainian cooperation project, highlights the extensive, indiscriminate, and wide-ranging impact of the Russian invasion on Ukraine's cultural heritage and creative industries: not just sites of cultural significance destroyed or damaged but also libraries, museums, religious buildings, burial sites; millions of



cultural artefacts and books have been destroyed or looted; the cultural sector's workforce depleted by over a quarter [1, p. 4].

As of March 2025, over 1,400 cultural heritage sites and 2,300 cultural infrastructure facilities damaged or destroyed, including museums, libraries, religious buildings, and educational institutions. This destruction is part of a systematic campaign to erase Ukrainian identity, with losses amounting to billions of dollars. Despite this, culture has emerged as a form of resistance and resilience, with communities and institutions mobilizing to preserve memory, digitize collections, and reframe national narratives. Similarly, the conflict has led to a transformation for the creative industries, which have shifted toward themes of trauma, resistance, and identity, with digital platforms, international support, and diaspora-led initiatives helping to sustain cultural production and to amplify Ukraine's voice globally [1, p. 3].

Cultural monuments were damaged in 18 regions and the city of Kyiv, including: 324 in Kharkiv region, 180 in Kherson region, 164 in Donetsk region, 137 in Odesa region, 65 in Chernihiv region, 83 in Zaporizhzhia region and the city of Kyiv. Kyiv - 83, Zaporizhzhia - 57, Mykolaiv - 44, Dnipro - 49, Lviv - 60, Sumy - 33, Luhansk - 32, Khmelnytskyi - 10, Poltava - 6, Vinnytsia and Zhytomyr - 4, Kirovohrad - 2, Cherkasy – 1 [4].

Culture is a key factor for a participatory and people-centered approach and should be a priority for the reconstruction of post-war society. It is important to promptly protect cultural heritage, taking into account the current emergency situation in Ukraine through integrated and multisectoral cooperation and multi-level policy-making at the local, national and international levels. Human rights-based approaches, gender, age, disability and diverse cultural perspectives should be integrated into all policies and practices

According to the Culture Work Plan of the EU's 2023-2026, the European Commission has established an Expert Group on the preservation of cultural heritage in Ukraine, which recommends that the European Union and the Ukrainian authorities do the following [3]:

- Include the protection and restoration of cultural heritage as one of the tools for the revival of Ukraine in state recovery strategies;
- Support the creation, modernization and sharing of safe storage facilities and other protective measures in Ukraine and in institutions of EU Member States;
- Propose existing or support the development of appropriate tools for documenting, monitoring and managing data;
- Promote the availability of reliable sources of information on cultural heritage in Ukraine.

Ensure adequate capacity building of national border, customs and law enforcement services in Ukraine, countries bordering Ukraine and the EU for search, identification and seizure of cultural property of illicit origin;

Ensure the creation and training of military and civil-military units capable of supporting the identification, protection, safe storage and evacuation of cultural heritage;

Ensure that policies, strategies and operational plans involve internally displaced persons, members of the diaspora, museums and relevant institutions in the interpretation and recontextualization of cultural heritage;

Prepare strategies for memorializing recent events, keeping in mind survivors and affected communities, and taking into account the need to address these issues in the long term and in a changing environment;

Establish a national database of stolen cultural property that is properly maintained and regularly updated;

Encourage and support the initiatives of non-governmental organizations and local communities in the recognition, protection and preservation of heritage at the national, local and community levels;

Develop curricula, textbooks on culture, art and history that are multi-faceted and inclusive of post-war Ukrainian society, for use in the school system;

Develop university/professional curricula to train specialists in heritage management, conservation and restoration [3].

Ukraine's reconstruction needs are too great to be met by international aid alone. Ukrainians are experiencing dramatic events, and without adequate investment in culture, health, and education, there is a risk of losing a generation that will not be involved in the country's future reconstruction. Reconstruction must be done first and foremost by Ukrainians, for Ukrainians. Through a "building for the future" approach, Ukraine has the chance to become a full-fledged platform for social innovation and prosperity, built on the foundation of agency and dignity.

There are already a number of projects that demonstrate the mutual benefits of horizontal cooperation between Ukraine and the EU over the past two years. Access to additional opportunities and networks, as well as the joint development and co-curation of Ukraine-related initiatives, will strengthen not only Ukrainian cultural actors, but also the European cultural and political arena. Continuity, a cross-sectoral approach and sustainability should be guiding principles for the cultural and creative industries sector and all new support programmes [5].

Thus, the impact of the Russian invasion is twofold: on the one hand, it is destructive for tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and on the other, it is stimulating for the processes of social consolidation and the establishment of culture as a factor of national stability. Further development requires a comprehensive state policy in the field of restoration and protection of cultural



values, investment in creative industries, as well as close international cooperation to preserve and increase Ukrainian cultural heritage in the face of global challenges [1, p. 47].

## REFERENCES

1. Artiushok V., Zhavoronkova M., Kyrychenko K. and others (2025) Report: Assessing the Impact of the Russian Invasion on Ukraine's Cultural Heritage and Creative Industries, ed. I. Gadd and A. Kruhliak, Bath Spa University and Academician Stepan Demianchuk International University of Economics and Humanities, 53 p., DOI: 10.17870/bathspa.30084532
2. Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention. Official document of May 14, 1954, the Hague, Netherlands. Electronic resource: <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict-regulations-execution-convention>
3. Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (European Commission). Recommendations from the European Commission-led expert group on the safeguarding of cultural heritage in Ukraine. 2024. Electronic source: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ac1cc7c5-a346-11ef-85f0-01aa75ed71a1>
4. Due to Russian aggression, 1419 cultural heritage sites and 2233 cultural infrastructure objects were damaged in Ukraine. Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications. Culture Heritage, April 2, 2025. Electronic source: <https://mcsc.gov.ua/news/1419-pamyatok-kulturnoyi-spadshyny-ta-2233-obyekty-kulturnoyi-infrastruktury-postrazhdaly-v-ukrayini-cherez-rosijsku-agresiyu/>
5. Karmaukh, A. and Kravchuk, K. (2024). Culture and creative industries in Ukraine: resilience, recovery, integration with the EU. Cultural Relations Platform, 47 p.. Available at: <https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/DGEAC-CRP-UA-Report-July-2024-UA.pdf>