

REPORT

on the Functioning of the National ICC Network in Ukraine in 2025

1. General Overview of the Functioning of the National ICC Network

In 2025, the national network of cities participating in the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme in Ukraine maintained its sustainability and operational capacity despite the challenges posed by martial law and limited institutional resources. Cooperation among the cities was based on a decentralised, flexible and project-oriented model, which was appropriate to the crisis context and the current challenges faced by local self-government bodies.

Communication and coordination among participating cities were carried out primarily through horizontal contacts, thematic working interactions and joint participation in events within the ICC Programme framework. In particular, eight working online meetings of local coordinators took place, including the participation of Rita Marascalchi, Head of the Intercultural Inclusion Unit of the Council of Europe, and Ben Freeman, Senior Project Officer at the Intercultural Inclusion Unit of the Council of Europe. This format enabled regular information exchange, mutual learning and continued engagement of cities in intercultural initiatives, despite staffing and resource constraints.

In their activities, participating cities relied on the established approaches and recommendations of the ICC Programme, particularly in the areas of intercultural dialogue, integration of internally displaced persons, prevention of discrimination and strengthening social cohesion in the context of war. This contributed to maintaining a shared value-based and conceptual foundation for the functioning of the national network.

The functioning of the network in 2025 was also characterised by a high level of responsibility demonstrated by individual cities which, despite difficult security and social conditions, continued to implement intercultural approaches within their communities. This made it possible to avoid an institutional pause in the network's activities and to ensure its continued practical presence within the national and international framework of the ICC Programme.

Information on the key intercultural activities implemented by cities of the Ukrainian national ICC network in 2025 is provided in **Annex 1**.

2. The ICC Intercity Grant as a Key Instrument in 2025

In 2025, the Intercity Grant of the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme became the key instrument for supporting intercity cooperation and maintaining the activity of the national ICC network in Ukraine. In the context of war and limited resources, this instrument provided a practical foundation for consolidating cities around a shared intercultural agenda.

The Intercity Grant was aimed at stimulating horizontal cooperation among cities, fostering mutual learning and implementing joint initiatives in line with the principles of the ICC Programme. In the Ukrainian context of 2025, this approach

proved particularly relevant, as it enabled cities not only to continue intercultural activities, but also to adapt them to a crisis context shaped by internal displacement, social tensions and the need to strengthen trust within communities.

In 2025, the city of Lutsk played a notable role in sustaining the activity and interaction of the national network of cities participating in the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme in Ukraine. This role was based on a combination of the institutional capacity of the municipal team, prior experience in the ICC Programme and the city's proactive stance in the development of intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. Lutsk served as a platform for intercity interaction without assuming formal coordination responsibilities, while ensuring the practical facilitation of cooperation processes.

During the reporting year, the city initiated and hosted key activities aimed at facilitating experience-sharing among Ukrainian cities participating in the ICC Programme, engaging international partners and promoting intercultural approaches at the local level. Holding events in Lutsk provided a safe space for professional dialogue, joint analysis of challenges and the development of solutions in the areas of integration, non-discrimination and diversity management.

The role of Lutsk in supporting horizontal links between cities operating under different security, social and demographic conditions was of particular importance. Through joint activities, exchanges and consultations, the city contributed to fostering an atmosphere of mutual trust, solidarity and partnership — core values of the ICC Programme.

3. Project “Cities of Reciprocity: Integration through Intercultural Dialogue”

3.1. Partnership and Cooperation Logic

The project was implemented within the framework of the ICC Intercity Grant and was based on a tripartite partnership between the cities of Lutsk (Ukraine), Lublin (Republic of Poland) and Pavlohrad (Ukraine). The partnership brought together cities with diverse social, historical and security contexts, creating added value for mutual learning and exchange.

Lutsk acted as the project lead and was responsible for coordination, communication with the ICC Programme and ensuring that project activities were aligned with the values of the Council of Europe. Lublin provided a European dimension and an expert perspective, while Pavlohrad contributed practical experience in working with communities under heightened security risks.

3.2. Project Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of the project was to strengthen the capacity of cities participating in the ICC Programme to implement intercultural approaches to integration and social cohesion in the context of war.

The project objectives included enhancing intercity cooperation, supporting municipal teams in working with diversity, creating safe spaces for intercultural dialogue, strengthening the role of cities as agents of social cohesion, and increasing the visibility of the principles of the ICC Programme within the Ukrainian context.

3.3. Key Activities and Implementation Formats

The implementation of the project was based on intercity meetings, expert sessions, mutual learning formats and public dialogues. The main activities were held in Lutsk, which served as a safe space for systematic intercity interaction.

A list of key activities and formats, as well as photo and information materials, is provided in **Annex 2**.

4. Project Impact on the National ICC Network

The “Cities of Reciprocity” project became a key factor in supporting and consolidating the national ICC network in 2025. Its implementation contributed to strengthening horizontal interaction among cities, preserving the integrity of the network in the context of war, expanding the professional competencies of participants and laying the groundwork for future initiatives.

The project also helped to reinforce trust, solidarity and shared values, which are fundamental to the sustainable development of intercultural practices within the framework of the ICC Programme.

The experience of the functioning of the national ICC network in Ukraine in 2025 demonstrated that even under wartime challenges, the network is capable of maintaining activity and achieving practical results, relying on city leadership, solidarity and project-oriented cooperation. At the same time, this experience clearly highlighted the need for further strengthening the institutional capacity of the network to ensure its sustainable development in the future.

Annex I

City of Lutsk

1. Implemented Grant Projects:

“Library for All: Creation and Development of an Inclusive Public
<https://www.lutskrada.gov.ua/publications/u-lutsku-vidkryly-inkliuzyvnyi-hromadsky-i-prostir-v-mezhakh-proiektu-biblioteka-dlia-vsikh/>

November 2024 – May 2025

The project was implemented within the framework of the grant competition “Partnerships for Recovery” of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with financial support from the Government of Sweden (Sida). Implementation was carried out by the Department of Culture of the Lutsk City Council, in partnership with the NGO “Perspektyvy Volyni” and the Municipal Institution “Public Library of the Lutsk City Territorial Community.”

The aim of the project was to create an accessible and inclusive public space for community residents, in particular war veterans, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, representatives of national minorities and elderly people.

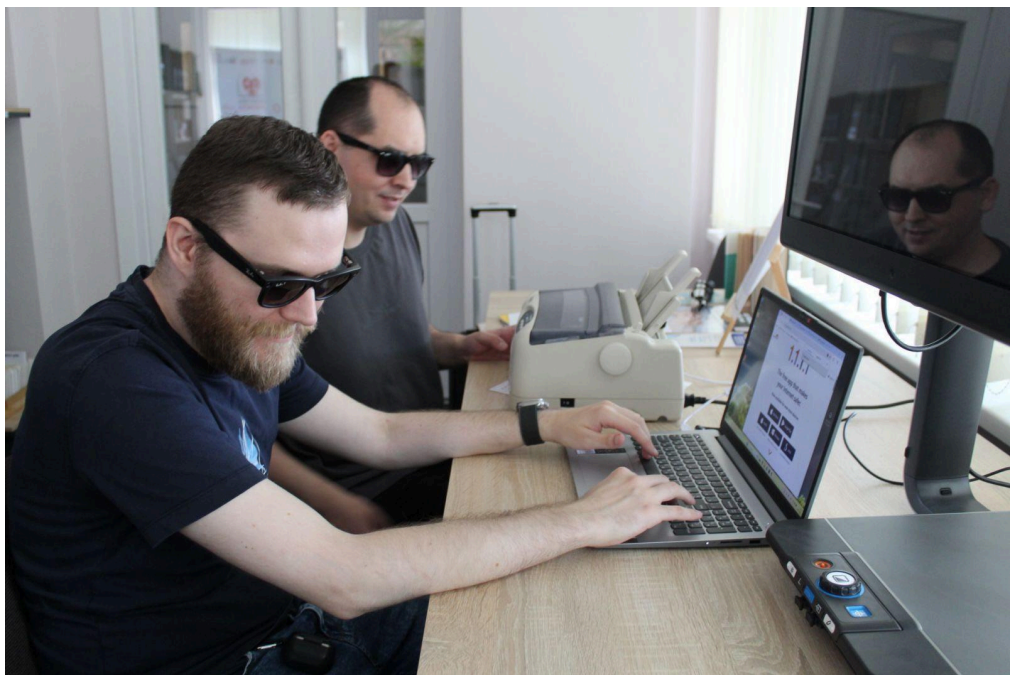
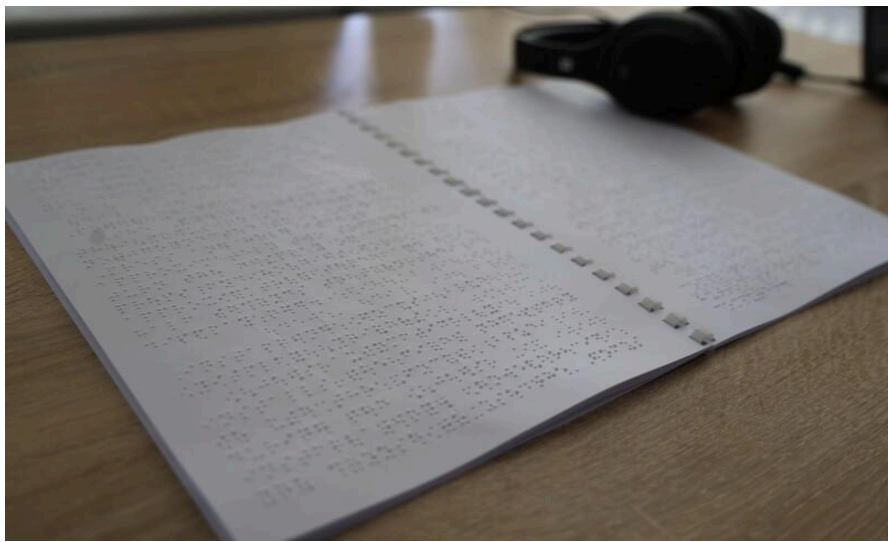
Within the framework of the project:

- specialised equipment for people with visual and hearing impairments was procured;
- the premises were modernised, including the installation of a ramp;
- inclusive zones for learning and development were created;
- 25 training and cultural-social activities were conducted, involving internally displaced persons and representatives of national minorities.

On 19 May 2025, the inclusive space “Library for All” was officially opened. The Lutsk Public Library became the first in the region to offer a comprehensive set of technical solutions ensuring inclusivity.

Grant amount: USD 32,000.





“Social and Educational Centres in Ukraine for IDPs / Roma IDP Children and Adolescents” (Phase II)

<https://chirikli.com.ua/news/cherven-2025-sotsialno-osvitni-tsentry-v-lutsku-odesi-t-a-kropyvnytskomu/>

<https://chirikli.com.ua/news/veresen-2025-sotsialno-osvitni-tsentry-v-lutsku-odesi-t-a-kropyvnytskomu/>

November 2024 – October 2025

The project was implemented at the Lutsk Art School, in partnership with the Department for Culture of Lutsk City Council and the International Charitable Foundation “Roma Women’s Fund ‘Chirikli’.”

The aim of the project was to support internally displaced children and Roma children aged 6–12 in improving their basic educational outcomes and psycho-emotional well-being through art therapy and cultural-educational activities.

Within the framework of the project:

- 30 children were reached;
- 46 activities were conducted (classes, excursions, competitions and cultural events);
- access to the city’s cultural institutions (theatres and museums) was ensured.

The project contributed to the social integration of children from vulnerable groups and to the development of intercultural interaction.





2. Other Intercultural Activities

28 January — Event marking the **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** “The Holocaust — Memory Without Oblivion,” Palace of Culture of the City of Lutsk.

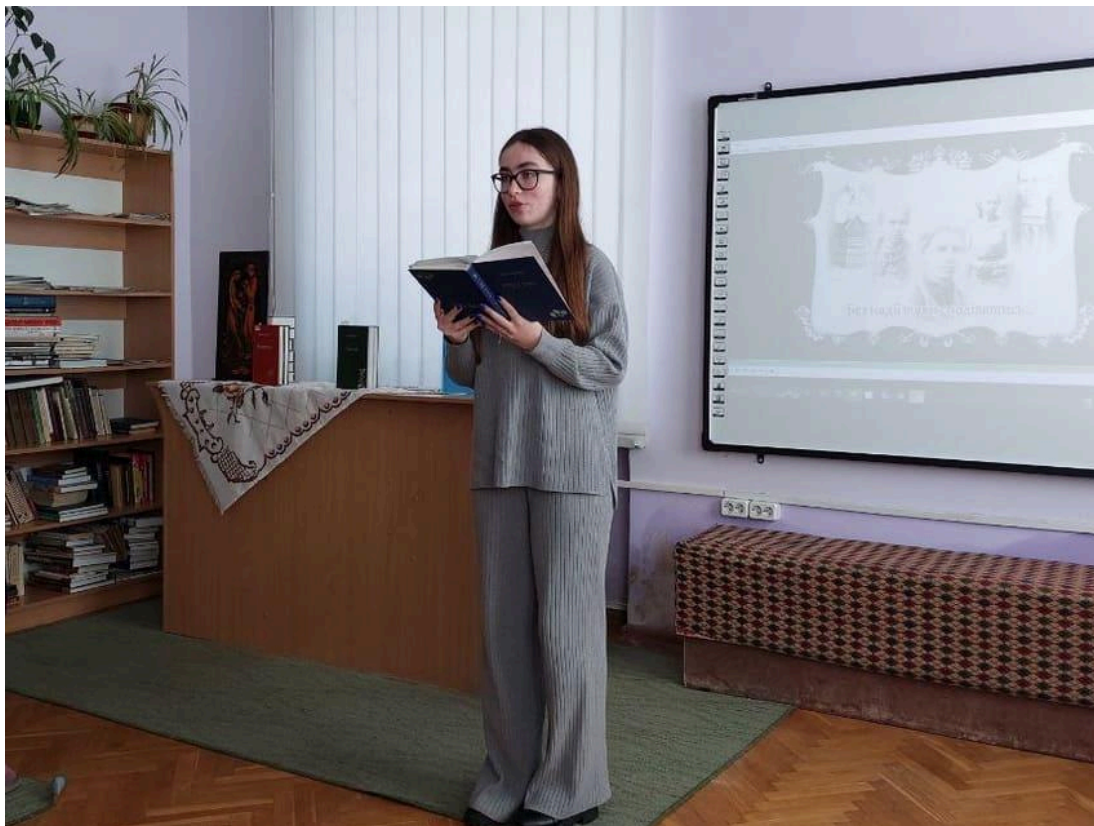
<https://www.lutskrada.gov.ua/publications/do-mizhnarodnoho-dnia-pam-iati-zhertv-holokostu-u-palatsi-kultury-mista-lutska-vidbuvsia-zakhid-holokost-pamiat-bez-zabuttia>

With the participation of representatives of the Progressive Judaism religious community, scholars, and local residents.



21 February — Event for International Mother Language Day
“*The Forest Song — Poetry That Unites,*” Branch Library No. 6.
<https://surl.li/twhrvp>

Reading of Lesya Ukrainka’s drama-fairy tale in multiple languages, with the participation of the community’s national and cultural societies.



21 May — Roundtable “Intercultural Dialogue as a Foundation for Community Harmony,” Lutsk City Palace of Culture.
<https://www.lutskrada.gov.ua/publications/interkulturni>

19.10.2024

Ден на национализмот
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ГОСТИНИЦИ ИЛИ
Училишта Претседател Училишта
или 27 ноември 2024 година
19.10.2024



19 September — Events marking the **10th Anniversary of the Socialists in Ukraine**
Germans of
<https://www.lutskrada.gov.ua/publications/u-lutsku-vidkryly-vystavku-robit-manipulatsiyi-vid-nimetskoho-pokhodzhennia-z-nahody-10-richchia-tovarystva-nimtsiv-volyni>

Opening of an exhibition of German decorative and applied arts and a concert of German music at the Lutheran Church. The event highlighted the city's European and multicultural heritage.





31 October — Forum of the Czech National Minority “*Czechs of Ukraine in the European Home*,” Lutsk Business Space

<https://www.lutskrada.gov.ua/publications/forum-cheskoi-natsionalnoi-menshyny>

Organized by the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience. The forum brought together representatives of Czech communities in Ukraine, the diplomatic corps of the Czech Republic, government authorities, and civil society. The discussion focused on the role of the Czech community in Ukraine’s European integration processes.



10 December 2025 — Roundtable “*Partnership That Transforms Communities: 2025 Review and Plans for 2026*” in Lutsk, within the framework of the Council of Europe project “Supporting the Reform of the Legal Framework on National Minorities and Strengthening the Resilience of National Minorities and Roma in Ukraine — Phase II.” <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CbVg8Raic/>

The event aimed to strengthen intercultural dialogue and partnership between representatives of national communities, local self-government bodies, and civil society organizations, while reviewing activities conducted in 2025 and identifying priorities for 2026. The roundtable served as an important platform for constructive dialogue, where participants jointly outlined a vision for future work focused on promoting mutual understanding, supporting communities, and reinforcing social cohesion within the community.



16 December — A one-day media literacy training for youth was held at the Palace of Culture of Lutsk, focusing on hate speech and its impact on society, intercultural relations, and community safety. The event took place within the framework of the Council of Europe project “Supporting the Reform of the Legal Framework on National Minorities and Strengthening the Resilience of National Minorities and Roma in Ukraine — Phase II.”
<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/195qNZnQHK/>

The training was conducted by Olga Bulkowska, journalist, fact-checker, and Coordinator of the WestMediaForum.

Participants acquired practical skills in identifying hate speech, understanding manipulation, and engaging in responsible communication in a multicultural environment. Young people developed safe and effective ways of responding to hate

speech and created their own mini-campaigns aimed at overcoming prejudice and promoting intercultural dialogue. This enabled participants to better understand their role and impact in fostering a tolerant, inclusive, and diversity-respecting environment within the community.





City of Pavlohrad

In 2025, the city of Pavlohrad implemented intercultural activities amid ongoing security threats related to the war. Despite the challenging context, the community maintained its engagement within the framework of the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme, focusing on supporting intercultural dialogue, involving national communities, and engaging internally displaced persons.

During the reporting year, the Roma community was the most active in intercultural initiatives. In 2024, the NGO "Bakhtale Roma" was established in the city, whose representatives became regular participants in social, cultural, and intercultural events in 2025.

Key Intercultural Activities

8 April — International Romani Day

An exhibition titled "Bakhtale Roma" was opened at the Pavlohrad Historical and Local History Museum, dedicated to the history, culture, traditions, and tragic episodes of the Roma community, which has deep roots in the region.
<https://new.xn--80aafeg3bveo.dp.ua/110147/>

Simultaneously, a children's drawing contest "Roma Among Us" was held across educational institutions. The winners were awarded during a charity concert dedicated to Romani Culture Day.





April — International Youth Mobility

With the support of the city of Siegen (Germany) and the “Europe – Shelter” Programme, a cultural and educational trip for young people from Pavlohrad to Siegen was organized, aimed at intercultural exchange and European learning.

21 May — Day of Interethnic Harmony and Cultural Diversity

An event “Artistic Circle of Diversity” was held at the Central City Library, with the participation of representatives from local government, cultural and educational institutions, national communities, and internally displaced persons. The event aimed to strengthen social cohesion and promote intercultural dialogue within the community. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1349834236305240>





2 August — International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Roma Genocide

The Roma community of the city commemorated the victims of the Nazi genocide of the Roma people during World War II.





Participation in an ICC Intercity Project

In 2025, Pavlohrad joined the implementation of the Council of Europe project “Cities of Reciprocity: Integration through Intercultural Dialogue,” carried out within the framework of the ICC Programme by the Department of Culture of the Luts'k City Council in partnership with the intercultural cities of Lublin (Poland) and Pavlohrad, with funding from the Council of Europe.

<https://pavlogradmrada.dp.gov.ua/news/pavlogradi-vidbuvsya-kruglijj-stil-v-mezhakh-programi-radi-ehvropi-interkulturni-mista.html>

Participation in the project contributed to:

- Integrating Pavlohrad into intercity experience-sharing formats;
- Strengthening the community’s capacity to work on intercultural issues in a crisis context;
- Integrating local initiatives into a broader national and European intercultural discourse.

<https://pavlogradmrada.dp.gov.ua/news/vidbuvsya-zavershalnijj-zakhid-u-ramakh-realizaci%d1%97-proehktu-mista-vzaehmnosti-integraciya-cherez-mizhkulturnijj->

[dialog-v-mezhakh-mizhmiskikh-grantiv-programi-radi-ehvropi-interkulturni-mista-i.html](https://pavlogradmrada.dp.gov.ua/news/u-misti-pavlogradi-prodovzhuehtsya-r-ealizaciya-proehktu-mista-vzaehmnosti-integraciya-cherez-mizhkulturnij-dialog.html)

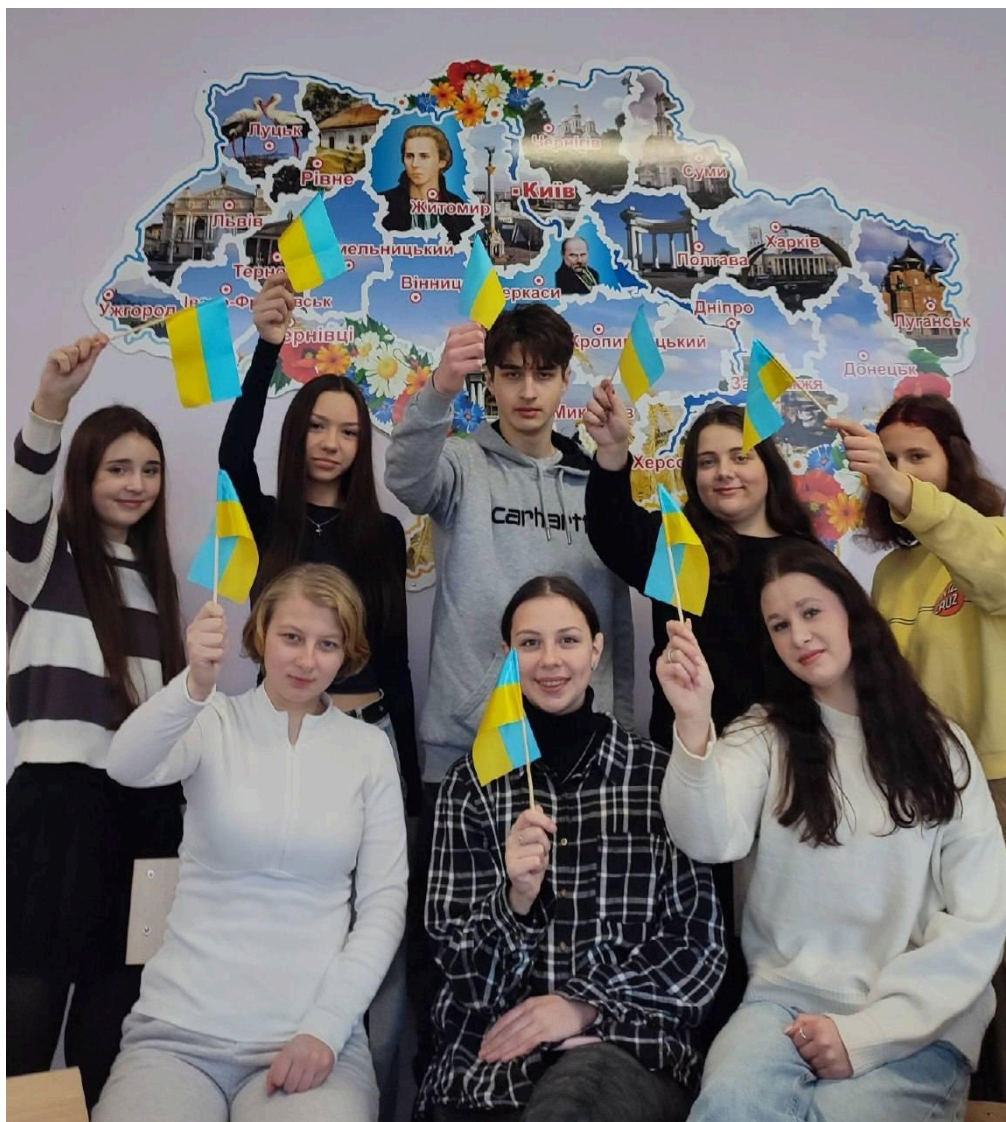
<https://pavlogradmrada.dp.gov.ua/news/u-misti-pavlogradi-prodovzhuehtsya-r-ealizaciya-proehktu-mista-vzaehmnosti-integraciya-cherez-mizhkulturnij-dialog.html>





Educational Initiatives

Throughout the year, the Euroclub “Europe Plus” operated at Lyceum No. 17 of the Pavlohrad City Council. Members of the Euroclub organized Euro-quests, educational games, workshops, and other learning activities for the students, aimed at promoting European values, intercultural dialogue, and active citizenship.



The experience of Pavlohrad in 2025 demonstrated that, even under heightened security risks, the community is capable of maintaining intercultural activity, engaging national communities and youth, and actively participating in intercity initiatives of the ICC Programme.

City of Sumy

Intercultural policy is one of the key instruments for strengthening social cohesion, fostering mutual respect, and promoting effective interaction among residents of the Sumy community with diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds. In the context of the full-scale war, internal displacement, and growing diversity within the community, its implementation has become particularly relevant.

Throughout 2025, Sumy continued systematic work on developing an intercultural approach, focusing on promoting inclusivity, non-discrimination, intercultural dialogue, and engaging various population groups in community life.

Cultural, educational, healthcare, and social protection institutions, among others, consistently organize events within the community involving representatives of national minorities (communities).



Sumy joined the project “CITIES OF RECIPROCITY: Integration through Intercultural Dialogue” under the Council of Europe ICC Programme, initiated by the City Council.

<https://smr.gov.ua/uk/novini/podiji/34348-sumi-doluchilisya-do-mizhnarodnogo-interkulturnogo-proektu.html>



21 May — According to the decree of the President of Ukraine, the Day of Interethnic Harmony and Cultural Diversity was celebrated for the first time. The day aims to unite Ukrainian society, protect the rights of national minorities and indigenous peoples of Ukraine, and honor their contribution to the country's ethnocultural richness.

On this occasion, a meeting of the Council of National Communities of the Sumy Region was held:

- The meeting discussed the state of protection of the rights of national minorities, results of the implementation of recommendations from the Special Report of the Commissioner on ensuring the rights of national minorities under conditions of armed aggression, and issues related to the active participation of communities in the media space.

- Special attention was given to the importance of systematic monitoring of cases of discrimination and hate speech, strengthening intercultural dialogue, and proper communication about the activities of national communities.

A representative of the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting also conducted a meeting with national communities.



19 September — At one of the libraries in Sumy, a regular meeting of the Council of Nationalities of the Sumy Region took place. Participants discussed current issues and future plans for their activities.
<https://smr.gov.ua/uk/novini/podiji/34937-u-sumakh-vidbulosia-zasidannia-rady-natsionalnostei-za-uchastiu-fakhivchyni-upravlinnia-suspilnykh-komunikatsii.html>



The implementation of a project aimed at expanding the integration capacities of the Roma community in the Sumy community continues.

The Roma community in Sumy is an active and effective part of the multicultural community. Mykola Moskaliov, Head of the NGO “*Roma National Association of the Sumy Region*”, and Olha Mikhailenko, Head of the NGO “*Roma Women’s Congress ‘Manusha’*”, serve as the voices of the Roma community. They consistently draw attention to the need to ensure the rights, freedoms, and lawful interests of the community.

In March, a roundtable was held on the implementation of the action plan of the Strategy to Promote the Rights and Opportunities of Roma Persons.

Three main topics were identified:

1. Expanding access of Roma to quality education;
2. Expanding access of Roma to healthcare services;
3. Ensuring employment and improving the level of Roma workforce participation.



Representatives of Roma community organizations participated in the “Human Rights Protection in Sumy Region” Forum.



Events were held to mark the International Romani Day.



2 August — Events were held to mark the International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Roma Holocaust during World War II. The Roma flag was raised at the central square of Sumy. Representatives of the Roma community, as well as officials from the Sumy Regional State Administration and the Sumy City Council, gathered near the war memorial to honor the victims. <https://lnk.ua/2V5g9604M>



A Roma Educational Center was opened in Sumy. Its activities are aimed at preparing preschool children for school, addressing educational gaps for school-aged children, as well as providing learning opportunities for the older generation. <https://smr.gov.ua/uk/novini/podiji/34966-u-sumakh-vidkryly-romskyi-osvitnii-tsentr.html>



Information meetings are held with representatives of the Roma community at the Roma Educational Center.

The main topics of discussion include: changes in the social protection system, applying for subsidies, conditions and procedures for receiving state assistance for families with children and low-income households, provision of aid for internally displaced persons, procedures for receiving care allowances on a non-professional basis, and other related issues.



The “Hunting for Fakes” Quest — a media literacy training through gameplay — was held at the Roma Children’s Educational Center.
<https://webportal.nrada.gov.ua/novyny-natsionalnoyi-rady-z-regioniv-19/>



An inclusion training on age, gender, and disability was conducted, with activists from two Roma organizations as participants and active contributors.

Training topics included:

- The National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Environment in Ukraine and key areas of accessibility;
- “What is Inclusion?” — understanding the concept of inclusion;
- The evolution of societal attitudes toward diversity;
- The concept of “Disability” and “Person with a Disability”, including correct terminology;
- How to communicate appropriately with people with disabilities.



The city celebrates festivals and ceremonial events of national communities.





Libraries and public spaces host exhibitions, screenings, thematic displays, and stands dedicated to representatives of national minorities (communities) and indigenous peoples of Ukraine. Events were held to mark the International Day for Cultural Diversity.

Relevant clubs and groups continue to operate at libraries, providing ongoing educational and cultural activities.





City of Vinnytsia

On **10 December 2025**, a roundtable titled “Rule of Law and the Citizen: Principles of Interaction and Responsibility” was held in the reading hall of the Legal Information Sector of the Department of Modern Technologies, Economic and Legal Sciences at the Vinnytsia Regional Universal Scientific Library named after V. Otamanovsky. The event was organized as part of the All-Ukrainian Law Week.

<https://surl.li/wmlovh>

The purpose of the event was to discuss current issues of legal awareness, civic responsibility, and human rights compliance, as well as the role of state institutions, civil society, and social services in fostering a culture of lawfulness under modern challenges. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/386759542730884>

During the roundtable, reports were presented and discussed on the following topics: prevention of domestic violence among youth and the role of education in developing legal awareness; support for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the development of inclusive communities; the current state of human rights compliance in Ukraine, particularly in the field of inheritance law; and human rights challenges and the role of social services in addressing them. Special attention was given to the practical aspects of human rights implementation, cross-sectoral cooperation, and the need to strengthen legal culture at the local level.

As a coordinator for national minorities, I had the opportunity to share information about the situation and needs of Roma communities, particularly in the context of implementing the Strategy to Promote the Rights and Opportunities of Persons Belonging to the Roma National Minority. Specific attention was paid to cross-sectoral cooperation and access of Roma communities to social, educational, and legal services. Information was also presented on the support provided to other national communities residing in the area and the importance of a systemic, inclusive

approach to ensuring minority rights, fostering dialogue, and enhancing social cohesion.

The outcomes of the event emphasized the importance of such discussion platforms as an effective tool for raising citizens' legal awareness and developing partnerships between authorities, experts, and the public.



On **10 November 2025**, an Intercultural Day was held in the general secondary education institutions of the Vinnytsia City Territorial Community.

<https://surl.li/ymslmv>

The event aimed to foster an understanding that cultural diversity and positive interaction between representatives of different cultures are important assets of modern society. Throughout the day, schools organized activities to promote tolerance, mutual respect, openness to dialogue, and acceptance of cultural differences.

As part of Intercultural Day, thematic discussion sessions were held, during which students learned about the concept of interculturality, explored the customs, traditions, languages, and cultural characteristics of various countries and peoples, and discussed the importance of intercultural dialogue, overcoming stereotypes, and adopting a non-discriminatory approach in communication.

Dialogue platforms were also organized, creating a space for open exchange of ideas, development of communication skills, and fostering mutual understanding among students.

To enhance student engagement, interactive formats were widely used, including quests, quizzes, presentations, and creative assignments. Students had the opportunity to present the culture of different countries through music, national traditions, art elements, and symbols, which helped broaden their worldview and deepen their understanding of global cultural diversity.

Overall, 19,069 students from Vinnytsia City's general secondary schools participated in the activities. The celebration of Intercultural Day demonstrated the importance of systematic work in fostering a culture of dialogue, tolerance, and mutual respect among young people, serving as an effective tool for educating conscious, open-minded, and responsible citizens in a multicultural society.



