THE ROLE OF ART IN THE POST-WAR RECOVERY OF UKRAINE

Baseline report

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1. About the RES-POL Project

The cultural policy development project, **RES-POL** (Rapid Expert Support for Culture and Media Policies in Ukraine), is being implemented by the **PPV Economic Development Agency** in partnership with the **Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine**, with the support of a grant from the **European Commission**. The project will continue until March 2025. The responsible partner for policies and strategies in the Culture and Arts sector is **'Insha Osvita,'** with key experts Alona Karavai, Iryna Chuzhynova, and Olha Diatel.

This baseline report was prepared by the **'proto produkciia'** agency at the request of the **'Tsentr "Rehionalnyi Rozvytok"'** public association in cooperation with the **'Insha Osvita'** public organization. Translation of the baseline report into English is supported by the Robert Bosch Foundation.

> **Project Aim:** To develop public policy documents that will form the foundation for creating a strategy for the development of culture within the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy.

Project Objectives:

- To develop policies for the focus sectors and mechanisms for their advancement.

- To support these policies with relevant operational programmes linked to Ukraine's EU accession process.

- To strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy for policy development and implementation.

- To involve the widest possible range of experts and stakeholders in the creation of these documents.

RES-POL focuses on four sectors: Arts, Cultural Heritage, Creative Industries, and the Media and Information Society. The RES-POL project invites key experts in these focus areas, along with a broad range of cultural actors and stakeholders, to engage in discussions on cultural policies.

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The Authors

The baseline report was prepared by the **'proto produkciia'** agency at the request of the **'Tsentr "Rehionalnyi Rozvytok"'** public association in cooperation with the **'Insha Osvita'** public organization.

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2. Executive Summary

Assuming that Russian (including military) aggression against Ukraine will persist in 2027, the authors of this report propose rethinking the classic linear approach to Recovery and exploring **new adaptive**, **non-linear recovery models**. These models would facilitate protection, evacuation, and emergency assistance, while enabling longer-term recovery efforts where feasible. Such a complex approach, however, demands mental and material resources, both of which are limited during wartime – necessitating careful prioritisation. One of the most significant challenges facing Ukrainian society in general, and the cultural and artistic spheres in particular, is demographic in nature. We are talking about the current outflow and loss of human capital, compounded by a projected demographic shock until at least 2040. This means that in the format of the so-called non-linear and adaptive Recovery in the field of culture and art, we should focus on **preserving, retaining, and returning people, as well as consolidating communities and building professional connections with Ukrainians abroad** – or, in line with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' narrative, with "global Ukrainians." Additionally, this strategy highlights the necessity of **differentiated, tailored support formats for culture and the arts across different regions**, recognising that realities and needs vary significantly. The report suggests the following regional classification:

- Rear regions: Lviv, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Rivne, Chernivtsi, Khmelnytskyi, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, and Volyn regions.

- War zones: Sumy, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odesa regions.

- Areas at high risk of hostilities: Chernihiv region, Kyiv region and the city of Kyiv, and Poltava region.

During the war, the fundamental functions of art are not only preserved but also become even more relevant. Art remains a vital space and catalyst for social and free expression. Its capacity to create safe (or safer) spaces for grief and emotional expression has grown increasingly important, as has its therapeutic role and its function as a medium for (self-)identification. As in peacetime, artists and their creative practices must remain free from censorship or use as propaganda tools. Any deviation from this principle risks undermining democracy and European values, veering towards totalitarianism.

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Regarding the role of artists and art **in developing an inclusive culture of memory and commemorative projects**, this report highlights both the fixating of human experiences through artworks and fostering understanding of collective trauma, as well as the importance of supporting inclusive and pluralistic narratives by involving diverse voices. One of the principal challenges lies in the fact that the war is ongoing, whereas most memorialisation tools are designed for peacetime and completed histories. In this context, the concept of **"tactical commemoration"** – short-term actions aimed at achieving long-term outcomes – becomes crucial for collective memory.

Another critical and complex task is **transitioning to an inclusive model of remembrance culture and policies**, which emphasises the pursuit of shared, unifying meanings, even when faced with differing experiences. This involves, as noted earlier, ensuring free and safeguarded expression (within the law) and preventing censorship in the cultural and artistic domains. Furthermore, experts in the field of commemoration and memorialisation recommend developing guidelines for commemorative practices. These would encompass principles for designing memorials, identifying and creating symbols, and establishing common forms of commemoration that can be manifested in various forms, not just material objects.

Art therapy, trauma-informed art, and other artistic approaches to addressing trauma play a vital role in helping individuals overcome psychological distress and regain their ability to thrive independently. Despite the significant demand for and potential of art in mental health, particularly in collaboration with the therapeutic functions of specialised institutions and systemic programmes, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive research in this area. At the same time, the development of such institutions and programmes is crucial. Working with art therapy and trauma-informed approaches requires **specialised qualifications, as inadequate expertise risks re-traumatisation**. It is essential to establish opportunities for high-quality, rapid upskilling of artists in art therapy practices and trauma-informed art. Additionally, piloting a specialised "art therapist" programme at a Ukrainian university, in collaboration with international institutions, would be a vital step forward.

Cultural diplomacy is another key area of art and culture during the war. While there have been successes in raising the visibility of Ukrainian art, many challenges hinder the systematic and sustained development of this field. The historical conflation of Ukrainian culture with Soviet (and often Russian) culture, insufficient investment in cultural diplomacy following independence, and the fragmented processes of researching and preserving cultural heritage have created significant obstacles. With the onset of the

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full-scale invasion, Ukraine has faced the challenge of not only addressing current issues but also overcoming decades of stagnation in cultural policy, and the need to quickly form the basis and principles of cultural diplomacy. As a result, the responsibility for representing Ukrainian culture abroad has fallen to various actors and institutions equipped with the necessary resources and capabilities. However, these efforts often lack coordination. At the same time, this decentralised and self-sufficient approach reflects the democratic nature of Ukraine's cultural community, which, unlike totalitarian systems, does not rely on a hierarchical power structure to function effectively.

Institutions and individuals involved in cultural diplomacy since the beginning of the full-scale invasion highlight several challenges: **a lack of high-quality cultural and artistic products for international audiences** (stemming from insufficient investment in domestic cultural production), **an imbalance in the representation of traditional versus contemporary Ukrainian culture (with a bias towards the former**, despite contemporary art being a more universally accessible "language" for global audiences), and **limited systematic cultural exchange** or collaboration with foreign artists on Ukrainian artistic projects. It is equally important to stress that in a democratic society, cultural diplomacy should not conflict with art's primary purpose – free expression. In other words, **cultural diplomacy must not devolve into state propaganda, as seen in totalitarian regimes**. Instead, it should remain a platform for the pluralistic representation of cultures and a celebration of diversity. This diversity should neither be overly coordinated nor constrained by rigid structures.

One of the most contentious issues in the field of cultural diplomacy is the **so-called cancelling of Russian cultural actors and / or Russian culture**. The phenomenon of "cancel culture" refers to the public condemnation or boycott of an individual, group, or organisation. While the cancellation of specific individuals has a long-standing tradition and recognised mechanisms within the European context, the cancellation of an entire culture is a far less comprehensible step. This divide is also evident within the Ukrainian artistic community, regardless of geographical location. **Distinguishing between "cancelling of Russian culture" and "cancelling of Russian cultural actors"** is crucial for understanding ongoing debates and disagreements. It also serves as a foundation for developing narratives and solutions that align Ukraine with the European cultural sphere rather than distancing it. Moreover, it is important to recognise that the challenges surrounding "cancelling" are often exacerbated by inequalities in resources. **International collaborative projects frequently proceed without sufficient Ukrainian financial involvement. Subjectivity in choosing content can be ensured by subjectivity and / or parity of resources**. The absence of the latter puts Ukrainian art and Ukrainian artists in a situation of complex ethical dilemmas.

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In times of war, the arts are particularly vulnerable to two risks: being curtailed as an unnecessary luxury of peacetime or being instrumentalized to promote patriotic sentiment in a manner that resembles propaganda – or, indeed, both. If such scenarios were to materialise, they would signal a retreat from democratic values and a shift towards a more totalitarian social framework.

A detailed list of key issues is provided after each section and cumulatively at the end of the baseline report.

3. Scenario Planning

This baseline report seeks to address the question of the role artists and the arts can play in the post-war Recovery of Ukraine. At the same time, as this baseline report forms part of the Ukraine Culture Strategy 2027, it seems logical to first consider the following questions: *'When will Russian (including military) aggression against Ukraine end? When can post-war Recovery begin?'*

> **Thesis 1:** **The authors of this baseline report operate on the fundamental assumption that Russian (including military) aggression against Ukraine will persist into 2027, meaning that the war will not have fully concluded.**

For the purposes of this report, the term "war" refers to the ongoing hostilities within Ukrainian territory, including in the temporarily occupied areas, even in scenarios where de facto ceasefire agreements may exist.

During the summer and autumn of 2024, as part of his presentation of the Victory Plan, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy repeatedly addressed international audiences and leaders, stating that the "hot phase" of the war could end "sooner than you think." Specifically, the president suggested that this phase might conclude by the end of 2024, contingent on the fulfilment of certain conditions, including the actions of Western partners. It is worth noting that the **Ukraine Facility Plan 2024–2027**, drafted by the Ukrainian government in 2023, was premised on the assumption that the war would extend until the end of 2024. As of autumn 2024, when this baseline report was written, the "hot phase" of the war remained ongoing. Some forecasts point to the possibility of agreements leading to a diplomatic phase by early 2025, following the inauguration of Donald Trump. However, the feasibility of this scenario depends on numerous factors within the evolving geopolitical landscape, which remains highly dynamic as of autumn 2024.

However, from the standpoint of October 2024, there is a need to make a new assumption within this baseline report:

- Will all territories occupied by the Russian army since 2022 be liberated by 2027?

- Will the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea be liberated by 2027?

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- Will the areas along the contact line be secure by 2027?

- Will post-war recovery in the regions adjacent to the contact line be feasible by 2027?

The authors of this document believe that the answer to these questions is no.

Accordingly, this baseline report will cover the territory controlled by Ukraine as of October 2024, with a special focus on all areas in close proximity to the contact line or designated as a war zone. For the purposes of this report, we use the following conventional classification of Ukraine's regions:

- Rear regions: Lviv, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Rivne, Chernivtsi, Khmelnytskyi, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, and Volyn regions.

- War zones: Sumy, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odesa regions.

- Areas at high risk of hostilities: Chernihiv region, Kyiv region and the city of Kyiv, and Poltava region.

> **Thesis 2: We consider human capital to be the greatest challenge for the arts and arts education sector.**

Demographic forecasts are particularly significant for this baseline report.

In its assessment of the top five risks for Ukraine, the World Bank's Global Risk Report 2024 places migration in second place, prioritising this factor above economic risks. The war, of course, takes the top spot as the defining factor.

In her research from the summer of 2023 for the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, researcher Maryna Tverdostup presents the following findings:

- By 2040, Ukraine's population will not return to pre-war levels. The population forecast for Ukraine in 2040 is no more than 35 million people.

- 20% of refugees who have been forced to leave Ukraine since 2022 are unlikely to return. This estimate is based on the 8 million registered Ukrainians in the EU, of whom 4.9 million are under the temporary protection programme.

- The responses of internally displaced persons (IDPs) show a positive trend, with 80% of them planning to return home.

- The biggest challenge for Ukraine will be the shortage of labour in the war-affected areas.

Tverdostup's study also separately analyses the key factors that negatively affected demographics before the full-scale invasion, as well as those triggered by the war in 2022: *'The war is likely to cause an irreversible demographic shock, which will result in a sizeable long-term decline in the population, much larger than was predicted before the war.'*

Similarly, during a telethon Ella Libanova, Director of the Institute for Demography and Social Studies, predicted that by 2033, Ukraine's population will be between 26 and 35 million people. This estimate corroborates the forecasts made in Maryna Tverdostup's research.

According to the Agency for Legislative Initiatives, the factor most likely to influence the decision of Ukrainian refugees abroad to return to Ukraine will be the affordability of life in their host country. This is crucial for 46% of respondents, while only 12% are concerned about the situation in Ukraine itself.

In their analysis of intra-Ukrainian forced migration, Dariia Mykhailyshyna and Mariia Tomilina, in their summer 2023 study, report the following findings:

- Zaporizhzhia region has lost the largest share of its population (20-25%).

- Kyiv, Kherson, Dnipro, and Mykolaiv regions have lost about 15-20% of their population.

- Kharkiv, Odesa, and Zhytomyr regions have lost about 10-15%.

- Volyn, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, and Kirovohrad regions have lost the least (0-5%).

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has triggered a significant demographic crisis, including mass migration and a sharp decline in population. The main issues remain the shortage of labour in the affected regions and the loss of a considerable portion of the population, including refugees who do not plan to return. To stabilise the situation, Ukraine needs to develop a strategy to restore its population, encourage the return of migrants, and foster economic recovery in the affected regions. Additionally, there is a need to provide incentives

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for labour migration from lower-income countries. This will particularly impact human capital within the culture and arts sector.

Based on the data presented above, the authors of this report **predict a significant reduction in staff at those institutions unable to offer competitive salaries** within the labour market. This particularly applies to the library sector and the technical/support staff of artistic institutions in the performing and audiovisual sectors. It is also necessary to adapt institutions to **potential gender imbalances** and, accordingly, to provide for the technologisation of processes that are currently dependent on physical labour.

Even before the full-scale invasion, there was a notable shortage of specialists in certain professions, particularly those with alternative career opportunities outside the cultural and artistic sector (such as lawyers, accountants, managers, PR specialists, social media managers, etc.). This trend of a shortage of qualified personnel in the arts sector is expected to increase steadily due to the inability to compete with other sectors of the economy in terms of salaries – a challenge already outlined above.

Art education will also experience a reduction in enrolment at all levels, which is likely to lead to a decline in the number of primary art education institutions, as well as the optimisation of the network of specialised art education institutions, professional pre-university education, and higher education institutions. The latter have already been experiencing a decline in applicants for several years, and after 2022, non-relocated institutions in areas of active hostilities will face unequal competitive conditions compared to those operating in the safer central and western parts of Ukraine.

> **Thesis 3:** **We assume that art and art education will not be prioritised at the state level in terms of capital expenditure.**

In other words, maintenance costs will be the primary focus of state funding for the network of cultural institutions, while development funding will remain reliant on "own revenues." As a result, enterprises and organisations that are expected to generate a profit will be in a better position than institutions that operate on a fully additive principle.

At the same time, while from 2019 to 2022 we did not observe a reduction in cultural funding at the regional level (UAH 14.6 billion in 2022 compared to UAH 14.3 billion in 2019), the data for 2023 should adjust this trend. According to empirical observations, regions close to the frontline, such as Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia, are redistributing cultural

spending downwards. As for state funding, such as that allocated by the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, the budget for 2025 is being formed at the time of writing and is projected to be cut.

For artists who realise their potential outside institutions, a high-quality and timely programme of state and/or donor support on the most affordable terms will be crucial. There are positive examples of how capable and institutionalised players in the Ukrainian art sector have become operators of Creative Europe's regranting programmes, such as the 'Izolyatsia' Charitable Foundation and the 'Insha Osvita' public organization (both of which originated in Donetsk, from where they relocated in 2014). Other positive examples include independent sector organisations becoming operators of international grant funds and establishing regranting programmes within the Ukrainian cultural and creative sector. For instance, the Per Forma regranting programme for the performing arts sector, operated by Kyiv Music Days with the support of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands, or the two seasons of the (re)connection UA programme, implemented consecutively by the 'Museum of Contemporary Art' public organization with support from UNESCO.

Grant support, by its nature, involves competition for donor funds, which means that less capable organisations may be denied access to resources. This indirect, and in some ways natural, selection is likely to have negative consequences for the sector and may lead to a critical reduction in the number of artistic organisations in small towns and villages, particularly if their initiatives do not find alternative affordable funding. One possible solution could be the **launch of grant programmes to support small cultural and artistic projects at the ATC level**. However, it is unlikely that local communities will prioritise cultural needs over social and educational ones, and they may not work to create separate tools for competitive allocation of funds. In theory, capable sector institutions could assume the role of operators for community funds, but this scenario is unlikely to be realised in the near future, certainly not by 2027.

The authors of this report also assume that the state will place more emphasis on cultural heritage than on contemporary art and socio-cultural activities, as infrastructure losses will require even more investment under the assumption of continued hostilities.

On the other hand, the European Commission, in its report on EU candidate countries, points out that Ukraine has shown unexpected growth in terms of GDP, with a 4.8% increase in 2023. We assume that this will present an opportunity for the cultural and creative industries to appeal to the contribution to these indicators, albeit with the need for a solid evidence base.

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Scenario Planning Section Summary

The authors of this report assume that the war will not end before 2027. This means that the front lines will most likely not be fully secure, hostilities may continue despite possible ceasefire agreements, and Ukraine will still be working to restore its borders as they were in 1991 – including through military means. Consequently, in this baseline report, we cannot discuss the role of artists and art in post-war recovery in the classical, linear sense – that is, in terms of recovery that occurs after the war has ended and in a relatively stable context of (physical) security. The European discourses of recovery and reconciliation, which were formed after the Second World War, are based precisely on a linear understanding. At the same time, the current realities of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine demand a different – renewed, non-linear and hybrid – **approach to recovery, which would combine rapid crisis assistance with a strategic recovery of only those elements that are beyond the risk of further destruction**. The fact that Russia's military aggression against Ukraine has not yet ended is also a key factor in the impossibility of reconciliation – in the sense of reconciling the two peoples through cultural dialogue and artistic exchanges. Traditional measures of cultural reconciliation can only be applied after the conflict has concluded, and only if both sides are willing to pursue them. These assertions – the non-linearity of recovery in the Ukrainian context and the impossibility of cultural reconciliation before the conflict's conclusion – are vital in discussions with foreign partners to clarify which support instruments may be most effective by 2027, and which ones may be premature.

One of the key challenges facing Ukraine – both in the cultural sector and more broadly – is the loss of life and the inevitable demographic shock. As a result, the population of Ukraine is projected to be no more than 30-35 million people by 2030, representing a reduction of 20-30% from the figure of 42.6 million as of 1 January 2022. At the time of writing this report, all analytical data indicate that 20% of refugees will not return to Ukraine after the end of the war, with this figure expected to rise as the active phase of the conflict continues. The shortage of skilled personnel and the lack of qualified workers constitute the second most significant challenge after security. This underscores the need to prioritise the recovery of human capital – for instance, through programmes that support the return of refugees and facilitate the professional reintegration of veteran artists. Such initiatives should include prioritising support for art education and systematically working to ease tensions between different groups of professionals in the sector (including those who remained in Ukraine and those who went abroad).

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In a context of heightened competition in the labour market, driven by the "brain drain" and the scarcity of qualified personnel, the cultural and artistic sectors find themselves in a particularly unfavourable position due to low wages and precarious working conditions. At the same time, by October 2024, state budgets for culture are being halved in some areas, exacerbating staff shortages – especially in management roles and related professions such as law, accounting, and communications.

The following sections of this report analyse the specific functions that art performs during war and / or in the process of non-linear and partial recovery. They also provide targeted recommendations for strengthening these functions, and, in part, for addressing the challenges outlined above.

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4. The Role and Functions of Art

If we discuss peacetime, art typically performs the following functions:

1. Art as a Form of Self-Expression

- Personal self-expression: Contemporary art often serves as a means for artists to express their personal experiences, emotions, and perspectives. This can foster a sense of connection and empathy between the artist and the audience.

- Cultural self-expression: Art is used to reflect and preserve cultural identity, traditions, and heritage, contributing to the formation of a sense of community and belonging. Art reflects and reproduces its own history, constantly referencing the past while simultaneously looking towards the future.

In the European context, the idea of free cultural and / or personal expression is fundamental and pervasive. The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. In other words, the restriction of this right is viewed as a violation of European values and democratic norms.

2. Art as a Political Message

- Political and social criticism: Many contemporary artists use their work to critique social issues, including politics, inequality, and human rights. This can raise awareness, provoke reflection, and inspire change.

- Activism: (Contemporary) art has become a powerful tool for activism, with artists using their platforms to promote social justice, equality, environmental protection, and more.

In particular, in the history of Ukrainian contemporary art, one example of political art is the art group R.E.P. (Revolutionary Experimental Space, where "space" in Ukrainian is "prostir" thus standing for "P" in the abbreviation), which emerged during the Orange Revolution in 2004 and remained active as a collective until around 2012. R.E.P. left behind a number of political actions (including those critical of power structures) and

important works of art, most of which are now housed in European museums. The key figures of this group – Lesia Khomenko, Nikita Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, Ksenia Hnylytska, Lada Nakonechna, and Volodymyr Kuznetsov – are now recognised, and integrated into the world art scene as artists. All of them have become a strong voice for Ukraine within European (left-wing) art since 2022 and have actively participated in cultural diplomacy – not out of a sense of duty or within a specific framework, but independently, autonomously, and according to their own political choices.

3. Art as a Space of Social Cohesion and a Catalyst for Change

- Public art projects: By integrating art into public spaces, contemporary art can transform the environment and contribute to a better engagement and revitalisation of the community. It is important to involve artists and art institutions in new urban concepts, where close collaboration between architects, sculptors, and painters is possible. This collaboration should focus on developing new urban public spaces, as well as making cities, towns, and villages inclusive, safe, and creative environments for their inhabitants.

- Participatory art and socio-cultural practices: Participatory art encourages viewers to become active participants, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic relationship between art and society. Socio-cultural practices allow for a joint rethinking of collective values and the social contract – this could concern issues such as inclusion, violence, and communication culture, for example.

One of the key prerequisites for public art is a participatory process, involving many stakeholders (both professional players in the field of art and urban planning, as well as non-professional actors representing the local community) in the decision-making process regarding the placement of an art object in a public space. After all, if the space is shared, the decision on its use should also be shared. A positive example of a public art project is the [crack on the Arch of Friendship of Peoples](#), which was integrated into the monument in 2018 at the initiative of the artist (and member of the R.E.P. group) Volodymyr Kuznetsov. A negative example can be found in the prevalence of quick and low-quality murals on military themes in Ukrainian cities – specifically, the case of [murals by Eugenia Fullen in Kyiv](#).

4. Art and Identity

- Identity Exploration: Art helps us explore and better understand our own identity (or identities), particularly through working with memory and own experience. Contemporary art often addresses themes of identity, including gender, race, and sexuality. This can challenge stereotypes and contribute to a more inclusive understanding of the human experience.

- Representation: Diverse representation in art ensures that a wide range of voices and perspectives are heard and valued, thereby enabling the creation of a more just society.

For example, from May 2024 to February 2025, the Odesa National Art Museum will host Alevtina Kakhidze's exhibition, ['Dad, I'm in Odessa!'](#) In this exhibition, the artist uses her own family history to narrate the impact of empires on several generations of her family over the past century – spanning the Soviet Union to the current Russian-Ukrainian war. Kakhidze records the shifting places of residence and languages spoken by different members of her family, approaching these changes with a delicate and seemingly simple touch. However, this transparency in simplicity brings forth political significance: 'My grandma spoke Ukrainian. And my mother never did. A mother and child do not speak the same language only for certain reasons. (I did not ask my mother when she switched to Russian.)' Through her work, Alevtina Kakhidze reflects on decolonisation, as well as the intertwined histories of Ukraine and Georgia, examining personal decisions of several generations of her family in the 20th and 21st centuries – from the Holodomor that forced her family to leave Vinnytsia region and settle in Donbas, through World War II, the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, and Russia's attacks on Ukraine from 2014 onwards, all the way to the shelling of Pokrovsk in January 2024, which impacted her closest relatives.

5. Art and Well-being

- Therapeutic Use: Artistic practices and interactions with art can serve as a form of psychological self-help. [Art therapy, which is already used and can be expanded, is particularly valuable for working with trauma – especially in military contexts](#).

- Collective Trauma: Art holds the potential to address collective collective trauma and can act as a catalyst for post-traumatic growth.

- Space for Optimism: Art in public spaces and community-based art projects can enhance the quality of life within communities, helping to create more inclusive environments. Art can provide spaces for optimism, which is why maintaining local cultural and artistic life despite hardships is so crucial. This can contribute to the revitalisation of communities, including encouraging the return of people to these areas.

Artistic practices in areas close to the front lines are increasingly significant. For example, the Mykola Kulish Kherson Regional Academic Theatre has responded to public demand by integrating art into the urban space. This is especially important for children and adolescents, who need safe spaces in the city. The theatre organises performances in basements and bomb shelters, holds film screenings to make up for the lack of cinemas, and invites people to participate in various creative activities with art-therapeutic potential, such as bead weaving and straw product-making.

6. Art and Education

- Educational Tool: Art education fosters creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. It can be incorporated into various subjects to enhance the overall educational process.

- Lifelong Learning: Museums, galleries, and art institutions offer educational programmes for all age groups, promoting continuous learning and a deeper appreciation of art.

There are a few notable examples of art education projects in Ukraine. One example is the private (commercial) project KAMA (Kyiv Academy of Media Arts), which educated several prominent artists from the 2015–2020 generation, including Kateryna Aliinyk, Bohdan Bunchak, and Kateryna Lisovenko. In 2023, the 'Asortymentna Kimnata' public organization in Ivano-Frankivsk launched a non-profit initiative called Frankivsk School of Contemporary Art fra fra fra. This school caters to two age groups – teenagers aged 12 to 15 and adults aged 16 and above. As of the time of writing this report, the school is operating successfully, having completed its second round of students.

7. **Art as an Economic Driver**

- Creative industries: The art market, including galleries, museums, and auctions, makes a significant contribution to the economy. Art fairs and biennales also play an important role in the cultural economy.

- Tourism: Art and cultural heritage attract tourists, supporting local economies and promoting cultural exchange.

The concept of "cultural and creative industries" emerged at the end of the last century in the UK, although the art market, of course, existed long before that. However, in the field of art, commercial success does not (always) equate to the artistic value of the work, and economic demand does not necessarily indicate the artist's realisation or the significance of their art for the history of art. The interdependence between the components of "material resources" and "artistic value" is non-linear and ambiguous.

8. **Art and Technology**

- Digital Art: The emergence of digital technologies has expanded the possibilities for creating and distributing art. Digital art, virtual, and augmented reality are rethinking the boundaries of traditional art forms. By challenging the postulate of mandatory physical co-presence, we are pushing the boundaries of creativity and accessibility of art objects. In addition, participatory digital experiences create a sense of community and (social) responsibility.

- Art and Scientific Research: The mutual integration of artistic and scientific practices and institutions, aimed at finding new methodologies, artistic languages, and ways of scientific inquiry, has proven to be productive.

- Social Media: Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have democratized art, allowing artists to reach and interact directly with a global audience.

An example of art that exists based on digital technologies is the Kyiv musical band _mediaklub, which improvises across the boundaries between different genres with a gravitation towards electronic music. Over time, musicians, artists, programmers, and, on occasion, the robot GAIA, joined this group. During quarantine, the mediaklub group transferred its artistic practice to Zoom, and this practice continued through wartime. However, the time delays during online communication often disrupted attempts to

create music in real-time. This led the group to adopt a new structure – no longer horizontal, but vertical, according to the laws of wartime. The group now closes the new form of mediaklub with one member, who serves in the army and on whom the group now focuses during online and hybrid musical performances.

The Role and Functions of Art Section Summary

All the functions and dimensions of art listed above are preserved even during wartime. Just as in peacetime, art remains a space for political criticism, a catalyst for social and free expression, which is limited only by the law of the respective country, a person's own set of values, and ideological beliefs, as well as the boundaries of their own self-censorship – which tend to narrow during social catastrophes and collective traumas. Even more important than in peacetime, art's ability to create (more) safe spaces for experiencing grief and expressing one's experiences in a non-cognitive way and through the language of art becomes essential. As in peacetime, artists and their creative practices must remain free from censorship or use as propaganda tools. Any deviation from this principle risks undermining democracy and European values, veering towards totalitarianism.

At the same time, during war and other social catastrophes (such as genocide), additional specific roles emerge in the field of art, which artists can take on if they wish. **These functions include cultural diplomacy and participation in commemorative practices and memorialisation processes. As noted above, the therapeutic function and role of art as a space for (self)identification during war only intensifies**. All these specific and especially important roles and functions during war will be described in more detail in the following sections of this analytical report.

4.1 **Fixation. Commemoration. Memorialisation.**

> *'The public perception of current or recent events (for example, ten or five years ago), as opposed to the distant past, is based on public, not academic, history. […] Sometimes works of art (not only visual) become historical sources (in the absence of or to reinforce other sources) in academic history. In a broader sense, visual art creates referential, iconographic images that convey understandable visual messages, communicating our experience of certain events. Art always constructs memory.'* This is how Oleksandra Kushchenko, art historian and researcher, outlines the relationship between art and the collective memory of the traumatic events of war in her analytical note, 'Ukrainian Visual Art Sector: Essential Problems and Challenges' (2024).

The Russian war against Ukraine is described as the most documented war of our time. Ukrainian art has been recording and interpreting the war since the very beginning of the military aggression in 2014. Even then, many artists explored the theme of war in their works, aiming to preserve the memory of both the events and, most importantly, the victims and their human stories. For instance, Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan created the poignant piece ['The Difficulties of Profanation,'](#) which, after 2022, came to be regarded as an "evidence sculpture" and was later adopted as a method by several other contemporary artists.

In 2018, ['Happy Fallings'](#) by Yevgenia Belorusets was published by ist publishing. In this book, the author transformed material from a series of interviews with residents of the grey and front-line zones in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions into a quasi fictional artistic text. Due to security concerns for some respondents, Belorusets was unable to present this material as traditional interviews. Similarly, in 2021, the 'VSL' Publishing House released a book by Olena Stiazhkina, in which the historian and writer from Donetsk recounted the diverse fates of friends in occupied Donetsk. In both Belorusets' and Stiazhkina's works, documentary and fiction, reality and imagination, are intricately intertwined.

In theater art, the urgency to fixate historical events after 2014 accelerated the develop-ment of **documentary and post-documentary theatre**. Notable examples of such pro-jects include 'Maidan Diaries' by Natalka Vorozhbyt and Andrii Mai, 'Militia' by Halyna Dzhykaeva and Antonina Romanova, and a series of verbatim performances at the Immigrant Theatre (curated by Natalka Vorozhbyt, Georg Genoux, and others). During this time, a new form of theatre, known as **witness theatre**, also emerged. One example

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is Georg Genoux's project 'Captivity,' in which journalist Alisa Kovalenko, who returned from captivity in Donetsk, reconstructs her experiences live on stage. These and similar projects, primarily performed on non-state theatre stages, aimed to bring diverse voices and occasionally controversial perspectives into the public sphere. In doing so, they **documented not only the events themselves but also the experiences of those who witnessed or participated in them**.

The Ukrainian Institute and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also adopted a performative approach to draw global attention to the plight of Crimean Tatar political prisoners. Their project 'Crimea, 5 am' compiled testimonies from Crimean Tatar public figures and journalists who were illegally arrested and detained by Russian occupation authorities in Crimea. Playwrights Natalka Vorozhbyt and Anastasiia Kosodii developed a documentary script, which was performed by public figures rather than actors, in a reading format. This project was staged from 2021 to 2023 in Kyiv, Warsaw, Berlin, London, and Cologne.

One of the **"side effects" of the artistic process during wartime has been the search for new forms and the creation of hybrid genres** that enable artistic expression in conditions of proximity to the events and an "unfinished history." When we are still inside the tragedy, these new forms attempt to transform lived experience into memory. Often, **these new forms blur the boundaries between documentary and fictional art**.

However, it is worth noting that, **until 2022, the topic of the war in eastern Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea remained somewhat peripheral to the artistic process in Ukraine and was occasionally even dismissed as "opportunistic."** This war was not widely regarded as a shared, collective war. Everything changed in a single morning in February 2022 – both in public perception and in the prioritisation of themes, formats, and methods within Ukrainian art, which has since been created both domestically and internationally.

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Fixation

The initial reaction of the Ukrainian art sector to the full-scale invasion in 2022 was to fixate the experiences of war. This was achieved primarily through diaries and archives – some of which were specifically aimed at an international audience to draw attention to the Russian Federation's military aggression in Ukraine. These direct and vivid depictions, integral to the diary genre, capture what has become an everyday reality for Ukrainians. For instance, in 2022, the diaries of Serhiy Zhadan ('Himmel über Kharkiw' / 'The Sky Over Kharkiv') and Yevgenia Belorusets ('Anfang des Krieges' / 'The Beginning of War') were published – both in German and, so far, with no plans for publication in Ukrainian. Belorusets' book played a notable role in public diplomacy. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz referenced a quote from the book in his historic 'Zeitenwende' (turning point) speech on the anniversary of the invasion. This address marked a significant shift from Scholz's earlier pacifist stance and called on the Bundestag to increase support for Ukraine, including military aid. Another key literary event was the posthumous publication of Volodymyr Vakulenko's diary, 'I am Transforming… Occupation Diary. Selected Poems' (Vivat, 2023). Writer Victoria Amelina, who found the diary, dedicated a lot of her lifetime to documenting war crimes and was going to publish this book by Vakulenko, but did not manage to do this, because she was killed by a Russian missile in Kramatorsk in the summer of 2023.

In the realm of performing arts, many Ukrainian playwrights, including Natalka Vorozhbyt, Oksana Hrytsenko, Nina Zakhozhenko, Andrii Bondarenko, Tetiana Kytsenko, Lena Lagushonkova, and Den Humennyi, began creating plays inspired by documentary evidence or their personal experiences of the war. Two anthologies of Ukrainian drama emerged after 2022: 'Anthology24' (Parad-Fest, 2022) and 'Drama Panorama 2023,' which compiled award-winning plays from various drama competitions. One particularly notable play, 'It is (not) possible to stay' (directed by Yevhen Reznichenko), fixates the experiences of actors from the Mykola Kulish Kherson Regional Academic Music and Drama Theatre, who lived under occupation before managing to escape. The play has been performed in multiple Ukrainian cities and has become a solidarity action with the people of Kherson. It incorporates documentary footage of the occupied city – shot on mobile phones – and testimonies about encounters with the occupiers, serving as a significant chronicle of this war.

In visual art, the process of fixating the initial experiences of the full-scale invasion took on a similar form, often blending diary-like formats with works that straddled the line between documentary and artistic photography. One example is Nazar Furyk's series of

[photographs from Irpin](#), taken in the summer of 2022. In the initial period – spanning six months to a year and a half after the invasion – artistic works often carried activist and placatory tones, as many artists themselves have noted. These works played a crucial role, both in international exhibitions of 2022–2023, which supported cultural diplomacy efforts, and in shaping a relevant language to address the modern experience of war – a process that required experimentation, time, and emotional distance. A substantial collection of so-called "war art" has been amassed in an [open online archive](#), launched in June 2024 and maintained by the 'Museum of Contemporary Art' public organization. This archive is currently the largest publicly accessible repository of visual art created by Ukrainian artists since 24 February 2022. Speaking of similar systemic large-scale initiatives by state or municipal institutions, it is worth mentioning the State Agency of Ukraine for Arts launched the website ['Art during War'](#) in 2022. However, as of the time of writing this analytical report, the site is not operational.

The authors of this baseline report are unaware of any large-scale systemic initiatives by state or municipal museums to collect and analyse contemporary art dedicated to the Russian-Ukrainian war (whether since 2014 or 2022).

Here, it is worth considering the so-called "authenticity dilemma," a significant challenge for art, which by its nature is tasked with reinterpreting and engaging with the realm of fiction. This is why, within the art sector, we focus on **fixation rather than the documentation of experiences**. *'In conditions where everyone can fixate and disseminate material about real events, the question of responsibility for the reliability of the information disseminated arises. Documentary images are often created by chance: circumstances and people who might not wish to be shown also begin to be interpreted. In the case of artists, we always have the artist who takes responsibility for where this information will later appear, and we are familiar with their practice before, during, and after. In this sense, art as evidence becomes a truer document—albeit of a different quality,'* the authors of the ['Policy Paper: Proposals for the Politics of Memory in Ukraine'](#) note.

It is also worth noting that, beyond the role of accumulating recorded experiences (for archives or future projects), **the act of fixating one's own traumatic experiences through artistic formats and creative expression can have a therapeutic effect**.

At the same time, working with documentary material and **real stories or artefacts belonging to others demands a responsible approach and raises important ethical questions** about the use of such testimonies. For example, the performance 'Green Corridors' by Natalka Vorozhbyt and Maksym Holenko features a photograph of the hand

with red nail polish of Iryna Filkina, who was killed in Bucha in 2022. This inclusion sparked a discussion about the ethics of using a person's image (even partially) without the consent of their relatives, as well as the potential emotional impact this artistic choice might have on audiences. Similarly, the film 'Yuryk' (STB channel, 2023) provoked criticism on social media, with many users arguing that it misrepresented the events of the war in Mariupol. In visual art, terms like **"ruin porn" or "war porn" have emerged to describe the unjustified use of explicit, (semi-)documentary images of destruction and suffering**. These images are often designed to (aggressively) provoke empathy and co-suffering in viewers but tend to have a limited emotional impact, leading to desensitisation and the need to "raise the stakes," in particular, due to their mass appeal. Susan Sontag discusses this overuse of realism in war imagery in her seminal text, 'Regarding the Pain of Others' (1997). The Ukrainian translation of this work, published by ist publishing in 2023, sold out within three months of release, and a second edition is already being prepared as of the writing of this report.

Thus, one of art's essential functions during wartime is to **fixate or record experiences and stories. However, this must be done – and presented – in an ethical and responsible manner to avoid re-traumatisation**. Striking a balance between the personal and the public is a key theme in the 'Policy Paper: Proposals for the Politics of Memory in Ukraine,' published in 2024 by the 'Museum of Contemporary Art' public organization and the memory culture platform Past / Future / Art: *'Using the image of real events in public spaces, we often neglect the dignity and right to privacy of those directly affected, whether living or deceased, in favour of public exposure. It is crucial to find forms and methods that neither re-traumatise nor exploit people who have endured traumatic experiences. Art is one of the tools that, through imagery, enables us to evoke emotions and encourage reflection without infringing on personal stories.'*

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Commemoration

> *'We live in a time that feels intensely concentrated. The next moment, we may struggle to recall what happened to us yesterday or the day before. It seems that everything that has occurred feels both distant and immediate, as if it happened a long time ago, yet just yesterday. Time is compressed and intensified. Art allows us to pass through and stretch this time; it gives us the opportunity to transform experience into memory. This is a necessary tool for surviving a catastrophe, where we turn experience into memory – not to fail, but to find a way to move forward.'*

The authors of the 'Policy Paper: Proposals for the Politics of Memory in Ukraine.'

One of the specific functions and tasks of art and artists during both the active phase of war and the period of post-war recovery is **to engage in commemorative practices**. While recording or fixating war experiences can be seen as a swift reaction, often focused on individual experiences or those of close communities, commemorative practices involve the participation of a broader range of stakeholders and a process of generalising experiences (without equalising them). These practices are rooted in a collection of individual and artistic fixations on catastrophe, trauma, war, or other crises. Therefore, the sequence is natural: first, the active phase of fixation and photographic preservation of events and emotions – from different perspectives and people; then, the creation of shared narratives based on this material, leading to commemorative practices.

By commemorative practices, we mean 'a complex of social practices aimed at honouring an event from the past or at processing the past' (definition from [the glossary of memory work by 'Past / Future / Art'](#)). Commemoration differs from rememembrance politics in that it is not only shaped by the state but also by individual groups and civil society. It also differs from memorialisation (discussed below) in that its tools are not limited to the creation of a physical object (a memorial); rather, it can include other forms of commemoration – collective rituals (such as a candle in the window on Holodomor Day), events (such as a military parade on Independence Day), etc. **Being participatory and pluralistic, commemoration can both reinforce the official memory policy and challenge it;** it can provide a platform for public discussion or even a field for conflict. As an unconventional example, we can consider the case where two daughters of a deceased Ukrainian soldier danced on his grave, explaining it as an act of commemoration – a gesture to honour their father's memory. This case not only garnered widespread attention and [sparked discussions within the artistic community](#), but it also had [legal consequences for the daughters, who were arrested by the police](#).

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Commemoration, like art, is a practice that exists beyond external censorship, while often encountering internal censorship. **Democratic societies should not fear commemoration and its pluralism – just as they should not fear (contemporary) art**. Commemorative practices often clash with regimes that lean towards totalitarianism but coexist well in democratic societies that seek to integrate the needs of different groups within society. Absolute consensus is only achievable in a completely unfree society, where history is reduced to a primitive tool for propaganda and the justification of the status quo. A degree of dissent regarding historical knowledge, as defined by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, is a hallmark of how knowledge functions in a democratic society. Art, in turn, is a natural environment for dissent (as noted by Belgian sociologist of culture Pascal Guillén) and free self-expression – not aimed at provocation but at revealing truths and giving a voice.

Commemoration refers to the ways events are interpreted and reveals the tools for preserving historical heritage – or silencing such events. Oksana Dovgopolova, co-curator of the 'Past / Future / Art' memory culture platform and member of the Memory Studies Association, writes, *'Commemoration is a very broad field that records the processes through which society understands itself in the mirror of the past.'* This brings us into the realm of **multidirectional memory** – a concept proposed by American researcher Michael Rothberg. Multi-vector history is a way of [addressing a tragic past](#) in which the memories of different tragedies do not compete, but instead provide tools for dialogue. A dispute over memories, Rothberg suggests, involves diminishing the significance of "others'" tragedies in order to amplify the importance of "one's own" – which is, in his view, a zero-sum game. **Due to the nature of their operational logic, commemorative practices are, although not swift, relatively effective tools for working in de-occupied territories and in cases of reintegration or reunification of communities that were (artificially) divided for a certain period**. *'We have a huge **public demand not for justice, but for punishment**. A significant challenge for us will be distinguishing a crime from an ideological mistake. We need to allow ourselves to speak, listen and, most difficult of all, hear. It is essential to remain in a very careful, very sensitive conversation, on very different levels, particularly on the non-verbal. We must not allow a hierarchy of experiences to form or belittle the experiences of others,'* as noted in the 'Policy Paper: Proposals for the Politics of Memory in Ukraine.'

At the same time, it is important to note that a feature of this war is its (relatively) common perception across different regions, with a certain regional specificity depending on proximity to the front and the presence or absence of occupation experience. In the

case of commemorative practices related to the Russian-Ukrainian war, the space for internal dissent, although present, is more limited than, for example, in the case of civil wars or multi-generational conflicts, such as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict or the Balkan wars. **In the Russian-Ukrainian war, the positions of aggressor and victim are (currently) quite clear, but in the case of a protracted conflict, this static situation may enter into dynamics, with the potential for change**. Additionally, the perspective of the dual model of "victim-aggressor" could shift after prolonged occupation or a prolonged separation from one's community.

Memorialisation

Memorialisation is a system of actions aimed at granting a material object the status of a point of fixation for historical meanings. When a material object is designated as a point for honouring a historical event, individual, or theme, we can speak of the creation of a memorial – an architectural structure that records the significance of a past event for collective identity. Examples of chaotic memorialisation include most monuments (and museum exhibitions) dedicated to the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, installations with portraits of fallen soldiers in public urban spaces in the form of banners, independently organised fields of flags on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kyiv, or the walls of memory in Lviv on Prince Danylo Square; individual initiatives to install memorial plaques on buildings or institutions, and so on. Special attention should also be given to projects involving destroyed objects or monuments as exteriors or decorations, for example, for photo zones. Memorialisation initiatives that involve the use of murals – particularly after several controversial cases surrounding murals (such as those by Eugenia Fullen) and a petition from the local community – led to the Kyiv City Council imposing a temporary ban on the creation of new murals in the autumn of 2023 until a transparent and open mechanism for approving sketches could be developed. As of the time of writing this analytical report, this mechanism has yet to be announced.

If the state's role in the functions of recording experiences and commemorative practices should be minimal, its involvement in the memorialisation process should remain non-nominal, as we are dealing with a common space and shared rules. **It is important to engage artists, architects, and professionals working with memory, conduct surveys of the local community, and allow sufficient time for all participatory processes and transparency – such as open competitions, public presentations of finalists, discussions, and so on.**

Although Ukraine has legislative norms that provide for competitions to create memorial sites, in practice, these competitions are often formal in nature, lack sufficient transparency, and fail to involve the general public in the discussion. This results in public distrust of the outcomes of such competitions and undermines their legitimacy. To improve this situation, a series of measures must be implemented. First, it is essential to popularise international examples of open and transparent competitions for creating memorials that involve both the professional community and the general public. Secondly, attention must be focused on positive examples of competitions in Ukraine that demonstrate that transparent and competitive procedures can result in the creation of truly significant memorials.

One example of work with commemorative practices is the 'Laboratory of Memorialisation Practices,' which was piloted by the Past / Future / Art memory culture platform in the spring and summer of 2024. The project aimed to begin the process of finding a visual language for remembering the Russian-Ukrainian war and expanding approaches to creating memorial projects. As a result, 25 ideas for memorial projects in Moshchun, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa were developed and presented. An interdisciplinary group of artists, architects, and researchers collaborated on the project. Additionally, in the spring of 2024, a free author's video course by Oksana Dovgopolova on unusual ways of commemorating tragedies, titled 'Memorial Projects about Social Losses,' became freely available. It was produced by the teams of Past / Future / Art and the 'Museum of Contemporary Art' public organization and published on the educational platform 'Cultural Project.' Another course dedicated to understanding the language of memorials was published in open access on the 'Zrozumilo' platform. The Past / Future / Art memory culture platform has been mentioned several times in this report and is currently one of the key organisations engaged, among other things, in informing, educating, and involving artists in (mostly participatory) commemorative and memorialisation practices. The platform was founded in 2019 by the 'Cultural Practices' public organization, in partnership with forumZFD (Forum for Civil Peace Service) in Ukraine. Its permanent curators are Oksana Dovgopolova and Kateryna Semenyuk.

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Fixation. Commemoration. Memorialisation Section Summary

In summary, the role of artists and art in developing an inclusive culture of memory and creating commemorative projects can be outlined as follows:

1. **Memory and Fixation:** The fixation of events, losses, human stories, and emotions in artistic works.

2. **Memory and Participation / Cohesion:** Engaging different voices and supporting an inclusive, polyphonic, and pluralistic narrative. By engaging and presenting diverse experiences, we do not create a more fragmented society, but rather a more consolidated one.

3. **Memory and Understanding:** Offering possible interpretations of the experience that Ukrainian society is undergoing through artistic works and expressions.

4. **Memory and Healing/Mental Health:** Attempting to make sense of loss and, through therapeutic practices such as keeping a diary or music, creating a space for psychological catharsis and the relatively safe expression of one's emotions within the community.

However, several challenges arise in this work. In particular, one of the main challenges in working with commemorative practices and memorialisation – paradoxical as it may sound – is that the war is not over. **The vast majority of conceptual frameworks and methodological tools in global approaches were developed during peacetime and for peacetime**. That is, they were conceived in a context where the end of the war was known, and a meaningful narrative could be constructed retrospectively. Ukraine finds itself in a somewhat paradoxical situation of non-linearity and simultaneity, where strategies and solutions must be developed and implemented for both recovery and commemoration and memorialisation while the war is still ongoing. This situation is fundamentally new for Europe and is not always accounted for by either Ukrainian or foreign researchers. In this context, the concept of **"tactical commemoration"** – short-term actions aimed at achieving long-term outcomes – becomes crucial for recording memory. 'It is impossible and unnecessary to prohibit people from installing symbols of honour. The state must engage in this process, cooperate with communities, and agree so that the messages do not contradict each other,' note the compilers of the analytical document 'Policy Paper: Proposals for the Politics of Memory in Ukraine' (2023).

Another challenge to the implementation of these functions may be **the gap between state institutions and the independent cultural sector**, which has been repeatedly

discussed in analytical documents within the framework of the RES-POL project. A participant in one of the focus groups articulated it as follows: *'There is state culture and culture engaged in by real cultural managers, real artists. We have the 'Union of Artists' with funding and premises, and we have an artistic avant-garde of real artists. We live in parallel worlds and rarely intersect. In the current issue of memorialisation, for example, there are no state orders for monuments'* (3P6). Respondents to the survey 'Memory Culture: Features of Perception and Work with It,' conducted by Gradus Research Group in 2023 in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Chernihiv, and Vinnytsia regions, highlighted the importance of **transitioning from a "vertical model," in which everything goes through the authorities, to a "horizontal model," where the project is implemented by involving stakeholders who jointly make decisions**. In particular, respondents saw the role of the authorities as creating and developing a nationwide strategy for preserving memory, which would harmonise the "diversity" and specificities of the regions, generalise, and unite them into a common concept.

This is also confirmed by the authors of the analytical document 'Policy Paper: Proposals for the Politics of Memory in Ukraine,' who recommend:

1. Transitioning to an inclusive model of remembrance policy, which emphasises the pursuit of shared, unifying meanings, even when faced with differing experiences.

2. Promoting successful practices of conducting competitive procedures with the involvement of the expert community. Amending the Procedure for Architectural and Urban Planning Competitions, approved by Resolution No. 2137 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 25 November 1999, to include provisions regarding: (1) conflicts of interest of jury members; (2) the inclusion in the jury not only of specialists in urban planning and architecture but also of the public and expert community, such as historians, monument restorers, and representatives of communities related to the event or theme being recorded and commemorated. The norm regarding the organisation of public discussions by the National Union of Architects should be excluded, as such practices are relics of the past and are in practice reduced to formalities.

3. Developing guidelines for commemorative practices. These would encompass principles for designing memorials, identifying and creating symbols, and establishing common forms of commemoration that can be manifested in various forms, not just material objects.

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Besides, respondents to the survey 'Memory Culture: Features of Perception and Work with It' highlight the high emotional intensity at all stages of memory preservation, which necessitates strong personalization and humanity in commemorative and memorialisation efforts.

Fixation. Commemoration. Memorialisation Section Key Issues

- **Transition from a vertical to a horizontal model. Inclusive memory policy**. Bridging the gap between state institutions and the independent cultural sector. The lack of memorialisation models that establish rules agreed upon by different stakeholder groups and allow for the involvement of civil society.

- **The need for tactical commemoration.**

- **Commemorative practices as a tool for work in de-occupied territories** and in cases of reunification of communities that were (artificially) divided for a period.

- **Changes to the Procedure for Architectural and Urban Planning Competitions:** Inclusion of the public and expert community in the jury.

4.2 Therapeutic Effect of Art. Art Therapy. Trauma-Informed Art.

Mental health and psychological well-being are central themes in the analytical notes and surveys conducted by key experts in the arts sector as part of the RES-POL project during the spring and summer of 2024. Specifically, the Vox Agency report, based on the results of 10 focus groups held in spring 2024, highlighted that a significant portion of the participants noted that cultural sector representatives (particularly in the regions) are experiencing considerable psychological strain due to security risks and are in need of psychological recovery. A third of respondents to in-depth interviews, conducted by Polina Horodyska in spring 2024 as part of the preparation for the analytical note 'The Ukrainian Literary Sector: Key Problems and Challenges,' referred to war-related stress, constant tension and fatigue, and negative changes in psychological well-being as the most significant impact on their professional activity since 2022. One respondent shared, *'War-induced stress reduces work capacity. After particularly painful events, it is very difficult to pull yourself together and get down to work. At the same time, without work, we would have gone bonkers for sure.'* It is evident that the challenges associated with psychological health issues are widespread across Ukrainian society and are not confined to any single sector or professional group. Furthermore, the trend is negative: for instance, according to a [survey by the Razumkov Centre](#) conducted in June 2024, the condition of 55.3% of respondents had worsened compared to the summer of 2023. In this context, **Ukrainian society must mobilise all available resources to maintain mental health**, alleviate stress, and address PTSD and other trauma-related disorders. **Such a strategy is no longer merely a value-driven decision within the framework of a humanistic perspective but is now a prerequisite for Ukraine's survival as a state.**

Due to its reflective and communicative nature, **art holds therapeutic potential**. It can serve as both a space for personal reflection on events and a medium for expressing feelings about the world and others. Art impacts individuals on various levels: for example, music can regulate physiological processes (including heartbeat and breathing) and help balance emotions. Artistic expression, whether through visual art, music, performance, or words, can either facilitate reconciliation with reality and contribute to emotional and psychological restoration (i.e., moving towards healing and well-being), or it can deconstruct and critique reality, potentially provoking uncomfortable reactions or even re-traumatising. These reactions can vary significantly from person to person and are difficult to predict. Therefore, when discussing the therapeutic effect of art, it is essential to recognise its situational nature and limitations. **While art can heal in a way, it does not always do so**, and other specific forms of human activity, such as psychological and psychotherapeutic practices, may offer more pronounced therapeutic benefits.

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Art Therapy

A distinct concept is **art therapy**, which represents one of the approaches in psychotherapy and psychological support. It is based on art and creativity as methods and **is practised by psychologists and psychotherapists (or less commonly, artists) with appropriate qualifications**. Artists are not art therapists and cannot undertake art therapeutic activities without the necessary qualifications. Otherwise, there is a risk of, at best, trivialising the process and failing to achieve its intended goals, and at worst, causing re-traumatisation and worsening the psychological condition of participants. If a cultural or artistic event is conducted without the involvement of a professional, certified art therapist, it cannot be considered art therapy or referred to as art therapeutic.

Art therapy is a globally recognised tool for addressing traumatic conditions, supporting psycho-emotional health, and enhancing overall well-being. The range of artistic mediums employed in art therapy is extensive and includes collage, visual art, film, photography, weaving, embroidery, and more. Essentially, any artistic practice that enables the free expression of emotions and strengthens individual agency can be utilised in art therapy. The Healing Arts Initiative plays a key role in the development, evaluation of the impact, advocacy, and global recognition of art therapy techniques. Established in 2020, this initiative consists of a coalition of research, medical, educational, and health institutions, as well as charitable foundations, led by the Arts and Health programme of the World Health Organization.

Art therapy operates within the bio-psycho-social model, influencing consciousness (by affecting mood, motivation, and emotions), the body (through changes in hormones, muscle tension or relaxation, and freedom of movement), and social interaction and behaviour. A therapist working with creative and artistic practices must create conditions conducive to transformation, focusing not on problems but on facilitating natural recovery through art. Indirectly, this aligns with what is commonly referred to as post-traumatic growth, i.e. the process of re-framing trauma into a category of experience rather than remaining as trauma.

Although art and art therapy may intersect in certain educational or social contexts, there are fundamental differences between them, including:

- **Purpose:** Art may serve as an end in itself, with the goal of creating an original work. Art therapy, however, has a therapeutic aim – to help individuals overcome stress and psychological challenges, develop emotional intelligence, and, ultimately, improve their psychological well-being and quality of life.

- **Process:** In art therapy, the process of creating art is prioritised over the final result. The therapist uses creative tasks to help individuals explore their inner experiences and discover new ways to adapt to life.

- **Specialist:** Art therapy is conducted by a qualified professional – an art therapist – who has undergone specialised training in both psychology and art.

Art is therefore a broad concept, whereas art therapy is a psychotherapeutic method that utilises art as a tool for addressing psycho-emotional states. To become an art therapist and practise professionally, one must hold a higher education qualification in psychology or pedagogy, complete specialised training, and obtain certification – for example, through the Ukrainian Association of Art Therapists public organization or another recognised international organisation. In some countries, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Austria, it is also possible to pursue a degree in art therapy, typically over 4-6 years.

Trauma-Informed Art

Using a **trauma-informed approach** (with appropriate certification) allows artists to work with traumatised communities and individuals. While this is not art therapy, it represents another form of support through art. In other words, trauma-informed education courses could enable artists to engage in collaborative creative activities with traumatised individuals in a way that minimises harm and has the potential to improve their well-being.

Trauma is a natural response of the nervous system to an overwhelming experience, during which the body's defence mechanisms are activated. In such cases, individuals often require active support to navigate the intense emotions associated with their experience. Trauma-informed environments are spaces where emotions can be expressed freely. For artists facilitating such processes, this requires attunement – the ability to respond empathetically and appropriately to the emotional needs and states of others.

Trauma affects the body at three levels: biological (heartbeat, sleep, addictions), psychological (panic attacks, depression, stuck in a sense of shame), and social (loneliness, conflict). At the biological level trauma disrupts key bodily systems, including cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, and immune systems. This can lead to sleep disturbances, impaired cognitive abilities, and the development of addictions. On a psycho-

logical level, some emotions become permanent and get stuck in the mind, causing constant anxiety, anger, depression, and other destructive states. On a social level, trauma disrupts the ability to build relationships, generates conflicts, isolation, aggression or a sense of loneliness, which can lead to the loss of social connections.

In a state of trauma, it is important for a person to first find a safe environment, and then it is possible to create a sense of belonging and inclusion. The final step involves creating a space where individuals can recognise their significance, agency, and purpose. Artists working within the trauma-informed art approach do not act as therapists or engage with people's personal stories. Instead, they facilitate shared creative spaces where trauma can be expressed, perceived, and experienced collectively.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified four types of interventions within the trauma-informed approach, each with distinct goals:

1. Prevention.

2. Mental health promotion.

3. Impact management.

4. Active treatment.

Both art therapy and trauma-informed artistic practices require additional qualifications. In Ukraine, there is currently no higher education programme for earning an art therapy diploma. This gap must be addressed by introducing the relevant specialisation in pilot universities. The art therapy specialisation could be taught by professionals who have completed higher education at international institutions or by Ukrainian specialists with qualifications in psychology, psychiatry, or trauma therapy, supplemented by certification courses in art therapy. It is equally important to provide opportunities for artists from various disciplines to work with trauma through artistic practices. This could be achieved through long-term academic programmes or accelerated training in trauma-informed art practices.

At present, education in the field of art therapy and trauma-informed art in Ukraine is being advanced by non-governmental initiatives. One such example is [Art Therapy Force](#), a project aimed at restoring psycho-emotional health through artistic practices and fostering the conscious rebuilding of Ukrainian society by institutionalising the training of qualified specialists. The project draws on modern academic methodologies,

incorporating foreign academic knowledge and practical experience from other (post-)conflict regions. Art Therapy Force collaborates with seven universities in Ukraine and two international educational partners – King's College London and its Department of War Studies. It also operates an online platform that hosts a library of articles, lectures, and methodological resources on art therapy. In addition, the initiative works with hospitals, organises educational retreat camps for Ukrainian artists interested in art therapy, and runs its own art therapy workshops.

The 'Culture Helps' project, initiated by 'Insha Osvita' and supported by the European Union, is **creating a platform to support projects and events at the intersection of art, therapeutic practices, and integration work.** This initiative aims to assist individuals who have been forced to relocate to safer regions of Ukraine or abroad due to the war. The support is provided through cultural, artistic, and educational events, which reflect the project's name. The project offers grant support to cultural managers and organisations that help people integrate into new communities through cultural activities. It includes information sessions and workshops designed to educate participants, support the mental health of cultural managers, and equip them with tools to work effectively within their communities. These efforts include training in trauma-informed art, in collaboration with Art Therapy Force, and in art therapy, in partnership with 'Psikultura.' All webinars and training videos are freely available on YouTube.

In 2023, the Coordination Centre for Mental Health was established under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to facilitate collaboration between state and non-state sectors, international partners and donors, as well as expert and scientific communities. The centre is tasked with implementing the national mental health programme 'How Are You?,' initiated by Olena Zelenska. Its primary focus is on educational activities, the creation of informational resources, and the production of educational and media materials. As of the time of writing this report, the Coordination Centre's only cooperation with the art sector involved providing informational support and organising joint events alongside the 'How Are You?' art exhibition held at the Ukrainian House in 2023.

At the Intersection of Medicine and Art

Art is widely utilised in psychiatry as a diagnostic tool. Mental recovery centres, such as Unbroken, frequently employ this method to identify pathological conditions. 'Art therapy is sometimes referred to among colleagues as our psychotherapeutic MRI, as it is a remarkable tool that proves invaluable in diagnosing and treating stress-related disorders,' says Dr Oleh Bereziuk, head of the psychiatry department at the Unbroken Centre.

Among purely medical projects in Ukraine that incorporate art, one notable example is the X-System – a technology designed to model the impact of music on the human brain. This innovative method is used to enhance the well-being of veterans and children with epilepsy. The technology provides music-based treatment tailored to the individual brain activity of patients, reducing the frequency and severity of epileptic seizures. It is a clinically approved, recommended, and licensed treatment method, particularly effective for medically resistant forms of epilepsy. Notably, this method does not require the presence of a therapist during the treatment process.

At the Intersection of the Military and Art

Artistic practices are also being applied within the military to alleviate psychological stress and engage military personnel in the therapeutic effects of art. By special order of the Land Forces Command, five mobile art groups – primarily composed of artists who are active military personnel – were formed. These initiatives are supported by organisations such as the 'Cultural Forces' public organization, which was established in the autumn of 2022 to facilitate concert and music-therapy activities along the front line. Mobile art groups work on the peer-to-peer principle and pursue four objectives: therapeutic, educational, motivational, and entertaining. A typical performance includes a guitar playing, bandura music, a puppet theatre show, stand-up comedy (often featuring civilian comedians), and a meeting with a public intellectual or musical performer. This sequence of performances is carefully planned, refined over multiple iterations. For instance, while initially considered a risky experiment, the puppet theatre has evolved into a powerful and emotive artistic experience. It has even served as a tool of cultural diplomacy, as documented in a film about the theatre that was broadcast on British television. Moreover, military puppeteer Valerii Dzekh discussed the frontline puppet theatre at TEDx in Britain in November 2024.

For security reasons (*'The battlefield dictates its conditions,'* says military artist Bohdan Kochur), these artistic events are conducted in dugouts and small private homes for groups of 5–18 soldiers. Without a stage and in close proximity, these performances create an intimate and highly focused artistic experience tailored to specific groups of soldiers.

Another noteworthy initiative is the 'Book to the Front' project, a collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy and the Cultural Forces public organization. Around 20 book publishers and bookshops participated in this project. Customers in partner bookstores could "hang up" (purchase) a book for a soldier, which Cultural Forces then delivered to the front line through the mobile art groups. At the time of writing this report, over 30,000 books had been distributed as part of this programme.

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Therapeutic Effect of Art. Art Therapy. Trauma-Informed Art Section Summary

Art therapy, trauma-informed art, and other artistic approaches to addressing trauma help individuals transition from a state of stagnation to a state of flow, enabling them to move forward and regain their capacity for independent development. Despite the significant demand for and potential of art in mental health, particularly in collaboration with the therapeutic functions of **specialised institutions and systemic programmes, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive research in this area**. At the same time, the development of such institutions and programmes is crucial. Working with art therapy and trauma-informed approaches requires specialised qualifications, as inadequate expertise risks re-traumatisation.

To harness the potential of art in its (limited) therapeutic role during the war and the post-war recovery period, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. To enhance intersectoral and interdisciplinary professional exchange between artists and therapists, and to establish frameworks for systematic cooperation.

2. To explore and implement opportunities for collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Culture in promoting mental well-being, art therapy practices, and trauma-informed art.

3. To investigate and develop synergies between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defence to support mobile art groups and other cultural and artistic programmes for military personnel.

4. To explore and facilitate collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs to support the adaptation and reintegration of veteran artists, providing conditions that enable them to return to their artistic practices.

5. To create pathways for high-quality, rapid training programmes to qualify artists in art therapy practices and trauma-informed art. To address the potential for re-training in this field and engage higher education institutions from the EU and the UK to mitigate the personnel shortage and improve the quality of education in Ukraine.

6. To systematically support the creation of information resources and research centres to produce and disseminate knowledge about art therapy.

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7. To pilot an "art therapist" specialty at Ukrainian universities in collaboration with foreign universities. To examine the certification processes of art therapists in other countries (e.g., Poland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Latvia) to inform this effort.

8. To conduct systematic evaluations of art therapy practices in Ukraine using psychological questionnaires, EEG brain impulse monitoring systems, and advanced neurofeedback techniques.

Therapeutic Effect of Art. Art Therapy. Trauma-Informed Art Section Key Issues

1. **Lack of (additional) qualifications in trauma-informed art and art therapy practices**, including the lack of professional higher education to obtain an art therapist diploma.

2. **Lack of research and institutions at the intersection of art and mental health.** There is a need to strengthen intersectoral and interdisciplinary professional exchange between artists and therapists.

3. There is a need to strengthen interagency and intersectoral cooperation in the field of **mobile art groups and other cultural and artistic events and programs for the military.**

4. The need to strengthen interagency and intersectoral cooperation **for the reintegration of veteran artists.**

4.3 Cultural Diplomacy

> **Cultural diplomacy** is a component of public diplomacy and soft power strategy, aimed at enhancing the recognition of Ukraine and its cultural diversity while fostering a positive attitude towards the country among citizens of other nations. *As a branch of foreign policy, cultural diplomacy allows Ukraine to promote and share its national achievements and cultural experiences with citizens of other countries, fostering greater understanding and trust.*

Since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion, **diplomatic relations and support from other nations have become integral to Ukraine's national security**. Cultural diplomacy plays a vital role in maintaining Ukraine's visibility within the international community, increasing awareness, and helping to cultivate loyalty and support, both within intellectual circles and across broader sections of society. This, in turn, has an impact on the volume of international assistance, which is crucial for the country's functioning and its defence capabilities.

Context

Under the Soviet Union, Ukrainian culture (like that of other republics) was categorised as "Soviet," which, in modern terms – especially in light of Russia's repeated attempts to position itself as the "continuing state" of the Union – has effectively been equated with "Russian." The Soviet era caused a rupture in the collective memory surrounding Ukrainian culture and art. Systematic efforts by Soviet authorities aimed at silencing or **appropriating** Ukrainian cultural heritage – an act of cultural appropriation where one culture absorbs elements of another (such as the appropriation of parts of the culture of colonies by the metropolis), often in an exploitative manner – were widespread. For instance, the concept of the "Ukrainian avant-garde" was introduced only in 1980 by a French scholar of Ukrainian descent. The process of appropriation continued after the collapse of the USSR. *'Russia spends incredible amounts of money on cultural diplomacy, allowing it to maintain a monocultural perspective of the post-Soviet space.'*

Scholarly articles analysing the role of cultural diplomacy during wartime highlight that Ukraine did not prioritise the development or implementation of an effective cultural diplomacy strategy after 1991 . A clear indicator of this is that the Ukrainian Institute, which aims to promote Ukrainian culture abroad, was only established in 2017.

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Those involved in the Ukrainian cultural and artistic process often describe it with expressions such as, *'Everything new arises from nowhere, as if the previous one did not exist,'* or *'Ukrainian continuity: everything returns to black soil.'* Documentation, research, and the archiving of past achievements are carried out by various individuals and institutions, ranging from state bodies to private initiatives. However, these efforts often lack the necessary resources, and the archival materials are dispersed across different collections and institutions, complicating their systematisation and access. **The gaps and omissions in the systematic archiving and research of cultural heritage have caused a break in historical continuity and hindered the development of Ukrainian art.**

The prolong historical conflation of Ukrainian culture with Soviet (and often "Russian") culture, insufficient investment in cultural diplomacy following independence, and the fragmented processes of researching and preserving cultural heritage have created significant obstacles. With the onset of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine has faced the challenge of not only addressing current issues but also **overcoming decades of stagnation in cultural policy, and the need to quickly form the basis and principles of cultural diplomacy.**

As a result, the responsibility for representing Ukrainian culture abroad has fallen to various actors and institutions equipped with the necessary resources and capabilities. However, these efforts often lack coordination. At the same time, this decentralised and self-sufficient approach reflects the democratic nature of Ukraine's cultural community, which, unlike totalitarian systems, does not rely on a hierarchical power structure to function effectively.

Main Challenges

In this context, and taking into account the results of focus groups and in-depth interviews, the following issues within the realm of cultural diplomacy can be outlined:

1. **Insufficient number of competitive cultural products**

According to the findings of the focus groups, participants note that with the onset of the full-scale invasion, the number of projects representing Ukrainian culture abroad has increased. However, the quality of many of these projects leaves much to be desired.

> *'Europeans are attending our performances less frequently because the quality of the cultural product is always a "surprise".'*

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Despite the international community's attention and the desire to support Ukrainians, including by inviting Ukrainian artists to various events, competitiveness remains the key factor in ensuring the long-term presence of Ukrainian works at international events.

Where can quality products and innovations be sourced? In the theatre sector, for example, such products are often found within the independent sector.

Olena Apchel and Iryna Chuzhynova, in their analysis of the performing arts, note that most professional innovations – both in terms of meaning-making and form – within the performing arts sector over the past 15 to 20 years have been driven by independent artists who lack stable financial support from the state.

> *'State-run theatres, on the other hand, often focus on creating performances for domestic audiences, avoiding experimentation and innovation, which limits their potential for cultural diplomacy. There is more emphasis on entertainment than on intellectual, exploratory, political, or socially responsible art.'*

As a result, Ukrainian art on the international stage risks being perceived as insufficiently innovative and uncompetitive when compared to works from other countries.

At the same time, professionalism and innovation are difficult to develop without synchronization with the international context and key events.

> *'To develop yourself as a good curator, you need the opportunity to attend preview days at events like the Biennale. It is very expensive. It's costly for European curators, too. And for a Ukrainian curator, for example, from the Odesa Museum, it's practically impossible. One would likely need to save money for ten years, probably from their salary, just to attend the Venice Biennale once. Without this, one can't truly understand the global context,'* says Yulia Berdiyarova *(From the Visual Arts Policy Brief).*

To make use of these opportunities, it is essential to strengthen financial support for the mobility of artists and cultural managers.

   2. **Multi-vector positioning and promotion of Ukrainian culture on the international stage**

Focus groups conducted by the research agency Vox Populi Agency in April-May 2024 indicate confusion within parts of the Ukrainian art community, stemming from the lack of a coordinated and unified vision of what Ukrainian culture represents in the context of European and global cultural spaces.

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> *'The world doesn't know who we are, why we matter, and we have not created any coherent image of Ukrainian identity and Ukraine itself.'* (A participant in a focus group).

Those focus group participants who have emphasised the need for coordination note that there is no strategic vision at the state level regarding the positioning of Ukrainian culture abroad. In some discussions, the necessity of a unified narrative and set of messages was even raised. However, a single narrative is fundamentally impossible when it comes to cultures characterised by diversity, such as Ukrainian culture(s).

The author of the analytical note ['Priorities of Ukraine's Cultural Diplomacy Policy'](#) argues that the primary challenge in shaping Ukraine's cultural diplomacy policy is the lack of vision. In practice, this means the absence of a roadmap or strategy for cultural diplomacy.

A direct consequence of the inconsistency or confusion arising from the diversity and varying perceptions of Ukrainian culture is evident in situations where Ukrainian embassies abroad fail to respond to requests or invitations to events that do not focus on traditional culture. *'The idea of Ukraine ends with "vyshyvanka" (embroidered shirt) and "sharovary" (traditional wide men's trousers). This image of Ukraine is, to some extent, promoted by embassies and state representatives abroad.' (From a focus groups report).*

The public [diplomacy strategy](#) developed in 2021 outlines the areas of focus for cultural diplomacy. It also states: *'In this area, close coordination and cooperation between Ukraine's foreign diplomatic institutions, the Ukrainian Institute, and other state bodies and agencies, including the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation (UCF), the State Agency of Ukraine for Cinema (Derzhkino), the State Agency of Ukraine for Arts and Art Education (Derzhmystetstvo), the Ukrainian Book Institute (UIK), the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (UINP), cultural institutions, non-governmental organisations, and associations of Ukrainians abroad, is expected.'*

Until such coordination and close interaction are established, cultural diplomacy may remain fragmented.

3. The problem of weak institutional interaction

The Ukrainian Institute is tasked with presenting Ukrainian culture abroad, but it has limited resources. Following the full-scale invasion, a larger number of institutions have joined the process, implementing many important and necessary initiatives abroad. However, the institutional capacity for effective international cooperation, as well as the ability of Ukrainian players to interact and synchronise, needs to be strengthened.

During numerous collective and individual meetings with cultural actorsfrom different countries over the past two years, the authors of this document have gathered the following feedback on the difficulties in cooperation:

- Foreign organisations express a desire to interact with Ukrainian institutions but do not always find appropriate contacts. Often, attempts to contact state institutions result in no response (no reply to phone calls or emails).

- English communication skills are highlighted as an important barrier.

- A lack of long-term planning skills, which affects the (in)ability to implement ideas.

- The efforts of individual players to promote their own activities may exceed those invested in synchronising for coordinated efforts.

These issues align with difficulties in cooperation with Ukrainian organisations, which were highlighted by representatives from various countries in the [Ukrainian Institute's Research Series on the perception of Ukraine and Ukrainian culture abroad](#) in 2020. Seven out of eight countries noted problems such as lack of funding, bureaucracy, and a formal attitude towards interaction. Other issues included a lack of strategic planning, inadequate feedback from Ukrainian partners, and the absence of institutions that would facilitate the search for necessary contacts.

4. Imbalance between the representation of traditional and contemporary Ukrainian culture

There is a significant imbalance in Ukraine's cultural diplomacy, with a frequent emphasis on traditional culture and insufficient attention paid to contemporary art. This is confirmed by the results of focus groups, where participants noted that foreign missions of Ukraine often promote stereotypical images associated with "vyshyvanka" and "sharovary," neglecting the contemporary artistic context.

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This situation results in an incomplete and distorted perception of Ukrainian culture globally, limiting its potential in shaping the image of Ukraine as a modern and dynamic European country. This raises the question of the root causes. Is the history of art (particularly contemporary art) integrated into the education of diplomats (especially at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)? Do diplomats understand contemporary Ukrainian and global culture?

Contemporary art holds considerable integration potential, particularly within the ongoing cultural processes in Europe. It is contemporary art that develops, tests new narratives, provokes research by art historians, and creates precedents for dialogue and discussion of potentially controversial topics.

Contemporary art is also a more accessible language for European countries, while folklore (such as folk songs and national costumes) may find itself in a zone of negative perception. Historically, for instance, Germany has a different attitude towards its own folklore and national costumes, which are largely only seen at beer festivals.

It is essential to raise the awareness and qualifications of specialists from state institutions regarding the history and characteristics of contemporary Ukrainian and European art. Mechanisms and models must be created to ensure that contemporary art becomes more visible and comprehensible for (state) cultural institutions, thus addressing the current imbalance between the representation of traditional and contemporary Ukrainian culture (both domestically and internationally).

'The state is not coping with the task of effectively using, distributing, and directing funds to the needs that are most urgent. There is neither a strategy nor an understanding of how to work and what to focus on. This is a reason to study the experience of cultural development during the war, to understand what has actually worked, what helped us. How did the Oscars come to Ukraine? How did other awards emerge? Who supported them? That is, what helped Ukraine maintain attention and support abroad, what enabled us to survive here? Does the state have any relationship with projects that helped Ukrainians withstand the pressure? An analysis is needed, an independent audit, and then we can reform the system entirely because, as it stands now, it amounts to feeding taxpayers' money into some utterly unnecessary, rigid, non-functional institutions,' Olha Balashova says.

5. Lack of involvement of international actors

Cultural diplomacy is often perceived as a task for Ukrainians to present their own culture. However, foreign actors in art and culture, particularly those with established audiences, can be highly effective in promoting Ukrainian culture in terms of both reach and impact. When individuals from outside of Ukraine speak about Ukraine and the war, it re-frames the issue as a global concern shared by many countries.

For instance, the Polish national pavilion at the Venice Biennale was dedicated to Ukraine, and at the prestigious Avignon Festival, Polish director Marta Górnicka staged 'Mothers. Songs of Wartime,' which drew heavily from Ukrainian stories about the ongoing war.

If prominent figures in the cultural and artistic spheres from different countries create works about Ukraine, this could attract wider audiences and compensate for the temporary limitations in the resources and experience of the Ukrainian cultural environment.

6. Lack of cultural exchange initiatives

Facilitating the movement of international specialists, artists, and cultural actors to Ukraine is essential. Such exchanges will help deepen global understanding of Ukrainian culture, enrich Ukraine's own cultural scene with fresh ideas and practices, and generate new opportunities for collaboration. Additionally, these exchanges will help strengthen Ukraine's international image.

For example, in 2023, the ['Insha Osvita' public organization](#), together with the [Prague Centre for Civil Society](#), organised a programme that brought thirty international cultural actors to Ukraine. A week in Kyiv allowed these participants to immerse themselves in the local context, which led to further cooperation. One outcome was that French colleagues saw a performance at the Franko National Theatre, which they later on included in the programme for the Ukrainian Pavilion at the Avignon Festival in 2024.

7. Insufficient involvement in cultural diplomacy of Ukrainian cultural and artistic actors who left abroad after the full-scale invasion

Focus groups revealed that many cultural professionals who left Ukraine following the full-scale invasion consider it their strategic task to represent Ukraine's interests abroad. These individuals promote Ukrainian contemporary art and cultural heritage through their projects and artistic practice, establishing collaborations with European institutions and organising support projects for Ukrainian artists.

However, there are currently no effective mechanisms or policies to systematically engage these professionals in state-led cultural diplomacy efforts. Ukrainian artists abroad have expressed a desire for professional contact with state institutions and for the standardisation of cultural diplomacy practices. Despite their willingness, the diplomatic sector has been slow to involve them in this process. The potential of Ukrainians abroad and displaced actors could be more involved into cultural diplomacy if there is coordination.

As noted in the Ukrainian Institute's study 'Beyond Greener Grass: Strategies for Reviving the Ukrainian Cultural Field Across Borders,'

> *'According to the interviewees, sometimes in their individual activities abroad they received a request to present ideas and narratives of the entire cultural field, and also felt a responsibility for this representation. Therefore, they saw the need to create clear narratives and ideas to represent Ukraine abroad. In their opinion, this could happen as a result of a dialogue between cultural workers abroad and those living in Ukraine. Continuous cooperation with Ukrainian institutions, participation in discussions in Ukraine can contribute to increasing opportunities to broadcast the ideas and positions of their representatives for mutual learning, exchange of ideas between Ukrainian and foreign cultural environments.'*

8. Lack of resources to support cultural diplomacy

Insufficient funding for cultural diplomacy in Ukraine limits the ability to implement large-scale projects and organise events abroad. This significantly hampers the creation of a consistent and impactful international presence for Ukrainian culture.

Furthermore, there is a growing demand for transparency regarding how available funds are allocated for the presentation of Ukrainian culture abroad. While the Ukrainian Institute has taken steps to address these issues, its efforts still require additional resources and state support. This challenge is not limited to financial aspects; it also extends to the need for a coordinated state policy on cultural diplomacy, including clearly defined values and standards that should be communicated at key international events.

9. Limited access to international venues for Ukrainian male artists

The state must provide support in establishing a procedure for obtaining travel permits for men to present productions (particularly for representatives of non-state theatres), exhibitions, etc.

The presence of permits from the Ministry of Culture does not always guarantee travel.

10. Lack of systematic archiving and documentation of cultural heritage

This issue has historical roots linked to the Soviet ideological dictatorship, repression, wars, and the persecution of the Ukrainian-speaking intelligentsia. As a result, the mechanisms of continuity in Ukrainian art were disrupted, leading to the loss of significant portions of cultural heritage and complicating its transmission to future generations. This pertains to sheet music, works of visual art, translations of drama, and other important materials essential for the reproduction and study of artistic works.

International institutions seeking to utilise Ukrainian works have limited access to materials, which are insufficient for presenting Ukrainian culture comprehensively. At the same time, global museums continue to label Ukrainian artists as "Russian" and "born in Russia," while foreign bookstores carry literature that categorises Ukrainian art as Russian.

11. Limited geography of cultural diplomacy

The Public Diplomacy Strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, created in 2021, identifies the following priority countries for cultural diplomacy: the USA, Canada, the UK, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Serbia, Turkey, Israel, Qatar, the UAE, China, and Japan.

By the end of 2023, the Ukrainian Institute announced that it was expanding its geographical focus to include: Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico), Sub-Saharan Africa (Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria), and Southeast Asia (India, Indonesia).

We are only just beginning to engage with a large portion of the world where the perception of Ukraine is either absent or shaped by narratives formed during the Soviet era.

12. Lack of networks and lack of advocacy for the cultural sector

There is a lack of specialised organisations and networks that could effectively advocate for the interests of the cultural sectors at both national and international levels. This leads to insufficient representation of the needs and concerns of individual sectors in the formation of cultural policy and resource distribution. The absence of such networks limits the ability of the cultural sectors to influence decisions regarding funding, legislation, and other important matters related to their development. Without effective lobbying,

these sectors may struggle to access the public and private resources needed to implement projects, develop infrastructure, and enhance professional standards. Furthermore, the lack of specialised organisations involved in advocacy and communication with the public leads to insufficient visibility of the challenges faced by these sectors.

13. Insufficient representation of Ukrainian culture and art in European education

This situation creates barriers to the perception of Ukrainian art and culture, requiring constant explanations of the context and historical background. This issue does not foster a sustainable interest in Ukrainian culture or its integration into the European cultural space.

Additionally, the difficulty in applying terms like "colonialism" and "decolonisation" to Ukraine persists: although Soviet Russia conducted a colonial policy towards Ukraine, these terms are often associated with other historical contexts. This complicates their use in relation to Ukraine and necessitates further explanations and justifications. Neighboring countries and countries with a predominantly white population are not perceived by Western audiences as having a colonial history.

Possible solutions:

- **Investing resources in cultural diplomacy:** ensuring sustainable funding and support for cultural initiatives.

- **Supporting successful actors and institutions:** promoting internationally recognized artists and organizations.

- **Organizing visits of foreign opinion leaders:** inviting cultural decision-makers to Ukraine.

- **Supporting foreign artists who draw attention to Ukraine:** promoting international projects that focus on Ukraine.

- **Using the environmental theme:** focusing on Ukraine's environmental problems caused by the war to attract a European audience.

- **Visit programs for foreign professionals to Ukraine:** organization of study tours for cultural figures.

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- **Residencies for foreign artists:** creation of conditions for the creative work of foreign artists in Ukraine.

- **Organization and participation in international festivals:** participation in international cultural events, as well as organization of international events in Ukraine.

- **Activation of the activities of embassies and consulates:** strengthening the role of diplomatic institutions in promoting Ukrainian culture.

- **Strengthening institutional capacity:** increasing funding and expanding the staff of the Ukrainian Institute and other institutions, opening representative offices in other countries.

- **Cooperation with the diaspora:** involving the Ukrainian diaspora in promoting cultural diplomacy.

- **Use of digital tools:** promotion of Ukrainian culture through online platforms and social networks.

- **Visit programs for Ukrainian actorsabroad:** organization of trips to familiarize themselves with international experience and present Ukrainian achievements.

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Cultural Diplomacy: Artists in military forces and veteran artists

At the intersection of the jurisdictions of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture, work on cultural diplomacy is underway with the involvement of a special unit under the Land Forces Command. This unit includes artists being in military forces and having specific competencies in public events and cultural diplomacy. Notably, one of the active military personnel involved is the writer and public intellectual Ostap Ukrainets. As part of this work, activities such as international tours to locations affiliated with foreign military forces and arms manufacturers in countries allied (or potentially allied) with Ukraine, and assistance with organising the filming of documentaries about artistic activities within the Ukrainian military, are being undertaken. The military artists involved in this work, as consulted by the authors of this analytical report, highlight the significant potential of such activities – particularly in a peer-to-peer format, working with foreign military and defence enterprises. They also stress the need to establish registries of foreign Ukrainian cultural organisations and actors who could assist in strengthening this work with their content and networks.

It is important to note that active military personnel who are artists and cultural actors have raised concerns about the lack of a mechanism for obtaining leave and permits for temporary travel abroad for cultural diplomacy purposes. Due to the inability to plan the leave in advance and the reliance on individual approval (since there is no dedicated mechanism for granting leave for cultural diplomacy), the vast majority of active military personnel are effectively excluded from representing Ukraine on international platforms and participating in the European artistic and cultural process.

Cultural Diplomacy Section Summary

Taking into account the points raised above, it is essential to stress that in a democratic society, cultural diplomacy should not conflict with art's primary purpose – free expression. In other words, **cultural diplomacy must not devolve into state propaganda, as seen in totalitarian regimes**. Instead, it should remain a platform for the pluralistic representation of cultures and a celebration of diversity. This diversity should neither be overly coordinated nor constrained by rigid structures.

Furthermore, focusing on cultural diplomacy – that is, promoting the artistic product "for export" – brings an indirect risk of sidelining the "domestic" artistic product within Ukraine. In a context where there are nearly no resources to support the creation and presentation of new artistic products within Ukraine, we risk finding ourselves in a situation

where, for example, a particular theater production has almost no performances in Ukraine but is consistently touring abroad. This could lead to the risk of transforming art into a "showcase" for foreign audiences and creating conditions that encourage further brain drain, draining human capital from Ukraine.

Cultural Diplomacy Section Key Issues

- **Lack of high-quality cultural and artistic products "for export",** stemming from insufficient investment in the domestic cultural product.

- **Imbalance between the representation of traditional and contemporary Ukrainian culture with a disproportionate emphasis on traditional culture.**

- **Lack of systematic cultural exchange and insufficient involvement of foreign artists in creating artistic products about Ukraine.**

- **International cooperation projects often proceed without adequate financial contributions from Ukraine.** There is a lack of parity for Ukrainian artists in international projects.

- **Insufficient institutional interaction and inadequate involvement of the "global Ukrainians"** – artists and professionals in the art field living abroad.

- **Limited access to international venues for Ukrainian male artists.** The absence of a mechanism for allowing active military personnel to temporarily travel abroad for artistic and cultural diplomacy purposes.

- **Limited geography of cultural diplomacy.**

- **Lack of a shared vocabulary with the world to define the policy of the Russian Empire towards Ukraine.** There is also a lack of understanding regarding the reasons and meaning of cancelling by foreign partners.

4.4 Cancelling Russian Cultural actors and / or Russian Culture

Since the onset of the full-scale invasion, Ukrainians have appealed to the international community in various ways to boycott Russian cultural actors and / or Russian culture. In some circles, this process has been termed "Cancelling of Russian Culture." To fully grasp the nuances of this phenomenon, it is essential to understand the origins of cancel culture.

"Cancel culture" is a social phenomenon involving the public condemnation and boycotting of an individual or organisation for actions or statements deemed offensive, discriminatory, or otherwise unacceptable. It is often employed as a form of social pressure to elicit a change in behaviour or compel an apology.

Cancel culture is a concept widely recognised across different countries and, to some extent, deemed acceptable, as *'public shaming as an effective tool of punishment has been used since the earliest days of societal formation.'* For instance, the careers of prominent individuals have been destroyed due to public outcry over sexual harassment allegations.

In the context of Russian military aggression against Ukraine, calls for cancellation manifest as appeals to boycott, restrict, or reject cultural products and events associated with Russia as a response to this aggression. This can include banning Russian films, performances, and concerts, as well as boycotting Russian artists and institutions.

The cancellation process generally encompasses:

- The condemnation and / or cancellation of specific cultural actors associated with Russia.

- The condemnation and / or cancellation of Russian culture as a whole.

While cancellation, as a general reaction, is relatively widespread across the Ukrainian community irrespective of geographical location, the specific targets of cancellation – be they individuals or cultural products – remain a subject of debate.

Similarly, in the international community, the cancellation of Russian cultural actors and Russian culture as a whole has sparked considerable discussion. The first aspect – the cancellation of specific individuals – is more widely understood due to its long-standing tradition in European society and the existence of established mechanisms for its im-

plementation. Conversely, the second aspect – the cancellation of all Russian culture – has faced significant criticism and misunderstanding from foreign observers. This broader cancellation is often perceived as fostering nationalist division. *'The importance of promoting Ukrainian art and culture is clear and should be prioritised. However, supporting Ukrainian culture does not necessitate cancelling Russian culture. To do so risks perpetuating a world of destructive national antagonisms and closed borders.'* The cancellation of works by deceased Russian artists adds another layer of complexity: *'In Italy today, it seems unacceptable not only to be a living Russian but also a dead one.'*

Distinguishing between "cancelling of Russian culture" and "cancelling of Russian cultural actors" is crucial for understanding ongoing debates and disagreements. It also serves as a foundation for developing narratives and solutions that align Ukraine with the European cultural sphere rather than distancing it.

What are the goals of the cancellation process of Russian cultural actors and/or Russian culture? What needs does it fulfil?

- **Safety and Protection.** Cancelling meets the need to limit the influence of all elements associated with the aggressor. For many, Russian culture and language act as triggers for PTSD symptoms due to deeply personal, versatile, and traumatic war experiences. Re-traumatisation may occur through shared spaces with Russians, the mere thought of such proximity, or through auditory and visual triggers.

- **Solidarity and Justice.** The vast majority of the Russian society is waging war in Ukraine, while largely refraining from attempts to stop it, often citing risks to personal safety. Meanwhile, Ukrainians face life-threatening conditions, abandoning professional aspirations, working in conditions of stress, enduring economic instability, and, in many cases, sacrificing their lives on the battlefield or in city buildings. Cooperation with Russian actors under these circumstances is often interpreted as tacit support for Russia's actions, a denial of collective responsibility, and an amplification of the aggressor's voice.

- **Reducing Propaganda Influence.** Russian culture has frequently been used as a tool of political influence and propaganda. This undermines its perception as a neutral entity. It often perpetuates imperial narratives that dismiss Ukrainian history and culture, portraying Ukraine as an inseparable part of the "Russian world."

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In most instances, cancelling seeks to protect Ukraine, put pressure on Russia and its government, influence political decisions: supplying weapons to Ukraine, halting collaboration with Russian institutions and individuals, and promoting Ukrainian cultural studies, etc. However, these efforts do not always yield the intended results and can themselves become sources of conflict.

Key issues in the process of cancelling Russian cultural actors and / or Russian culture:

1. Lack of a Synchronized Algorithm

Cancelling currently operates as an unspoken agreement within the cultural community. While there is broad adherence to this consensus, debates frequently arise over specific decisions. There is a growing call for the development of clear algorithms, as the mechanics of cancellation are relatively new and unfamiliar to many cultural figures.

Participants of in-depth interviews and focus groups have expressed the view that it is essential for government bodies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, to establish an official recommendation framework on cancellation. This would help to minimise internal conflicts within the community and present a more unified and professional front in communications with foreign partners.

There is also ambiguity surrounding the cancellation of Belarusian culture and/or Belarusian cultural figures, given that Belarus served as a launchpad for attacks on Ukraine. This issue becomes particularly complex when distinguishing opposition Belarusian art – most of the representatives fled Belarus after the failed 2021 revolution – from Belarusian culture that aligns with the official government stance. The performance of Russian repertoire and participation in international events featuring Russian cultural actors remain contentious topics.

> *'What criteria can determine whether I can participate in certain events, whether it is not okay, and whether this will be understood and accepted by Ukrainian society?'* (I. Vakulina).

One proposed solution is to establish a set of principles for decision-making, formalised in a memorandum or handbook. A precedent for this exists in the ["Memoir for Ukrainian Artists Abroad,"](#) developed by the Ukrainian Institute at the onset of the invasion.

While abandoning the cancellation policy altogether has been suggested, it seems impractical given the diverse and traumatic experiences of individuals. Nevertheless, synchronising the understanding and mechanics of cancellation is a pressing need.

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2. **Parity for Ukrainian artists in international projects**

International cooperation projects often proceed without adequate financial contributions from Ukraine, leaving international institutions to set the terms of engagement. This often results in demands for collaboration with Russian artists under the guise of fostering reconciliation between the two nations. Ukrainian artists abroad are often stripped of their agency in selecting their repertoire and are compelled to compromise with institutions that dictate the direction of these collaborations. This occurs because international organisations act as the primary implementers of projects, relegating Ukrainian artists to the status of hired contributors rather than equal partners.

3. **Lack of understanding regarding the reasons and meaning of cancelling by foreign partners**

The projects and platforms where the organizers want to bring together Ukrainian and Russian artists remain the focus of foreign actors on the issue of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This approach reflects:

- A desire to react to the situation and invest resources in it, but in a way that seems "right."

- A lack of awareness that Russian culture has long been employed by Russians as a vehicle for disseminating political narratives.

- A tendency to adopt a "coercive approach," where Ukrainian perspectives on the suitability of such activities are overlooked.

- Lack of understanding of how elements of Russian culture can re-traumatise Ukrainians.

For instance, the Austrian national pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale features a ballerina of Russian origin, now based in Austria, collaborating with a Ukrainian to reflect on historical experiences. This project ignores the context of Russian aggression and can be perceived as an attempt to "reconcile" Ukrainian and Russian culture, which is unacceptable to many Ukrainians.

4. **Lack of a shared vocabulary with the world to define the policy of the Russian Empire towards Ukraine**

Ukrainians characterise Russia's policies towards Ukraine as colonial, with Russian cul-

ture as its tool. However, there is no consensus with the international community on this terminology, leaving a gap in the framework for discussing the cancellation of Russian culture.

Cancelling Russian Cultural actors and / or Russian Culture Section Key Issues

- **International cooperation projects often proceed without adequate financial contributions from Ukraine.** There is a lack of parity for Ukrainian artists in international projects.

- **Lack of a platform for regular synchronization of the Ukrainian cultural and artistic communities** on issues of international cultural and artistic work, including issues of the cancellation of Russian cultural figures.

- **Lack of a shared vocabulary with the world to define the policy of the Russian Empire towards Ukraine.** There is also a lack of understanding regarding the reasons and meaning of cancelling by foreign partners.

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5. Conclusions. Key Issues

Art cannot stop war, and artistic dialogue – defined as dialogue between artists, art-works, and audiences in various configurations and with differing roles for the parties involved – cannot replace military negotiations. Both during wartime and in the post-war recovery period, art **risks being diminished as a perceived luxury of peacetime or co-opted to serve patriotic sentiment and cultural diplomacy verging on propaganda**. If such scenarios were to materialise, they would signal a retreat from democratic values and a shift towards a more totalitarian social framework.

The Universal Role of Art

To avoid this outcome, it is crucial to safeguard the universal functions of art during both wartime and post-war recovery to prevent a regression in civilisation. These functions include:

- **A space for the individual:** A platform for free self-expression, (political) critique, and catalysing (social) change. This space relies on the ability to challenge public opinion, critique majority views, and articulate unpopular thoughts and ideas. When censorship and self-censorship are minimised (even if not entirely eradicated), this space can foster both visionary and grounded ideas for a shared future.

- **A space for the common:** A safe environment for expressing personal experiences in non-cognitive ways, collectively processing grief, and searching for shared narratives of a painful past. This space depends on empathy for others and a willingness to compromise in order to preserve what is common.

These fundamental functions are multidirectional. It is precisely this quality that enables art to serve as a space for embracing and living diversity—the cornerstone of any democratic society. Art often reveals and navigates paradoxes. Ukraine's long-term cultural strategy, developed through extensive dialogue between the Ministry of Culture and various cultural communities and approved by the [Cabinet of Ministers](#), draws similar conclusions. The strategy identifies the cultural sphere as *'the most sensitive indicator of the implementation of human rights.'* Among its priorities are fostering dialogue to unify the country and ensuring that Ukraine's cultural sphere remains open to contemporary global development processes.

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Building on these universal functions, policies can be designed to address brain drain and to retain or attract creative talent (which, first of all, depends on the retention and attraction of people) – both within the country as a whole and in de-occupied territories in particular. **For artists as a professional group, economic stability is important but not always decisive in influencing decisions on migration. More often, the presence of an uncensored space that promotes diversity and free self-expression is a priority**. At the policy level, this underscores the importance of **supporting both state-run and independent institutions that have demonstrated the capacity to create inter-disciplinary, experimental platforms with an optimal balance of resources** – neither excessive nor insufficient – to foster a diverse range of artistic outputs.

Specific Roles of Art During War and Post-War Recovery:

At the same time, during war and other social catastrophes (such as genocide), additional specific roles get strengthened in the field of art, including:

- Contributing to **commemorative practices and memorialisation.**

- **Cultural diplomacy.**

- Strengthening **the therapeutic function.**

- Serving as **a marker of (self)identification.**

One of the "side effects" of the artistic process during wartime has been the search for new forms and the creation of hybrid genres that enable artistic expression in conditions of proximity to the events and an "unfinished history." In such contexts, narratives about the war are crafted even before its conclusion. Often, **these new forms blur the boundaries between documentary and fictional art**. By its nature, art is tasked with re-imagining and operating within the realm of fiction. Therefore, this report focuses on the fixation rather than the strict documentation of experiences.

One of the inherent functions of art during war is **the fixation or recording of experiences** and stories. Beyond serving as a means of accumulating recorded experiences for archives or future projects, such practices have demonstrated **therapeutic potential.** However, when recording (and especially when presenting) the stories of others, it is vital to do so ethically and responsibly **to avoid re-traumatisation**. Respondents interviewed as part of the RES-POL project, through focus groups (in collaboration with Vox Agency) and in-depth interviews (in cooperation with five sub-sector experts), high-

lighted the need for tools to support artistic works that capture war experiences in diverse ways – from civilians, military personnel, and veterans alike. This demand is particularly pronounced in the literature sector.

During both the active phase of war and the post-war recovery period, another critical task for artists is **engaging in commemorative practices and the process of memorialisation**. While recording or fixating war experiences can be seen as a swift reaction, often focused on individual experiences or those of close communities, commemorative practices involve the participation of a broader range of stakeholders and a process of generalising experiences (without equalising them). **Commemoration, like art, is a practice that exists beyond external censorship, while often encountering internal censorship**. Democratic societies should embrace commemorative practices and their inherent pluralism, just as they should value contemporary art. Typically, commemorative practices clash with regimes that lean towards totalitarianism but coexist well in democratic societies that seek to integrate the needs of different groups within society. In this context, the concept of "tactical commemoration" – short-term actions aimed at achieving long-term outcomes – becomes crucial for recording memory.

Due to their nature, commemorative practices are, although not swift, important tools for working in de-occupied territories and in cases of reintegration or reunification of communities that were (artificially) divided for a certain period. It is crucial to understand, that in the Russian-Ukrainian war, the positions of aggressor and victim are (currently) quite clear, but in the case of a protracted conflict, this static situation may enter into dynamics, with the potential for change. Additionally, the perspective of the dual model of "victim-aggressor" could shift after prolonged occupation or a prolonged separation from one's community.

The state's involvement in recording experiences and supporting commemorative practices should be minimal, focusing instead on fostering educational and experimental platforms. However, the state should avoid direct involvement in the memorialisation process. Memorialisation involves assigning material objects the status of sites for the preservation of historical meaning – such as the creation of memorials – and requires shared spaces and agreed-upon rules. To prevent chaotic memorialisation and conflicts – such as disputes over temporary bans on new murals in urban spaces – it is crucial **to transition from a "vertical model," where decisions are made solely by authorities, to a "horizontal model" that actively engages stakeholders. These stakeholders should collaborate within a framework of socially agreed norms and rules.**

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Although Ukraine has legislative norms that provide for competitions to create memorial sites, in practice, these competitions are often formal in nature, leading to public distrust. Involving artists and professional stakeholders, consulting local communities, ensuring adequate time for participatory processes, and maintaining transparency have all proven to help establish memorials that are professionally executed and accepted by local communities. In the broader context of commemoration and memorialisation, there is an urgent need for increased cooperation and synergy between state and independent sectors. As in other key policy areas identified within RES-POL and stakeholder consultations, respondents have highlighted **a significant gap between state institutions and the independent cultural sector. This divide often leads to the creation of parallel structures and competing narratives.**

One of the key roles artists assume during wartime is the function of **cultural diplomacy** as part of a "soft power" strategy. This aims to enhance the visibility of Ukraine and its cultural diversity while fostering a positive perception of Ukraine among citizens of other countries. The prolong historical conflation of Ukrainian culture with Soviet (and often "Russian") culture, insufficient investment in cultural diplomacy following independence have created significant obstacles. With the onset of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine has faced the challenge of not only addressing current issues but also **rapidly overcoming decades of stagnation in cultural policy, and the need to quickly form the basis and principles of cultural diplomacy.**

Respondents in focus groups and in-depth interviews conducted as part of the RES-POL project highlight the problem of **an insufficient number of competitive artistic products** with international market appeal. Additionally, there is **an imbalance between the representation of traditional and contemporary Ukrainian culture** with an over-emphasis on the former. This bias often results in cultural outputs that are less accessible or relevant to the European artistic context, where folklore and ethnography occupy a relatively niche position. Professionalism and innovation are difficult to foster without alignment with international contexts and major cultural events. One potential solution to this challenge involves establishing sustainable, systemic tools to support international professional mobility and internships for Ukrainian cultural figures. Furthermore, the creation of **high-quality artistic products "for export" depends on the presence of a high-quality domestic product, and this, in turn, is based on a high-quality – or at least existing – artistic process and cultural life within Ukraine.** The diversity of players and the variety of artistic formats under certain conditions is converted into quality. A high-quality cultural product cannot arise in a vacuum, and geniuses, despite the widespread myth, do not arise outside the community, outside the resources and outside the historical context.

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A segment of the artistic community perceives **a fragmented approach to positioning and promoting Ukrainian culture on the international stage**. While this perception likely reflects the reality of multi-vector efforts, the expectation of a "synchronised narrative" seems problematic. A singular narrative is inherently incompatible with cultures characterised by diversity, as well as with societies committed to democracy and freedom – both of which are defining attributes of Ukraine. Often, when concerns about "unsynchronised narratives" arise, the underlying issue lies in weak institutional coordination, particularly between the state and independent cultural sectors.

Another challenge in cultural diplomacy is **the limited involvement of international cultural figures, as well as insufficient engagement with Ukrainian artists who left the country** either recently (post-2022) or earlier. For the former, the issue often stems from a lack of cultural exchange and professional mobility programmes. As a result, only a small number of foreign artists and curators possess sufficient knowledge of Ukrainian art or are immersed in the Ukrainian context to act as consistent advocates for Ukraine in the international art scene. **The narrow geographical focus of cultural diplomacy** also requires attention, as efforts are currently concentrated on a few countries, neglecting many others whose attitudes are also pivotal to Ukraine's situation. Regarding the latter group, there is a concerning lack of policies and mechanisms to establish meaningful professional connections with both established and newly formed Ukrainian diasporas. Additionally, some respondents report an unfriendly narrative from state representatives towards individuals who left Ukraine after 2022. In light of the unfolding demographic challenges and an increasingly visible human capital crisis across all sectors, Ukraine cannot afford to alienate its allies or its artistic communities abroad. In this context, respondents also highlighted the **difficulties male artists face in securing short-term travel abroad for cultural representation**, noting that such restrictions often result in the loss of "half the team" or the diminishment of cultural diplomacy efforts. This disparity becomes particularly pronounced when compared with Russian artists, who do not face the same barriers.

With the challenge of the systemic inequality (both qualitative and quantitative) of art and artists from Ukraine and Russia on European and global cultural platforms, efforts have been made since 2022 to develop policies and tools **for the cancellation of Russian cultural actors and / or Russian culture**. Currently, this area remains one of the most contentious in the field of cultural diplomacy, often encountering misunderstanding and opposition from foreign colleagues. The phenomenon of "cancel culture" refers to the public condemnation or boycott of an individual, group, or organisation is a concept well

understood in Europe and around the world when it comes to the cancellation of individuals for discriminatory actions or for cooperating with totalitarian states or terrorist organisations. While the cancellation of specific individuals has a long-standing tradition and recognised mechanisms within the European context, the cancellation of an entire culture is a far less comprehensible step, one which faces considerable criticism and is sometimes perceived as a divisive call for nationalism. This divide is also evident within the Ukrainian artistic community, regardless of geographical location: while cancellation, as a general reaction, is a relatively common phenomenon with a relatively stable level of compromise, the object of cancellation – whether individuals or cultural products – remains a subject of debate. **Distinguishing between "cancelling of Russian culture" and "cancelling of Russian cultural figures" is crucial for understanding ongoing debates and disagreements. It also serves as a foundation for developing narratives and solutions that align Ukraine with the European cultural sphere rather than distancing it.** Moreover, it is important to recognise that the challenges surrounding "cancelling" are often exacerbated by inequalities in resources. International collaborative projects frequently proceed without sufficient Ukrainian financial involvement, leading to situations where international institutions establish their own rules without due consideration of the position of Ukrainian artists, who are often "only" invited participants and performers. Subjectivity in choosing repertoire and performance venues, as well as the ability to boycott certain foreign institutions that still cooperate with Russian artists and / or Russian cultural products, can be ensured through subjectivity and / or parity of resources. The absence of these resources places Ukrainian art and artists in ethically complex situations. To address these challenges, stronger institutional cooperation is needed, along with support for solidarity within the Ukrainian artistic community and the search for non-obvious sources of funding to maintain the agency of Ukraine's cultural diplomacy.

Taking into account the points raised above, it is essential to stress that in a democratic society, cultural diplomacy should not conflict with art's primary purpose – free expression. In other words, **cultural diplomacy must not devolve into state propaganda, as seen in totalitarian regimes**. Instead, it should remain a platform for the pluralistic representation of cultures and a celebration of diversity. This diversity should neither be overly coordinated nor constrained by rigid structures. Furthermore, focusing on cultural diplomacy – that is, promoting the artistic product "for export" – brings an indirect risk of sidelining the "domestic" artistic product within Ukraine. In a context where there are nearly no resources to support the creation and presentation of new artistic products within Ukraine, we risk finding ourselves in a situation where, for example, a particular theater production has almost no performances in Ukraine but is

consistently touring abroad. This could lead to the **risk of transforming art into a "showcase" for foreign audiences and creating conditions that encourage further brain drain, draining human capital from Ukraine.**

If we discuss **the therapeutic function of art during the war and in the period of post-war recovery**, then, given the total existential challenges for human capital and the collective mental well-being of the country, Ukrainian society should mobilise all available resources to address PTSD and other traumatic disorders. Due to its reflective and communicative nature, **art holds therapeutic potential**. It can serve as both a space for personal reflection on events and a medium for expressing feelings about the world and others. At the same time, it is essential to recognise the limitations of this potential, as well as the fact that other specific forms of human activity have an explicit therapeutic function – for example, psychological and psychotherapeutic work. In particular, **art therapy**, as one of the approaches in psychotherapy and psychological assistance, although based on art and creativity as a method, is **practised by psychologists and psychotherapists with the appropriate qualifications**. Artists cannot engage in art therapy without proper qualifications, as this risks profanation or re-traumatisation of participants. That said, there is a field known as **trauma-informed art**, which allows artists to engage in collaborative creative activities with traumatised individuals in a way that minimises harm and has the potential to improve their well-being. It is crucial that **both art therapy and trauma-informed artistic practices require additional qualifications.**

Despite the significant potential of art in the field of mental health and at the intersection with its therapeutic function, as well as the great need for educational activities and high-quality qualifications in both art therapy and trauma-informed art, **there are few specialised institutions and systemic programmes, along with limited in-depth research in this area in Ukraine**. It is worth exploring the potential for cooperation and synergy between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, strengthening intersectoral professional exchange between artists and therapists, and creating conditions for their systematic cooperation, as well as high-quality and swift additional qualifications in these areas.

In summary, the role of art and artists during the war and post-war recovery becomes even more complex, as the "peaceful" functions of preserving spaces for both freedom and criticism, as well as consolidation and empathy, become even more critical. Additionally, the important roles of commemorating the (common or disparate) painful past within the country and carrying out cultural and diplomatic work with current narra-

tives abroad are added to these. This complexity, coupled with the rapid pace of change and the lack of resources to address increasing exhaustion, can lead to a desire – or rather a compulsion – to simplify. **It is important to counteract this inertia in order to preserve art as a field capable of withstanding paradoxes, rather than rolling back from democratic values and civilised progress in general. At the same time, the fuel for resistance and the further development of art in Ukraine can be not only – and not exclusively – the availability of resources, but primarily and as a priority, the preservation of the space for freedom, self-expression, and artistic autonomy.**

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- **Transition from a vertical to a horizontal model. Inclusive memory policy.** Bridging the gap between state institutions and the independent cultural sector. The lack of memorialisation models that establish rules agreed upon by different stakeholder groups and allow for the involvement of civil society.

- **The need for tactical commemoration.**

- **Commemorative practices as a tool for work in de-occupied territories** and in cases of reunification of communities that were (artificially) divided for a period.

- **Changes to the Procedure for Architectural and Urban Planning Competitions:** Inclusion of the public and expert community in the jury.

- **Lack of (additional) qualifications in trauma-informed art and art therapy practices,** including the lack of professional higher education to obtain an art therapist diploma.

- **Lack of research and institutions at the intersection of art and mental health.** There is a need to strengthen intersectoral and interdisciplinary professional exchange between artists and therapists.

- There is a need to strengthen interagency and intersectoral cooperation in the field of **mobile art groups and other cultural and artistic events and programs for the military.**

- The need to strengthen interagency and intersectoral cooperation **for the reintegration of veteran artists.**

- **Deficit of high-quality cultural and artistic products "for export"**, stemming from insufficient investment in the domestic cultural product.

- **Imbalance between the representation of traditional and contemporary Ukrainian culture with a disproportionate emphasis on traditional culture.**

- **Lack of systematic cultural exchange and insufficient involvement of foreign artists in creating artistic products about Ukraine.**

- **International cooperation projects often proceed without adequate financial contributions from Ukraine.** There is a lack of parity for Ukrainian artists in international projects.

- **Insufficient institutional interaction and inadequate involvement of the "global Ukrainians"** – artists and professionals in the art field living abroad.

- **Limited access to international venues for Ukrainian male artists.** The absence of a mechanism for allowing active military personnel to temporarily travel abroad for artistic and cultural diplomacy purposes.

- **Limited geography of cultural diplomacy.**

- **Lack of a platform for regular synchronization of the Ukrainian cultural and artistic communities** on issues of international cultural and artistic work, including issues of the cancellation of Russian cultural figures.

- **Lack of a shared vocabulary with the world to define the policy of the Russian Empire towards Ukraine.** There is also a lack of understanding regarding the reasons and meaning of cancelling by foreign partners.

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