MOBILISING CARE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE IN RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

Diána Vonnák and Siân Jones
with contributions
by Josephine Munch Rasmussen
and Samuel Andrew Hardy

UNIVERSITY of STIRLING


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UKRAINE !!!

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Cite this text as:
Vonnák, Diána and Siân Jones, (with contributions by Josephine Munch Rasmussen and Samuel Andrew Hardy). 2025. *Mobilising Care for Cultural Heritage in Russia's War Against Ukraine*. University of Stirling, doi: https://doi.org/10.34722/n9m2-tv84

ISBN: 9781908063687
doi: https://doi.org/10.34722/n9m2-tv84
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Layout design: Iryna Dyak, Mykhailo Tsimerman

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Acknowledgements

Research for this report was carried out as part of the JPI CH DECOPE project (Destructive Exploitation and Care of Cultural Objects and Professional/Public Education for Sustainable Heritage Management, https://www.niku.no/en/forskningsprosjekt/decope/). The project was led by the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU), Norway, in collaboration with University of Stirling, Scotland, UK, and Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Spain.

The authors would like to thank our respective national funding bodies: Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK), The Research Council of Norway, and the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades, Agencia Española de Investigación.

We would like to extend appreciation and thanks to the many people who participated in or otherwise supported the research underpinning this report. Our research would not have been possible without the candid contributions of many individuals – heritage and museum professionals, NGO and INGO workers, state officials, members of community groups, and others – who gave generously of their time and knowledge. Due to ethical and safety concerns we will not list individual interviewees by name, but we are grateful to you all.

Special thanks also to our DECOPE Associate Partners for their support and contribution to project design and impact: Centre for the Urban History of East-Central Europe (UA); Historic Environment Scotland (UK), Museum Crisis Centre and New Museum NGO (UA); The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage (NO). Our Ukrainian partners in particular have been influential in helping to shape the research underpinning this report.

We would like to thank members of our DECOPE expert Reference Group who provided invaluable comments on draft text of the report: Emma Cunliffe, George Findlater, Olha Honchar, Nina K Jernæs, Håkon Roland, Iryna Sklokina, Beate Strøm, Serhiy Telizhenko. We are also grateful to Dóra Mérai for her comments on the draft.

Finally, we thank Vitaliy Pavliuk who translated the report into Ukrainian for his sharp eye and editorial suggestions.

Author contribution statement

Dr Diána Vonnák co-designed the research underpinning the report and carried out the underlying research focusing on Austria, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Ukraine. She undertook much of the analysis, formulated key findings and recommendations, and is the lead author in terms of original drafting of the report. Professor Siân Jones co-designed and managed the research underpinning the report and carried out underlying research in the UK. She drafted original content for the report, participated in formulation of key findings and recommendations, and contributed to review and editing and at all stages. Dr Josephine Munch Rasmussen designed and carried out underlying research in Norway and integrated findings from this work in the preparation of the report. Dr Samuel Andrew Hardy drafted content relating to looting and illicit trade in movable cultural property. All of the authors played a role in funding acquisition, along with Professor Ana Belmonte Vico.

Funding statement

The research project discussed in this research report was funded by a grant (€674,000) under the Cultural Heritage, Society and Ethics (CHSE) call of the European Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage and Global Change (JPI CH). Funding was derived from a consortium of national funding organisations: Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) (AHRC grant number AH/Y000285/1); The Research Council of Norway (RCN grant number 343995); Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades, Agencia Española de Investigación (AEI grant number: PCI2023-143383). This report is based on a work package led by the UK team, with some input from the Norwegian team.

Data access statement

Due to the ethical principles and safety considerations governing our human subject research we are not able to make the underpinning data available.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of key transnational networks, trends and challenges in the provision of care for cultural heritage in Ukraine between the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion and February 2025. Approaches to heritage protection in war have developed considerably over the last 20 years, as have the range of actors involved, extending beyond state administration and public bodies to diverse INGOs and NGOs. However, the complex networks and political economies involved in this are not well understood. It is increasingly recognised that cultural emergency responses intersect with humanitarian ones, but how this happens *in practice* is rarely explored. Without this understanding, calls for greater coordination and coherence, as well integration of heritage interventions with humanitarian ones, will be difficult to implement.

Our research therefore aims to advance knowledge of how care for cultural heritage in war is mobilised through aid and capacity-building, alongside legal and regulatory frameworks, including civilian support and emergency responses. Based on extensive qualitative social research across Europe, the report identifies the actors, resources and reasoning involved, as well as the financial, political and practical contexts of their operation. We unpick the networks, supply chains and organisational alliances entailed, both inside Ukraine and among Ukraine's allies, showing what actions are taken, by whom, and with what consequences. We also identify factors that facilitate or hinder how care is delivered in practice, particularly constraints that local professionals might face in their effort to shape the agenda of international support.

Our results provide new knowledge about cooperation and collaboration in various phases of the war, and show how cultural heritage emergency response, humanitarian aid, and support for social cohesion and resilience, intersect in practice. Analysing care for cultural heritage in this broader, cross-cutting framework transforms understanding of both the social role of cultural heritage in wartime, and the true extent of the networks and resources involved. The Ukrainian example also powerfully illustrates the relevance of ongoing heritage and memory work in the pre-recovery phase with important wider implications for policy and practice.

The overarching objective is to produce more effective and better coordinated support for projects and activities involved in caring for Ukraine's heritage, and the professionals, activists and lay communities involved in them. To this end, we present the principal findings and recommendations here, while detailed findings and recommendations are offered at the beginning of chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Key findings

1. At the time of the full-scale Russian invasion, Ukrainian state-level planning and preparation for protection of heritage was still minimal. Emergency protocols lacked legal and bureaucratic adaptations for disaster contexts. Heritage professionals sought alternative routes of support to deal with the ensuing breakdown in communication, logistical and resource chains, leading to both informal networks and a plethora of new civic initiatives.

2. Civic initiatives, municipal actors and staff in local heritage institutions acted faster in terms of emergency response than either the central state or international actors. Hybrid 'centaur initiatives', combining flexible organisational structures (e.g. through NGOs) with public sector know-how, were best placed to fill gaps in state capacity, understand needs across scales and geographies, and mediate between diverse stakeholders.

3. There was a rapid internationalisation of resourcing in the context of the war economy in Ukraine, and it was largely the influx of foreign funding which sustained a functioning heritage sector. Well-networked organisations that were able to quickly receive and manage diverse portfolios of funding, including donations, were critical in acquiring fast, flexible support during the emergency phase. Donor success depended on localised knowledge of sector-specific micro-networks, and the ability to connect these into larger-scale chains to channel funding and other resources.

4. The initial emergency was followed by more robust and predictable funding and a return to the project economy. Support became more diverse as large INGOs and foreign state bodies entered or returned to the country. Resourcing key initiatives happened through coalitions of international funders, leading to the emergence of loose partnerships. Bridge actors who connect different geographic and sectoral tiers of the support landscape have been key for the coordination and efficiency of the sector, facilitating communication and logistical flows.

5. With time, there has been increasing use of international instruments and 'in danger' lists to designate and protect Ukrainian cultural heritage in the context of the war. Multi-national agencies, intergovernmental bodies and related INGOs in this international political-diplomatic nexus also began to develop a more substantial in-country presence, working with the Ukrainian central state across the civil and military domains.

6. Diplomatic, military and central state initiatives constitute a relatively closed sphere, defined by restricted communication channels, administrative bureaucracies, diplomatic considerations and political priorities. Furthermore, support derived from leading actors in the international political-diplomatic and state sphere is often concentrated on major urban centres and around World Heritage and other prestigious heritage sites.

7. Care for heritage is intertwined with other forms of care work: social and humanitarian support through the distribution of humanitarian aid, psycho-social support through commemorative events, and peer-professional care work in the form of fundraising and institutional support for displaced colleagues. The relative safety, including financial safety, of heritage workers in Ukraine has been crucial in their ability to continue providing care for heritage. Social and cultural reproduction are interlinked.

8. Heritage institutions offer infrastructures for volunteering, distributing humanitarian aid, and commemorating fallen soldiers. These activities lead to new or stronger connections between heritage professionals and local communities. Heritage work is therefore part of complex care work that crosscuts distinct policy fields, notably relating to humanitarian aid and social cohesion-oriented culture work. Hence, it often falls between distinct funding streams, leading to gaps in capacity.

9. Projects focusing on everyday unofficial and/or local forms of heritage have flourished, including the emerging everyday heritage of war. This boom is part of the new relevance many feel about the value of heritage under threat. However, everyday heritage work also places a considerable burden on heritage and museum professionals in terms of the emotional labour of care and upskilling in forms of practice they may be unfamiliar with.

10. Already in the pre-recovery phase, complex care work, associated with both grassroots humanitarianism and everyday heritage practice, contributes to community resilience and belonging in societies heavily affected by armed violence and occupation. In this context, processes of care and repair, including identity work and trauma support, matter as much as the material outcome.

Recommendations

1. Simplified bureaucratic procedures and less centralised, vertical decision-making structures should be developed as part of emergency protocols, to enable fast action in volatile environments. Relatedly, contingency planning needs to take place at all levels, developing localised responses in consultation with the central state.

2. Guidelines and training on implementation of emergency protocols should recommend a networked approach, encouraging people to map relevant sectoral networks. Highly networked actors should be identified in this mapping to build efficient distribution chains, which can be mobilised flexibly in the face of any breakdown in communication, logistics and supply chains. Civil society actors, NGOs and INGOs should be considered as key actors, because they can often respond more flexibly in channelling and coordinating resources than public-sector organisations.

3. Donors should increase direct funding to 'centaur initiatives' at the onset of war, especially in policy areas where public-sector institutions are crucial but fast action is needed. Likewise, recognise and resource bridge actors so they can facilitate communication and logistical flows, helping to achieve greater coordination and efficiency across geographical and sectoral tiers.

4. Facilitate state capacity-building through closer communication and collaboration between civil society actors and state bodies. At the same time, recognise that varying degrees of central oversight, scale, and flexibility are required for different interventions, and build this in accordingly.

5. Take a broader, more holistic approach to wartime heritage response and funding, by embracing everyday heritage practices focusing on 'ordinary' things and stories, which can play an important role in (re)establishing social and material relationships in the upheavals and dislocations of war.

6. Recognise the importance of heritage institutions for civil society mobilisation and the provision of humanitarian aid. Prioritise their continued functioning to facilitate a heritage-centred social recovery already in the pre-recovery phase, even when their officially recognised heritage significance is not high.

7. Assess and support training needs related to new wartime dimensions of heritage work to ensure appropriate practices around vulnerable subjects and seek to address the overall mental health challenges of war for both heritage professionals and communities.

8. Increase communication between adjacent policy and funding areas – CPP emergency funding, arts funding, and humanitarian – to help develop more holistic funding initiatives that facilitate both complex care work and everyday heritage projects.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope, ambition and context

This report provides an overview of key transnational networks, trends, challenges and developments in the provision of care for cultural heritage in Ukraine after the Russian invasion of the country. **We ask, how is care mobilised for cultural heritage, and those associated with it, and what are the challenges, impacts and effects of local, national, and international responses? We analyse how states, intergovernmental actors, civil society organisations, and professional associations mobilised and divided tasks and resources.** The war between Russia and Ukraine firmly locates major challenges relating to heritage, society and ethics in areas of armed conflict in the heart of Europe. Our primary focus is therefore on the European response, but key non-European actors who participate in supply chains involving European partners have also been included.

Our definition of cultural heritage is deliberately broad, including all the resources inherited from the past which people identify as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. **It includes all aspects of the physical environment as well as the intangible traditions, values and associations resulting from the interaction between people and places through time** (Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (the Faro Convention), 2005). We therefore **go beyond officially designated heritage and include diverse forms of 'everyday heritage' defined as the ordinary, mundane and/or quotidian practices** associated with archives, places, buildings, collections, and communities (see Ireland et al. 2024). **In war, all these processes are threatened and disrupted placing even greater weight on care for cultural heritage** in the face of wilful or collateral destruction and as unifying, symbolic markers of survival and cohesion (see contributions to González Zarandona et al. 2023).

Our approach therefore brings together categories of heritage that are often held apart, such as movable heritage/collections, built heritage, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes and intangible heritage. Many existing policy documents, standard-setting texts and practical guidelines focus on protection and safeguarding in these specific domains (see European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture 2024: Annex 1 for a list). Whilst we recognise that these categories are subjected

to distinct legal and governing instruments, policies, norms and professional practices, this report attempts to trace sector-wide tendencies that cut through these divisions.

The **challenges of protecting cultural heritage in the context of Russia's war** in Ukraine have been discussed in several reports and an emerging body of scholarly literature (e.g. Campfens et al. 2022; European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture 2024; Kosciejew 2023; Mérai 2022; Powderly and Strecker 2023; Vonnák 2023; Yanov 2024). Many have pointed out the multiplicity of actors on the ground and the relative lack of coordination between them. However, **the complex networks and political economies involved in this crowded landscape are not well understood**. In particular, we need a better knowledge of the links between various tiers from diplomatic channels to grassroots initiatives and the division of labour across sub-sectors such as damage monitoring and funding community resilience. It is increasingly recognised that **cultural emergency responses intersect with humanitarian ones, but how this happens *in practice* is rarely explored**. Without this understanding, calls for greater coordination and coherence (Campfens et al. 2022: 11), as well integration of heritage interventions with humanitarian ones, will be difficult to implement.

We set out to address these problems through a network-based analysis of the diverse actors, supply chains, and organisational alliances involved in mobilising care for cultural heritage both inside Ukraine and among Ukraine's allies. We also identify the resources and reasoning involved and the financial, political and practical context of their operations. The **results help to close gaps in our understanding of cooperation and collaboration, as well as how cultural heritage emergency response, support for social cohesion and resilience, and humanitarian aid responses, intersect in practice**. By humanitarian aid responses we mean both the humanitarian industry, composed of UN and government-run aid agencies that work towards alleviating the needs of war-affected and displaced populations (see Weiss 2013), as well as grassroots, citizen aid efforts (Fechter and Schwittay 2020). **Analysing care for cultural heritage in this broader, cross-cutting framework allows to get a fuller picture of both the social role of cultural heritage in wartime, and the true extent of mobilised resources.**

This report offers an overview of the results, starting with the initial emergency period, followed by the consolidation of actors, networks and coalitions in the mid- to longer-term and finally the intersection between heritage and broader socio-cultural care work. At the start of chapters 3, 4 and 5, **key findings are highlighted and recommendations offered**. Occasional short case studies are provided (in-set in boxes) to illustrate the results. **The overarching objective is to produce more effective and better coordinated support for projects and activities involved in caring for Ukraine's heritage, as well as the heritage professionals, activists and lay communities involved in them.**

1.2 Approach

Many studies that focus on the protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage during war are structured along the lines of specific legal domains, types of heritage, or organisational actors. In contrast, our approach combines **an analysis of networks and resource flows with a broad focus on care for cultural heritage**. This facilitates a holistic analysis of the structural challenges, problems and solutions that often transcend specific areas. In a diverse, fast-moving field it also **helps highlight relationships between key actors as they coalesce around specific initiatives and seek funding from diverse donors in a dynamic funding environment**. This means we can highlight emerging coalitions of funders who enable initiatives to operate beyond specific project logics.

1.2.1 Care

We focus on a **broad concept of care** which goes beyond stewardship, protection, preservation and safeguarding, extending to other kinds of relationships and responsibilities that people have with heritage (c.f. Woodhead 2023: 36). **We also embrace a wide range of practices and techniques**, including monitoring, prevention, evacuation, mitigation, documentation, and heritage-based discursive work, **as well as recording emerging new heritage and the memory of the ongoing war**.

We seek to recognise the ways in which care for cultural heritage in war is one of the ways in which people seek to "maintain, sustain and repair our worlds" (Tronto 1993: 103). This means **we are interested in 'infrastructures of care', attending to material aspects**, such as the funding, physical resources, practical logistics, and training, **whilst simultaneously following the complex networks of actors involved**. Care allows us to **approach heritage not only as an object of concern and moral purpose** (after Jones and Yarrow 2022), but **also as an active component in sourcing, maintaining and mending identities and supporting social cohesion** (after Puig de la Bellacasa 2017; Tronto 1993). In other words, **we see the relationship between heritage and communities as co-constitutive**.

1.2.2 A focus on networks

Our research **focuses on networks across scales, geographies and sectors**. Problem-centred analyses have developed recommendations for key challenges such as damage monitoring or the evacuation of collections. However, they rarely address what these challenges might look like in terms of working across diverse bureaucracies and organisational norms, and how these underpin any wartime response. **Tracing networks from grassroots and civil society initiatives to international non-governmental, intergovernmental and state organisations has the following advantages:**

- We can see **what, and who, provides care and how this is framed** (heritage protection, rescue, reconstruction, and/or wider humanitarian objectives).
- We can **identify connections between what appear to be disparate actors and projects**, including hybrid coalitions which are often crucial to capacity building.
- We can **trace resource flows** of various kinds from source projects to recipients even when they go through intermediaries.
- **Barriers and bottlenecks** in resources and communication can be identified.
- We can **highlight organisational adaptation, learning and upscaling**.
- Practical **intersections between adjacent policy areas are rendered visible**, which can translate to more holistic and cross-sectorial policy recommendations.

1.3 Methods, data sources and limitations

1.3.1 Methods and data sources

The report is based on a range of **qualitative methods** and sources.
We combined:

- **semi-structured interviews**
- **ethnography**
- **focus group discussions**
- **media analysis** and
- **desk research.**

Data collection took place between March 2023 and December 2024. Overall, **60 in-person and online interviews** were conducted with heritage professionals across diverse institutions in **Ukraine, Austria, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Norway Poland, and the UK**. In each country, we approached national heritage boards, staff from national branches of umbrella organisations like ICOM, UNESCO and Blue Shield. We spoke to people working for major museums and research institutions and approached municipal offices and locally run cultural centres and attended their programming and training events. We also mapped relevant NGOs and grassroots initiatives that support the Ukrainian heritage sector and interviewed displaced Ukrainian heritage professionals. Online interviews were conducted when in-person interviewing was not feasible, includ-

ing with Ukrainian heritage professionals and with US-based institutions.

All **interviews were semi-structured**, and occasionally we did a follow-up when we suspected the passage of time might have brought significant changes to the interviewee's perspectives, or when we found unexpected areas worth exploring in more depth. Usually we recorded one-on-one interviews, but occasionally the same semi-structured format was used with a small group of staff within the same organisation.

Ethnographic research consisted of site visits, including visits to exhibitions, participation in professional meetings and conferences, and attendance in guided tours and other programmes developed for refugee communities. **Fieldwork in various European countries took c. 5 months in shorter instalments. We conducted online ethnography throughout the data gathering period, attending online events like conferences, presentations and training courses**, and we analysed recordings of several events we did not synchronously attend.

Vonnák's independent ethnographic research, used additionally to her DECOPE research, has also played an important role in the research findings. This includes **25 in-person interviews, and c.4 months of in-person fieldwork in Ukraine between May 2022 and September 2024**.

In February 2024, we conducted a **workshop in Lublin, Poland, with the participation of 12 Ukrainian heritage professionals** predominantly based in smaller organisations and localities, in Southern and Eastern Ukraine. During a three-day event, we held debates and discussions, and through interactive seminars we explored their experiences with wartime work and everyday heritage of various kinds, as conceived by participants. **Circular research practices were embedded in this event, soliciting and adjusting to feedback about emerging findings from participants**.

We conducted **desk-based research**, analysing the activity reports, press releases, social media announcements of key stakeholders, went through online training materials, watched online conference recordings in Ukrainian and English. We also consulted published reports and academic literature.

Finally, our **DECOPE Associate Partners** in Ukraine (Museum Crisis Center, and Center for Urban History), Norway (Riksvantikvaren) and UK (Historic Environment Scotland) played an active role in the design and implementation of the research, attending our project workshops and commenting on work in progress. They offered insights on key networks, trends and challenges, provided recommendations regarding participants and sources, and gave feedback on our findings. We also established a **Project Reference Group** with members drawn from a range of backgrounds in the museum and heritage sectors to provide advice and dialogue regarding the findings discussed in this report and its broad recommendations.

1.3.2 Strengths and limitations

While it offers an overview of the European response, the results presented stem from more sustained work in a **specific range of countries**.

Poland was chosen as a focus point as a neighbouring country and a major regional power that displayed strong and unanimous support for Ukraine. **Austria and Hungary** offer glimpses of a more ambivalent regional response. **Estonia and Latvia** offer insights into local responses where the sense of geopolitical threat is acute but not coupled with the same volume of resources as in major European economies. **Germany** was chosen as the biggest economy and the largest provider of aid in the EU. Finally, **Norway** and the **UK** were included as key European actors outside of the EU, but with different structural and political relations to it.

The results are therefore based on wide-ranging but differential geographic coverage. They are indicative of developments across the continent but are not exhaustive. We focused on the networks that channelled various forms of help, providing a holistic picture that connects grassroots perspectives to major transnational actors, but **we did not estimate the financial value of the tracked support**.

When it comes to the **reception and distribution of heritage aid inside Ukraine, we sought out individuals and initiatives from every region, focusing on less prestigious institutions and forms of heritage**. As with our wider European findings, the results show **clear trends and consistent challenges across the country**, but these are not comprehensive because of the attrition of the war and information about some operations/activities/priorities being withheld by the state due to national security considerations. **We did not conduct research that pertains to the developments in occupied territories.**

Finally, due to **challenges of access to diplomatic channels and the confidential nature of conversations with military personnel** involved in cultural property protection, national ministries or international actors like UNESCO, **our analysis is largely restricted to publicly available information disclosed by these actors**. We also analysed impressions of the impact and limitations of state and intergovernmental agency work from interviews with actors in the wider heritage sector, but without attempting a full-scale reconstruction of their actions.

UKRAINE'S HERITAGE SECTOR: BRIEF OVERVIEW, KEY CHALLENGES 2

Ukraine has **c.140,000 registered monuments and objects of immovable cultural heritage**. These are split into eight categories; nearly half are archaeological monuments, about 37% are historic monuments, ca. 11% are architectural monuments and urban planning sites, ca. 2% are monuments of monumental art; less than 0.1% are registered monuments of science and engineering, landscape architecture and landscape (Council of Europe 2014).

The state-run infrastructure is organised in a vertical fashion, where sectoral and territorial logics intersect. Extensive and **complex bureaucracy**, centralised control combined with **frequent changes of staff in the central state institutions, limited executive power on the local level**, and **long-term underinvestment** have been the key challenges for the Ukrainian heritage sector in the past decade.

These **are all intensified by the ongoing war**. They are exacerbated by further cuts in funding, **dangerous work conditions** especially in areas heavily affected by fighting and bombardment. **Limited contact with international partners** across the EU, and the **lack of foreign language proficiency** among staff beyond major urban centres, has been an **obstacle in the sector's ability to absorb incoming support**.

2.1 Heritage law and international conventions

Ukraine and Russia are signatories to several international conventions and protocols with implications for cultural heritage in the context of armed conflict. These are discussed in detail by Campfens et al. (2023) in their report, *Protecting cultural heritage from armed conflicts in Ukraine and beyond.* We merely provide a summary here.

According to the Ukrainian Constitution "Cultural heritage is protected by law. The State ensures the preservation of historical monuments and other objects of cultural value and takes measures to return to Ukraine the cultural treasures of the nation, that are located beyond its borders" (Article 54).[1] General provisions for cultural heritage pro-

[1] The Constitution of Ukraine. https://rm.coe.int/constitution-of-ukraine/168071f58b#:~:text=Article%2054&text=Cultural%20heritage%20is%20protected%20by,are%20located%20beyond%20its%20borders.

tection are established by the *Law of Ukraine on Cultural Heritage Protection* adopted in 2000.

The State's mandate and its responsibility to designate, manage and protect cultural heritage include any eventuality of armed conflict. However, challenges of access in the context of occupation or ground warfare, as well as financial challenges in a war economy have also significantly impacted on the State's ability to fulfil these obligations since February 2022.

When it comes to International Humanitarian Law (IHL),[2] **both Ukraine and Russia are party to the 1949 Geneva Convention**. IHL principles applicable to the protection of certain forms of cultural heritage include the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attacks. Article 53 in the additional Protocol I of 1977 specifies that it is prohibited "to commit any acts of hostility directed against the historic monuments, works of art or places of worship which constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples".[3]

Likewise, **both countries are signatories of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (HC54)**, which refers to any "movable or immovable property" that is deemed "of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people" by a State party.[4] Museums, libraries or archives devoted to conserving such property, and designated refuges for sheltering cultural objects in emergency, are also protected under HC54. Furthermore, **state parties will determine priorities and inventories of cultural property in accordance with their national legislation**.

It is a norm of customary international law that cultural property must not be exposed to damage or destruction during armed conflict, whether through deliberate targeting or making use of them for military purposes, except in cases where imperative military necessity can be established (Campfens et al. 2023: 32-33). The **Second Protocol of the Hague Convention (1999), ratified by Ukraine (2020) but not Russia**, established an additional level of protection to cultural property under an International List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection where the waiver of imperative military necessity cannot be invoked.

State parties to HC54 should also take measures to prevent looting and illicit trafficking in movable cultural property. This is further reinforced **in the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property**, which Ukraine and Russia ratified in 1988. The Second

[2] Also often referred to as Laws of Armed Conflict or LOAC.

[3] International Committee of the Red Cross, International Humanitarian Law Databases (n.d.) Article 53 Additional Protocol I. Available at: https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-53

[4] Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention (1954) 249 UNTS 240. Available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict-regulations-execution-convention

Protocol further prohibits illicit trade of cultural property in armed conflict, including the transfer of ownership in occupied areas, as well as alteration of cultural property that would conceal or alter scientific evidence.

Campfens et al. (2023: 42) note that "the international legal framework specifically developed to protect cultural heritage in armed conflict has so far focused on its tangible manifestations". However, **intangible manifestations of cultural heritage are protected under international human rights law**, and the framework applicable to tangible forms of cultural heritage also protects the intangible heritage associated with tangible cultural property. Furthermore, the **UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) to which Ukraine is a party**, established operational guidance for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in emergencies, including conflicts, in 2019. The guidance assigns primary role to the communities who practice and transmit intangible heritage while also recognising state party responsibilities.[5]

Access to cultural heritage is a human right according to the 1976 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, of which both Russia and Ukraine are signatories. Attacks on cultural heritage can constitute **war crimes** or they might be used to establish genocidal intent, and they might be **prosecuted before the International Criminal Court.**

Finally, **both countries are signatories of the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage,** *which envisions interstate cooperation, including exchange of information on illicit trade, but otherwise does not deal with ownership issues regarding elements of archaeological heritage.*

2.2 The Ukrainian heritage sector: key challenges

Ukraine's heritage sector is characterised by **centralised, vertically arranged institutional structures that follow both a sectoral and geographic logic**, a legacy of the Soviet-era command economy. Although the sector has been subject to multiple reforms in the past decade, they retain an **extensive and centralised bureaucracy, top-heavy decision-making, and relative lack of executive power in the lower rungs**.

2.2.1 The vertical state

The **Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications (MCSC) is the main executive organ in the sphere of arts and culture in Ukraine**. Within it, the **Department for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage (DPPCH)** is responsible for the formation and implementation of heritage policy.

[5] UNESCO (2019) Operational principles and modalities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in emergencies. Available at: https://ich.unesco.org/en/operational-principles-and-modalities-in-emergencies-01143

The DPPCH

- **sets and implements policy** for the protection of cultural heritage, including intangible heritage,
- **coordinates** the activities of reserves and museums,
- **monitors** export and import of cultural property,
- **administers** heritage documentation,
- **determines** the cultural significance of designated heritage objects,
- **maintains** the State Register of Immovable Monuments,
- and **manages** the work of state enterprises in the sector.

The Ministry **oversees the work of culture departments of regional state administrations**, which in turn are responsible for their respective district and local counterparts. These culture departments manage culture and heritage institutions within their territory. Through this **nested system of local, district and regional administrations**, the Ministry in theory has oversight over the entirety of the sector: it requests information, sends out orders, retains processual oversight. However, **this central role has not been matched with appropriate infrastructure, resources or staff**.

Since 1991, the ministry responsible for culture has been **restructured multiple times**: between 2005 and 2010 culture, and hence heritage, was managed jointly with tourism; between 2020 and September 2024 it was integrated into the Ministry of Culture and Information Politics. Since September 2024, it runs under the name of Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communication.

Staff shortages, frequent restructuring involving reorganisation of work, and a chronic lack of funding are among the most often mentioned long-term challenges. At the start of the full-scale invasion, Oleksandr Tkachenko served as minister of culture. He was replaced by Rostislav Karandieiev in July 2023, after whose resignation Mykola Tochytskyi was appointed in September 2024. There were also several other changes among senior staff members in this period.

Interviews with former Ministry staff and numerous external heritage professionals across Ukrainian heritage institutions unanimously signalled that the MCSC **lacks an efficient, digital information management system**. MCSC reports that **only 10% of the collections of Ukrainian museums and archives had been digitised prior to the full-scale invasion**. Furthermore, this was done without standardisation of cataloguing practices, approaches to metadata, data storage, and software usage practices. Internal archives are inconsistent and not up to date, with only a fraction of older records having

been digitised.[6] Staff struggle to source adequate data for their work, as already noted in past sectoral assessments (see e.g. Norris and Lankeleine 2015).

The challenges around data management and the vertical, rigid arrangement of communication, combined with the low spending on dedicated research means that there is a **serious lack of strategic planning and often even sectoral oversight within the Ministry**. Reform attempts have been made in the past decades (see 2.2.3), but there is a **consensus among Ukrainian heritage professionals, including current or former civil servants about the need for wholesale reform, including further decentralisation and simplified procedures**.

The combined effect of structural (infrastructural as well as legal and procedural) weaknesses, the frequent changes in staffing and policy direction, and the relative lack of lobbying power have meant that several internal reform attempts had been halted between the 2013-4 Maidan Revolution and Russia's 2022 invasion. **Under the enormous financial, logistical and security pressures of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, these vulnerabilities are further accentuated**.

The **workload and responsibilities of Ministry staff grew significantly with the Russian invasion, while staff numbers remained and resources have been reduced**. Outside of the MCSC, this translated to salary cuts for most culture and heritage staff across the public payroll since 2023. Although there have been attempts to compensate this (see Chapters 3-5), these initiatives remain small-scale, isolated interventions. As such, **the long-term sustainability of public-sector heritage work remains a challenge**, adding to the core challenges described above.

2.2.2 A decade of reform attempts: decentralisation, devolved culture funding and the internationalisation of the sector

After 1991, culture funding plummeted in Ukraine, and no major institutional or legal restructuring took place in the sector. As the infrastructure deteriorated, and state-run cultural institutions closed, especially in smaller and more remote communities, no significant alternative funding mechanism developed in this initial period. Private funding or investment was scarce, and foreign funding operated on a small scale.

Ukrainian cultural policy changed significantly after the 2014 Maidan Revolution, with a concentrated effort to bridge the gap between the state and the independent cultural scene. Decentralisation policies devolved central state power to some extent, allowing newly rearranged local communities more financial autonomy. There was

[6] Challenges around data management, the simultaneous profusion and difficult access to information, and the difficulties around updating major data infrastructures are typical challenges in large state organisations, although the extent of the problem varies. In Ukraine's case both the major shift marked by the country's independence, and the underfunding that meant digital transformation has been only partial and rather rudimentary, are key causes of the severity of this problem. For comparative cases studies see Jones and Yarrow (2022: 117-142).

a push for new funding models, which led to, most notably, the **creation of state agencies like the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation or the Ukrainian Institute, which started to distribute culture funding on a competitive basis**.

However, newly created institutions remained vulnerable to political pressure under both the Poroshenko and the Zelenskyi administration, and the long-term institutional and financial sustainability of the reforms was not granted (Pesenti 2020:21 ff). The legal, financial and tax system was not harmonised to support their work, and financial precarity remained a significant challenge in the whole sector.

Foreign culture funding, including heritage funding grew significantly with the onset of the war in the Donbas, with existing institutions like the British Council or Goethe Institute or the Polish Institute having manifold growth in their annual funding, and newcomers like GIZ entering the scene. The presence of EU funding grew with Ukraine's inclusion to the Eastern Partnership Policy in 2011, and after the 2014 ascension agreement, culture was part of the bilateral agreement. The joint impact of these initiatives was increased by their strategic cooperation in both developing and executing programs. The expansion took place in a climate where heritage became more central in the EU's policy agenda.[7]

This cross-sectorial increase in foreign funding and the new programs offered by state agencies led to significant growth in the independent cultural scene, and to a stronger presence of policy blueprints and managerial models widely used in European cultural institutions.

Still, in the interim years between the Maidan and the 2022 Russian Invasion, reforms were undertaken in an ambivalent policy context. On the one hand, there was **a push towards devolved funding, and a vision of culture as a democratically oriented, progressive social force; on the other hand, a securitised vision of national culture was pursued, largely in response to Russia's hybrid war and the ongoing war in the Donbas** (Olzacka 2024). These tensions often led to an atmosphere of culture wars, and hence a fragmented professional community. Trust in the central state remained limited, especially in the provinces.

The expansion of heritage and culture focused NGOs and grassroots initiatives was crucial during the 2022 invasion, as they became key arbiters and mediators of funding, and innovators in working with state institutions to foster their continued work in the war economy. Still, the vast majority of Ukrainian public institutions farther away from major urban centers had little or no experience with international collaboration or even domestic granting agencies. Language skills, experience with project management and compliance tasks and lack of familiarity with the grant economy remained a challenge for many.

[7] The EP declared the year 2018 the Year of Cultural Heritage (see: Decision (EU) 2017/864 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on *a European Year of Cultural Heritage* (2018).

2.3 Emergency preparedness: the challenges of protocols and bureaucracy

February 2022 was not the first time Ukraine's heritage sector encountered major emergency. With **Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the start of the armed conflict in the Donbas in 2014**, heritage institutions in these regions experienced major challenges in their attempts to care for their collections, buildings and archaeological sites. This period **exposed gaps in the country's emergency preparedness**, which led to a broader awareness of its vulnerabilities within the professional community, but **reform attempts remained limited** (Vonnák 2023).

2.3.1 Emergency preparedness 2014-2022

Article 3 of HC54 requires state parties to engage in **peacetime preparations for the safeguarding of cultural property** against the foreseeable effects of an armed conflict. A body of normative protocols, and limited guidelines and training resources have been developed covering the range of proactive preparedness activities, examples of which are summarised in Article 5 of the Second Protocol:

> the preparation of inventories, the planning of emergency measures for protection against fire or structural collapse, the preparation for the removal of movable cultural property or the provision for adequate in situ protection of such property, and the designation of competent authorities responsible for the safeguarding of cultural property.[8]

Article 7 of HC54 in turn requires state parties **to foster respect for cultural property within their armed forces during peacetime** and to plan or establish specialist military personnel "whose purpose will be to secure respect for cultural property and to co-operate with the civilian authorities responsible for safeguarding it".[9]

The extent to which state parties have progressed these peacetime preparations varies significantly from country to country, with most countries falling short of the ideal. In Ukraine, **state level planning and preparation for CPP was still minimal at the point of the full-scale invasion**. The MCSC had not invested in a centralised information system for inventories or registries of cultural property. **Individual institutions received little guidance and support to improve either communication with the central state**, or to acquire equipment for evacuations or the protection of their cultural property if it could not be moved. As the sector leaves little executive power in the hands of institutional

[8] Article 5, Second Protocol to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1999) 2253 UNTS 212. Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000130696

[9] Article 7, Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention (1954) 249 UNTS 240. Available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict-regulations-execution-convention

leaders, and the financial autonomy of public institutions is limited, many awaited guidance from the central state.

At the onset of the Donbas war in 2014, a working group was set up within the Ministry of Culture to assess the risks regional museums were facing. Staff visited institutions in government-controlled territories to deliver **trainings about emergency measures, including evacuations. However, such initiatives were isolated attempts**. Although they increased awareness, without logistical support and more sustained dialogue with the central state authorities, these steps could not coalesce into a sustained strategy. **No significant extra funding was made available to facilitate better preparedness in the museum sector in the Donbas** (Vonnák 2023). Heritage workers who attempted to improve the preparedness of their institutions usually needed to find funds autonomously.

Looting of cultural property in Ukraine was already seen as a cultural 'catastrophe' (Gershkovych 2020) prior to Russia's full-scale invasion. The years following the annexation of Crimea and the Russian incursion to the Donbas saw some mobilisation among concerned state officials, heritage professionals and citizen activists who lobbied for legal and administrative reforms. Activities included public campaigns for better protection of cultural heritage in occupied territories and zones of armed conflict (Busol 2017; Gershkovych 2019). However, even with Ukraine's ratification of the 1999 Second Protocol of HC54, **cultural property policing** did not become a policy priority. **There was a shortfall in staffing, equipment and training and consequently relevant bodies of the cultural heritage profession, law enforcement and security agencies could not significantly augment their response(s)**.

The international community was also ill-prepared and despite appeals from the Ukrainian government, international cultural heritage organisations, law enforcement agencies and crime-fighting projects did not attend to Ukraine in a significant way prior to 2022. Appeals to UNESCO to help protect cultural heritage in the occupied territory resulted in a commitment to explore ways of collecting information and engaging in direct monitoring. Yet by 2020 the promised UNESCO monitoring delegation had still not visited Crimea[10], reaffirming a perception of broader 'gridlock' in multilateral decision-making and action (Meskell, 2015; see also McCafferty, 2023).

A provisional **Blue Shield National Committee** for Ukraine was established in response to civil unrest in 2014,[11] but with little subsequent activity until 2018 when the Blue Shield International Secretariat approached original founding members to establish a formal administration and legal statutes. This process stalled in 2020 with the global Covid-19 pandemic and once again with the full-scale invasion, with the result that Blue Shield Ukraine only began the first stages towards becoming fully legally constituted

[10] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. 2020. UNESCO states further deterioration of the situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine*, April 8. https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/unesco-states-further-deterioration-situation-temporarily-occupied-crimea

[11] https://www.ifla.org/publications/blue-shield-statement-on-ukraine/

(under the Articles of the Blue Shield association, and in national law) in 2023, a process expected to be completed in 2025.

The key actors who were involved in the Ukrainian BS during this period were influential in connecting BSI with the Ukrainian state civil and military spheres through their professional positions. They would also be influential in BSI's support and capacity building following the full-scale invasion and closely involved in BSI's investigative missions to Ukraine from November 2022 onwards. This demonstrates the **importance of key actors and informal networks even in the absence of formal structures**, as well as the role of international NGOs in proactively maintaining networks and attempting to initiate the structures and processes necessary for implementation of IHL.

Nevertheless, whilst Blue Shield symbols were reportedly in use at some heritage sites,[12] **much CPP capacity was still to be developed at the time of the full-scale invasion, including in the military sphere**.[13] CPP responsibility had not been formalised in the shape of a designated military unit or provision, and there was minimal training for military personnel.[14] **Broader implementation of HC54 and its Protocols was limited** in terms of preparedness, as indicated above, and nor was any training conducted to enable accountability for breaches of law, either amongst those who might need to collect evidence, or those responsible for potential court cases. Furthermore, like many countries, **Ukraine had not taken advantage of the HC Second Protocol provision** to prepare a list of properties for the International List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection at the time of Russia's full-scale invasion.

2.3.2 The months of escalation

There was a level of alertness in the preceding months as Russia moved growing numbers of troops to the border. A small number of institutions reported having been warned by the intelligence services or central state officials. However, in line with policies of the Presidential Office, **most institutions were instructed not to prepare for war, and to de-escalate potential panic**. Even lower-rank staff within the Ministry of Culture stated they had not been warned; the circle of those privy to the actual threat was small.

Museums and heritage sites remained open to visitors, and **emergency preparedness was left to the discretion of individual leaders**, most of whom lacked first-hand experience of wartime heritage work. In the Donbas, where several institutions had

[12] The extent of use of the emblem at the time of the full-scale invasion is unclear, but it was also rapidly mobilised through a marking campaign focusing on World Heritage Sites in March 2022, https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2412

[13] For instance, the Procedure for Marking Buildings and Structures, Vehicles Subject to International Humanitarian Law with Relevant Distinctive Marks (Emblems) during a Special Period, was approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine № 1199, 21 October 2022, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1199-2022-%D0%BF#Text [Last accessed: 26 March 2025].

[14] The CPP unit in the Armed Forces of Ukraine was established in late 2024.

experienced occupation and looting attempts in 2014, institutional leadership often reported a dulled sense of risk after the 8-year exposure to the incipient threat of escalation. Instructions were circulated to review safety protocols, and in museums, priority lists were requested, but in general, no additional funds or equipment was distributed to allow for preparatory steps.

3 INITIAL EMERGENCY

The first few months after Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022 were characterised by **emergency measures**. This chapter looks at **how heritage professionals in Ukraine sought international help in these first weeks, what was received by whom, and what challenges were encountered**. Whilst recognising the interconnectedness of emergency responses across borders of various kinds, for practical purposes the discussion is divided into heritage emergency response in Ukraine and international mobilisation of emergency support.

For the purposes of this report, **we refer to approximately the first 1.5 months of the war as the initial emergency period**, which ended with the Ukrainian victory on the Kyiv front, and the relative reduction of high risk in the capital city. **This phase was characterised by spontaneous actions, relative lack of coordination, and a relative absence of international actors on the ground**. Ordinary rules of project management and compliance norms were disrupted or suspended entirely.

New, fast-acting initiatives were established that started to fill the gaps in state provision and support outlined in Chapter 2. Many existing initiatives in adjacent sectors, such as arts and culture, social and community development redirected their attention to wartime emergency heritage response activities or added new lines of activities with significant heritage dimension. **Internationally, logistical chains started to coalesce around bridge actors with know-how, contacts and/or language skills**. By **bridge actors** we refer to **actors** who connect different geographic and sectoral tiers of the emerging support landscape, facilitating communication and logistical flow, often collecting and further distributing support and information.

Pre-war networks within the country and across state borders played a significant role in terms of what kind of emergency support was mobilised and where it was concentrated. Some of these pre-existing networks also often informed emerging new alliances that would continue to shape the sector's response in the long run.

Key findings

- **Emergency protocols in Ukraine lacked legal and bureaucratic adaptations for disaster contexts,** such as simplified permit acquisition procedures or emergency communication regimes that could be switched on quickly in case of armed conflict. This led to compromised communication between the central state and heritage professionals across the country.
- Those involved in care for cultural heritage tried to **mobilise their own networks to find alternative routes of support** in the context of breakdown in communication, logistical and resource chains, leading to both informal networks and a plethora of new civic initiatives.
- **Civic initiatives, municipal actors and staff in heritage institutions on-site could, on balance, act faster** than either the central state or international actors. **Existing networks of actors both inside the country and internationally were best placed to identify needs and channel support**, especially further away from better-connected major centres.
- Organisations that were able to **quickly receive and manage diverse portfolios of funding, including donations (e.g. charitable foundations) were critical** in acquiring fast, flexible support during the emergency phase.
- Hybrid **'centaur initiatives' that combine flexible organisational structures with public sector know-how were best placed** to fill gaps of state capacity, understand needs across scales and geographies, and mediate between diverse stakeholders.
- There was a **rapid internationalisation of resourcing in the context of the war economy** in Ukraine, and it was largely the influx of foreign funding which sustained a functioning sector.
- The most effective were those donors, often (I)NGOS, who were able to **connect geographically and sector-specific micro-networks into larger-scale chains**.
- There is extensive evidence that those who mobilised to offer support for cultural heritage **also responded to humanitarian needs, but this was down to individual decisions** rather than a given in the sector.
- The **relative safety, including financial safety of heritage workers in Ukraine, was crucial** in their ability to continue providing care for heritage. Social and cultural reproduction are interlinked.

Recommendations

- **Guidelines and training on implementation of emergency protocols should recommend a networked approach**, encouraging heritage professionals to map relevant sectoral networks in preparation and mobilise them flexibly in the face of any breakdown in communication, logistics and supply chains.
- **Simplified bureaucratic procedures and less centralised, vertical decision-making structures should be developed** as part of emergency protocols, to be activated in the context of disaster or armed conflict. This would enable fast action in volatile environments.
- Relatedly, **contingency planning needs to take place at all levels** from centralised government bodies dealing with heritage to regional and local organisations (e.g. counties, municipalities, museums, libraries, archives), **developing localised responses in consultation with the central state**.
- **Civil society actors, NGOs and INGOs should be considered as intermediaries for channelling funding and support, because they are often able to react more quickly and effectively that state actors and public bodies** by targeting highly networked actors who can identify needs and coordinate distribution of support and resources.
- The importance of **key bridging actors and hybrid 'centaur initiatives' should be discussed as part of emergency response guidance and training**, with a recommendation that relevant existing actors are mapped and potential initiatives identified as part of preparation.
- **Emergency responses should include support for the physical and financial safety of heritage workers and their families**, recognising that their continued care for heritage depends on meeting their basic needs.

3.1 Heritage emergency in Ukraine

Due to the lack of central directives in the months of escalation, **most heritage workers acted in an improvised fashion on 24 February 2022, and the decisions they had taken prior to the invasion shaped what they were able to achieve**. It is likely that the Ministry of Culture took specific measures in the case of a few select organisations, and this was reported in interviews, but while the war is ongoing, the extent and details of these measures remain confidential. **For the vast majority, no additional resources were allocated to support emergency preparedness**.

The **centralised nature of Ukrainian heritage bureaucracy** discussed in Chapter 2 **proved a crucial problem** in the initial period. Frequently, it was not possible to secure the permits required for evacuating movable heritage from the Ministry of Culture. Without these, **actors on the ground, such as local government officials responsible for culture and leaders of heritage institutions, needed to find informal solutions at their own risk and discretion**.

A related problem was the **financial and managerial inflexibility of the public sector**, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, encompasses most heritage institutions in Ukraine, from archives through museums to archaeological sites. Although many reported that individual officials were willing to bend norms, the **procedural routines and compliance rules meant these organisations would struggle to regroup finances or take decisions under time pressure**.

3.1.1 Heritage spending in the war economy

Spending on culture, and consequently, on heritage, had not been high prior to the full-scale invasion: in 2020 and 2021, 0.438% and 0.464% of Ukraine's nominal GDP[15] was spent on arts and culture, slightly lower than the EU average 0.5%.[16] **However, since 2022, this has dropped to 0.365% in 2022 and 0.325% in 2023**, and these cuts in funding were also **reinforced by a significant overall drop in the GDP**.

Within the context of the war economy, the change in the relative weight of arts and culture spending is even more striking. The state was forced to increase its revenues by higher taxation, to allow for the radically expanded defence expenditure. Virtually all budget revenues from the Ukrainian economy are absorbed by defence spending (Vlasiuk, Cooper and Milakovsky 2024: 12). This means that the security state grew at the expense of the rest of the state (Artiukh and Fedirko 2025), and it is largely foreign grants and loans that cover baseline spending in sectors like education or culture.

For the heritage sector this means that **even in its reduced form, the continued functioning of the Ukrainian state organs has been contingent on continued foreign support**. Due to the priorities of the war economy, **resources might be cut further, if this funding is discontinued**. With heritage work being so strongly linked to the continued functioning of the state, pressures around redistribution in the context of the war economy can threaten the viability of the work of many within and beyond the state apparatus.

[15] The quoted figures for this section are calculated from the numbers given by the Ukrainian state's Open Budget portal (http://openbudget.gov.ua) See '0820 – Kultura ta mystetstvo', using Functional Classification, using the annual budget spent ('Executed for the period' for each year since 2020). The total annual budget can be found at Budget/Expenditures on the site.

[16] Calculated from numbers given by the EC: 'Government Expenditure on Recreation, Culture and Religion', https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_recreation,_culture_and_religion [Accessed: 27 December 2024].

This dependence should be seen together with the **rapid internationalisation of the sector** in the context of the war, as foreign states, intergovernmental bodies, third-sector organisations and private actors stepped in to respond to the war. The total volume of support would be impossible to calculate, but **it is largely the influx of foreign funding that has sustained and, in some spheres such as digital documentation, even led to the expansion of heritage work in Ukraine**.

3.1.2 Emergency on the ground in Ukraine: digitisation, mitigation, rescue

Even with substantial preparatory measures, **the efficiency of preparation, rescue, and damage mitigation hinges on a complex set of actors and circumstances**. Many respondents emphasised that emergency preparedness guidance often presumes that state services will continue to function relatively undisrupted, which is highly unlikely in the actuality of intense warfare.

When it comes to **immovable heritage like buildings, archaeological sites or urban ensembles**, preparation only goes so far. Even when staff have purchased fire equipment, and dismantled reliefs or ornaments from buildings, successful fire rescue would still require a functional firefighting service, and the safekeeping of ornamental features incurs extra costs and infrastructural resources. Furthermore, all this hinges on the continued presence of staff.

Digital documentation is widely seen as an important preparation and preservation response **in the case of buildings and architectural sites**. As discussed in Chapter 2, **only 10% of the collections of Ukrainian museums and archives had been digitised prior to the full-scale invasion**, and records lack standardisation.

Private companies and NGOs had used photogrammetry and laser scanning in the heritage sector prior to the invasion, but it was not a common-place practice. During wartime, possible restrictions on UAV usage, the cost of the process, and the limited number of trained personnel further challenge this process.

In the case of **movable heritage, preparatory measures offered more actionable protection**, but even the dismantling and appropriate storage of exhibitions incurs significant costs. Furthermore, due to the relative lack of preparation, specific details about materials required for the packaging of specific items, safe measures for hiding sculptures or monumental art were unknown and information was hard to obtain. **Evacuation, when it was an option, involved an orchestrated effort between sending and recipient institutions, coordination and intricate bureaucracy. Permits needed to be secured from MCSC, which Ukrainian interviewees reported were nearly impossible to acquire**. In the case of especially valuable items, evacuation might require police or military escort, or even civil infrastructure services, and thereby a coordination between multiple ministries of the central state.

Digitising inventories and collections was a feasible response only in areas further away from the frontline. Closer, in more volatile contexts, *ad hoc* interventions could be made at best. **Many institutions initially lacked the technical equipment or the necessary data management infrastructure** across the country.

Vehicles, functioning roads and resources for petrol were among the most easily overlooked elements in the initial provision of heritage support, highlighting the importance of logistical and civil infrastructural support. Generic as they might seem, they are a vital, indispensable condition for the emergency response that often fell between the cracks of support provision.

The relatively poor provision for the documentation and prosecution of **looting and illicit trafficking** described in Chapter 2, was **further exacerbated by the conditions of war**. It was not until June 2022 that a range of Ukrainian museums and libraries were able to start working with ICOM to prepare an Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk for Ukraine to help combat illicit trafficking. This was published in November 2022, but various emergency restrictions on international trade in Ukrainian cultural property, e.g. by the Council of the European Union (2024: Article 3V), would not be imposed until 2024.

3.1.3 'Centaur initiatives': state non-state coalitions

A key development in these initial weeks and months, was the **emergence of charitable bodies and foundations set up to channel and manage heritage support in Ukraine**. These were often **established by state-funded heritage workers attached to public institutions**, such as museums or municipal culture departments. We encountered comparable developments outside of Ukraine, where heritage workers in public institutions resorted to registering charitable foundations to facilitate their support work aimed at Ukrainian heritage actors.

Whilst legally distinct from state-run institutions, in practice these charitable foundations are often strongly aligned, supporting the functioning of a given institution or sector and related heritage work across a specific region. In other cases, their remit might extend well beyond specific organisations, but the people involved might receive infrastructural support, such as office or storage space, from a public body.

These initiatives should be considered a **composite or hybrid actor** where **the charitable body and at least one public body share major goals, which neither could cater for alone**. The public body might have legal remit and expertise to work with a certain heritage corpus but might lack the financial flexibility and speed needed to do so. Conversely, the charitable body might be able to work efficiently in grant acquisition and fundraising activities but lack the necessary access and/or expertise for, say, digitising a collection or stabilising a damaged site.

Their strategic alliance, then, benefits both parties, and information flow is facilitated

by the overlap in personnel. We call these **'centaur initiatives'** to capture their **interdependence, pragmatic unity and legal duality, as well as the way they strategically exploit differences in institutional form, taxation, reporting and compliance procedures**.

The emergence of centaur initiatives should be seen as **a major adaptation mechanism** in the rapidly changing wartime environment. They are also evident beyond the heritage sector, notably in adjacent areas like culture and education.

Finally, centaur initiatives **often rely on existing pre-war networks**. For instance, networks of East Ukrainian museum professionals developed during the Donbas war were mobilised by the newly established Museum Crisis Center. Municipal and museum workers from Lviv who established the Center to Rescue Cultural Heritage in the early weeks of the full-scale invasion had collaborated with Polish heritage professionals prior to 2022 and reached out seeking help. The Ukrainian diaspora, especially those employed in the heritage sector internationally, initiated support and mediated between their respective organisations and their Ukrainian counterparts.

3.1.4 Heritage workers: a *sine qua non* for heritage work

Heritage workers, whose own lives and personal security came under threat, needed to **balance personal and professional duties**. In areas heavily affected by fighting and/or rocket and drone attacks, they were often torn between the dilemma of staying on or evacuating, particularly if they have care responsibilities for children, the sick or elderly. In late 2022, according to a UCF survey, 47% of cultural sector workers remained in their pre-war jobs, and 5% were mobilised to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) or work full-time as volunteers.

The heritage sector in Ukraine is **heavily dominated by women**, especially in museums, libraries, archives, as in public sector jobs generally (Karpov 2015, 2018). In the context of the full-scale war, this becomes even more pronounced, as more men join up or are conscripted to the army than women. Women generally experience a **traditionally higher care burden. Amidst the existential and financial pressures brought on by war and displacement, the impact of familial care duties on professional work are even more significant**.

Public sector workers **rarely earn more than a minimum wage** in Ukraine, so heritage workers in state-run organisations, which constitute much of the heritage sector, are in an especially **vulnerable and precarious economic position**. Salaries were not cut in this initial period, but rising inflation and increased cost of living in wartime Ukraine posed a significant burden for many, especially as housing costs in safer areas rose sharply in response to increasing demand.

The economic viability of heritage work, then, often hinges on its links to the humanitarian sector – and humanitarian support should be seen as an integral part of

heritage aid. Peer-to-peer support, including **direct financial assistance and in-kind support** in the form of care packages, were important from early on, distributed by actors like Cultural Heritage Rescue Centre, Museum Crisis Centre, and HERI. Museum directors and local municipal workers in Ukraine repeatedly reported that participating in the gathering and distribution of aid, besides being a patriotic duty, was important for their colleagues, allowing legitimate access to otherwise unaffordable food and hygiene products.

Supporting heritage workers by **reducing familial care burden** by financial or logistical help in care provision is also critical in facilitating their continued presence in the sector. Several locally run, peer-to-peer initiatives recognised this early on, adopting a support and fundraising strategy centred on a **comprehensive form of support**. This merged dedicated heritage aid (packaging materials, fire hoses, generators, fuel) with aid consisting of daily food and hygiene products, as well as small cash payments for colleagues in heavily affected territories.

3.1.5 The geography of risk

While the safety and survival of those located in directly invaded areas was often irreconcilable with their continuing work *in situ*, **heritage workers in areas of relative safety were instrumental in the sector's continued operation**. Most often, this came with a new focus, such as staff working on preventive measures or rescue. In the case of cultural institutions, it meant staying open and offering their premises for social and humanitarian purposes. Sometimes pre-war work such as interpretation, restoration or digitisation continued as well. Meanwhile, **displaced heritage workers often acted as bridge actors** between their original home communities and organisations and support networks in unoccupied areas.

The levels and immediacy of **threat to heritage differed greatly across the country**. Further from the frontlines, exhibitions were dismantled, movable property packed, crosses and decorative sculptures were swiftly removed from historic buildings and churches, protective tapes were placed on glass surfaces, and sandbags were piled in front of windows. Some statues were dismantled from public spaces, but the majority remained in place, protected by sandbags or metal scaffoldings. More sensitive, fragile forms of heritage such as film tapes were often left as they were, as the risk of moving and thereby damaging them was deemed higher than the chance of a rocket attack.

While **formal risk assessment** is built into disaster planning protocols, and some tentative steps were taken by the MCSC, the relative lack of preparation discussed in Chapter 2 meant that **much of this work was based on rapid or informal appraisal in difficult circumstances**, especially in areas close to theatres of war. In smaller localities in the East, communication with veteran organisations or the AFU often triggered institutional leadership to assess risks and seek guidance from the central state, but this hinged on them having such contacts in the first place.

The proximity of EU borders and good transportation links meant that **West Ukrainian cities, especially Lviv, also became end destinations for international in-kind support**. Preparing for the receipt of evacuated cultural property was also an important aspect of their work, although the details of this cannot be accurately estimated and shared until the end of the war.

In major cities of comparative safety in Eastern Ukraine, like Dnipro or Poltava, many reported **turning their workplaces into logistical hubs for humanitarian as well as heritage-specific aid distribution**. They also acted as a temporary stopover for evacuated cultural property, a meeting point for heritage professionals leaving the most affected areas, and those *en route* there.

Across the country, but especially nearer the frontlines, many heritage workers were forced to leave their homes, and there was **not always enough time to secure sites and collections**. Problems specific to long-term occupation are beyond the scope of this report, but it is worth noting that colleagues who remain in occupied areas and those who escaped to territories under Ukrainian control often preserve a level of connection.

The high uncertainty that characterised the initial weeks meant that **many people decided to seek safety who would later return to their ordinary place of residence**. There is little comprehensive data about both internal and international displacement of heritage workers specifically, especially when it comes to more liminal decisions people take moving back and forth. Still, it is safe to say that areas heavily affected by bombing or ground assault lost many more of their heritage workers.

The **initial emergency period's most challenging feature was the direct threat to Kyiv and its surroundings**, which heavily **curtailed the capacity of the central state to maintain communication and coordinate across the country**. This reduced capacity to coordinate work across the country had an impact on virtually all Kyiv based state institutions, such as public restoration bureaus or professional associations, and centrally located civil society actors as well. This meant that major institutions that would normally play a central role in coordinating the sector, which would often have more extensive international networks, and hence the capacity to ask for and manage international help, had to find alternative ways to work under extraordinary pressure, until the Russian army retreated from the Kyiv front.

3.1.6 Incoming international support

On 15 February 2022, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine requested civil protection support from the European Union and its member states and in March 2022 a dedicated request for in-kind assistance for the protection of cultural heritage was added. **Dedicated heritage organisations like ICOM Ukraine and ICOMOS Ukraine also issued calls requesting aid to their parent organisations** immediately at the start of the full-scale invasion. Various national chapters, as well as international umbrella organisations

responded to these calls. **However, border logistics, transportation costs, financial regulations, as well as government travel advisories and employment regulations restricting work travel to Ukraine posed serious challenges for what could be delivered where** (See 3.2).

Both senders and recipients of international support noted that the **success of mobilising help across borders was linked to existing personal and professional links, language skills, and experience of working across vastly different bureaucracies and financial regulations**. Support requests were initiated in especially large numbers from Western Ukraine, notably **Lviv**. Even aid dedicated to other Ukrainian locations often went through Lviv. **Less-connected institutions, especially those that lacked staff with foreign language skills and whose online presence was rudimentary, struggled to reach international partners**. These became dependent on Ukrainian initiatives that stepped in to coordinate and distribute help across the country.

Incoming **material aid was selective** in these initial months, and it was **difficult to cover processual bottlenecks or non-sector specific costs**. For instance, scanners needed near Mykolaiv or Poltava would be a struggle to deliver if, as was often the case, senders were only able or willing to transport the cargo to the border or to places in the far west of Ukraine like Lviv. While fire hoses, bubble wrap or scanners were obvious and ubiquitous forms of dedicated heritage aid, **fragmented logistical chains meant that it was comparatively difficult to source vehicles, drivers and petrol** to make the journey.

The logistical burden, as well as the coordination of supply and demand, largely fell on the shoulders of actors on the ground in Ukraine, such as civil society actors or individual heritage organisations. Centaur initiatives were often crucial in this type of coordination, such as Museum Crisis Centre.

Actors who solicited and managed incoming support, who were in contact with foreign partners, and maintained a broad network of ties across Ukraine, had a crucial role to play in the equitable distribution of support. We refer to such actors as **bridge actors** to indicate the work they have done in **connecting different geographic and sectoral tiers of the emerging support landscape**. There were no standard criteria for assessing risk and urgency, so it was often **left to these actors to organise and distribute support across Ukraine**, based on their own judgement and discretion.

Existing ties between the local state and cultural, educational institutions that deal with cultural heritage were also tested. Regional networks, such as the vertical ties of oversight and supervision between museums in regional centres and nearby smaller towns and villages, were often activated, providing important lines of communication, exchange of good practices, and the channelling of aid. **Being part of this loose sectoral network and having robust ties was often critical in the ability of especially more remote, less prestigious institutions to solicit help**.

3.2 Emergency mobilisation across Europe

Russia's invasion of Ukraine prompted a dramatic response across Europe. As millions of refugees fled to neighbouring countries and beyond, support was sourced and negotiated in every sector. Neighbouring countries and the main target destinations of Ukrainian refugees across continental Europe were at the vanguard of the response.

Key actors **responding to the heritage emergency did so amidst an enormous crisis of displacement, and a policy climate that brought a decisive change to Euro-Atlantic security and military policy**. In this tumultuous context, resources and logistics supporting heritage work often intersected with overlapping policy areas. **Arts and culture funding, social support as well as humanitarian support played an important part of this response and need to be considered together to best assess aid and care for heritage** (cf. Price-Jones 2023).

As a supranational body, **the European Union played a role in providing support across these domains through its Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM)**, which aims to strengthen cooperation between the EU countries and participating states. On 15 February 2022, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine activated the CPM and the European Emergency Response Coordination Centre (EU-ERCC) oversaw the transfer of largescale in-kind assistance by Member and Participating States to the Ukrainian authorities.

In **March 2022, a dedicated request for in-kind assistance for the protection of cultural heritage was added** (including fire security systems, fire extinguishers, alarm security systems, dehumidifiers, boxes, sandbags, wrapping material as well as vehicles to evacuate cultural heritage). In response, several countries (notably Italy, Germany and Norway) offered cultural heritage protection items such as kits for cultural asset protection, boxes, sandbags and special equipment.[17]

However, help with similar cultural heritage protection items in this emergency mobilisation phase frequently came about through **professional sectoral mobilisation**, from heritage institutions and associations, as we discuss below. **In the context of sectoral mobilisation, funds were freed up as crisis response, often with the lifting of *status quo ante* compliance and grant application rules**. As inside Ukraine, resources mobilised for heritage emergency response across Europe were allocated alongside and in competition with the demands of the humanitarian crisis and military aid.

As mobilising care for cultural heritage was intertwined with the broader humanitarian response, it is important to note that **civic mobilisation was enormous across Europe**, leading to what Elizabeth Dunn and Iwona Kaliszewska (2023) termed **distributed humanitarianism**, a 'post-Fordist', largely informal mode of procuring and distributing humanitarian aid. The logistical and bureaucratic challenges we describe in the coming

[17] European External Action Service 2022. Report on the progress in the implementation of the "Concept on Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crises. A component for peace and security in European Union's external action" and the dedicated Council Conclusions. EEAS (2022) 1556. https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12398-2022-INIT/en/

section, and the emergence of smaller-scale grassroots actors like centaur initiatives should be seen in this light.

3.2.1. Sectoral mobilisation: coordination and logistics

Ukrainian chapters of professional associations, academics and staff at heritage organisations **reached out to international umbrella organisations like ICOM, ICOMOS and Blue Shield**, as well as scholarly associations, requesting help. Foreign national chapters of similar organisations and large international umbrella organisations responded with calls to their members, often leading to organisational statements of support, fundraising for material resources, and support for displaced Ukrainian colleagues, for instance in the form of visa application support and accommodation (see 3.2.4).

In this initial period, **support for heritage protection, rescue and care in Ukraine mostly took the form of sending relatively cheap and abundant equipment and supplies for fire safety, packaging materials, cameras and scanners**. There was often a lack of specification about the context and types of cultural property that needed support and knowledge about the adequacy of specific kinds of packaging was hard to come by.

In several cases, we found **organisations making little distinction between heritage aid and humanitarian aid**. Adopting a **'people first' approach**, they sent everything from packing crates and acid-free paper to sleeping bags and radios, as well as personal notes of support to whoever ultimately received the aid packages in Ukraine.

The most visible sources of funding for purchase of such resources included **spontaneous online crowdfunding, high-profile charity events and auctions organised by philanthropists and collectors**. Slightly less visible were fundraising activities among members within organisations or professional associations. Many organisations ranging from national museums and heritage bodies to municipal bodies and NGOs also **discretely donated things like packing materials and other consumables from their own existing supplies**.

The plethora of initiatives which emerged in the initial weeks and months were rarely framed as responses to a specific call and, as such, **their destination in Ukraine was not always specified. Pre-existing networks played a vital role in establishing logistical chains and funding coalitions**.

Some actors with **geographical and sectoral micro-networks became linked via key nodes into larger networks with effective logistical chains**, but in other cases initiatives might only involve two or three players with poor intelligence regarding local needs and little experience of logistical chains. **In this multilingual, fragmented and crowded field it was challenging to track who sent what where, what was still demanded and what kinds of help became superfluous**.

There were attempts to coordinate both supply and demand, and to track support sent to Ukraine, for instance by the secretariat of Blue Shield International. These,

however, involved remote reporting, placing the **burden of self-reporting on senders and recipients without providing real incentives to do so**, other than the abstract good of a hypothetical clarity. It would have been equally challenging to reverse this process, placing the burden of remote tracking on BSI staff, as the scope and range of actors was enormous, diverse and scattered across a broad informational, geographic and linguistic space. As a result, these initiatives were partial at best.

Comparable **coordinating initiatives emerged in neighbouring countries**, notably in Poland, for instance the Polish Centre to Support Culture in Ukraine (PCSCU) and the Committee for Ukrainian Museums. Both initiatives came about **to aggregate communication, offer some level of centralisation and coordination, and to streamline the logistics of channelling aid** to institutions and colleagues in Ukraine. The key difference compared to the BSI initiative lay in **robust institutional support**. In the case of the PCSCU this came from the Polish state and its National Heritage Board, and in the case of the Committee for Ukrainian Museums it came from the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising and ICOM Poland.

The regional mandate of these coordinating initiatives and existing Polish-Ukrainian contacts probably made a difference, but two features stand out besides these. On the one hand, **institutional support that came about thanks to the political will of the Polish state meant that staff had dedicated time and some resources to facilitate the coordination work**. On the other hand, **coordination attempts were not divorced from the practical daily task of delivering support**. Successful initiatives then became entry points for professional support activities internationally, as word about them spread across professional networks like ICOM or the Network of European Museum Organisations.

These initial months show that **tracking initiatives remained a partial success**, and sending heritage aid into Ukraine in the initial emergency period was loosely coordinated at best. **Real oversight emerged among bridge actors, often INGOs and NGOs, at the intersection of international aid and in-country distribution**. Coordination helped some senders who struggled to establish contact with their Ukrainian counterparts, and it reduced the burden on recipient initiatives. Still, **the lack of strategy and centralisation also had its benefits as well**, supporting responsiveness, speed and flexibility to changing needs.

3.2.2 Budgetary, insurance and bureaucratic constraints

Like their peers in equivalent Ukrainian institutions, **public sector organisations** across Europe, such as national heritage boards, museums or research institutions where most heritage professionals are employed could not free up resources in their own budgets to buy or send the requested items directly. Since they spend public resources, they **operate with strict and lengthy budget allocation and compliance procedures. Spending institutional resources on 'political' events like the war in Ukraine were often**

considered risky and potentially divisive, even in countries that unanimously supported Ukraine in the context of the invasion.

Hence, sympathetic professionals, although often mobilised on an institutional level, usually organised on an individual basis, rather than as official representatives of a given institution. We encountered individual fundraisers led by staff members, often informally facilitated by sympathetic leadership and **tacit institutional support**. Some reported having sent in-kind support, typically re-classifying their own equipment as surplus, allowing some items to be sent to Ukraine. These were often discrete **semi-informal steps**, and hence it is difficult to estimate the extent of help that resulted from such strategies, but even with limitations of scale and volume, it was a rather common response across Europe.

In European countries, centaur initiatives were also developed or adapted to provide support for cultural heritage, and those who work with it, in Ukraine. These usually involved NGOs with charitable status linked to public heritage bodies in formal or informal ways involving individual actors who have some kind of association with both. In this way **professional expertise and public infrastructures could be combined with the more flexible organisational forms of NGOs and private donor funding** to initiate projects that would have stalled in public bodies due to bureaucratic processes, financing constraints and political sensitivities. For example, in Norway, the former director of the Norwegian Resistance Museum established a charitable foundation to fundraise and support a guest exhibition from the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, aided by the Friends of the Resistance Museum who also took on roles in the new charity.

Besides the difficulties around institutional mobilisation and fundraising, **employee safety and liability was another key challenge severely curtailing international heritage professionals' attempts of in-person mobilisation of support**. Organisations not specialised in working in contexts of armed violence often have **risk-aversive policies** regarding staff training and insurance that would facilitate travel to areas designated high risk or 'do not travel' destinations by their governments. While humanitarian organisations, embassies and NGOs in many sectors do have existing protocols for the management of this risk, **the heritage sector is relatively unprepared apart from dedicated organisations specialised for wartime heritage support**.

This means that especially in the initial months, **concerned international heritage professionals would have limited first-hand knowledge on the ground**. Interviews revealed that **many professionals who had pre-existing ties to Ukraine took annual leave or went without official permission from their organisations**. They reportedly provided training, supported the dismantling of collections or tried to get a sense of what was needed on the ground.

However, these informal practices are problematic and unsustainable in many ways, contributing to a **problematic division of risk both between employer institution and**

individual, and between foreign and local professionals. Individuals reported having gone without insurance, or having paid for insurance themselves, and either taking leave or with the tacit agreement of their institutional leadership that could not take upon themselves to officially approve such trips.

Private philanthropy should be seen as a key component of the early emergency interventions. In comparison to public sector bodies, which are often burdened by bureaucratic constraints as described above, **organisations that operate with private donor funds often acted faster and more flexibly**. For instance, the Institute for Human Sciences' (IWM) Ukraine program in Austria offered one-off funding for researchers and culture professionals. Ukrainian **centaur initiates described above (section 3.1.3) also partly came about to facilitate the channelling of funds from international philanthropists and charitable fundraising activities**.

3.2.3 Emergency digital interventions from outside of Ukraine

Digital interventions were an important early strategy used by established organisations and newcomers alike. **Scraping and archiving Ukrainian websites** with art and culture content was an important grassroots response to the invasion, leading to initiatives like the US-based Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online (SUCHO) that produced back-ups for significant national institutions and archives. This form of help was among the fastest to be organised, often active in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion.

Some of these initiatives also include **the documentation of emerging heritage, such as databases of war testimonies, or large-scale archiving of war memes and social media Telegram channels**, but work on these often took off in the subsequent months. Although such archiving initiatives would provide efficient documentation, the field has been underregulated in terms of data management, ownership rights and ethics.

Monitoring destruction using before and after satellite imagery was a line of work initiated in the first few months of the war by large actors with a focus on the provisions of HC54. These include the Conflict Observatory of the US State Department, the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI), and the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT), a branch of The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). UNESCO has worked closely with these organisations, especially the latter, and since 24 February 2022, it has been **cross-checking reported incidents of damage to 'immovable cultural property' with multiple credible sources**, including satellite image analysis. The results are synthesised and published on a dedicated web page.[18]

Open-source intelligence initiatives were launched by investigative organisations like Bellingcat to verify damage or in some cases, intentionality behind destruction. **These were focused on a select number of highly affected and/or prestigious sites, and their long-term efficiency largely depended on coordination with the Ukrainian**

[18] Damaged cultural sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO, last accessed 8 February 2025, https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco

state either in the case of gathering material establishing war crimes related to cultural heritage, and in case of broader monitoring. Overall, international digital interventions **were fast to emerge, but slower to scale up** after the emergency phase, as we will discuss in Chapter 4.

3.2.4 Suspending protocols and foregoing procedures

As inside Ukraine, **international responses in these initial months were often characterised by a suspension of ordinary protocols, project cycles and norms of conduct** for many institutions. While some actors refrained from taking radical steps, holding back from acting on an institutional level, the opposite could be observed in many other cases.

Ministries of Culture in Poland and Germany, for instance, backed up grassroots initiatives such as professional support networks, and many institutional leaders **permitted staff members** to dedicate themselves to facilitating help for colleagues in Ukraine during working hours. The European Commission **lifted reporting rules for its existing funded projects**, effectively allowing supported organisations to retain salaries and use project budgets flexibly, responding to needs. As with the in-country initiatives, the **lines between dedicated heritage support and humanitarian aid were often blurred in practice**.

The sense of emergency led even **major institutions to forego programming norms** and project cycles. For instance, coalitions of Ukrainian museum staff and international curators, philanthropists and collectors would develop **rescue plans for major artworks and movable heritage**, ensuring they were kept safe abroad in temporary exhibitions at major European institutions, such as the Louvre, the Royal Castle in Warsaw or the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid. Though these projects came to fruition much later, they should be understood as part of the emergency response, as their execution was decisively shaped by a collective willingness to suspend the *status quo ante*. This allowed for **informal mediation, diplomatic coordination, special permits and speedy, unusually short planning processes, which were possible only in this short, initial period**.

The **bureaucratic constraints that obstructed rescue work inside Ukraine had a spill-over effect internationally**. One curator involved in facilitating evacuations and obtaining financial support for them observed that the state almost acted as if it was peacetime. Likewise, the physical **process of sending these objects abroad required diplomatic coordination between the host country and the sending institutions**, involving embassies and often ministries on both sides. Due to their value, army convoys had to be secured, and covert operations had to be organized in secrecy, involving actors as diverse as sender institutions, customs services and the contracted private art transport company. In one example, an emergency evacuation project that was launched in March 2022 saw the actual transfer of the objects in November 2022.

3.2.5 Sending support vs. helping displaced Ukrainian heritage and museum workers locally

Besides in-kind aid and fundraisers, supporting displaced heritage professionals was a key immediate concern that many European heritage institutions participated in. **Existing networks were activated immediately, and many professionals in the field found support in housing and work placements through such professional ties**.

Although one could argue that the displacement of these professionals meant they stopped providing care for Ukrainian heritage, in practice, we saw that **many were instrumental in setting up links between their former workplaces and others, and their new host communities, facilitating fundraisers, translating and helping with logistics**.

Likewise, **many displaced Ukrainian professionals played important roles in Ukrainian heritage-related programming outside of the country**. For instance, in museums, they often worked on Ukrainian guest exhibitions or contributed to the revision of cataloguing protocols considered Russo-centric. They also supported work with customs officers in host countries to stop illicit trafficking of Ukrainian cultural property and, in many contexts, they helped deliver trainings and facilitated feedback from their colleagues left in Ukraine. They shaped institutional change that came about in response to the Russian invasion in many European heritage institutions, sometimes linking these to existing global transitional justice movements or decolonisation efforts.

In this sense, but also more broadly, it is important to recognise that just like in Ukraine, **the European provision of help in the heritage sector was, in practice, overwhelmingly intertwined with humanitarian responses in these initial months**. As millions of refugees were arriving in Europe, cultural institutions like libraries, archives, museums and cultural centres **became part of the social infrastructure**. They were turned into temporary shelters and hubs of humanitarian aid, legal advice, free childcare, job centre services etc. This **expansion of the remit of cultural and heritage institutions outside of Ukraine** is comparable to similar tendencies in Ukraine.

The **provision of aid sometimes competed with foreign institutions' own priorities**, such as improving their emergency preparedness. This was especially poignant in neighbouring countries, where fear over further escalation was tangible, institutions were prompted to review protocols and even practice dismantling or evacuation drills.

3.2.6 The geography of wartime heritage emergency response in Europe

Although virtually no country in Europe remained unaffected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the war redrew the overall security landscape of the continent, **the extent and nature of their response in the emergency phase differed markedly**.

The EU-ERCC attempted to orchestrate assistance by Member States to the Ukrainian

authorities through its Civil Protection Mechanism, including some support for cultural heritage protection. **However, geographical proximity and historical attitudes towards Russia were key factors in shaping how the sector responded in each country**. Those countries where Russia had been often considered a geopolitical and existential threat, such as Poland and the Baltic states, responded more unanimously in support of Ukraine.

In Central-Eastern European countries where attitudes are divided and where elite politics has been ambivalent about ties with Russia, such as in Austria, Slovakia, Hungary or Moldova, communities and institutions were divided when it came to more dedicated support beyond the initial humanitarian aid.

Further from Ukraine, it was mostly those key geopolitical actors in shaping European Union policy, notably Germany, that mobilised significant funds. For large aid providers with a marked presence in security hotspots globally, such as the UK, France or Germany, response to the war in Ukraine was but one of the global challenges that needed to be addressed, in marked contrast to the regionally-oriented foreign policy of smaller and mid-sized East-Central European states.

In each case, **election cycles and domestic demands shaped the extent and the nature of the response, and heritage was not a prominent priority anywhere, compared to military or humanitarian responses, or locally provided support for displaced Ukrainians**. Dedicated institutions in each country, such as ministries of culture, national chapters of ICOM, ICOMOS, UNESCO, actors in academia and in professional associations, as well as NGOs and other civil society actors had to mobilise, fundraise and lobby for support. They did so in contexts where providing this help often came in **competition with the need to do so for domestic concerns, and in an overall environment where culture budgets were cut in the context of the changing security landscape of the continent**.

ACTORS, NETWORKS AND COALITIONS 4

Once the northern front was eliminated with Ukrainian victory in early April 2022, and the prospect of a ground assault on Kyiv was avoided, central state organs like the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communication could resume operations in a smoother fashion. By this time, **sector-wide networks had emerged. The know-how gathered in the initial weeks was gradually shared among professional networks**. Several new initiatives were registered, which would become go-to contact points both internationally and inside the country, leading to **more efficient communication** across regions, countries and fields of activity. The **increased safety of the capital** also meant that the extent and nature of foreign involvement in the heritage sector gradually changed, with the **influx of more structured international support**. As diplomatic staff returned, **heritage actors with experience in dedicated wartime support, including large INGOs, started to develop a more robust in-country presence**.

The **line between emergency measures and a (partial) return to project and compliance norms remained blurred for some time**. Emergency modes still influenced institutional strategies for a year or more after the invasion, and **many decisions made in response to the first shock of the invasion only bore fruit many months later**. Besides one-off measures, the emergency response also led to altered strategic and budgetary plans among state bodies and civil society organisations, where new funding streams were made available or strategic priorities were changed to account for arising needs. In the **longer term**, many actors also described **challenges around keeping Ukraine on the international agenda**. With changing domestic concerns and political leadership in allied countries, as well as other wars, there was a gradual shift in focus and resources away from the country.

This chapter looks at the **coalescence of new routines and the reintegration of wartime heritage support into the international project economy**. First, we trace how priorities and new *modus operandi* were established in terms of needs assessment and the distribution of aid in Ukraine. We show how **the return of major dedicated heritage actors changed the landscape** hitherto dominated by local actors and grassroots initiatives in the emergency phase. We look at support for strategic developments like damage monitoring, digitisation drives and sectoral capacity building, identifying challenges specific to each.

With the **ongoing war**, we show how the **work of dedicated agencies** with complex procedural norms like UNESCO, or types of **work that require intricate negotiations with state actors**, like CPP training in the military, gain momentum. Throughout the chapter we return to the division of labour and **relative lack of communication between the political-diplomatic nexus of heritage work, and the domain of civilian heritage actors,** based across NGOs and other civic initiatives, and across public sector organisations.

Key findings

- The initial emergency was **followed by more robust and predictable funding, and a return to the project economy.** The logic of emergency prevailed for a while, as many projects initiated early only bore fruit in this period.
- The **response was more diverse** as large INGOs and foreign state bodies entered or returned to the country, and recently established initiatives grew. Resourcing key initiatives happened through **coalitions of international funders**, leading to the emergence of loose partnerships
- State capacity did not increase substantially, **but coordination between state and non-state actors, such as through centaur initiatives and their funding improved**. Significant funding was channelled directly to CSOs, leading to broad sectoral capacity building, rather than state capacity building.
- There is increasing use of international instruments and 'in danger' lists in the international **political-diplomatic nexus** to designate and protect Ukrainian cultural heritage **by enhancing visibility** of threats, **leveraging resources and politically marginalising** Russia.
- **During 2023-24, the multi-national agencies, intergovernmental bodies and related INGOs linked to this political-diplomatic nexus also develop a more substantial in-country presence in Ukraine**, working with the Ukrainian central state across the civil and military domains to increase capacity for CPP and implementation of IHL.
- Support derived from leading actors in this international professional-diplomatic and state sphere has been **concentrated on major centres and around World Heritage and other prestigious heritage sites**.
- The **relatively slow pace of development** in this sphere, compared to the more rapid and agile work of INGOs and Ukrainian centaur actors, is a result of the **administrative bureaucracies, diplomatic considerations and political priorities that mediate the work of key actors in the political-diplomatic sphere**.

- **Diplomatic, military and central state initiatives constitute a relatively closed sphere**, defined by **restricted communication channels with civil society actors and professional associations**.
- **Bridge actors** who **connect different geographic and sectoral tiers of the emerging support landscape**, sharing contacts and facilitating communication and logistical flows, are key for the coordination and efficiency of the sector.

Recommendations

- **Facilitate state capacity building through closer collaboration between civil society actors and state bodies**. In such partnerships, ensure that funding is tied to long-term policy work delivered jointly by those actors.
- Work towards **establishing more communication, transparency and accountability** between the political-diplomatic nexus of heritage work and civic and professional actors.
- Acknowledge that the **scale, speed and flexibility of interventions varies across different kinds of organisations**. Rather than aiming for uniform sector-wide improvement of governance, **work with this diversity** by encouraging loose coordination across them.
- **Increase direct funding to centaur initiatives**, especially in policy areas where public-sector institutions are crucial but needs change rapidly. Outside of ongoing war contexts, translate some of the flexibility of third-sector organisations into the modus operandi of the public sector.
- **Recognise and resource bridge actors** so they can facilitate communication and logistical flows, **helping to achieve greater coordination and efficiency** across geographical and sectoral tiers.
- When **establishing or expanding in-country presence, international actors should work with bridge actors and centaur initiatives to support more strategic, decentralised and locally appropriate responses.**
- Facilitate **sectoral dialogue and coordination among major donors** to more efficiently fund initiatives that augment state capacity but rely on unpredictable grant funding.

4.1 Capacity building beyond the state: funding streams and the project economy

The first year after the initial emergency phase proved crucial in the mobilisation of the sector, both in Ukraine and internationally. Existing or newly established partnerships between the Ukrainian state and key international actors (e.g. ICCROM, UNESCO, ALIPH, BSI, the EC, the Smithsonian, Goethe Institute, World Monuments Fund) often **geared up after the initial emergency**. Some of these actors (re-)established in-country presence during this period.

Centaur initiatives such as HERI and MCC **acting as bridge actors** on the ground, (see Chapter 3), grew their networks and their operational knowledge of the international donor landscape. **Increasing know-how about mobilising care among local actors was accompanied by growing specialisation leading to more efficient and coordinated responses**. HERI, for instance, started to focus on its monitoring efforts six months after the start of the full-scale invasion, and MCC concentrated on procuring and distributing aid for smaller museums in the east and south of the country. Many heritage professionals we interviewed reported a return to more focused professional work after all-out, often humanitarian and/or military volunteering typical in the initial few months. As the **visibility of such bridge actors grew**, in the country and internationally, they became established contact points among donors.

Prominent Ukrainian **public institutions in regional centres**, like the Odesa Fine Arts Museum or the Dmytro Yavornytskyi National Historical Museum in Dnipro, that were in a better position to seek out support and opportunities, **started to share know-how and contacts with their colleagues in smaller institutions and/or more remote locations**. These activities **built on existing vertical management structures in the Ukrainian heritage bureaucracy**, whereby leading regional organisations acted in a supervisory role and provided oversight for institutions across a district or a county. This meant that **the leadership of such heritage institutions across metropolitan centres could rely on these established collegial ties when sharing experience and advice**.

Support via existing contacts between foreign professionals, Ukrainians abroad and professionals inside the country went beyond the *ad hoc* measures characterising the initial emergency phase, sometimes growing into larger cooperation attempts. Most foreign professionals we interviewed who went to Ukraine in person, did so from the summer 2022 onwards. **Organisational missions also started in the second half of 2022**, such as the ICOMOS /ICCROM joint mission in July 2022 and the first BSI mission to Ukraine in November 2022. Even organisations like ALIPH, that had been active very early on, only sent their senior staff in June 2022. These in-person ties led to joint monitoring work, discussions around appropriate, standardised recording of damage to heritage sites, and conversations about digitisation challenges, among others.

The second half of 2022 and first half of 2023 saw increased coordination among various actors, and a clearer division between organisational remits and areas of responsibili-

ty. However, the sector remained crowded and only partially coordinated. The Ukrainian state, and specifically the Ministry of Culture, retained its position as a first point of contact for many major international players and foreign state actors. The Ministry still managed properties in state care across the country, including providing basic operational costs, protecting World Heritage sites, and coordinating with UNESCO (e.g. about training, 'at risk' lists and nominations/designations). However, the financial and staffing **capacity of MCSC and other state bodies remained limited, especially considering the significant extra work created by the full-scale war**.

4.1.1 New logistical chains

Due to its proximity to the Polish border, its relative safety and the concentration of heritage professionals and institutions, **Lviv emerged as a hub of Ukrainian heritage logistics, where much of the international aid came through**. Bridging initiatives discussed above developed capacity to receive and further distribute this aid, especially as new customs regulations had been introduced around the import of humanitarian aid, which are difficult to navigate from abroad without adequate documentation from Ukrainian recipients.

Many **Polish organisations reported that they became intermediary actors**, contacted by Western European initiatives hoping to send supplies and equipment to Ukraine but lacking the logistical and bureaucratic know-how. Polish bridge actors like the Polish Support Centre for Culture in Ukraine often coordinated and received aid from across Europe and then drove it to Lviv, from where different local initiatives would help distribute it across the country. In major consortia like the European Competence Centre for Cultural Heritage, this meant that it was often Polish professionals who sought out and maintained contact with their Ukrainian counterparts, while Western European consortium partners led conceptualisation or project management.

This division of labour was visible in terms of the role of neighbouring countries, especially Poland vis-a-vis Western Europe and, inside Ukraine, Lviv and other West Ukrainian cities vis-a-vis the South and the East. **These emerging supply chains introduced higher efficiency and more predictability to the delivery of material aid. However, they also contributed to the uneven distribution of high-risk labour.**

4.1.2 Attempts at damage monitoring

Monitoring damage to cultural heritage emerged as a central challenge early on. This work requires coordination and the ability to aggregate diverse data sources. Theoretically it is **within the mandate of the MCSC** to monitor the condition of immovable heritage across the country, but due to the difficulties described in Chapter 2 (see particularly 2.2.2 and 2.3), **the Ministry had no centralised system that could have linked registries to condition monitoring or other project work prior to the escalation**.

Existing state registries contained basic information, including geographic coordinates, descriptions, and often photographic information, but these were **not maintained** by regular updates. When it comes to **archaeological sites, including known but unresearched sites, the landscape was even more diverse**, as documentation existed in a plethora of organisations, and even when it was maintained in digital databases, it was not necessarily standardised and easy to share.

Culture offices in Territorial Administrations were asked to collect information on damaged sites, but this was done manually. In Chernihiv, for instance, in Excel sheets, which were updated and regularly sent to Kyiv. Similar work was also ongoing in other regions, but these accounts were reported to be collected manually, without entry to a central digital database. Even if non-state actors attempted to develop comprehensive databases for monitoring damage or managing information about immovable heritage, **this line of work would potentially benefit from a more integrated approach**.

Given the dangers of site visits, fewer, multi-goal monitoring visits would have reduced risk for those involved. However, documentation requirements and standards differ for stabilisation or repair projects and legal documentation prepared for potential war crimes cases, so multi-purpose visits were not always feasible. **Coordination was a significant challenge in terms of leadership, resources and expertise to build shared platforms** in the crowded, diverse and uncoordinated field of heritage interventions.

The MCSC launched a publicly available database of verified cases, Destroyed Cultural Heritage in Ukraine, where photographic evidence was uploaded. However, their attempts at building a centralised database involved **cooperation with NGOs and international actors**. The database is no longer available since summer 2024, although the monitoring work is ongoing. According to news published on the Ministry's website, 2,109 sites are verified as damaged as of 5 November 2024.[19]

Several documentation initiatives exist simultaneously: besides MCSC and HeMo, UNESCO conducts its own damage assessment, which, as of 20 January 2025, verified damage to 476 sites.[20] Additionally, the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI) has been conducting satellite monitoring of 28,710 sites for potential cultural heritage damage, and they suggest potential damage to 2,122 sites as of April 2024 (Bassett et al. 2024).

The fact that the MCSC was but one important actor in this field meant that even though **coordination existed among initiatives, it was not a structurally in-built feature but a conscious strategy many actors adhered to**. There was significant knowledge-sharing to facilitate standardisation and the spread of internationally accepted documentation practices, such as the ICCROM documentation template, but **the field remained busy and only partially coordinated**.

[19] 2,109 cultural infrastructure facilities have been damaged or destroyed due to Russian aggression, 5 November 2024. https://mcsc.gov.ua/en/news/2109-cultural-infrastructure-facilities-have-been-damaged-or-destroyed-due-to-russian-aggression/ [Last accessed: 20 February 2025]

[20] Damaged cultural sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO, https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco [Last accessed: 26 February 2025].

It is worth noting that adjacent areas that require monitoring and systematic documentation, such as potential war crimes against cultural heritage come with **comparable challenges**. Although teams of prosecutors have been deployed in Ukraine, training and general capacity building, alongside coordination of standardised data production and sharing, remain issues. Likewise, building a functioning system to address **illicit trafficking** has been a challenge partly due to the **lack of any formal structure for trust-building and cooperation among cultural heritage professionals, law enforcement and security agents** and other stakeholders prior to the full-scale invasion.

Responding to this systemic challenge in the context of a major war exposed pre-existing systemic problems, just as damage monitoring attempts highlighted pre-invasion limitations in digital registries, data management and broader state capacity in general.

Heritage Monitoring Lab. Glass ceiling in capacity building

The most ambitious initiative that attempted to utilise these streams of data, and build a standardised infrastructure was launched by Heritage Monitoring Lab (HeMo). HeMo **grew through regional damage monitoring expeditions funded by a plethora of international NGOs** like WMF, Cultural Emergency Response (CER) and the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI). Recognising the importance of standardised documentation, data entry, and an adequate infrastructure, HeMo was a capacity building project from early on.

Work, including field trips, started in October 2022. The standards of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) were used, complemented by testimonies and evidence of crimes against culture according to the methods developed by the SCRI.

HeMo **did coordinate with the MCSC, but it remains a civil society centaur initiative** with key members holding leadership positions in public-sector heritage organisations. Founder Vasyl Rozhko, for instance, is the director of the Tustan Natural-Cultural Reserve. The work could be described as **compensatory, in that it steps into an area where state capacity seemed to be lacking, while the services it provides aid the state to fulfil its stewardship role**.

However, lacking long-term core funding or any state guarantees, **HeMo's success is strongly tied to the availability of grant funding, even though its work could be described as a crucial wartime public service**. The quality and applicability of its results partly lies in the scale and longevity of its operations, so the **unpredictability in funding could effectively create a 'glass ceiling'** undercutting its aspirations to establish a central database as a point of reference.

4.1.3 Decentralised responses to digital documentation and training

Digitisation of collections is a distinct, albeit related, area from damage monitoring that might also involve, for instance, document scanning, photogrammetry, terrestrial laser scanning, and/or airborne LiDAR to record objects and sites preventively or when documenting destruction. **Unlike manual damage monitoring, digitisation is a field that can operate well, and even benefit from, decentralised responses, although these can create challengingly diverse data management practices in the long run**.

Digital **interventions range from highly complex and technologically advanced, costly measures to portable, cheaper solutions**. Documentation of monuments through photogrammetry and laser scanning, or LiDAR surveys of archaeological sites require more resources than photogrammetric modelling of cultural property in museum collections, or the production of digital inventories of catalogues, scanning of manuscripts and archival documents, or the production of digital photographic records of collections or monuments. Correspondingly, funding initiatives **range from small infrastructural grants** to facilitate digital inventorisation **to comprehensive laser scanning initiatives** focusing on key monuments, as well as **larger interventions** that aim to bring about sectoral improvements.

Early on, most cultural institutions in Ukraine worked with **outdated equipment** and only a few had scanners or cameras appropriate for digitising their collections, or trained professionals to operate them. The **lack of a functioning digitisation infrastructure increased the vulnerability of these collections**, as the recording of potential damage is more difficult without digital inventories, and the lack of digital copies means the loss of originals cannot be mitigated. Digitising collections therefore became a priority recognised early-on.

Private companies like the Ukraine-based Skeiron were producing 3D models of nationally significant heritage sites **using photogrammetry and laser scanning, receiving grants from a diverse range of donors, including foreign state bodies**.[21] For instance, the laser scanning of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, part of the UNESCO World Heritage ensemble was financed by the Austrian Embassy in Kyiv and executed by Skeiron. International consortia like the EC-funded European Competence Centre for Cultural Heritage (4CH)'s Save the Ukraine Monuments project was also active in the field, but with a focus on major historic centres like Kyiv, Lviv and Odesa.

Smaller infrastructural grants were made available through projects like the German state-funded Safeguarding Documents and Archival Holdings in Ukraine or via individual and small institutional grants distributed by House of Europe, using EU-funding. WMF also took part in this line of work, partnering with the State Archive of Kyiv Oblast (SAKO) to digitise their collections.

[21] #SAVEUKRAINIANHERITAGE:3DScanninginUkraine.https://4marikr.notion.site/eb1de5ab63164895aed1e234ade9492b?v=2e83cd4721dd4704910165344b507edd [Last accessed 26 February 2025].

Many involved in provision of early funding in support of Ukrainian partnerships, such as the UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative, saw digitisation equipment and server support as a straightforward form of help but then found **unforeseen challenges**. For instance, they might lack the relevant networks and **know-how to support import logistics in a country at war**, or **unexpected training needs relating to vastly different archiving practices** in order for this equipment to serve its intended purpose.

When combined with training and designed in a way that ensured the sustainability of these interventions, **digitisation efforts were a significant, and often successful area of intervention**. However, in many cases, ad hoc purchases of equipment, the diversity and cost of the data management software and the overall infrastructure, as well as the lack of awareness of ongoing parallel projects could **hamper the mid- or long-term viability and efficiency of these initiatives**. The afterlife of these interventions is not always thought through at the inception of the projects, **so follow-up work assessing sectoral results and potentially aggregating them would be important to valorise the existing work**.

Safeguarding Ukrainian archival heritage. Localised micro-assistance

One project offering **direct assistance in digitisation of museum and archival collections** in the form of distributing affordable equipment in Ukrainian cultural institutions offered a successful and cost-efficient intervention early on. It was sponsored by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media in Germany and executed by the Berlin-Karlshorst Museum (formerly: German-Russian Museum Karlshorst).

The project commenced in July 2022, when the German Ministry of Culture decided to increase support for the Ukrainian heritage sector in the context of the war. Over 8 months, the project **supported 76 institutions in Ukraine in at least partially digitising their collections**.

The allocated budget of **0.5 million euros could be spent in-country**, and it was developed as a form of **rapid response with more in-built flexibility than normally accepted in the management and compliance norms that regulate the sector**. This was because the decision to allocate extra funding was still guided by the emergency logic of the initial phase of the invasion.

The fact that **in-country purchases were allowed** meant that the cost of intermediaries, as well as the transportation of equipment could be cut out. The project could run efficiently with minimal staff in Berlin, so only a small fraction of the grant was spent outside of Ukraine. Due to the Museum's orientation, staff spoke Russian, and in some cases, Ukrainian, which allowed for **direct communication with recipients** about their needs.

The project offered an integrated first-step solution to enable Ukrainian institutions, especially museums, libraries and archives to start digitising their collections. This meant **buying and delivering affordable, easy-to-use cameras, laptops and scanners** that were nevertheless good enough quality to enable the creation of adequate records. This was supplemented by **Ukrainian-language online training on the process of recording, as well as cataloguing and managing the created data**. The German-developed *museum-digital* **data management software was then localised, made available in Ukrainian and Russian to reduce the barrier of access, and training was offered**. Trainings were delivered in Ukrainian or Russian.

The approach of offering low-tech, easily accessible equipment as part of a packaged data storage and management solution was one of the most successful ventures **reaching 'last mile' (final distribution) locations**. It ensured that access to heritage support remained viable for less well-endowed institutions across the country, and that the solution offered was not tied to further project funding.

4.2 Major international actors, networks and coalitions

After the initial emergency, **large state-run and intergovernmental organisations** like UNESCO, the EC, Goethe Institute, as well as **major NGOs and INGOs** such as ALIPH, WMF, BSI, and ICCROM, **increased their presence in Ukraine**.

Some, like House of Europe, EUAM, EUDEL and UNESCO expanded or re-channelled existing budgets in Ukraine. **Some opened new field offices, while others like EUDEL, built on a longer standing physical base with the aim of developing multi-level support for regional and local institutions in the sphere of heritage and culture, as well as national ones**.[22] Others, like WMF hired local professionals to maintain on-the-ground presence, yet others like BSI continued to operate remotely but initiated periodic visits/missions and **extended their networks of contacts and budgets**.

The opening of a **new UNESCO office** in Kyiv in October 2022, is of particular note as the leading intergovernmental organisation (IGO) in the domain of heritage worldwide with a significant role in respect to HC54. The **UNESCO Emergency Preparedness and Response unit (EPR) took on coordination of actors on the ground who supported in situ damage assessment work**. EPR is a product of recent wars, focusing on seed funding, bridging needs until the recovery phase, so that heritage is included in early responses.

[22] Council of the European Union, *Report on the progress in the implementation of the "Concept on Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crises. A component for peace and security in European Union's external action" and the dedicated Council Conclusions*, 12 September 2022. https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12398-2022-INIT/en/pdf [Last accessed: 26 February 2025]

These actors have been prominent in all domains of heritage funding from stabilisation projects to direct support for heritage workers, evacuations, digitisation and knowledge sharing. They **work with state bodies, but also with civil society and NGOs**. Sometimes their interventions have **supported gaps in state CPP capacity or enhanced partially functional infrastructures**. In other cases, they facilitated **new initiatives** that originated outside of the public sector. Each domain comes with different challenges, all with lessons pertaining to wartime interventions beyond Ukraine.

4.2.1 International funding beyond support for the central state

Some nation states and the EC supported heritage work in Ukraine through specific bilateral ventures with the MCSC, or sponsored arm's length non-governmental public bodies linked to the state, like the British Council or Goethe Institute, to initiate projects directly with Ukrainian organisations often in coordination with MCSC. **Others chose not to channel funding directly to Ukraine, but to do so via UNESCO as the leading intergovernmental body, using its multi-donor scheme to aid** specific projects.

The two UNESCO member states to make the largest donations for heritage sector projects through this scheme to date are Japan and Spain. Japan has supported UNESCO's damage assessment and monitoring activities with 23.5 million euros since the start of the invasion.[23] The Spanish support was more project-based: the Spanish Agency for Development and Cooperation, together with UNESCO, the MCSC and the Lviv City Council launched the flagship project UNESCO Lviv Culture Hub in 2024, an institution aimed at training and capacity building in the heritage and culture sectors.[24]

Beyond these, UNESCO's **Heritage Emergency Fund**, a pooled, non-earmarked funding mechanism was used in 2023 to support the development of a national Cultural Heritage Management System in Ukraine, facilitating digital transformation. The funding was pooled from a dozen supporting member states.

All these examples highlight how **UNESCO and other major actors have moved towards individual negotiations with donor countries** to cover the cost of their operations in emergency contexts, and how **coalitions between such funding bodies and national funding agencies have led to an increasingly complex funding landscape** on the intergovernmental level. As with other project funding, the scope and long-term feasibility is subject to the continued availability of such funding.

Many projects by INGOs and intergovernmental agencies were done through **joint ventures with MCSC, or in coordination with it**. For example, the production of a GIS-based Risk Map for Ukraine's cultural heritage, led by ICCROM's First Aid and Resilience Programme, funded by the US Department of State, was developed in collaboration with

[23] Japan's support to Ukraine through UNESCO. https://www.unesco.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/ukraine_support_EN.html 7 February 2024. [Last accessed: 24 February 2025]

[24] Lviv Culture Hub, https://www.lvivculturehub.com/about-us [Last accessed: 26 February 2025]

MCSC, the Maidan Museum and the Agency for Cultural Resilience.

Partnerships with unconventional financing strategies also emerged around prominent INGOs like ALIPH (see box), which **bypass the central state, directing funding to civil society organisations instead**.[25] This funding ecology is a key development of the last few decades, not only in Ukraine but globally, with the rise of project-based work in state agencies and INGOs. This trend, increasingly described as projectification (Brass et al 2018; Godenhjelm et al. 2015), has been widely described in humanitarian and development contexts, but it is also increasingly important in the heritage sector. **Recipients of INGO funding include civil society actors as well as conventional state bodies**, and collaborative projects are conducted with actors as diverse as UNESCO and the National Research and Restoration Center of Ukraine (NRRC).

These INGOs can operate across state (civil and military) and civil society divides, bypassing the enormous procedural complexity of the former and upscaling the responsiveness of the latter. Although some tensions were reported from state organs who would have preferred to retain their monopoly over disbursing international donor funding, these organisations mostly complement the state's work and **reduce the burden on the state apparatus**, all the while maintaining coordination.

Unconventional direct funding for local heritage projects. ALIPH

Growing global concern about heritage destruction in contexts of armed conflict, particularly in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq, led to the **emergence of new heritage actors specifically working in warzones**.[26] UNESCO's own Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF), established in 2015, drew on member states and other donors to raise funds specifically for conflict-related interventions.[27]

ALIPH, a Swiss-based NGO with a plethora of state funding and private donations, was established in 2017 in response to the commitments set out in the **UNESCO Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Protection of Heritage and Cultural Pluralism in Conflict Areas** in 2015. A specialist in emergency interventions, stabilisation and rescue, it funds local organisations on the ground.

[25] This fits a broader tendency in humanitarian and development contexts in general, where since the 1990s major donors, including state agencies increasingly disburse aid to projects rather than states (see e.g. Krause 2014: 3). According to the OECD, over 20% of all bilateral aid is channelled through NGOs (OECD 2015).

[26] Significant actors like the US-based Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative date back to the 1990s, but the sector expanded in the aftermath of 9/11 and the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas. The Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development established the NGO Cultural Emergency Response (CER) in 2003. The WMF launched a Crisis Response program in 2019, and other heritage institutions increased capacity in this front as well. The V&A launched its Culture in Crisis project in 2019 too.

[27] Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF) https://www.unesco.org/en/culture-emergencies/heritage-emergency-fund [Last accessed: 1 March 2025]

ALIPH had already approved its **Ukraine Action Plan in March 2022**, and a diverse array of respondents reported that it was the first major international donor to arrive in the sector. A number of major international donors chose to channel their heritage funding via the organisation. **ALIPH, then, emerged as a key bridge actor between foreign states and local Ukrainian organisations, as well as between the Ukrainian state and its foreign allies**.

For instance, the EC granted ALIPH 2 million euros to enable direct and fast financing of Ukrainian heritage support projects in autumn 2022, referring to the agility of their model.[28] Funding of non-state actors by the EC was a relatively **unusual move distinct from the usual bilateral agreements with specific states**, though it constituted a **diversification of their approach rather than a wholesale shift**. The US State Department and Monaco also channelled large portions of their heritage support via ALIPH.

By November 2024, ALIPH spent 7.2 million euros in Ukraine, **supporting 450 organisations**.[29] Its portfolio ranges from emergency interventions to stabilisation projects, 3D scanning monuments, and funding the work of mobile 'restoration clinics' with travelling professionals.

The organisation **often works via local Ukrainian bridge actors** that further distribute funding across the country, reaching remote, small institutions. It also **channels funding to other INGOs and non-governmental public bodies in allied states who have the expertise and infrastructures to support its Ukraine-focused projects, whilst also acting as a bridge actor connecting them with Ukrainian partners on the ground**.

4.2.2 The political-diplomatic nexus of heritage work

The second half of 2022 saw the results of the **mobilisation of the political-diplomatic nexus of care for heritage in war**. This largely focused on tangible cultural property protection as defined through HC54 and the World Heritage Convention. UNESCO sits at the heart of this work, as a specialised agency of the UN and a key intergovernmental actor for its member states. Professional non-governmental organisations such as ICOMOS and ICOM also play an active role, with their expert committees providing advice to UNESCO, as well as initiating heritage protection support at the national level to varying degrees.

[28] EU and ALIPH help protecting cultural heritage in Ukraine, 11 November 2022. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu-and-aliph-help-protecting-cultural-heritage-ukraine_en?s=232#:~:text=The%20European%20Union%20provides%20EUR,Ukraine%20to%20protect%20cultural%20heritage. [Last accessed: 14 February 2025].

[29] ALIPH Ukraine Action Plan, June 2024 by ALIPH Foundation, 10 June 2024. https://issuu.com/aliphfoundation/docs/202406_presentation_aliph_ukraine_eng.pptx [Last accessed: 1 March 2025]. ALIPH Annual Report 2022 by ALIPH Foundation, 18 July 2023. https://issuu.com/aliphfoundation/docs/annual_report_2022_en_2023_07_18 [Last accessed: 1 March 2025].

UNESCO has consistently condemned Russia's targeting of historical sites, and with unusual pellucidity, given the political sensitivities around the fact that the war's main antagonist, the Russian Federation, is a permanent member of the UN Security Council with vetoing power.[30] Acts of destruction of individual sites were also **consistently condemned**, as in the case of a July 2023 attack in Lviv, when damage occurred to the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site.

A main area of activity relates to the **use of international instruments to designate and protect Ukrainian cultural heritage**, something which can be traced to the second half of 2022, but is only substantially realised from 2023 onwards. **The Historic Centre of Odesa was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on 25 January 2023, as a result of an emergency procedure**. The nomination was rushed through in the hope of offering enhanced protection, although arguably, the inscription did not act as a deterrent, as the World Heritage property and buffer zone was hit by rocket attacks in July 2023 and November 2024.[31]

The inclusion of Odesa's historic centre on the World Heritage registry is arguably **the most radical step UNESCO has taken in the first year of the war**, responding to the October 2022 request of Ukraine's President. However, it has also made active use of the **List of World Heritage in Danger**, for instance adding the World Heritage Sites in Lviv, Kyiv and Odesa to the List in Sept 2023. Similarly, ICOM's Emergency Red List,[32] published in November 2022 was an attempt at increasing the visibility of the problem, sounding the alarm, and possibly **activating mechanisms that might lead to more resources and expertise being available in case of damage** to these sites.

Political and diplomatic relationships and associated tensions are clear in the context of these moves. The decision to include Odesa's historic centre on the UNESCO World Heritage List was subject to a heated voting, and it was taken amidst **serious diplomatic tensions**, including calls to strip the Russian Federation of its UNESCO membership. At the final stage of the nomination process, there was a conflict between ICOMOS and the institutions that prepared the dossier regarding the name of the proposed World Heritage Site. The dossier emphasised the history of the city prior to its annexation by the Russian Empire, a narrative that contradicts mainstream Russian narratives about Odesa

[30] For an analysis of announcements and declarations by major international agencies and state bodies, see Kosciejew (2023).

[31] Le centre historique de la ville ukrainienne d'Odessa inscrit au Patrimoine mondial par l'UNESCO, 25 January 2023, https://news.un.org/fr/story/2023/01/1131657 [Last accessed 14 February 2025] See: 'Odesa: UNESCO Condemns Strikes on World Heritage Site', 18 November 2024. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/odesa-unesco-condemns-strikes-world-heritage-site. and 'Odesa: UNESCO Strongly Condemns Attack on World Heritage Property', 21 July 2023. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/odesa-unesco-strongly-condemns-attack-world-heritage-property.

[32] ICOM, 2022, Emergency Red List – Ukraine. https://icom.museum/en/ressource/emergency-red-list-ukraine/ [Last accessed :14 February 2025]

as a quintessential imperial city.[33] Another example is the fast-tracking of Ukraine's application to have the **Ukrainian culture of borscht recognised by UNESCO** as part of its **Intangible Cultural Heritage and inscribed on the List of Urgent Safeguarding**, a process which was also the focus of heated political commentary.

It is also noteworthy that while the **heightened visibility afforded by these designations** might help to leverage increased protection and resources, it **also subjects the Ukrainian state to higher levels of international scrutiny**. This happened in relation to the ongoing **derussificaiton** measures in Odesa's historic centre,[34] which led to decrees by the regional administration that earmarked 19 monuments for removal, and deprived others of protected status. This was criticised by a group of international heritage professionals and concerned citizens as a state-led damage to a World Heritage Site, who appealed to UNESCO in an open letter with heated discussions about the appropriate implementation of the derussification process.[35]

International organisations like **ICOM and ICOMOS** often **also wrestled with professional and political tensions**. Many of their national branches are under significant political pressure, which means **they struggle to fulfil their role as professional watchdogs and accountability entities**. One Baltic state ICOMOS member reported frustration over a sense that well-grounded critiques of Russia's war practices are politicised to such an extent that **it is difficult to reach a global consensus over issuing condemnations, and national committee members' votes usually mirror the geopolitical stance of their countries**.

There is **a growing boycott of Russian national committee members attending conferences for heritage professionals**, refusing cooperation on the grounds of Russia breaking HC54 and disregarding international law in its conduct of war. The German ICOM, for instance, announced a full boycott in February 2023, and called for **an investigation of Russian ICOM members' role in seizing Ukrainian cultural property** in occupied terri-

[33] Open Letter regarding the draft decision of the 18th Extraordinary session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in the context of the consideration of the nomination "Historic Center of the Port City of Odesa", submitted by Ukraine for the inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger. 24 January 2023. https://mcsc.gov.ua/en/news/open-letter-regarding-the-draft-decision-of-the-18th-extraordinary-session-of-the-unesco-world-heritage-committee-in-the-context-of-the-consideration-of-the-nomination-historic-center-of-the-port-ci/ [Last accessed: 26 February 2025]

[34] The legal basis of derussification policies is the law "On the condemnation and prohibition of propaganda of Russian imperial policy in Ukraine and decolonization of toponymy," which mandates the "liquidation of symbols of Russian imperial politics to protect Ukraine's cultural and informational space." For an overview on the decommunisation process between 2015 and 2022, see Zhurzhenko (2022). For the expansion of the policy into derussification, see Betlii (2022).

[35] Global Alliance of 120 Intellectuals Urges UNESCO to Protect Odessa from Cultural Erasure. Odessa Journal, https://odessa-journal.com/Global%20Alliance%20of%20120%20Intellectuals%20Urges%20UNESCO%20to%20Protect%20Odessa%20from%20Cultural%20Erasure#google_vignette [Last accessed: Retrieved 26 February 2025]
For the text of the letter see: 'Urgent appeal to UNESCO to request the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky to defer the ill-timed decisions about Odesa's cultural heritage until the end of the war, when public consultations can take place', 21 October 2024, https://odessa-journal.com/Global%20Alliance%20of%20120%20Intellectuals%20Urges%20UNESCO%20to%20Protect%20Odessa%20from%20Cultural%20Erasure [Last: accessed: 26 March 2025]

tories.[36] These steps towards the **isolation and marginalisation of the Russian heritage sector** have sometimes been orchestrated in conversation with Ukrainian ICOM national committee members.

The impact and consequences of exerting this type of pressure remain difficult to assess as of January 2025, both in terms of acting as a deterrent and in increasing pressure on the Russian state. The potential for legal prosecutions has increased with the **granting of enhanced protection to 27 sites in Ukraine under the Second Protocol of HC54** by the UNESCO Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict in December 2024.[37] Even though Russia is not a signatory to the Second Protocol, the inclusion of sites on the list **increases their visibility and significance** for the international community, ensuring there can be no denial of their significance and location.

Finally, efforts to **impede illicit trafficking of cultural goods from Ukraine required sustained work from major state actors, and coordination within the political-diplomatic nexus globally**. Temporary emergency restrictions on imports into trading hubs of cultural goods from Ukraine are now in place, though it took until 2024 for those restrictions to be imposed (e.g. by Council of the European Union, 2024).

These came **after rather limited responses in the field during the 2014-2022 period** when the Donbas war and the Russian annexation of Crimea posed significant risks for illicit trafficking. The **success of these interventions still rests on major training and capacity building for customs and law enforcement professionals**, both in Ukraine and in major target countries affected by illicit trafficking and adjacent cultural heritage crime.

4.2.3 Building state capacity for CPP and implementation of IHL

In the emergency phase, prominent international actors in the sphere of HC54, and Cultural Property Protection (CPP) more broadly, **had offered remote support** in the form of statements, advice and remote satellite monitoring. However, from the summer of 2022 onwards, they started to pursue their mandates through an active presence on the ground in Ukraine. UNESCO established an office in Kyiv and organisations like BSI, ICOMOS, ICOM and ICCROM undertook in person exploratory visits or missions.

Implementation of IHL falls into three strands: civil and military preparatory and protective measures; military measures during conflict; and accountability for any crimes committed. However, **in practice, support for state capacity building in respect of HC54 and its protocols tends to overlap with other activities associated with CPP in**

[36] ICOM Germany boycotts ICOM Russia, 13 February 2023. https://icom-deutschland.de/2023/02/icom-deutschland-bannt-icom-russland/ [Last accessed: 14 February 2025]

[37] In 2023, 25 sites were added to the list, followed by 2 more in December 2024. For the initial 25 sites see UNESCO. 2024. 'Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection Ukraine'. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386886 [Last accessed: 22 January 2025]. For the added 2 items: 'Ukraine: Two More Cultural Properties under "Enhanced Protection" of UNESCO', https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ukraine-two-more-cultural-properties-under-enhanced-protection-unesco [Last accessed: 22 January 2025].

a broader sense, such as emergency response, first aid and recovery planning which are not included in HC54. **Distinctions can therefore become blurred** as for instance in the sphere of damage monitoring which might be specifically focused on IHL but is simultaneously often also oriented to practical first aid or recovery.

UNESCO's multisectoral programme of support for Ukrainian culture, launched in February 2023 and funded by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust, is a good example of how **work in the sphere of IHL and broader CPP overlaps in practice**. The project aims to strengthen Ukraine's response in terms of protection of cultural heritage in wartime, some of which relates directly to implementation of IHL (e.g. risk preparedness planning) but also includes subsequent capacity for reconstruction which falls outside of HC54 and its Protocols.

A key point is that UNESCO and other **international 'big players' in the CPP domain tend to focus on World Heritage Sites and other sites of strong national or international significance**, because of the existing recognition of international responsibility. Indeed, UNESCO states that its Japanese Funds-in-Trust emergency response project will "focus primarily on properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and sites on Ukraine's Tentative List, all of which are also protected under the 1954 Hague Convention".[38]

Initial in-person 'missions' following the emergency phase were exploratory, involving rapid appraisal of levels of heritage destruction and advice on emergency response. One of the first was a joint ICOMOS-ICCROM mission in July 2022, the stated purpose of which was to "assess the damage caused to cultural heritage, to identify immediate needs, and to offer technical assistance for the preparation of a systematic and coordinated national strategy for first aid interventions and recovery planning".[39]

BSI's initial missions focused more specifically on **barriers and challenges to effective implementation of IHL**, alongside advice and related actions.[40] For instance, **BSI led on the production of an official Ukrainian translation of HC54** and its two Protocols for the MDU and its Territorial Defense Forces, to "further awareness and integration of international standards of accountability".[41] BSI's early missions also focused on damage appraisal specifically from an IHL perspective, providing recommendations to the MCSC to improve implementation of IHL. These early missions included consultations with the MDU, regional administration, and NGOs too.

[38] UNESCO Core Data Portal, Emergency response for World Heritage and cultural property: damage assessment and protection. Project ID 567UKR4000.
https://core.unesco.org/en/project/567UKR4000 [Last accessed: 18 February 2025]

[39] Joint ICOMOS-ICCROM mission to Ukraine, 26 July 2022,
https://www.icomos-ukraine.org/recent-news-en/joint-icomos-iccrom-mission-to-ukraine
[Last accessed: 19 February 2025]

[40] BSI returns to Ukraine, February 25, 2023, https://theblueshield.org/bsi-returns-to-ukraine/. [Last accessed: 18 February 2025]

[41] Blue Shield Annual Report 2023,
https://theblueshield.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Blue-Shield-Annual-Report-2023-and-Financial-Report-2023_final.pdf [Last Accessed: 15 January 2025]

More substantial sectoral capacity building through in-country training courses in the state civil sphere would only start to develop from the summer of 2023. For instance, ICOMOS, as an advisory body to the World Heritage Committee, initiated a co-designed programme of capacity building and technical assistance in coordination with UNESCO and ICCROM. Their first training course on documentation of the state of conservation and disaster risk management at World Heritage properties took place in late July 2023 in Kyiv. **Workshops, courses and in person missions picked up pace and intensity in 2024**, including a number funded through the UNESCO World Heritage project discussed above, such as a UNESCO/ICOMOS mission focusing on restoration and recovery in Chernihiv's historic centre in March 2024 and another on emergency preparedness of the Saint Sophia Cathedral complex, Kyiv, in August 2024.

Developments in the military domain were slower than in the civil sphere. UNESCO played an important advisory role as one of the main intergovernmental bodies with a mandate to protect cultural heritage, whether in times of peace or conflict. In parallel, **NATO also contributed through advice and training in CPP delivered outside of the Ukraine**. Cooperation with partner states also plays an important role in developing protocol and training military personnel in cultural property identification and protection (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine 2024: 63). Yet, ultimately, **INGOs were often able to act faster and with greater flexibility** to offer support in the military domain.

As one of the leading INGOs in this sphere with a unique HC54 mandate, BSI has sought to pursue its mission by **bringing together uniformed services and heritage professionals** in relation to CPP in the combat zone in Ukraine. In the summer of 2023, the BSI Secretariat led intensive discussions with Ukraine's Directorates of International Law, CIMIC, as well as members of the Territorial Defense Forces. The result was **an agreement between the Head of Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) and BSI** to work together **to establish a CPP capability within the Ukrainian TDF**. This **new CPP unit was established in October 2024**, with an emphasis on CIMIC reflecting U.S. and NATO approaches to addressing CPP in armed conflict.[42]

Initially, training for Ukrainian military and CIMIC personnel had taken place outside of the country. For instance, Ukrainian officers joined NATO CIMIC training in Poland in April 2023, where CPP was reportedly briefly covered. The first dedicated military CPP training took place in August 2023, when six Ukrainian officers joined military personnel from the U.K., France, and Poland in the USA for an intensive "Army Monument Officers Course" organised by the US Army's Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command and the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2024: 64). The **training focused on knowledge exchange regarding the implementation of HC54 and its Protocols in the event of armed conflict**, informed by the doctrinal approaches, policies and best practices of the US and other NATO member states. **In-country training**

[42] It is worth noting here that only a small proportion of state parties that are signatories to HC54 have dedicated military CPP units of some kind. Most state parties instead rely on dedicated legal advice within the military sphere.

for military personnel would come later still, for instance, UNESCO conducted its first training targeting military personnel and justice system professionals in August 2024.[43]

The centrality of the Ukrainian state across these civil and military initiatives is evident in repeated statements that visits and activities were organised at the request of, and/or coordinated by the MCSC, with other state organs frequently involved in some capacity, notably the Ministry of Defense and the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine. **Leading charitable INGOs** in the sphere of heritage protection work, like ALIPH, were sometimes **included in the delegations assembled around these missions** and their activities, alongside **select Ukrainian 'Centaur' initiatives** which have emerged as leading bridging actors in the transnational CPP drive. Among these, HERI was instrumental as a bridge actor between heritage professionals and the military. However, **the key orchestrating actors consist of those international organisations and their associated professional advisory INGO bodies, at the heart of the political-diplomatic nexus** discussed in the previous section.

Whilst this sphere is not without its tensions, alliances, and competitive frictions, it is nonetheless **a relatively closed circle, defined by longstanding organisational ties and networks of individuals which also extend into state ministries and military CPP units of allied partner states, EU organisations and NATO CIMIC provision**. While the missions and activities conducted build CPP capacity in Ukraine they also inform knowledge and understanding of the situation amongst allies. For instance, BSI's early missions resulted in briefing reports on heritage destruction and potential heritage war crime for the UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport in February 2023 and the European Union Advisory Mission in September the same year.[44]

In turn, **administrative bureaucracies, diplomatic considerations and political priorities also mediate this kind of work** because of the range of state and intergovernmental actors involved, particularly UNESCO and its advisory committees. In part, this explains the **relatively slow pace of development** of initiatives focusing on CPP and implementation of IHL on the ground in Ukraine, compared to the more rapid and agile work of INGOs and Ukrainian 'Centaur' actors in the first 6-12 months of the war.

The military sphere of CPP provides a particularly pronounced illustration of this. There is evidence that during the first 6 months of the full-scale war, heritage professionals in the **Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces tried to use horizontal personal-professional contacts** in the CPP units of allied countries to mobilise support and training for military CPP early on in the war. However, those receiving such requests could not respond

[43] Ukraine: UNESCO gathers military, cultural, and justice personnel for the protection of cultural properties, 12 August 2024, https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ukraine-unesco-gathers-military-cultural-and-justice-personnel-protection-cultural-properties [Last accessed: 26 February 2025]

[44] Blue Shield Annual Report 2023, https://theblueshield.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Blue-Shield-Annual-Report-2023-and-Financial-Report-2023_final.pdf; also https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ukraine-unesco-gathers-military-cultural-and-justice-personnel-protection-cultural-properties [Last accessed: 26 February 2025]

directly because of the hierarchies involved in military tasking and associated government decision-making.

The efficacy of horizontal networks was therefore limited to offering informal advice on formal routes for making such requests, which involved numerous hurdles and barriers, often connected to the complexities of political and military decision-making and resource allocation. Furthermore, the timeframes involved in communications up and down diplomatic-military hierarchies also meant a significant gap between initial communications and material outcomes, if any.

4.3 Wartime cultural diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy has been a field of activity that is **intertwined with heritage support work** since the beginning of the Russian invasion, partly because the invasion itself was premised on the wholesale denial of a distinct Ukrainian identity, history and language. **Shaping global perceptions of Ukraine and generating support for its sovereignty in the face of ongoing aggression** thus became an important aspect of both state-led and civic culture work in Ukraine. It is important to note, that the **Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communication** both in its current iteration and the previous one has **coupled cultural and media policy** in its mandate, facilitating strong international messaging regarding Ukrainian culture and heritage.

Likewise, allies of Ukraine expressed their support by **featuring Ukrainian culture and heritage in leading institutions across Europe**, often combined with a **revision of the earlier, Russo-centric status quo**. International cultural diplomacy directed towards Ukraine should be seen **in the broader context of a post-Maidan increase in European Neighbourhood Policy funding**, contributing to a robust civil society sphere largely operating through grant programmes of **major state agencies** like the Goethe Institute, the British Council etc. The USA through USAID was a comparably important actor in this field. In the heritage sector, the work of these actors jointly **facilitated a less object-centred approach towards heritage, a focus on minority heritage and Ukraine's multicultural history**, often highlighting **historic and cultural links between Europe and Ukraine**.

Ukrainian state institutions engaging in cultural diplomacy include the **Ukrainian Institute, a state agency dedicated to cultural diplomacy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, and several other state institutions in the culture and heritage field, such as the UCF, the Ukrainian Book Institute, and the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UNIM). These are all relatively **recent institutions relating to post-Maidan policy reforms**, and most of them work in **close collaboration with the central state, as well as foreign state agencies and the EU cultural policy apparatus**. Ukrainian embassies also play a significant role in communication and coordination.

Civic actors in the field of cultural diplomacy include **Ukrainian diaspora organisations** like the Ukrainian Institute in London, and **a diverse array of NGOs** that operate in the field, who usually work through grant funding from across domestic and foreign programmes. Professional associations like Ukraine's Institute of Archaeology and research institutions often contribute to programming as well as educational campaigns.

Wartime Ukrainian cultural diplomacy exhibits a certain **degree of duality, between a values-and rights-based approach to heritage and a more essentialist understanding based cultural nationalism**. On the one hand, the cultural-diplomatic project is closely linked to the **reassertion of Ukrainian identity as European** through an emphasis on links between these contexts, and **often through an emphasis on 'European values'**. Notable examples of this trend include reframing the Ukrainian avant-garde as part of the European avant-garde or stressing the role of European capital in the early industrial development of Ukraine, notably in the Donbas. Even the broader decolonial turn that articulates Ukrainian history through the legacy of the Russian and Habsburg Empires, is linked to the rights-based turn.

On the other hand, institutions like the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory pursue wartime cultural diplomacy through a cultural **nationalist idiom**, which assumes a certain level of essentialism, although rarely on an ethnic basis. This can lead to **challenges around protecting certain types of heritage that the Russian invasion rendered 'difficult'** – such as Soviet and Russian Imperial heritage. Likewise, the broader, contested legacy of Ukrainian militant nationalism, such as that of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, raises questions around complicity or perpetration of anti-Polish and anti-Jewish violence, with consequences for new monuments or heritage sites related to that violence.[45]

Cultural diplomacy has taken the shape of **temporary exhibitions in museums and other cultural institutions**, featuring both historic collections and contemporary art, as well as some of the emerging heritage and documentary work around the ongoing war. It has included **educational and general awareness raising activities** about Ukrainian history, identity and heritage, Russian-Ukrainian relations, and many other themes. It features the creation of online resources, increased **funding for translating Ukrainian cultural products**, the production of **educational resources for higher education institutions** and **fellowships for journalists** covering these issues.

Beyond these activities, certain lines of **activities we discussed above**, notably the political-diplomatic work around the fast-tracked nomination of the historic centre of Odesa as a World Heritage Site, **have strong cultural diplomatic relevance**. Likewise, lobbying efforts in professional associations like ICOM, aiming to push for the moral and professional accountability of Russian members, could be seen as part of the broader heritage-related cultural diplomatic effort of Ukraine.

[45] Most contested is the Law no. 2538-1 "On the Legal Status and Honouring of the Memory of the Fighters for the Independence of Ukraine in the 20th Century", which enshrines the protection of these groups as "fighters for the independence of Ukraine", and scrutinising their legacy a possible insult.

4.3.1 Exhibiting Ukrainian heritage abroad

Major exhibitions across Europe that featured Ukrainian cultural heritage had a two-fold importance. On the one hand they were **cultural diplomatic ventures**, but many were simultaneously conceived of as **safekeeping operations**. In the emergency phase immediately following the invasion, when **heritage professionals were worried about the limitations of in-country evacuations of museum collections**, several large-scale co-operations were launched. Even with rapid measures, these would **usually bear fruit from late 2022 onwards**, often later.

One example is the ALIPH-funded loan of Mediaeval Byzantine objects to the Louvre, where they were restored with the oversight of Ukrainian conservation professionals prior to being exhibited. Another is the travelling exhibition of Ukrainian avant-garde artworks called *In the Eye of the Storm* that opened at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid before its European tour, and the early modern artworks exhibited in the Royal Palace in Warsaw.

These exhibitions were often framed in terms of rescue and safekeeping, and they were generally embraced by Ukrainian official diplomacy. However, **these were usually bottom-up initiatives of heritage professionals both in Ukraine and in host countries**, rather than state-led endeavours. They rested on **complex personal-professional networks that date back to prior to the invasion**. They require **trust**, the negotiation of **complex and risky wartime logistics**, and often **diplomatic support channels** that might help secure permits, arrange enhanced military protection for the travelling items, or negotiate border crossings amidst diplomatic tensions.

Ukrainian legislation does not permit the temporary export of cultural property for the duration of travelling exhibitions. This means that loaned items had to be returned to Ukrainian territory each time they are exhibited, **adding significant cost and risk to these ventures**. Working through **logistics and insurance are equally challenging especially under war time conditions**. Sometimes, when initiators had **access to diplomatic channels, special exemptions were secured** to make such exhibitions possible, as in case of the items of the *In the Eye of the Storm* exhibition.

Finally, occupation of certain territories might come with **legal challenges such as potential Russian restitution claims to collections from cultural institutions located in such territories**. This happened around the return of Crimean museum objects to Ukraine from a temporary exhibition at the Allard Pierson Museum in the Netherlands, after the illegal annexation of the peninsula by Russia in 2014 (see Mattez 2024). This means that such loans, especially those from cultural institutions located nearer to the frontlines, are **only viable in contexts of robust diplomatic relations and general trust**.

Working with private collections, contemporary art or the emerging heritage of the war, with items not yet included in the Ukrainian state registries of cultural property such as the Ukrainian Museum Fund, **poses fewer logistical and bureaucratic challenges**. It has accordingly been a prominent type of intervention, ranging from contempo-

rary art exhibitions like *Timeless: Contemporary Ukrainian Art in Times of War* at Berlin's Bode Museum in 2023, to photography exhibitions like *Echoes of the Blitz: Underground shelters in Ukraine and London* at London Transport Museum, to virtual exhibitions like *Beast of War, Bird of Hope* at the Aspen Institute.

4.3.2 Reasserting Ukrainian heritage narratives

Educational campaigns and various forms of **online resources** have been important features of Ukrainian wartime cultural diplomacy as well. **Conferences, lectures and workshops accompanied Ukrainian-themed exhibitions**, such as the professional conferences that accompanied the *In the Eye of the Storm* exhibition in London or Vienna. Other examples include the Ukrainian Institute's *Postcards From Ukraine* exhibition that featured information boards about destroyed cultural heritage, or their *Culture Fights Back* exhibition series that feature profiles of enlisted artists and culture professionals.

Significant **online resources were** produced to promote Ukrainian cultural heritage narratives, often with the **explicit aim to counter narratives produced by Russian cultural institutions**. For instance, the NGO Ukraine Crisis Media Centre produced a website dedicated to the avant-garde in Ukraine,[46] and they maintain multilingual YouTube channels with significant coverage of Ukraine's heritage. **Some of these efforts are linked to ongoing state policy decolonisation drives** such as the Ukrainian Association of Archaeologists' project, *Stolen Heritage: archaeological heritage stolen by Russia*, which focuses on objects in Russian state collections with contested provenance.

The field of cultural diplomacy work is highly diverse with many grassroots initiatives and an associated **relative lack of coordination**, though **many larger organisations cooperate with state officials and agencies like the Ukrainian Institute**. Still, neither the narratives put forward, nor the political orientation of these initiatives is homogenous.

For most actors, **awareness raising and advocacy efforts are not core activities but side-projects that run simultaneously to other forms of culture and heritage work**. This is often the case with more generic educational resources about the cultural heritage and history of Ukraine, which are not linked explicitly to the ongoing war, such as online courses by the Ukrainian Institute London, and *Re-e-sources*,[47] a growing platform of multi-lingual teaching resources initiated by the Center for Urban History in Lviv.

As such, the opportunities and challenges are similar to those described in the field of digitisation or other grassroots-heavy areas of heritage work. **Their existence is tied to contingent project funding, and the sustainability of the knowledge produced is subject to continued maintenance work that is rarely ensured beyond the project cycles**.

[46] Ukrainian Avant-Garde. https://avantgarde.org.ua/en.php

[47] Re-e-souces, https://edu.lvivcenter.org/en/ [Last accessed: 26 February 2025]

THE NEXUS OF HERITAGE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CARE WORK 5

War changes the relationship between communities and their cultural heritage, as well as the work heritage professionals are engaged in, with implications beyond the areas we have described so far. **Heritage work contributes to social cohesion both as infrastructures of care, and as a means of maintaining and repairing community identities and relationships to place in the face of destruction, dislocation or threat of loss**.

On the one hand, wartime heritage work remains part of a broader societal mobilisation, as heritage institutions become central locations for volunteering and aid distribution. **Humanitarian work, civic and military volunteering, and broader community work unfold in heritage institutions, while heritage professionals continue to work across these spheres**.

On the other hand, there is an **intensification of interest in local everyday heritage** in the sense of objects, places, practices embedded in people's daily lives, **including the emerging everyday heritage of war**. Faced with imminent threat of destruction, family photographs, factory archives, and community civic buildings become **valued sources for memory work about the pre-war life of communities, subject to new forms of collection, curation and care**. New heritage is produced through the collection of military objects, oral testimonies capturing the diverse experiences of war, commemoration of victims and events, and documentation and repair of war-damaged built heritage.

This chapter examines **how heritage work intersects with care work in other spheres supporting social cohesion and resilience**, as well as the ways in which new forms of heritage practice proliferate. Much of this work **unfolds on the margins of designated heritage sites**, and it concerns the creation of new heritage, meanings and networks between people, places and things. We discuss the **challenges of funding complex care work, working with new materials, skills and practices, and the emotional labour of wartime heritage work**. Including this work in the broader context of the wartime care for cultural heritage is an important move away from the policy binary of rescue and reconstruction; a crucial step in contexts of war attrition.

Key findings

- **Heritage institutions become key venues** for volunteering, distributing humanitarian aid, and commemorating fallen soldiers. These activities lead to **new or stronger connections** between heritage professionals and local communities, while **heritage infrastructures became key for social cohesion**.
- **Heritage and memory work is intertwined with other forms of care work**: social and humanitarian support through the distribution of humanitarian aid, psycho-social support through commemorative events, and peer-professional care work in the form of fundraising and institutional support for displaced colleagues.
- **Complex care work crosscuts distinct policy fields**, notably relating to humanitarian funding and social cohesion-oriented culture work. Hence, it **falls between distinct funding streams, leading to gaps in capacity**.
- **Exhibition and events programming changes to reflect the ongoing war**, with new practices of collecting, memory work and documentation. As such, Ukrainian **heritage institutions become key sites for the consolidation of new narratives about past and present**.
- **Projects focusing on everyday heritage flourish**, whether focusing on intangible heritage, non-listed, often personal heritage and archives, or the emerging heritage of war and occupation. **This boom is part of the new relevance many feel about the value of heritage under threat, and it is linked to the reduced bureaucratic constraints of this work**.
- Everyday heritage work **places a considerable burden on heritage and museum professionals in terms of the emotional labour of care and upskilling** in forms of practice they may be unfamiliar with.
- Already in the pre-recovery phase, complex care work, associated with *both* grassroots humanitarianism and everyday heritage practice, contributes to **community resilience** and belonging in societies heavily affected by armed violence and occupation. In this context, the ***processes* of care and repair, identity work and trauma support matter as much as the material outcome**.

Recommendations

- **Heritage should be integrated into a broad humanitarian response and** funded as a vital aspect of supporting war-affected, fractured communities.
- **Recognise, resource and support heritage work as complex care work which includes humanitarian and community resilience dimensions** to facilitate heritage-centred socio-economic recovery already in the context of ongoing war.
- **Take a broader, more holistic approach to wartime heritage response, embracing everyday heritage practices** focusing on 'ordinary' things and stories, which can play an important role in **(re)establishing social and material relationships in the upheavals and dislocations of war.**
- **Support and fund the development of peer-based professional networks and the production of tools, trainings and digital documentation protocols** to support heritage and museum workers and community participants to carry out this important everyday heritage work.
- **Increase communication between adjacent policy areas** – CPP emergency funding, arts funding, and humanitarian funding – to help develop **more holistic funding initiatives that facilitate both complex care work and everyday heritage projects.**
- **Assess and support training needs related to new wartime dimensions of heritage work** to ensure appropriate practices around vulnerable subjects and seek to address the overall mental health challenges of war for both heritage professionals and communities.

5.1 Heritage work as complex care work

Heritage institutions like museums, libraries, cultural centres, and historic buildings **are key pieces of public infrastructure that gain new functions in the context of war**. Institutions **often offer their premises for civic and military volunteering activities** such as distributing humanitarian aid, offering temporary shelter, or the making of masking nets or care packages for soldiers.

These activities unfold alongside ongoing heritage and memory work, bringing together a broader section of the local population on site than they had done before the war. Premises also **transform into aid distribution hubs, shelters, meeting places**. Thus, heritage institutions **become part of the social state**, as well as key hubs for wartime civil society work. This is especially prominent in smaller settlements and in areas closer to the frontline.

This new, **expanded mandate, places additional burden on these already underfunded institutions**, where salaries are often further reduced in the context of wartime budgetary cuts. Yet, their **continued work is a crucial factor in the resilience of local communities** (Aljawabra 2020).

Civilian and military volunteering are often blurred; wartime heritage and memory work is intertwined with both. Heritage workers often collect testimonies during military-centred volunteering. Aid packages for displaced people could be distributed after concerts organised to gather funds for a certain unit.

Thus, **mobilising care around heritage is best described as a segment of a broader mobilisation that merges socio-economic, emotional and logistical care. It intersects with humanitarian concerns**, as well as with **community cohesion work**. Much of this work **concerns rarely prioritised forms of** heritage, and even when it unfolds around major national sites, it remains on the **margins of what is usually considered core heritage work**. Heritage is often assumed to contribute to social recovery, but how exactly this happens remains underexplored (Chalcraft 2021). **More attention to the complex care work that heritage workers become involved in during war will help better fund and facilitate heritage-centred socio-economic recovery**.

5.1.1 Heritage institutions as infrastructure for wartime humanitarian work

Public-sector heritage institutions like museums, libraries and culture houses act as meeting points and logistical hubs for volunteering and social support provision. As **non-commercial spaces with basic utilities** like heating and electricity, and often large premises, **they are well-placed to step into these infrastructural roles mobilising their existing links to both communities and the state**. This has strong implications for their role in fostering local resilience.

Heritage professionals reported to have housed the displaced and occasionally even soldiers temporarily, leading to **ties developing between heritage professionals, civilian volunteers and army units**. Many stressed that **communities saw their institutions as natural go-to places to seek or offer support**. They would request to hold meetings or organise volunteer activities in their premises, such as producing dried goods for the army or providing daycare for displaced children. This is **especially in smaller localities where public infrastructure might be scarce**.[48]

[48] Recent literature, such as Janes (2023) argue that museums have a potential to mitigate societal disruptions and collapse, acting as 'lifeboats'. Although this is discussed in relation to the imminent climate crisis, the reasoning stands in the context of war as well: sense of place, stewardship, accessibility, and public trust all contribute to the capacity of museums to engage in complex care work. As we have seen this capacity also extends to many other heritage institutions such as libraries, culture centres, religious sites, and historic buildings. At the same time, working in contexts of crisis involves considerable emotional labour as people face new demands to adapt, change and experiment with established ways of working (Morgan and Woodham 2025).

This work typically overlaps with, but extends beyond, the **work of the humanitarian industry** composed of UN and government-run aid agencies, like USAID or Polska Pomoc, with a mandate to alleviate the needs of war-affected and displaced populations (see e.g. Weiss 2013). It can be seen as **a form of grassroots humanitarianism, where local actors deliver very similar forms of support, but in a more distributed, bottom-up fashion** (Dunn and Kaliszewska 2023).

Whilst mobilised towards the same goals as the humanitarian industry (Fechter and Schwittay 2020), **these aid efforts are guided by locally relevant conceptions of duty, responsibility and care**. We argue that it is crucial to link these activities to the dedicated heritage work conducted by these institutions, because heritage workers engage in it simultaneously with their dedicated work. **This reveals how and why heritage institutions can play such a pivotal role in community cohesion and social recovery.**

In the context of evacuations and safety concerns around displaying collections, **a new, less object-centred work regime emerged in many places**, literally **freeing up space** for new forms of use such as contemporary art exhibitions and discussion fora often focusing on the war, or places of collective mourning. This work, focusing on commemoration and processing of the war experience, **often takes place side-by-side with humanitarian and community support work occupying these spaces**.

One of the first exhibitions of Mystetskyi Arsenal in Kyiv after the full-scale invasion was entitled *Our Feelings*. It was accompanied by a series of dialogues where audiences were invited to share their own experiences of war. Elsewhere, empty halls are dedicated to the commemoration of fallen soldiers, in yet other places, masking nets are made in the same spaces where temporary exhibitions are held. **Civic mobilisation, collective grieving and heritage work intersect in all these examples.**

Providing aid offers important socio-economic support for poorer volunteers. They contribute their labour and time instead of money, **accessing help, contacts and goods**, which is especially important for precarious segments of the community. Those active in humanitarian volunteering often participate in heritage-centred work as well. **Heritage workers** who facilitate all this are **themselves often financially precarious, and they gain legitimate access to humanitarian aid** that in turn helps them continue their professional work, *de facto* **contributing to the continued functioning of poorer heritage institutions**.

Staff in heritage institutions, often middle-aged and older women, **are well-placed to play a central role in wartime civic mobilisation**: they are usually respected, and because of the low salaries, are rarely seen as profiteering. They are well-connected across social groups and, with **strong ties to the local state**, they often coordinate with municipal officials, **forming a crucial link between the local state and civil society** both in the heritage sector and beyond.

As in Ukraine, virtually all museums, cultural centres, and libraries we worked with across Europe mobilised care for Ukrainian cultural heritage locally. In neighbouring

countries, especially Poland, this involved daycare or legal aid provision and other social support and integration work for refugees, as well as special programming and guided tours.

Internationally, these developments were **more pronounced in the first year** of the full-scale invasion, and many reported concerns about the long-term viability of these humanitarian efforts, as domestic concerns of key donor countries competed with the initial outpouring of solidarity. Many noted a **return to their core functions, especially in larger and more prestigious heritage institutions** both in Ukraine and internationally, while **smaller institutions sustained this expanded function for longer**, especially along the Ukrainian border abroad, and near frontline areas inside Ukraine.

Humanitarian work that exists alongside documenting, memory production, and heritage-centred educational and community work jointly forms a **complex network of care work**, in that they **contribute to maintaining and repairing communities and their relationships to places, histories, and identities**. It is the intersecting concerns of acting against damage and erasure that link grassroots humanitarianism and heritage work, turning heritage institutions into hubs where the two coexist and blur.

5.1.2 The challenges of funding complex care work

There is a **growing recognition that heritage support is integral to social recovery and should be incorporated into wider recovery planning** (Barakat 2021; Campfens et al. 2022). This point is emphasised by the EC expert group's recommendations made specifically for the Ukrainian context (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture 2024).

However, **funding for complex care work** that could ensure this integration even in the pre-recovery phase **often falls in the cracks of various grant streams and policy areas**. For many, especially those who work in less prestigious institutions, securing dedicated heritage funding beyond initial emergency measures has been a challenge. Furthermore, this work is rarely considered a priority for humanitarian support or culture-focused funding streams that foster community cohesion.

This means that **heritage workers** in libraries, museums and archives **often need to negotiate complex donor landscapes across several policy areas, each operating with different, often conflicting priorities**. Due to demands of the work itself, the volume of grant applications and management, and low pay, **many leave the sector**. People are also **pushed to take on additional unrelated work** to make ends meet.

Heritage and culture funding inside Ukraine remains precarious. According to the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation's analysis, nearly **two-thirds of territorial communities spend less than 2% of their budgets on culture** (Ukrainian Cultural Foundation 2024). With central state spending on culture cut to the minimum, the **burden on the few domestic funding sources is enormous**.

UCF, which had been a key actor for heritage and memory work in this broader sense prior to the full-scale invasion, was forced to cancel its funding programmes altogether in 2022. Although they resumed grant programs in a limited fashion in 2023, players in the starved-out sector have to compete for these reduced pools of funding (Ukrainian Cultural Foundation 2024).

The budgets of major **governmental agencies in supportive countries that could fund some of this complex care work are also subject to economic and political upheavals**. With the attrition of the war and the deepening crisis of European security, many states cut their culture spending drastically.[49] By far the biggest blow for Ukrainian heritage and culture funding was the 2025 suspension of USAID payments for ongoing projects, highlighting the strong **dependence of third-sector heritage work on a limited number of major funders**.[50]

Funding complex care work for cultural heritage in countries that host significant populations of displaced Ukrainians is similarly challenging **and contingent on long-term political and budgetary considerations**. Using their premises for social service provision or to distribute humanitarian support was something many European institutions decided to reduce or drop with the attrition of the war.

Dedicated support included a state programme that **facilitated the employment of displaced Ukrainians** in Poland through tax reductions, with comparable municipal programmes in Austria, Germany, and Latvia. Similar private initiatives included the Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation's programme that offered employment and training for Ukrainian curators and museum professionals in German museums, in partnership with municipalities. **Some of these measures led to long-term job contracts, but many were short- or mid-term solutions gradually discontinued with the continuation of the war.**

Additional state funding helped sustain some care work activities with displaced Ukrainians or at least provide mental health support or community integration through heritage work. **Still, complex care work was easier to mobilise, fund and sustain** in European heritage institutions than **sending support directly to Ukraine**. In part, this is due to the strong **local mandate** of most heritage institutions that see part of their mission as catering for local communities, which now often include a sizeable Ukrainian displaced population.

[49] For instance, the British Council is facing drastic cuts which will likely have an impact on their funding capacity in Ukraine. See Adams, Richard. 2025. 'British Council Could Disappear within a Decade, Says Chief Executive'. *The Guardian*, 25 January 2025, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jan/25/british-council-could-disappear-within-a-decade-says-chief-executive.

[50] The overall USAID spending between 2022 and 2024 is estimated at 36.7 billion USD in Ukraine. While only a relatively small faction was spent on complex care work for cultural heritage, the USAID support was still cited as among the most significant sources among research participants. About the impact of the cuts see Ivana Kottasová and Kostenko, Marina. 2025. 'Disconnected Helplines, Undiagnosed HIV Cases and Unfinished Classrooms: Ukraine Counts the Costs of USAID Suspension'. *CNN*, 17 February 2025, https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/17/europe/ukraine-counts-costs-of-usaid-suspension-intl/index.html [Last accessed: 7 March 2025].

As such, heritage institutions across Europe played a significant role in **providing spaces for Ukrainian living heritage activities, strengthening the cohesion of the displaced community, and facilitating the international integration of the Ukrainian heritage sector**.

This is telling of the many ways dedicated **support for Ukrainian heritage is intertwined with humanitarian support, as well as arts and culture funding internationally**. Nevertheless, this help was primarily shaped by local political, economic and electoral concerns. It was **a substantial challenge to maintain the consistency and volume of this aid beyond the first year of the war, contributing to the worsening conditions many Ukrainian heritage professionals found themselves in later on**.

Working with war-affected people posed a **significant burden on the mental health of heritage professionals** both in Ukraine and beyond, with many emphasising the threat of **burnout and vicarious trauma**. Due to low salaries across the sector, many **cannot afford to seek mental health support privately, jeopardising their long-term ability to pursue complex care work and support social recovery**.

5.2 Everyday heritage, memory, and the emerging heritage of war

After the initial emergency, care for many forms of heritage intensified. While there is increasing engagement with prestigious national heritage sites and collections, we found a **more intense preoccupation with forms of localised heritage associated with the everyday, familiar and familial aspects of people's lives**.

Official national monuments and world heritage sites are also entangled in everyday local meanings and practices. However, **most of the ordinary, mundane things and quotidian practices making up 'everyday heritage' exist on the fringes of museum collecting, heritage management and protection infrastructures** (see Ireland et al. 2024).

This intensified engagement also includes the **production of new heritage associated with diverse daily experiences of war**. Collecting practices extend to include **wartime testimonies**, as well as the **material culture of conflict and wartime lives. Commemoration of the dead and the memorialisation of key locations** and events also become important heritage practices. In museums from Dnipro to Berestyn, Russian trophy objects have been exhibited, and atrocities have been commemorated in public spaces from Kyiv and Irpin to Yahidne.

The full-scale invasion radically changed the stakes and relevance of cultural heritage for communities, and the consequent mobilisation to care for it reflects this changed status quo. The **link between heritage and the everyday intensifies precisely because the implicit rhythms, cultural forms and physical fabric of people's daily lives can no longer be taken for granted**. Whether under physical or ideological attack, the sense of threat leads to an increase in the consciousness and significance of a range of unofficial,

vernacular and intangible forms of heritage.

5.2.1 Everyday heritage

The impetus to work with everyday heritage in Ukraine is not restricted to museum and heritage workers and is responsive to wider societal mobilisation. There are precedents in local history movements and grassroots heritage practice, especially in late-Soviet social movements that resisted state-sanctioned silencing of mass deportations or events like the 1932-3 mass famine, and in post-Maidan heritage work around the Donbas (Zychowicz 2023). However, **war reconfigures connections between communities and localities, as well as attitudes towards the past, leading to a broader mobilisation and a proliferation of everyday heritage practices**.

On the surface, pre-existing **projects in the tradition of European ethnology, and associated collecting** focusing on traditional crafts, folk dress, cuisine, song and dance, could be seen as forms of everyday heritage in that they focus on localised rural lifeways. For instance, the Baba Yelka project in Kropyvnytskyi uses oral histories with elderly tradition bearers, specifically grandmothers, to **collect and recover Ukrainian cultural traditions**.

Such projects have taken on a new urgency, **seeking to evidence and project an archetypal Ukrainian culture** in the face of Russian denial of its existence. However, much of the subject matter is **more closely linked to ideas of intangible cultural heritage than to a preoccupation with the mundane, ordinary and quotidian heritage of the everyday**.

In a rather different vein, those who have been internally displaced, with buildings damaged or collections evacuated, **have also turned their attention to non-material heritage. Localised food cultures and the everyday sociality of preparing and consuming daily meals have become a popular focus**, often mentioning the legacy of the 1932-3 mass famine, the Holodomor, to stress the urgency of working with intangible heritage around food.

For example, following destruction of the city and displacement of the population, the People's Museum of the History of Avdiivka initiated a project telling the story of the city through the story of a local rice porridge, encouraging cooking sessions and sharing recipes in an attempt to maintain networks, cultivate a shared identity and hold together a dispersed community. **Contrary to the logic of UNESCO's emergency inscription of Ukrainian borscht,[51] according to which safeguarding is needed because of the**

[51] The rationale for its emergency inscription was that displacement caused by the war is "threatening the viability" of the Ukrainian borscht, as "people are unable not only to cook or grow local vegetables for borscht, but also to come together to practise the element. 'Culture of Ukrainian borscht cooking' inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, 1 July 2022, https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/culture-ukrainian-borscht-cooking-inscribed-list-intangible-cultural-heritage-need-urgent#:~:text=Culture%20of%20Ukrainian%20borscht%20cooking%20was%20today%20inscribed%20on%20UNESCO's,Parties%20to%20the%20UNESCO%20Convention [Last accessed: 3 March 2025]

threats posed by war, the Avdiivka porridge project shows how **war might also create a renewed concern around intangible heritage**. Dynamic living heritage, such as unlisted local recipes might **form part of a future-oriented heritage work that supports community resilience**.

Most everyday heritage work **takes place at the margins of prestigious heritage** and the world of UNESCO nominations, **involving objects, sites and/or practices that are not subject to the regulatory powers of the state**. These include sites of specific local significance that are subject to strong place attachment, community heritage, including amateur and family collections, and vernacular architecture, a substantial proportion of which may not be part of official collections and designations.

Digitisation of non-official heritage has become a thriving field (see e.g. Garduño Freeman and Leibowitz 2024), especially in the context of occupied territories and front-line communities. With the imminent threat of destruction, family archives, amateur photography and cinema become **highly valued sources of the pre-war life of communities**, leading to an increased momentum of digital recording endeavours.

Forms of Soviet-era built heritage, such as mosaics, statues and monumental art constitute a **difficult form of everyday heritage**. These have been implicated in **heated debates** since the annexation of Crimea and the start of the Donbas war, which have intensified since 2022. Usually listed on local registries, at most, these sites are often **subject to vandalism or neglect, making them vulnerable** not only to war-related damage but also **from hasty implementation of decommunisation and decolonisation laws**.

Many **grassroots platforms have started to document these sites, monitor potential damage or lobby for increased protection**, such as Art Oborona in Kharkiv, Izolyatsia in Kyiv (displaced from Donetsk) as well as artist collectives like De-Ne-De.[52] Such initiatives are especially **dependent on international support** considering the blanket state policies and toleration of vandalism that leave little room for considerations of social significance or alternative interpretations for many such sites.

5.2.2 The emerging heritage of the war: new collections and testimonies

The matter of war has also become a focus of emerging everyday heritage practices. **Soldiers bring items relating to active conflict to museums for collection, display and care**: drones and other weapons, personal items from dead soldiers and mundane items relating to everyday life on the front line. They also find **archaeological artefacts** unearthed through military actions, which are sometimes brought to museums as part of mixed assemblages. Other areas of work focus on the **creation of collections or digital records of personal materials**, such as family photos, documents and heirlooms saved by internally displaced people.

[52] De-NeDe https://2023.kyivbiennial.org/en/participants/de-ne-de [Last accessed: 3 March 2025]

Lacking contextual information or coherent collecting strategies, these diverse materials embedded in different regimes of value present challenges to museum professionals. Temporary exhibitions of such material have been put together by institutions ranging from small museums in East Ukraine, such as the Museum of Local History in Berestyn, to the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War in Kyiv which put on a major exhibition of objects left behind by Russian soldiers after the battles of Irpin and Bucha.

These exhibitions garner significant local interest and even international media attention revealing a strong desire to engage with the everyday heritage of war. However, for many museum professionals, **questions surrounding what to keep and how to record, display and ultimately care for such material remain ongoing dilemmas**.

Such **collections are often tied to testimonial work** undertaken through interviews with displaced people and soldiers. Likewise, there has been a **proliferation of projects using testimonial interviews** in documenting and understanding **the physical transformations, stories and relationships surrounding damaged or occupied buildings and landscapes during the war**.

Grassroots projects involving displaced locals, such as the Mariupol Memory Park, attempt a continued engagement with the city through images, audio stories and essays that evoke the urban fabric and affective heritage of Mariupol.[53] Communities further from the frontline also reflect on these transformations. For instance, in 2023, the Lviv Center for Urban History initiated a project dedicated to **researching, archiving, and understanding the role of critical infrastructures in society and those that work with them, as they respond to daily attacks**.

The **daily recuperative work of heritage professionals** is part of this project and others, such as the *Wounded Culture* documentary film project, which focuses on the experience of employees at cultural institutions in Okhtyrka and Trostyanets. At the heart of these projects is **an aspiration to (re)make connections between built heritage, critical infrastructures and forms of cooperation**, which are **critical to survival in wartime**.

Social media networks and websites have also become part of the emerging everyday heritage of war, providing arenas for sharing testimonies, organizing volunteer groups, personal diaries, blogs and artistic reflections, and so forth. **Initiatives devoted to documenting and archiving this material** have also sprung up, such as the Telegram Archive of the War project led by the Lviv Center for Urban History and the SUCHO Meme Wall, which has collected and curated community crowdsourced memes since February 2022.[54]

[53] Mariupol Memory Park, https://www.mariupolmemorypark.space/en/ [Last accessed: 3 March 2025]

[54] Pro zbir dokumentalnykh svidchen viyskovoii ahresii rosiyskoii federatsii proty Ukrainy, 25 April 2022, https://tsdahou.archives.gov.ua/2022/04/25/pro-zbir-dokumentalnyh-svidchen-vijskovoyi-agresiyi-rosijskoyi-federacziyi-proty-ukrayiny/

5.2.3 Heritage care and repair as a means to wartime recovery

The arena of everyday heritage is **even more diverse and crowded than the realm of official heritage work**, in part due to the lack of official articulation and associated policies. **Working with unofficial, unrecognised heritage has distinct advantages in the volatile context of war**, because it is not subject to the complex regulations and permits that would otherwise be required. At the same time, the lack of official recognition often comes with **less prestige, making it a low priority in a sector that already lacks adequate financial and human resources**.

As with humanitarian work and other forms of complex care work, many museum and heritage professionals reported that **small-scale everyday heritage projects are supported by their own resources, coupled with small grants** when feasible. INGOs like the British Council, the Danish centre DIGNITY and several European Union funding programmes offer applicable sources of funding, usually in the form of small grants.

However, **grant acquisition often depends on high-level proficiency in a rather technical form of English, pre-existing international networks and prior experience in the community- and rights-based approaches to heritage which tend to underpin the funding criteria. Volunteer labour and community participation** are therefore frequently an element in the sustainability of such projects and the organisations who oversee them.

Fundraisers are also important, often involving intensive campaigning through online platforms and networks to reach international donors. Fundraising for everyday heritage projects, with their emphasis on cooperation and collaboration, can be **an extension of the work of creating and maintaining communities. By creating physical and virtual networks working towards specific projects, shared visions of the future are produced**.

At the same time, this requires **considerable energy and initiative on the part of those involved**. With the attrition of the war, many respondents reported an **overall decrease in funding opportunities** for this important broader work that provides a means of **mending and repairing their precarious worlds**.

There are also challenges around the knowledge and skills required for working with everyday heritage of war. New materials, methods and ways of working create **demand for training, tools and resources to support heritage and museum professionals and community participants to carry out this important work**. Furthermore, **the emotional labour of this professional practice in the context of rapid change is in need of a great deal more attention** (see Morgan and Woodham 2025).

Working with trophy objects and the personal belongings of Ukrainian soldiers, or producing temporary exhibitions about the war, are especially emotionally taxing experiences. **However, there is little in the way of mental health support such as counselling, or dedicated training to facilitate working with distressed people**.

The **abundance of projects and materials**, including digital records, also creates **challenges about what to keep, and how to contain, store and curate** the resulting collections. There are also linked concerns about **long-term viability, potentially chaotic archiving and standard-setting and limitations of professional and technical capacity**.

Attempts to take stock and map key challenges have been led by an annual conference titled The Most Documented War.[55] The **online repository** resulting from these meetings offers a **partial overview of documenting initiatives**.[56] State institutions, such as the Central State Archive of Public Associations and Ukrainian Studies, have also **started to develop protocols, e.g. for archiving social media**.

However, for most professionals, **building, maintaining and safeguarding these new archives requires further training**. The emerging nationwide conversation among heritage and museum professionals is a good example of **peer-driven knowledge exchange, but access to this is inevitably linked to the nature and extent of an organisation's, or individual's, networks**.

With the ongoing war, everyday heritage offers an important arena of memory work, including the commemoration of fallen soldiers, civilian deaths or destruction and occupation that might have taken place locally. It is through this work that people process ongoing events and produce **a shared vision of the future**, both of which are key for societal recovery. Consequently, the success of heritage-based recovery hinges on how **the intense wartime significance of diverse forms of heritage is captured and worked with in the shared production of future identities and political visions**.

Everyday heritage is therefore a vehicle for complex forms of care, which are put in train long before post-war reconstruction and recovery. The social aspects of this work are prominent, but there is also a strong sense that something more existential is at stake. This is particularly the case in de-occupied areas and those close to the frontlines where communities are displaced and the physical fabric of people's lives substantially destroyed. Here **everyday heritage work can play a key role in mending and repairing fractured ties and narratives of belonging, contributing to the continued existence of communities and the places they are associated with**.

[55] The Most Documented War. Center for Urban History, 2023. https://www.lvivcenter.org/en/conferences/the-most-documented-war-2/ The Most Documented War: Ethics and Practice of International Collaboration, Center for Urban History, 2024. https://www.lvivcenter.org/en/conferences/ethics-and-internatioinal-collaborations-2/ [Last accessed: 6 March 2025]

[56] Catalogue of Documenting Initiatives, https://mostdocumentedwar.org/en/ [Last accessed: 6 March 2025]

Abbreviations

ACURE – Agency for Cultural Resilience

AECID – Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation

AFU – Armed Forces of Ukraine

ALIPH – International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage (formerly: International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict areas)

BS – Blue Shield

BSI – Blue Shield International

CER – Cultural Emergency Response

CIMIC – Civil-Military Co-operation

CPM – Civil Protection Mechanism (of the European Union)

CPP – cultural property protection

CSO – civil society organisation

DPPCH – Department for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage (in MCSC)

EC – European Commission

EPR – Emergency Preparedness and Response unit (UNESCO)

EU – European Union

EU-ERCC – European Union Emergency Response Coordination Centre

EUAM – European Union Advisory Mission

EUDEL – European Union Delegation

HeMo – Heritage Monitoring Lab

HERI – Heritage Rescue Emergency Initiative

HC54 – Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954)

ICCROM – International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

ICOM – International Council of Museums

ICOMOS – International Council on Monuments and Sites

IGO – intergovernmental organisation

IHL – International Humanitarian Law

INGO – international non-governmental organisation

LOAC – Law of Armed Conflict (also known as International Humanitarian Law)

MCC – Museum Crisis Center

MCSC – Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communication, Ukraine

MDU – Ministry of Defense, Ukraine
NGO – non-governmental organisation
NRRC – National Research and Restoration Center of Ukraine
OECD – The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCSCU – Polish Centre to Support Culture in Ukraine
SAKO – State Archive of the Kyiv Oblast
SCRI – Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative
SUCHO – Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online
TDF – Territorial Defense Forces (Ukraine)
UN – United Nations
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO EPR – UNESCO Emergency Preparedness Unit
UNIM – Ukrainian Institute of National Memory
UNITAR – The United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNOSAT – The United Nations Satellite Centre
WMF – World Monument Fund

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Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (UNESCO, 1970), https://theblueshield.org/resources/law-library/treaty-law-and-the-1954-hague-convention/the-1970-convention-on-the-means-of-prohibiting-and-preventing-the-illicit-import-export-and-transfer-of-ownership-of-cultural-property/.

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Front cover (inside and outside)

The digitisation of personal archives gained importance during the war. Okhtyrka, December 2022. Photo © Natalia Khasanshin, from the archive of the Museum Crisis Center and the Territory of Terror Museum.

Destroyed Russian military vehicles displayed in Mykhailivksa square near the Princess Olha Monument in Kyiv, summer 2024. © Diána Vonnák

Back cover (inside and outside)

Wrapped up fragment of the Monument to the Military Glory of the USSR Armed Forces in the yard of the Territory of Terror Museum, Lviv, May 2022. The statue had been dismantled as part of the ongoing decommunisation process. © Natalia Khasanshin, from the archive of the the Territory of Terror Museum.

The damaged building of the Okhtyrka Museum of Local Lore, 2022, December. © Natalia Khasanshin, from the archive of the Museum Crisis Centre anf the Territory of Terror Museum.

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ISBN 9781908063687

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UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council

Cultural Heritage AND GLOBAL CHANGE

AGENCIA ESTATAL DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Universidad Rey Juan Carlos

NIKU Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research

Funded by The Research Council of Norway