



RESILIENCE, COMMITMENT, SOLIDARITY

Consequences of the armed aggression
by the Russian Federation on the
Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe
in Ukraine



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REPORT

Resilience, Commitment, Solidarity:
Consequences of the Armed Aggression
by the Russian Federation on the
Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in Ukraine
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1. Executive Summary

This study was commissioned by the programme of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and the European Institute of Cultural Routes to assess the impact of the armed aggression by the Russian Federation on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in Ukraine, with a particular focus on the resilience, adaptability, and continued development of the programme under conditions of ongoing conflict. Following a call for consultants, the study was carried out between January and March 2026 and presented to the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in May 2026.

Despite severe security, infrastructural, and institutional challenges, Ukraine has not only maintained its participation in the Cultural Routes programme but has significantly expanded it – from three routes in 2021 to thirteen at present. This growth highlights both the strong commitment of Ukrainian stakeholders and the relevance of the programme as a tool for cultural cooperation, solidarity, and European integration.

The findings demonstrate that while the Cultural Routes have proven resilient, their sustainability is affected by the ongoing security situation, including regular missile and drone attacks, as well as by structural challenges such as the absence of a national coordination mechanism, institutional fragmentation between culture and tourism governance, and limited access to funding and international horizontal partnerships among members of each route. Communication has become extremely challenging for Ukrainian partners under these circumstances.

The study underscores that the continuity of Cultural Routes in Ukraine largely depends on highly committed individuals, creating risks for long-term sustainability. Approximately half of the route partners in Ukraine continue to operate within the domestic tourism market, while others have suspended their activities. At the same time, those who have managed to continue their work demonstrate strong dedication, actively engaging in international cooperation despite significant logistical and security constraints.

In this context, the Council of Europe—through the European Institute of Cultural Routes—can adopt a more proactive approach, including support for the establishment of a national coordination mechanism, the expansion of partner networks, targeted capacity-building, improved access to European programmes, enhanced visibility of certified routes, and the development of a flexible crisis response framework.

Strengthening these areas will not only ensure the resilience of Cultural Routes in Ukraine but also reinforce their role as platforms for dialogue, cooperation, and shared European values. The ongoing armed aggression should not hinder engagement, but rather serve as a catalyst for deeper integration of Ukraine into the European cultural space as an equal and active partner.

2. Introduction

Ukraine officially joined the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA) in 2021, marking a significant step in its integration into the European cultural space. However, the armed aggression by the Russian Federation in February 2022 posed a serious threat to these achievements.

The response of the Cultural Routes network to the military threat in Ukraine was initially humanitarian and later institutional, enabling Ukraine not only to maintain its participation in the programme but also to expand it considerably. At the time of joining in 2021, the country was involved in three routes; today, this number has grown to thirteen, all of which continue to operate despite the ongoing threat of drone and missile attacks across all regions. This expansion demonstrates both the resilience of the programme and its essential role in supporting cultural heritage and fostering international cooperation, even under conditions of armed conflict. It represents a unique experience for the programme, one that is hoped to remain exceptional.

In 2023, the Council of Europe established the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The register documents all eligible claims for compensation for damage, loss, and injury resulting from the aggression, providing a key mechanism to seek reparation under international law.

The purpose of this study is not to document the scale of cultural losses, which are recorded in the Register, but to assess the impact of the Russian Federation's armed aggression on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in Ukraine. Particular attention is given to how route representatives in Ukraine have managed to maintain and, in some cases, further develop these routes under ongoing conflict. The study aims to capture the perspectives and experiences of those directly involved, providing insight into the operational, social, and institutional challenges posed by the armed aggression.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted online with key stakeholders. Efforts were made to engage both representatives of the European Cultural Routes networks and their Ukrainian partners, in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the Russian armed aggression. Desk research complemented the interviews and included a review of publicly available information to verify the current status of the routes in Ukraine.

The interviews were conducted between January and March 2026, coinciding with the fourth anniversary of the Russian aggression. During this period, ongoing attacks on Ukraine's electricity infrastructure caused significant power shortages, which complicated communication with Ukrainian partners. Some participants were temporarily unreachable due to lack of internet access, and arranging interviews required additional time. To mitigate these challenges, several interviews were conducted via mobile phone. The interviews lasted on

average 30 minutes and were semi- structured, allowing for flexible discussion of the key topics. The interviews focused on three main areas:

- The current status and functioning of cultural routes in Ukraine;
- Direct and indirect impacts of the Russian armed aggression on route stakeholders, institutions, and local communities;
- Expectations, needs, and priorities of Ukrainian partners for the future development and resilience of cultural routes.

Participants were selected based on their involvement in the Cultural Routes programme in Ukraine. All participants provided informed consent, and their responses were treated confidentially in accordance with standard ethical practices.

This methodology ensured a rigorous and ethically sound collection of qualitative evidence, providing a solid basis for assessing the consequences of armed aggression through the “voices” of those who have maintained and developed Cultural Routes in Ukraine over the past four years. A symbolic milestone in the programme’s development was Ukraine’s inclusion in the Viking Route during the preparation of this study, which best illustrates the programme’s resilience.

The study is structured to present an overview of the Cultural Routes prior to February 2022, evaluate the current state of the programme, and analyse both the direct and indirect consequences for routes, stakeholders, and institutions. The findings are framed within the broader context of cultural heritage protection and promotion in Ukraine, taking into account the needs and expectations of route participants and civil society more broadly. The conclusions aim to deepen understanding of the effectiveness of international support mechanisms and to provide recommendations for further cooperation within the Cultural Routes programme and other Council of Europe initiatives.

3. The Cultural Routes Programme in Ukraine Before February 2022: Institutional Framework and Activities

Engagement of Ukraine with the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes programme began well before formal accession, reflecting both institutional interest and grassroots initiatives. Initial contacts with the network were through Via Regia, dating back to 2004–2005, led by Dr. Jürgen Fischer, the founder of the initiative, whose vision included extending the route eastwards to Kyiv and integrating Ukraine into a European cultural network. Ukrainian partners were actively involved from the outset, contributing to co-founding activities and laying the groundwork for future participation.

Parallel to Via Regia, Ukraine developed early ties with the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH), reflecting the country's long-standing industrial traditions. Sites in the Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Dnipro regions were identified as key industrial heritage assets and were integrated into the European network; unfortunately, some of these sites are now under Russian occupation, and are no longer active members. By 2018, only five ERIH sites in Ukraine, particularly in the city Kryvyi Rih were actively participating in projects and pilot initiatives showcasing industrial heritage tourism and transnational collaboration. Today, ERIH experts continue to support Ukrainian partners by contributing to the development of the Experts' Group for Cultural Heritage of the European Commission, helping to shape recommendations on safeguarding cultural heritage in Ukraine.

The European Mozart Ways (EMW) route also attracted Ukrainian attention before 2022. The LvivMozArt International Festival, first held in 2017, initiated informal cooperation with the EMW network and laid the foundation for cultural and musical exchanges across Europe. These early engagements and membership in 2019 helped to strengthen local expertise, establish European connections, and position Lviv as a cultural hub in line with the programme's heritage and tourism objectives.

Institutional interest in Ukraine was reinforced by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sport, which actively promoted integration into European networks. Practical steps included dissemination of guidance documents such as the *Handbook on Local and Regional Participation in European Cultural Routes* (2018, <https://decentralization.ua/uploads/library/file/343/Posibnyk.pdf>) and promotional materials highlighting the benefits of European Cultural Routes for heritage preservation, local development, and tourism (<https://rm.coe.int/eicr-coe-leaflet-ukr-june2019-web-01/168098232c>). These materials demonstrated official recognition and strategic interest in aligning Ukraine's cultural infrastructure with the Council of Europe framework.

All preparatory efforts culminated in formal accession. On 26 March 2021, the Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the Council of Europe officially informed the Secretary General,

Marija Pejčinović Burić, of Ukraine's accession to the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA), effective from 30 March 2021. The accession ceremony was held within the 10th Annual Advisory Forum of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in Kutaisi, Georgia, in September 2021, symbolising the culmination of over a decade of preparatory engagement and strategic planning.

Following Ukraine's formal accession in 2021 and prior to the full-scale Russian armed invasion, the country's participation in the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes programme continued to expand. In addition to the existing routes – Via Regia, European Route of Mozart Ways, and European Route of Industrial Heritage – two new Cultural Routes formally integrated Ukrainian partners after 2021: the European Route of Jewish Heritage and the Phoenicians' Route. Their inclusion strengthened Ukraine's presence in thematic networks, promoted intercultural dialogue, and created additional opportunities for heritage-based tourism and international cooperation ahead of 2022.

4. Cultural Routes in Ukraine After February 2022: Case Studies

4.1 Réseau Art Nouveau Network (RANN)

4.1.1 Current Situation of the Network and Main Partners

The [Réseau Art Nouveau Network](#) is a long-established European cultural route created in 1999, bringing together cities and institutions committed to the protection, study and promotion of Art Nouveau heritage. Over the years, the Network has grown into a consortium of more than thirty members, many of whom have been involved for decades. This long-term cooperation has created not only a professional platform, but also a sense of community, where heritage preservation, cultural exchange and tourism development are closely linked. In 2014, the RANN became a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.

Before the full-scale war, the Network had already established contacts with Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv, and had explored possibilities for closer cooperation. However, after the outbreak of the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine, the Network made a conscious decision to intensify its engagement and demonstrate solidarity in a concrete way. One of the main challenges was the relatively high membership fee, which made standard accession impossible for Ukrainian institutions under wartime conditions. As a result, the Network actively searched for a solution that would allow a Ukrainian partner to join without financial barriers. This led to the decision to welcome Lviv and its Heritage Bureau as an honorary member, based on the clear evidence that, despite the war, the institution continued to work actively on heritage protection and public engagement (<https://www.artnouveau-net.eu/lviv-heritage-bureau/>).

In 2023, the city of Lviv joined the RANN, which is dedicated to studying and promoting the heritage of Art Nouveau. This means that Lviv got a platform for promoting its Art Nouveau heritage at the international level and, together with European partners, will implement the project “Art Nouveau: A New Eurotopia. How the Past Can Be a Bridge to a Sustainable Future” until 2027. The project is supported by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission.

For the Ukrainian partners, being part of a European Cultural Route is now perceived as belonging to a shared European cultural space: *“The understanding that we are in one common information and cultural space... to realise that we are part of Europe”* and other quote of interviewee *“People still discover that Ukraine has heritage. Many imagine only ruins.”*

4.1.2 The Impact of the War

The impact of the armed aggression on the Lviv partner of RANN is therefore not abstract, but very tangible and human. While the Art Nouveau heritage in Lviv has not, so far, suffered major physical damage, the war has had a profound effect on institutional capacity and human resources, for example: *“From a restoration workshop of eight people, only two remained.”*

Nevertheless, the Heritage Bureau has continued its activities with remarkable commitment, but under extremely difficult conditions. The workload is concentrated on very few people, often young professionals who are required to combine strategic leadership, project management, reporting and international representation. This situation inevitably affects communication, coordination and the ability to fully meet the administrative requirements of European-funded projects, even though the quality of the actual heritage work remains very high.

Within the framework of the Creative Europe project, the Network and its Ukrainian partner adapted the project objectives to the realities of war. One of the measures was the development of a heritage database documenting Art Nouveau buildings and elements in Lviv. Originally conceived as a research and documentation tool, the database evolved into a broader mechanism for recording and safeguarding knowledge about local heritage, with the explicit understanding that such documentation could become crucial in the event of destruction or damage. This shift reflects a wider change in priorities: from long-term enhancement to urgent protection through knowledge preservation. In addition, an online photo album entitled “LVIV: ARCHITECTURE — ART NOUVEAU STYLE” is available, providing visual documentation of the recorded heritage (https://spadshchyna.lviv.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/lviv_ar_nuvo_small_resolution.pdf).

One of the buildings combining Art Nouveau, Historicism, and Folk Architecture styles — the “Sunny Villa” — was destroyed as a result of a Russian missile strike on 4 September 2024. In total, approximately 188 buildings in Lviv were damaged, including at least seven local architectural landmarks and numerous historically significant buildings located within the UNESCO-listed historic zone and its buffer area. Among them was the “Sunny Villa”.

At the same time, promotion and public engagement did not stop. On the contrary, the Heritage Bureau continued to organise guided tours, awareness-raising activities and collaborations with academic institutions, such as the Lviv Polytechnic University, demonstrating that heritage protection during wartime also serves as a form of civic resilience. A particularly strong example of solidarity was the organisation of a summer school in Lviv, where young restorers were able to work directly on heritage objects (<https://spadshchyna.lviv.ua/en/summer-school-of-restoration-in-lviv-stories-people-and-a-touch-of-the-citys-history-2/>) and winter Restoration school dedicated to an early 20th-century wooden gate (<https://spadshchyna.lviv.ua/en/restoration-school-dedicated-to-an-early-20th-century-wooden-gate/>). These initiatives proved to be highly effective, as it combined professional training, paid employment and concrete conservation work, all at relatively low cost (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/heritage-bureau-in-lviv/>). The success of initiatives has led to plans for a next edition, with the ambition to involve students from other Ukrainian regions.

The war has also significantly affected participation in international meetings and forums. Ukrainian representatives often face long and exhausting journeys by land, making attendance uncertain and sometimes impossible. Even when participation is achieved, the conditions are

far from equal. There were cases where Ukrainian representatives had only minimal time to present their work, despite the effort and cost required to travel. This highlights another indirect impact of the war: reduced opportunities for visibility, exchange and leadership within international cultural frameworks.

The city authorities also continue to support cultural heritage sites, including Art Nouveau buildings, through the implementation of a co-financing programme entitled “Programme for Repair and Restoration Works of Balconies in Buildings Designated as Cultural Heritage Monuments” of the Lviv City Council. The programme was implemented by RANN partner, the Municipal Enterprise “Lviv Heritage Bureau.” Under the programme, 80% of the cost of restoration works was covered by the city, while the remaining 20% was paid by the residents (<https://www.uois.lviv.ua/category/prohramy/>).

Public funding for restoration during the ongoing war has collapsed:

- from approx. UAH 48 million annually in 2021 to UAH 1,2 million in recent years (budget figures cited by the Ukrainian partner). External funding remains limited and project-based.

And the indirect effects are substantial:

- slowed or halted restoration due to bureaucratic constraints;
- inability to efficiently absorb donor funding;
- increasing administrative burden during wartime.

As the interviewee noted: *“About one third of the restoration time is spent on collecting papers.”*

4.1.3 Expectations and Needs

From the perspective of the Network, Ukrainian members today need, above all, continuity, flexibility and human support. Financial assistance alone is not sufficient if institutions lack the staff capacity to manage projects, reporting and international coordination. There is a clear need for additional support mechanisms that take into account wartime realities, including flexible timelines, adapted expectations and support for strengthening teams on the ground. Representatives of the RANN in Brussels fully acknowledge the challenges faced by the Heritage Bureau in Lviv and express strong support for its continued and expanded involvement within the Network. The Heritage Bureau is regarded as a partner for the next phase of the project “Art Nouveau: A New Eurotopia”, planned for 2027, reflecting confidence in its expertise and long-term commitment to heritage protection and promotion. At the same time, RANN underlines the importance of strengthening communication and ensuring full compliance with the European Commission’s reporting requirements.

In parallel, RANN plans to submit an application in 2026 for a small-scale Creative Europe project in cooperation with two other cultural routes. Within this initiative, RANN will act as a partner in

a consortium. The main objective of the project is to design and implement mediation activities, with a focus on capacity building and professional development for Network members. The planned activities include training sessions, workshops, and practical ateliers dedicated to mediation practices. The team of the Heritage Bureau in Lviv, including the project leader, Stefaniya Topylko, will be invited to actively participate in these activities and attend project meetings.

Based on the interview, the Ukrainian partner identified the following areas of support:

1. Simplified funding mechanisms for restoration and heritage-related interventions under wartime conditions. This primarily depends on Ukrainian authorities; however, European partners could provide advocacy support to encourage the creation of professional associations, particularly organisations representing the interests of restorers. As the interviewee noted: *"We lack a professional association that speaks the language of restorers, not developers."*
2. Capacity-building and training, aimed at sustaining motivation and retention of professionals within the cultural sector, especially for:
 - o heritage managers;
 - o restorers.
3. Advocacy and visibility, to help European audiences better understand that heritage protection and restoration *activities continue despite the war*, that Ukraine is an integral part of Europe's cultural and historical landscape.

The interviews clearly show that the main impact of the war on RANN in Ukraine is not limited to physical destruction but lies in human, institutional and systemic vulnerabilities. The Route currently serves less as tourism products and more as frameworks of European belonging, solidarity and professional survival.

4.2 Phoenicians' Route

4.2.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

The [Phoenicians' Route](https://fenici.net/en/about-us/), certified by the Council of Europe as a Cultural Route of Intercultural Dialogue, is a transnational initiative that aims to foster cooperation, intercultural dialogue, and sustainable development through heritage-based strategies. Although its name may suggest an archaeological or Phoenician focus, the Route uses the history of Mediterranean civilizations and their contemporaries – from around 1500 BC for approximately two millennia – as a foundation for understanding and promoting contemporary European and global societies. This approach emphasises the social, cultural, and ethical lessons of the past, including the rejection of war and the importance of respect and cooperation between peoples. Today, the Phoenicians' Route operates not only in the Mediterranean but also in the Black Sea region, where Ukraine is considered a partner, in the Baltic region, and across the Americas and Canada (<https://fenici.net/en/about-us/>).

At present, the main partner of the Phoenicians' Route in Ukraine is the Foundation for United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (FFUNSDG), whose headquarters were initially located in Kyiv but have been relocated to Budapest due to the ongoing conflict (<https://www.foundationforunitednations.org/uk/>). As a Ukrainian partner noted, *"We were permitted to join the cultural itinerary as a Ukrainian member,"* demonstrating the role played by the Phoenicians' Route in facilitating Ukraine's participation despite the challenging wartime context.

While this foundation remains a member of the Route, the war has significantly impacted its ability to engage actively. Ukrainian partners have faced difficulties in maintaining collaboration, following Route activities, and participating in international assemblies, which has limited the implementation of planned initiatives. In response, the Phoenicians' Route is seeking additional partners across Ukraine, including universities, research centers, museums, cultural parks, schools, festivals, tour operators, municipalities, chambers of commerce, cultural and tourism foundations, and other public institutions. These partnerships are seen as essential for strengthening cooperation in line with the Route's methodologies, including SmartWays, community involvement inspired by the Faro Convention (Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 2005), and regenerative tourism practices.

4.2.2 The Impact of the War

The first initiatives in Ukraine were launched after the Russian invasion, driven by solidarity. Early efforts included training programs for young Ukrainians in cultural and tourism management, bringing participants to Italy along with their children to remove them from unsafe situations. In the words of the interviewee, *"in a country like Ukraine, you cannot divide cultural activities and humanitarian aid,"* reflecting the complex realities faced by Ukrainian institutions and partners engaged in the Cultural Routes programme.

While the first initial activities had a humanitarian focus, the Phoenicians' Route intends to shift its emphasis toward training youth who can contribute to post-conflict reconstruction, regeneration, and capacity-building within the country. To achieve this, cooperation with Ukrainian organisations is critical, and the Route has been exploring potential partnerships through the Italian Cultural Institute at the Italian Embassy in Ukraine. The goal is to create a structured training and capacity- building program, integrating Ukrainian institutions into the Route's networks and methodologies. An example of a Route's potential partner could be the Odessa Archaeological Museum.

4.2.3 Expectations and Needs

Despite the ongoing challenges, the Phoenicians' Route has significant experience in crisis zones, including Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon, Tunisia, Cyprus, the Balkans, and Georgia. This experience has allowed the Route to develop effective strategies for community engagement, heritage management, and participatory planning, even under conditions of conflict, migration, or social upheaval. The Route's SmartWays methodology and regenerative tourism approach have proven valuable in facilitating community participation, supporting social and psychological recovery, and developing ethically responsible tourism and cultural offerings. These approaches emphasise the involvement of local populations, enabling them to shape cultural and heritage activities while fostering long-term social cohesion (<https://fenici.net/en/projects/>).

Currently, the Ukrainian partner faces several pressing needs. There is limited awareness of the Cultural Routes Programme, which constrains their ability to identify and communicate specific requirements. Networking and strategic dialogue with other Route members and international institutions are essential, as these connections provide access to technical support, knowledge exchange, and potential project funding. Ukrainian potential stakeholders also require assistance with project conception, planning, and implementation, particularly regarding EU-funded or internationally supported initiatives. Reliable local contacts and detailed analysis of community needs are critical to designing effective programs that integrate heritage, tourism, and education.

The Phoenicians' Route is prepared to offer support through its extensive networks and methodologies. Online technical assistance, webinars, and remote guidance can provide immediate capacity-building, similar to initiatives carried out in other crisis-affected regions. Participation in the Route can enable Ukrainian institutions to access European and international networks, fostering cooperation with the EU, the European Parliament, UNESCO, UNWTO, UNICEF, the Arab League, COPPEM, and other organisations. By engaging in these networks, Ukrainian partners can develop strategies for post-conflict recovery, the regeneration of heritage sites, and the sustainable development of cultural and tourism sectors.

Looking ahead, the Phoenicians' Route is preparing a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening Ukraine's role within the Route and supporting post-conflict reconstruction. The Route plans to integrate Ukrainian universities, museums, schools, tour operators, and cultural organisations

into its existing networks. The SmartWays methodology will be applied to facilitate ethically based tourism, heritage management, and participatory community development.

A MiniMaster programme on “Culture as a Tool for Dialogue in Crisis Zones” was launched in 2025, and the 2026 International General Assembly, to be held on March 19–20 in Aquileia, Italy, and Ajdovščina, Slovenia, will focus on “Dialogue Beyond Borders.” Ukrainian representatives might be invited to contribute insights on the impact of conflict on heritage and on strategies for post- conflict recovery. These events aim to create spaces for exchange, learning, and collaborative planning that reflect the Route’s vision of intercultural dialogue as a tool for social and territorial regeneration.

Ukraine’s cultural heritage and its strategic position in the Black Sea region make it a vital partner of the Phoenicians’ Route. By integrating new Ukrainian institutions into its networks, the Route aims to support the country in preserving its heritage, training cultural managers, and creating long- term opportunities for post-conflict recovery and intercultural dialogue.

4.3 European Route of Historic Gardens

4.3.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

[The European Route of Historic Gardens](#) (ERHG) is a non-profit association established to unite managers of historic gardens across Europe and to create a stable network (2020). The route aims to promote historic gardens as unique elements of artistic and natural heritage, ensuring adherence to the principles of the Florence Charter (ICOMOS-IFLA, 1981) regarding the authenticity and historical accuracy of garden elements (<https://www.europeanhistoricgardens.eu/en>). The main objective of ERHG is to develop a high-quality cultural and tourism offering, enhance the visibility of garden locations, facilitate knowledge exchange among managers, and create conditions for sustainable cultural and tourism development.

Sofiyivka National Dendrological Park of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine is one of Europe's most outstanding romantic landscape parks, a man-made masterpiece of human genius founded in the 19th century. The park places particular emphasis on restoring the original appearance of preserved historic elements based on archival materials, in line with the Florence Charter. On 2 September 2022, Sofiyivka became a full member of ERHG. The initiative came from European colleagues: as a sign of solidarity with Ukraine following the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation, the ERHG General Assembly included the park in the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme without requiring the payment of membership fees. This was particularly important given the park's limited funding and the challenging situation in Ukraine (<https://www.sofievka.org/>). Membership in the route opened opportunities to participate in international forums, conferences, and training programmes, and established a platform for collaboration with European experts and UNESCO.

4.3.2 The Impact of the War

The war has created significant challenges for the ERHG partner in Ukraine: Sofiyivka has preserved the physical integrity of its structures, but some trees were damaged, and falling shells posed a hazard. A significant proportion of staff and researchers were mobilised or volunteered for military service, including the head of the biotechnology laboratory, who was injured and is undergoing rehabilitation. Technical and maintenance teams were reduced to a few individuals, creating serious difficulties in maintaining the park and its gardens.

Financial support has also declined: state funding was cut by approximately 50%, and visitor numbers fell fourfold, from over 600,000 per year to around 30% of the pre-war level. In 2025, visitor numbers largely returned to pre-war levels, although the share of visitors from unpaid categories, such as war veterans, increased.

Despite major electricity shortages, the park ensured operational continuity through the use of generators, uninterruptible power supply systems, and a controlled ticketing system. These efforts were supplemented by assistance from international donors and the US Federal Government, which provided USD 20,000 for the purchase of a generator.

At the national (the Ministry of Culture and the National Academy of Science of Ukraine) and local government levels, there was and still is a need to coordinate actions to maintain infrastructure, protect cultural heritage, and ensure staff safety.

Staff and researchers continue to maintain operations under extremely challenging conditions, often working at the limits of their physical and emotional capacity. Young scientists have received scholarships from the President of Ukraine, while volunteers assist with garden maintenance and scientific activities. Support from local authorities is limited to formal acknowledgments and certificates, as legislation does not provide financial assistance to state institutions from local budgets (<https://www.nas.gov.ua/news/misce-krasi-i-sili-yak-dendropark-sofivka-pracyuye-pid-chas-viyni>).

Today, Sofiyivka maintains uninterrupted scientific research and laboratory work thanks to available generators, uninterruptible power supplies, and flexible work schedules. The park conducts research, monitoring, and conservation of the flora of Ukraine's Forest-Steppe zone, as well as plant introduction, acclimatisation, breeding, and propagation, alongside landscape and garden construction.

Local and international partners support scientific activity: 15 desktop computers and 2 laptops were provided for laboratory work; conferences and training programmes are organised; and the propagation of rare and endangered plants, such as *Moehringia hypanica*, is maintained. The park actively collaborates with Polish, Czech, and German botanical gardens and universities, supporting academic and practical knowledge exchange.

Examples of Solidarity Projects and Initiatives within EHGR:

- Participation in forums in Zugdidi (Georgia), Brussels (Belgium), and other European conferences (Budapest, Hungary). As the interviewee noted, *"Many participants had never heard of the park before and were searching for information about it online during the presentations. For most of them, the park was a genuine discovery, and the presentations significantly increased its international visibility."*
- Potential international initiatives, including participation in MERITA programmes and the organisation of performances by symphonic and chamber ensembles in the park.

The interviewee, representing the European Route of Historic Gardens, noted that cooperation with the Ukrainian partner remains strong and effective despite the wartime context. As she stated:

"Despite the difficult situation in Ukraine, I am positively surprised by how fluent the communication is. They always respond, participate in our forums, and make great efforts to be present, even when travelling is very complicated. They are very proactive and more active than some partners who do not face such difficulties."

4.3.3 Expectations and Needs

At the same time Sofiyivka, as a partner of the ERHG, identifies the following needs for support:

- Support for the restoration and conservation of historic sites, and cultural landscapes.
- Capacity-building for researchers and professionals through participation in international seminars, training activities, and exchanges.
- Collaboration with financial assistance in scientific research and laboratory programmes.
- Strengthened communication and integration within the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe network, including access to grant programmes and international partnerships.
- Support for increasing international visibility of Ukraine's cultural heritage, including facilitation of inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Participation in the ERHG provides Sofiyivka with a platform to promote and develop cultural heritage, creating prospects for future integration into European cultural and tourism networks.

4.4 Leonardo da Vinci Route

4.4.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

Ukraine's engagement with the [Leonardo da Vinci Cultural Route](#) emerged in the exceptional context of the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine and reflects both cultural and institutional resilience. The inclusion of the National Dendrological Park "Sofiyivka" of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in the Leonardo da Vinci Route was initiated in 2023, following the participation of Ukrainian representatives in the Annual Advisory Forum of the Cultural Routes held in Łódź, Poland. This occasion enabled the establishment of dialogue with representatives of the Route's governing association.

The initial impetus for Ukraine's participation was rooted in an original interpretative approach linking Sofiyivka's scientific and cultural heritage to the symbolic legacy of Leonardo da Vinci. In particular, the park's rose collection includes varieties named "Leonardo da Vinci", which are conceived as living forms of memory dedicated to outstanding historical figures and creative masters. This symbolic connection, combining horticultural science, artistic heritage and commemorative practices, was recognised by the Route's leadership as a distinctive contribution, not replicated elsewhere within the network.

Following preliminary consultations, Sofiyivka's management initiated the formal process of accession to the Leonardo da Vinci Route. Despite the complexities of wartime governance, the necessary documentation was prepared, coordinated with national authorities and submitted to the Route's coordinating bodies in Italy. Ukraine's membership was confirmed on the eve of the Route's certification, and the country was officially included among the participating states during the certification process held in Vinci, Italy, the symbolic centre and headquarters of the Route.

Ukraine's accession to the Leonardo da Vinci Cultural Route thus took place under extraordinary circumstances: it was achieved during wartime, without extensive preparatory projects or financial incentives, and was driven primarily by cultural and symbolic motivations rather than economic or tourism-oriented considerations.

At the same time, the Ukrainian case illustrates broader structural challenges within transnational cultural networks, including uneven visibility of member countries, gaps in representation on digital platforms. For instance, Ukraine is not yet indicated on the official map of the Route (<https://www.leviedileonardodavinci.com/>). Nevertheless, Ukraine's participation has contributed to strengthening the geographical and conceptual diversity of the Leonardo da Vinci Route, extending it beyond the traditional territories associated with Leonardo's life and work and opening new perspectives for intercultural dialogue between Western, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the wider Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. It's an example of how cultural heritage, scientific institutions and symbolic narratives can be mobilised to sustain international cooperation and cultural diplomacy under conditions of uncertainty.

4.4.2 The Impact of the War

In 2022–2023, Sofiyivka became a member of two certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. The impact of the war on the dendrological park is further analysed in the section related to the European Route of Historic Gardens. During the interview, the respondent highlighted the indirect but profound environmental consequences of missile and drone attacks on the park's landscape, noting: *"Even when explosions occur far from the park's territory, it feels like an earthquake, and the oldest trees begin to fall, pulling down three to five others. In this way, the historical landscape of the park changes rapidly."*

4.4.3 Expectations and Needs

Despite the war circumstances, representatives of "Sofiyivka" express a clear interest in developing projects within the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci Cultural Route. Their prospective initiatives are envisaged to focus on historical personalities from the participating countries who are known for their inventions and intellectual achievements. In this perspective, Sofiyivka considers the Route not only as a platform for symbolic affiliation, but also as a potential space for narrative interpretation and transnational dialogue between science, art and cultural memory. The park's representatives also expressed their intention to host a travelling exhibition dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci in Ukraine, with the aim of bringing his legacy closer to Ukrainian audiences and strengthening public awareness of shared European cultural and scientific heritage. As emphasised during the interview, the primary expectation from cooperation within the Route is not financial support, but the generation of ideas, exchange of knowledge and creation of meaningful cultural content capable of connecting national histories with broader European narratives.

4.5 VIA REGIA

4.5.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

[Via Regia](https://www.via-regia.org/en) is one of the oldest European transcontinental road systems, connecting the Atlantic coast with the Dnipro River. Known historically as the “King’s Road” (VIA REGIA), it linked major European cities such as Paris, Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig, Wrocław, Kraków, Lviv, and Kyiv, serving as a key artery for trade, pilgrimage, and cultural exchange between East and West. Following the fall of the Iron Curtain, Via Regia gained renewed symbolic importance as a route of European unification. In the early 1990s, initiatives emerged to revive the route as a shared cultural space. A major milestone was the international symposium “VIA REGIA – European Cultural Route” held in 2004 in Thuringia, which contributed to the Council of Europe’s decision to award Via Regia the status of a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2006 (<https://www.via-regia.org/en>).

In Ukraine, the partner of Via Regia is the Association of Cultural and Art Centers “VIA REGIA Ukraine”, which brings together cultural institutions – including museums, reserves, and cultural spaces – across 11 cities from the Lviv region to Kyiv (www.via-regia.org.ua).

At the national level, Via Regia is not yet fully embedded in state cultural or tourism policy frameworks. Participation in international forums, such as the Council of Europe Cultural Routes Advisory Forum, has relied largely on individual initiative rather than institutional support. Notably, Ukrainian representation at such events has been limited, with minimal participation from national public authorities. Despite these challenges, international interest in Ukraine within the Via Regia network remains strong: the coordinator of the Route emphasised that Ukrainian partners continue to be perceived as an integral part of the network, noting that “we always say to them: you are Europe – you are not joining Europe, you are already part of it.”

4.5.2 The Impact of the War

The full-scale invasion in February 2022 has had profound direct and indirect consequences for Via Regia and its stakeholders:

- damage to cultural infrastructure in several regions along the route, including Kyiv;
- suspension or cancellation of planned international projects due to security risks and mobility restrictions;
- limited ability of foreign partners to travel to Ukraine and of Ukrainian professionals, especially men, to travel abroad;
- redirection of human resources toward volunteer and humanitarian activities.

The most significant impact has been on human capital. Cultural institutions have experienced:

- staff displacement within Ukraine or abroad;

- mobilisation of male staff members;
- loss of experienced professionals, particularly in key positions such as collection managers;
- difficulties attracting young professionals due to low salaries, bureaucratic constraints, and military registration requirements.

As a result, many institutions are now staffed predominantly by older employees, creating risks for long-term sustainability and knowledge transfer. While physical destruction of heritage sites is an important concern, interviewees emphasised that the erosion of human resources poses an even greater long-term threat to the functioning of Cultural Routes.

Since 2022, cultural heritage protection in Ukraine has focused primarily on emergency measures: safeguarding collections, adapting buildings for dual use (including civil protection), and ensuring basic operational continuity. Civil society organisations and international donors have played a crucial role, particularly through emergency grants for collection preservation and equipment. However, long-term development, research, and promotion activities have been significantly reduced.

Local and regional authorities provided co-financing for cultural projects before the war and continue to offer limited support, but budgetary constraints and security priorities have shifted attention away from culture.

Solidarity from Via Regia's European partners has been expressed mainly through:

- direct communication and moral support;
- inquiries about emergency needs and potential hosting of displaced cultural workers;
- inclusion of Ukraine-related discussions in international forums.

However, the war has also triggered unexpected forms of resilience and creativity among Ukrainian partners. According to the European coordinator, Ukrainian members have demonstrated remarkable initiative during this period: *"it may sound strange, but after the aggression our network members in Ukraine worked like crazy. They were full of ideas, projects and initiatives, and many of them were actually realised."*

However, large-scale joint projects have been rare due to security, political sensitivities, and differing expectations regarding project scale and funding.

4.5.3 Expectations and Needs

Ukrainian Via Regia partners identify the following needs:

- Opportunities for international networking, training, and exchange, leading to stronger visibility of Ukraine within the Cultural Routes network. The interviewee emphasized that at the most recent Forum in Türkiye, only two representatives

from Ukraine were present. To strengthen the promotion of all Cultural Routes, it would be beneficial to involve representatives of the Ministry of Culture, or of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or of the State Agency for Tourism Development, and the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation.

- Assistance in presenting Ukrainian culture abroad through exhibitions, publications, and digital platforms. In particular, showcasing contemporary artists and their exhibitions, combined with fair financial remuneration, was highlighted as a priority.
- Development of research projects and related book publishing as a viable format during the ongoing war. Potential topics include the historical route of Anna of Kyiv, Queen of France and daughter of Prince Yaroslav the Wise, as well as research into historical trade and cultural exchanges along Via Regia, such as the contract fairs held along the route.

The European coordinator emphasised that rebuilding personal contacts with Ukrainian partners and between others will be essential for the future development of the route, noting that *"the last time we all met in person as a network was in 2019, so re-establishing these connections is now very important."*

Looking ahead to the post-war period, the route is expected to play an important role in the international promotion of Ukrainian cultural destinations. Ukrainian partners have developed new tourism initiatives and regional offers during the war, and the international network will support their visibility through communication and marketing. As the coordinator noted, *"they already have many new initiatives and offers prepared, and after the war our task will be to communicate them through the entire network."*

Both Ukrainian and European interviewees emphasised that people remain the core element of Cultural Routes. Sustaining the motivation, professional dignity, and financial stability of cultural workers will therefore be essential for preserving heritage and maintaining the functioning of Via Regia during and after the war.

4.6 European Mozart Ways

4.6.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

The European Mozart Ways (EMW), a certified Cultural Route since 2004, promotes European musical heritage, intercultural dialogue through music, and cultural tourism through the legacy of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (<https://mozartways.squarespace.com/>). In Ukraine, the LvivMozArt International Festival of Classical Music, first held in 2017, became the sole Ukrainian member of EMW in 2019, integrating the city into the transnational network (<https://mozartways.squarespace.com/members/ukraine>). The festival is named in honor of Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart, son of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who lived in Lviv from 1808 to 1838. The Youth Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine is one of the EMW young ambassadors.

4.6.2 The Impact of the War

The Russian invasion halted the festival's full-scale international programming. Direct consequences included cancellation of the 2022 festival and suspension of international collaborations. Indirect effects involved the diversion of cultural resources to humanitarian needs, restricted access to venues, and reduced international visibility.

The current situation can be described according to Gerhard Spitz, President of EMW (email communication, January 2026): "... we have only one member in Ukraine – The Mozart Festival in Lviv. Of course there is an impact of the Russian aggression, because the Festival stopped the activities. There is nothing else to report"

Despite this, LvivMozArt and its partners continued cultural engagement through smaller-scale initiatives, demonstrating resilience and solidarity:

- The documentary film "Lviv – Salzburg: Mozart for Solidarity" (2022), a collaboration with the International Mozarteum Foundation, highlighting cross-border support for Ukrainian music (available on [Youtube](#)).
- The creative project "Mozart aus Lemberg" (2023, Graupa/Pirna, Germany), presented as a concert-discussion event led by Ukrainian conductors Nataliia Stets and Oksana Lyniv. The project focused on the legacy of Franz Xaver Mozart in Lviv and the historical interconnectedness of Ukrainian and European musical traditions.
- A series of Mozart-themed concerts and chamber music events in 2023–2024 at the Lviv Philharmonic and other cultural venues, organised in adapted formats under wartime conditions and aimed at maintaining public access to classical music and European cultural heritage.
- MozArt BirthDay concerts in January 2025, organised by the Lviv Philharmonic, celebrating Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and strengthening community engagement with European musical heritage.

- Participation of Ukrainian musicians and cultural institutions associated with LvivMozArt in international concerts, academic events, and cultural forums in Europe after 2022, where Mozart's legacy was used as a symbolic framework for expressing solidarity with Ukraine and promoting Ukrainian cultural identity.

These initiatives helped maintain the visibility of Ukrainian classical music while ensuring continuity of cultural life under exceptional circumstances. The LvivMozArt Festival can be considered a model of cultural resilience. It demonstrates how cultural initiatives can adapt in times of conflict, sustain heritage promotion, foster intercultural dialogue, and strengthen ties with European partners. Its continued engagement in the European Mozart Ways provides a pathway for post-conflict cultural recovery, the reinforcement of Ukraine's musical identity, and the long-term sustainable development of heritage and cultural tourism.

4.6.3 Expectations and Needs

The Ukrainian partner within the European Mozart Ways seeks the gradual restoration of full-scale festival activities once security conditions permit. It also requires stronger institutional integration within the Cultural Routes network, including mobility opportunities for young musicians, joint solidarity-based programming, and enhanced European visibility. In the longer term, the Route represents a strategic platform for post-war cultural recovery, youth engagement, and the reinforcement of Ukraine's European cultural identity through shared musical heritage.

4.7 Iter Vitis Route

4.7.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

The Iter Vitis Cultural Route (IVCR) of the Council of Europe (2009), dedicated to the cultural heritage of viticulture and winemaking, promotes regional development through shared European wine traditions (<https://itervitis.eu/>).

Ukraine officially joined the IVCR in 2023. However, cooperation between Ukrainian stakeholders and the route had begun earlier through professional contacts, thematic projects, and informal partnerships, laying the groundwork for future membership. In 2022, the National Association for Inbound and Domestic Tourism of Moldova (ANTRIM) mobilised and became actively involved in supporting refugees by providing accommodation to more than 2,000 Ukrainians in an expression of solidarity.

The official Ukrainian member of Iter Vitis is the wine cluster Frumushika Nova, located in the southwest of Ukraine, Odesa region. On 27 October 2023, during the General Assembly of the IVCR held in Toulouse, NGO Frumushika Nova officially became a full member. The new partner was awarded the Iter Vitis Award in the category “Best Resilient Wine Tourism Destination,” recognising its dedication to winemaking and resilience under wartime conditions.

In 2024-2025, representatives of IVCR encouraged Frumushika Nova to engage in international initiatives. For example, through the extended invitation of the Croatian association Club CELO, disseminated via the Iter Vitis network, projects from Moldova and Ukraine were invited to participate in the Sunflower Award. In July 2024, Frumushika Nova was among the Ukrainian initiatives involved in this international platform.

The IVCR representative noted that Frumushika Nova as an organization has still been able to participate in international events. Alexander Palariev, leader of the NGO, has attended events in France and Croatia, representing the cluster and maintaining active engagement with the network.

On the official IVCR website, there is also information about another honorary Ukrainian member, the Foundation for United Nations SDG (FFUG–SDG).

4.7.2 The Impact of the War

According to the interview with the representative of Frumushika Nova, the war has had a significant but differentiated impact. The territory of the wine cluster has not been directly affected by bombardment, as it is located approximately 20 km from the Moldovan border and far from the frontline. Nevertheless, the tourism sector has experienced a substantial decline.

As the representative noted, *“the number of visitors has decreased several times compared to the pre-war period.”* Over the four years of full-scale war, tourism flows have been reduced and largely regionalised. Today, as the interviewee explained, *“most of our guests come from within 100–150 kilometres.”* Tourism has therefore shifted from international and national markets to predominantly local and regional visitors. First-time visitors typically come to discover the

cultural and natural landmarks of the complex, while repeat visitors focus on recreation and wine tasting, which has become one of the central features of the destination.

Despite the decline in tourism flows, wine sales have demonstrated stable growth. As emphasised during the interview, *"while tourism decreased, wine sales have continued to grow."* This indicates an adaptive shift from tourism-based revenue toward product-based resilience. Increased demand has been observed for local grape varieties such as Odeskyi Chornyi, Sukholymanskyi (white), and Citronnyi Magaracha (white), reflecting a strengthening of regional identity and interest in indigenous varieties.

In 2025, the complex welcomed approximately 100 visitors from Moldova, demonstrating limited but continued cross-border engagement. During the wartime period, around ten international conferences were organised on site, including events involving the Embassies of Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. These activities underline the role of Frumushika Nova not only as a tourism destination but also as a platform for international dialogue.

Importantly, the cluster has managed to retain its staff, most of whom live in a nearby village, by maintaining stable salaries and preventing labour migration. This highlights the winery's broader socio-economic role as a stabilising factor within the rural community.

Beyond economic adaptation, membership in Iter Vitis has also had symbolic and reputational significance. As stated by the representative, *"partnership with ITER VITIS gives recognition and credibility to our wine at the European level."*

Overall, the impact of the war on Iter Vitis in Ukraine is characterised less by physical destruction and more by structural transformation: reduced tourism mobility, regionalisation of visitor flows, diversification of revenue models, and reinforced local identity combined with European-level symbolic integration.

4.7.3 Expectations and Needs

IVCR plans to extend cooperation at the national level in 2026 through collaboration with the State Agency for Tourism Development of Ukraine (DART). In this regard, IVCR held the first meeting in October 2025 with Natalia Tabaka, head of DART. Not all Ukrainian wineries currently offer tourism products, and DART could serve as a national member connecting Iter Vitis with new potential wineries interested in developing their tourism services.

The representative of Eastern Europe, Natalia Turcanu, who participated in the development of the winery route in Moldova, also views Ukraine as part of the regional network. As she noted, *"we are thinking of being prepared for what is coming after the war will end and to be prepared in these partnerships."* Ukraine can also be involved in projects in the Danube region (<https://rm.coe.int/ev-2023-2024-iter-vitis-route/1680b0d2b9>).

At the level of Frumushika Nova, expectations toward the Route remain relatively undefined. As the interviewee acknowledged, *"we are not fully aware of the opportunities that international organisations can offer, so it is difficult for us to specify which needs they could address."* This

statement indicates not a lack of interest, but rather a communication and capacity gap that may limit the effective use of international cooperation mechanisms.

From a policy perspective, Ukrainian wine stakeholders could benefit from:

- enhanced networking under the Cultural Routes framework;
- clearer information on project opportunities within the Cultural Routes programme;
- support in developing structured wine tourism strategies aligned with European standards;
- promotion of indigenous grape varieties within European markets;
- preparatory partnerships for post-war recovery and reintegration into international tourism market.

4.8 European Route of Industrial Heritage

4.8.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

Cooperation between Ukraine and the [European Route of Industrial Heritage](https://www.erih.net/i-want-to-go-there) (ERIH) had already been established in 2015–2016 (<https://www.erih.net/i-want-to-go-there>), when Ukrainian representatives began participating in European professional exchanges and conferences. These early contacts contributed to the gradual development of institutional cooperation and visibility of Ukrainian industrial heritage within European networks. As noted by the interviewee, Ukrainian actors had been “*long-term members before the Russian invasion*,” with the Kryvyi Rih City Development Institute (a municipal enterprise of the Kryvyi Rih Council) becoming the only active paying member representing several industrial heritage sites. At the same time, other Ukrainian locations, including 16 sites, were present in the ERIH database without holding formal membership status, illustrating the complexity and unevenness of participation models within large European heritage networks.

The Kryvyi Rih City Development Institute has officially maintained its membership in the ERIH Network since 2018 as a corporate member, representing five industrial heritage sites: 1) the ArcelorMittal Kryvyi Rih Coking Plant and Museum, 2) the South Mining and Processing Plant Quarry, 3) PJSC ArcelorMittal Kryvyi Rih, 4) the North Mining and Processing Plant Open-Air Museum of Mining Equipment, and the 5) Inhulets Mining and Processing Plant Open Cast Mine.

Since the beginning of the full-scale war, the Inhulets site has been fully closed, while all other locations operate under strictly limited access due to security restrictions.

ERIH played an important role in enhancing the visibility of these sites as part of Ukraine’s industrial heritage and in fostering international cooperation. Kryvyi Rih was highlighted as a distinctive institutional partner within the network, representing a model in which industrial heritage sites remain partly in active industrial use, in contrast to many European ERIH members that primarily function as museums or cultural venues.

4.8.2 The Impact of the War

Since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022, the situation of Ukrainian partners within the ERIH network has changed significantly. The war has affected not only tourism but also the industrial sites themselves: “*missile strikes were recorded on the quarry area; fortunately, there were no casualties*,” while some facilities lost their production function and were put into conservation. Symbolic transformations have also taken place, as “*a memorial to fallen workers of the enterprise was established on the site of an industrial object*.”

Institutional capacities have been further strained by infrastructural challenges caused by systematic attacks on energy systems. Although Kryvyi Rih is located in central Ukraine and relatively distant from the frontline, the operational environment for cultural institutions remains unstable and highly complex. These conditions have intensified human resource challenges, as

"there is a clear staff shortage and professional exhaustion — we have ideas, but often lack the people and capacity to implement them under wartime conditions."

4.8.3 Expectations and Needs

Despite these difficulties, Ukrainian partners have continued to engage with ERIH whenever possible. They participated online in meetings and annual conferences and remained involved in cultural initiatives such as the WORK it OUT Dance Event. This engagement was particularly valued by ERIH representatives, who noted: *"I was really surprised that they managed to take part in this event and produce videos. And they had children there dancing."* Such participation highlights both institutional resilience and the role of cultural activities in sustaining social cohesion during wartime.

ERIH has implemented several supportive measures in response to the war. Ukrainian members were granted free membership, as the network considered it inappropriate to request financial contributions under wartime conditions. In addition, income from ERIH's annual conference was donated to Ukrainian colleagues as a symbolic and practical gesture of solidarity. Although travel grants were offered, they were rarely used due to limited institutional capacity and security constraints. Despite these efforts, Ukrainian partners emphasise their strong commitment to maintaining industrial visit sites in proper condition; however, they currently lack sufficient funding even for basic maintenance, not to mention larger-scale projects such as the drainage of the quarry, which is planned for the post-war period.

Beyond direct support, ERIH has been involved in broader European initiatives aimed at safeguarding cultural heritage in crisis contexts, including cooperation with Europa Nostra and participation in expert groups addressing endangered heritage. At the same time, it was acknowledged that in wartime conditions cultural heritage protection often competes with urgent human needs, as *"sometimes it's about pure living and life conditions."*

Overall, the case of ERIH demonstrates that, continued symbolic recognition, flexibility, and inclusion in European networks are perceived by Ukrainian partners as essential forms of support, while the analysis points to the need for more structured assistance to sustain cooperation during the war and enable post-war recovery.

4.9 European Route of Jewish Heritage

4.9.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

The European Route of Jewish Heritage is a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, certified in 2004 (<https://jewishheritage.org/about>). The route is coordinated by the European Association for the Promotion of Jewish Heritage (APJ), which acts as the network carrier and brings together public institutions, cultural organisations, NGOs and local communities across Europe. Ukraine joined the network in 2021, when the first Ukrainian organisation became a formal member of APJ. Since then, cooperation has expanded beyond formal membership to include a wider range of stakeholders and public authorities.

The Jewish Cultural Route in Ukraine is currently developing primarily at regional and local levels rather than as a consolidated national route. The first formal member organisation was the NGO Heritage Springs (Vilhivtsi, Zakarpattia region) which joined the network in 2021. According to the interviewee, this organisation focused on developing Jewish heritage initiatives in a specific region and on fundraising for heritage restoration projects: *“it was looking for funding in the US to renovate some synagogues in the town”*.

At present, cooperation extends to multiple stakeholders in major cities such as Lviv, Odesa, Kyiv and Dnipro, as well as in Cherkasy region. The interviewee emphasised that, although there are no additional formal members yet, *“we are in contact with many different stakeholders... all public bodies,”* and the network is actively facilitating their involvement.

The APJ network supports Ukrainian partners by providing expertise, access to European networks and participation in international projects. As stated in the interview, *“we are trying to help them looking for resources, financial resources specifically, in order to develop their projects.”*

4.9.2 The Impact of the War

The Russian armed aggression has significantly affected the development of the European Route of Jewish Heritage in Ukraine: at the project level, initiatives were suspended or postponed. The interviewee noted that *“all the projects were stopped and on standby,”* and that the first Ukrainian member organisation had to interrupt its activities because *“the team working on the ground needed to leave Ukraine.”* Planned restoration projects, including synagogue renovation, were therefore frozen.

At the institutional level, heritage development ceased to be a priority for public authorities. As highlighted in the interview, *“the development of a Jewish heritage route nowadays is not a priority for the public body in Ukraine.”* This reflects broader shifts in public policy and resource allocation under wartime conditions. At the societal level, Jewish communities and cultural stakeholders were heavily affected by displacement and disruption. Communication with Ukrainian partners became difficult but continued: *“it’s very hard even to keep contact and to stay updated... but we still have communication.”*

Despite these challenges, Ukrainian stakeholders continue to demonstrate strong motivation to remain connected to European cultural networks and to develop heritage initiatives when possible.

The current context of Jewish heritage protection in Ukraine is characterised by vulnerability, limited resources and adaptive strategies. The APJ network has introduced flexible measures to support Ukrainian partners, including temporary free access to the network. As the interviewee explained, *“until the war is over, what we are doing is offering them access to our network for free.”*

At the same time, the interview highlights the importance of partnerships between public authorities and local Jewish communities: *“we are trying to find or to facilitate that the local Jewish community could work with the public authority in order to develop the project together.”*

Several initiatives illustrate solidarity within the Cultural Routes framework. Ukrainian partners have participated in European project consortiums, including the Interreg project “Jewels”, involving the city of Lviv (<https://agency-lvivregua.com/en/news/?tag=JEWELS%20TOUR>). The APJ network also supported Lviv’s application for the European Capital of Culture 2030 and facilitated Ukrainian participation in the training programme “Midor Ledor”.

The interviewee emphasised the importance of inclusion and emotional support: *“we do our best to make them feel that they are still connected with us and with our other members of the network.”* These initiatives contribute to maintaining Ukraine’s visibility within European cultural networks despite wartime disruptions.

4.9.3 Expectations and Needs

The interview reveals that Ukrainian partners expect continued inclusion in European cultural networks, flexible cooperation mechanisms and support in accessing international funding and expertise. The interviewee summarised the main need as the restoration of normal working conditions: *“the main need is obviously that the war is over and to start working on a normal basis.”*

At the same time, there is a strong expectation that European institutions will continue to facilitate participation and reduce barriers to cooperation. Jewish heritage is perceived by Ukrainian stakeholders as an integral part of national identity and cultural diversity. The interviewee underlined its significance: *“Jewish heritage is really something in Ukraine. It’s part of the DNA, the national identity.”*

4.10 European Route of Ceramics

4.10.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

The European Route of Ceramics is a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe (2012) that connects cities, museums, cultural institutions, and ceramic centres across Europe in order to promote ceramic heritage, traditional craftsmanship, and cultural tourism. The network facilitates cooperation between partners through exhibitions, educational initiatives, and joint projects that highlight the historical and contemporary importance of ceramic production in Europe.

The National Museum of Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia Folk Art in Kolomyia is currently the only partner of the route in Ukraine. The museum officially joined the network on 20 June 2022, when the General Assembly of the route approved its membership (<https://www.coe.int/tr/web/cultural-routes/-/national-museum-of-hutsulshchyna-and-pokuttia-folk-art-by-y.kobrynsky>). The initiative was supported by the Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Administration and developed in cooperation with experts in cultural heritage and ceramic art. The nomination also highlighted the tradition of Kosiv painted ceramics, inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO.

Since joining the network, the museum has participated in several international activities. In September 2022 representatives attended the General Assembly in Faenza, Italy and presented the situation of Ukrainian cultural heritage during the war. According to the interviewee, *“we spoke about the museum, about Ukraine and about the war that had already lasted six months at that time.”*

In 2023–2024 the museum maintained contact with the Route’s office through online meetings and was invited to participate in several collaborative initiatives, including Erasmus+ project proposals aimed at developing educational tools linking ceramic heritage with language learning in schools. The institution also contributes information on exhibitions and activities to the route’s online platform, which increases the international visibility of Ukrainian ceramic heritage.

At the national level, the museum continues to actively promote Kosiv ceramics through conferences, exhibitions, and collaboration with local craftsmen. The tradition remains vibrant, with both established and young artisans engaged in production and increasingly registering small businesses to reach wider markets.

4.10.2 The Impact of the War

The full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine has had a significant impact on tourism and cultural exchange. Before 2022 the museum received up to 250000 visitors annually, including a substantial number of international tourists. At the same time, the museum has adapted its activities to the new context. Internal displacement has brought new audiences: *“foreign visitors decreased, but internally displaced people participated in our events and learned about ceramics and local culture.”*

The war has also affected the craft community itself. Some craftsmen from the Kosiv ceramic centre have been mobilised into the armed forces, which temporarily reduces the number of active practitioners. In addition, security considerations have required museums to evacuate or store parts of their collections, making it more difficult to organise international exhibitions using original museum objects. As a result, the museum often relies on contemporary craftsmen who provide works specifically for travelling exhibitions. Despite these constraints, the museum continues to represent Ukrainian ceramic heritage internationally when possible. For example, it presented exhibitions and presentations about Kosiv ceramics at cultural forums abroad, including events linked to the EU Danube Strategy (<https://hutsul.museum/events/2022/pysanka-ceramics-kosice/>).

4.10.3 Expectations and Needs

The interview highlights several needs for strengthening Ukraine's participation in the European Route of Ceramics, as expressed by the director of the National Museum of Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia Folk Art in Kolomyia.

First, the institution identifies the lack of financial resources for international mobility as a key barrier. Invitations to exhibitions or assemblies cannot always be accepted because travel and participation costs are not covered. As the museum's director explained, *"we are invited every year, but we do not currently have the financial resources to travel,"* noting that the museum's available resources are currently largely directed toward safeguarding collections and addressing wartime challenges.

Second, the museum expressed a strong need for more practical cooperation within the network. While communication with the central coordination of the route exists, closer horizontal partnerships with other ceramic centres – particularly in neighbouring countries – would be highly beneficial. As the director noted, *"it would be very important for us to have partner relations with centres in Poland, Slovak Republic, or others where we could exchange experience, organise joint expeditions, symposiums or plein-air events."*

Third, the interview highlights the need for greater institutional and project development capacity. Participation in European programmes requires staff time and expertise to monitor calls, develop project proposals, and build international consortia. As the interviewee noted, *"to participate in European projects, you need partners from two or three countries,"* and stronger horizontal cooperation would help Ukrainian institutions prepare such initiatives.

Fourth, the museum also emphasised the importance of support for international exhibitions and the mobility of Ukrainian ceramic masters. Organising travelling exhibitions or demonstrations abroad would allow European audiences to better understand contemporary Ukrainian ceramic traditions. As the interviewee explained, *"it would be valuable to organise exhibitions where masters could demonstrate their work, show how ceramics are formed and painted, and present both traditional techniques and new artistic trends."*

Finally, the interview also raised concerns about the sustainability of traditional ceramic production in the region. In particular, the loss of traditional clay deposits due to construction

and land development poses a growing threat to the continuity of local ceramic traditions. According to the interviewee, *"traditional pottery clay deposits are gradually disappearing, and this directly affects the ability of masters to continue working with local materials."* The museum suggested that recognition and advocacy from international cultural networks could help raise awareness of this issue among local authorities.

Overall, despite the difficult wartime conditions, the museum remains committed to maintaining its role within the European Route of Ceramics and to promoting Ukrainian ceramic heritage at the European level. Representatives of the institution emphasised their willingness to further develop international cooperation and to present Hutsul and Kosiv ceramics more actively within the European cultural space once conditions allow.

4.11 The European Route of Historic Thermal Towns (ERHT)

4.11.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

The European Route of Historic Thermal Towns, certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2010, unites 53 spa towns from 20 countries and focuses primarily on tourism promotion, health culture, and spa heritage. The network operates mainly as a platform for cooperation between thermal destinations, facilitating tourism campaigns, participation in international fairs, communication among members, and knowledge exchange.

Cooperation with Ukraine began in 2021 when Truskavets, a historic spa town in Western Ukraine, entered into dialogue with the route. Following the outbreak of the war in February 2022, the route formally admitted Truskavets to the network. This decision was taken as a gesture of solidarity and facilitated by the Polish member town Łądek-Zdrój, which had already established cooperation with Truskavets and organised humanitarian assistance in the early weeks of the invasion. As the interviewee explained: *"When the war broke out, we admitted them to the network... we instantly decided that we would admit them for free, just to show our solidarity."* Membership fees for the Ukrainian partner were therefore temporarily waived in order to support its participation in the network during wartime.

Since 2022, Truskavets has maintained limited but stable involvement in the route's activities. The mayor of Truskavets has participated in some general assembly meetings, and the town remains connected to the network through internal communication channels such as newsletters and the intranet platform. However, cooperation has remained largely informational rather than project-based. As the route representative noted: *"They really tried to participate in our general assembly meetings. But beyond that, there was no cooperation."*

This limited cooperation is partly explained by the specific structure of the route. Unlike many Cultural Routes that develop heritage or research projects, this network focuses primarily on tourism promotion and destination marketing.

4.11.2 The Impact of the War

The war has affected the ability of the Ukrainian partner to participate in international projects. For example, Truskavets was invited to join the Green Spas Interreg Europe project, which addresses climate change adaptation for spa towns, but declined participation due to limited resources.

Despite the war, the overall number of visitors to Truskavets decreased only slightly: from 183 444 tourists in 2021 to 163 218 in 2022. However, the structure of tourism changed significantly, with a sharp decline in international visitors and a reduction in the average length of stay. Tourist tax revenues in Truskavets remained relatively stable during the war period and even increased in 2023, reaching approximately 9.2 million UAH (about €231 100). This demonstrates the resilience of the spa tourism sector and the continued importance of Truskavets as a domestic tourism and rehabilitation destination.

Table 1. Impact of the Russian armed aggression on the Truskavets tourism sector (2019–2025)

Year	Total Visitors	Foreign Visitors	Tourist Tax Revenue*
2019	≈ 230 000	≈15 000	≈ € 221 600
2020	≈ 150 000	≈ 4 000	≈ € 126 500
2021	183 444	≈11 000	≈ € 214 000
2022	163 218	≈ 2 200	≈ € 219 400
2023	≈ 160 000	≈ 500	≈ € 231 100
2024	n/a	n/a	≈ € 201 000
2025	n/a	n/a	≈ € 227 000

**Euro equivalents are calculated using the average annual EUR/UAH exchange rate based on data from the National Bank of Ukraine.*

Source: Suspilne Lviv tourism tax report (2025), (<https://suspilne.media/lviv/919011-na-lvivsini-v-2024-roci-turistichnij-zbir-ustanoviv-rekord-ponad-47-miljoniv-griven/>) Zaxid.net (2026), (https://zaxid.net/torik_gromadi_lvivshhini_popovnili_byudzheth_turistichnim_zborom_na_63 mln_grn_n1627602)

The data reveal several notable trends in the development of tourism in Truskavets during the war period. International tourism declined sharply following the full-scale invasion, with the number of foreign visitors falling from approximately 11 000 in 2021 to around 500 in 2023. In contrast, domestic tourism remained relatively stable, with the total number of visitors decreasing only moderately compared to the pre-war period. Tourist tax revenues increased, reaching over 9.8 million UAH (approximately € 227 000) in 2025, reflecting sustained demand for spa services and extended stays in sanatoriums. These trends also point to a transformation in the city's tourism function: during the war, Truskavets has increasingly served as a rehabilitation and recovery destination for military personnel and internally displaced persons, complementing its traditional role as a spa tourism centre.

The war has also constrained the level of active engagement of the Ukrainian partner within the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns. While Truskavets remains an official member and part of the route's internal communication network, practical collaboration has been limited due to the challenging circumstances faced by Ukrainian municipalities during wartime.

4.11.3 Expectations and Needs

The main expectation for future cooperation between the route and its Ukrainian partner relates to the post-war recovery phase. The network leadership anticipates that once the security situation improves, Truskavets will be able to participate more actively in tourism promotion activities, which constitute the core mission of the route.

At present, the network operates mainly as a platform providing opportunities for collaboration rather than imposing mandatory projects. All members, including the Ukrainian partner, receive information about activities and invitations to participate in initiatives. As the interviewee explained: *"Members constantly have the opportunity to access information... we have an internal newsletter every two weeks and an intranet where they can access everything."* Despite the limited ways of interaction during wartime, the network leadership emphasizes that the

Ukrainian partner remains part of the community and that communication channels remain open.

Future cooperation could include participation in international press trips, tourism promotion campaigns, and joint activities with nearby member towns, particularly in Poland. The route also maintains cooperation with the European Travel Commission, which could help promote Ukrainian spa destinations internationally once conditions allow. As noted in the interview: *"When the situation improves, we could organise press trips – for example to Poland and to Ukraine."*

Finally, representatives of the route expressed a strong symbolic commitment to supporting the Ukrainian partner in the future. The board of the association has already discussed visiting Ukraine after the war as a gesture of solidarity: *"We already agreed in our board that as soon as the situation changes, we will go and visit – just to show our solidarity."*

Overall, the main expectation for the future is the gradual reintegration of Truskavets into the full range of tourism promotion and cooperation activities of the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns once the conditions for international tourism and collaboration improve.

4.12 Saint James Way

4.12.1 Current Situation of the Programme and Main Partners

The Saint James Way (Camino de Santiago) is one of the most established Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, bringing together a wide network of pilgrimage paths across numerous European countries (<https://saintjamesway.eu/>). Camino Podolico is the Ukrainian section of the Saint James Way – a cultural and pilgrimage route that runs through the Podillia region, connecting historic towns, natural landscapes, and cultural heritage sites while promoting pilgrimage and sustainable tourism development (<https://caminopodolico.net/en/about-project>).

The integration of national and regional routes into this network is a common practice; and in this context Ukraine represents a relatively recent extension of the route into Eastern Europe. The interviewee noted, *"From the very start, our goal was not just to create a local route, but to integrate it into the Santiago de Compostela network."* As a result of its development Camino Podolico successfully completed the Council of Europe certification cycle in May 2024, confirming its official status as part of the Cultural Route network. In parallel, the Vinnytsia City Council became an active member of the European Federation of St. James Way, and since 2024 its representative has held the position of Vice-President, ensuring Ukraine's direct involvement in strategic decision-making within the broader European network of the Camino de Santiago.

Camino Podolico itself was established in 2021 through a joint initiative of the Vinnytsia and Bar city councils, with support from the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation. The project successfully implemented pilgrimage infrastructure, including route mapping, signage, pilgrim passports, and certification mechanisms. During its pilot season, the route was completed by approximately 150 pilgrims, demonstrating initial demand and development potential. The project successfully implemented pilgrimage infrastructure, including route mapping, signage, pilgrim passports, and certification mechanisms.

The governance model is based on strong multi-level cooperation. A memorandum of cooperation signed in 2023 brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including local self-government bodies along the route (Vinnytsia, Bar, Hnivan, Kamianets-Podilskyi, Zhmerynka, Chortkiv, Dunaivtsi, among others), civil society organisations such as the Association of Friends of St. James Way in Ukraine and Via Regia Ukraine, as well as the State Agency for Tourism Development at the national level. The National Nature Park "Podilski Tovtry" is also among the partners.

4.12.2 The Impact of the War

The full-scale invasion of Russian Federation in 2022 had a significant disruptive effect on Camino Podolico. The planned inaugural season was postponed, and municipalities along the route redirected their focus toward humanitarian assistance and defense. Public infrastructure and signage were partially removed due to safety directives, and some trail sections were inaccessible because of ongoing military risks.

Despite these obstacles, the initiative demonstrated remarkable resilience. Local volunteers and community members maintained communication with the program coordinators, gradually testing pilot walks and providing logistical support. By 2023, small-scale pilot pilgrimages resumed, supported by community-led initiatives such as temporary shelters and digital maps. At the same time the interviewee highlighted *“During the war, communities could not fully operate the route, but people still reached out asking if it was open... We had to explain that safety came first.”*

By 2024, the program had fully relaunched and exceeded initial expectations. Over 300 pilgrims participated in 2024, and 500 in 2025. Local residents began offering accommodation, including private homes and community buildings. Pilot initiatives also promoted the revival of abandoned heritage sites, such as restoring schools or historic estates for lodging, effectively combining cultural preservation with tourism recovery.

The program adapted to wartime conditions by:

- Mapping and marking safe pathways for pilgrims.
- Establishing emergency shelters and temporary lodging in local households.
- Creating online maps and digital guidance to support independent travel and planning.

“The war highlighted the importance of such routes: they became a pathway for Ukrainians to reconnect, explore their region, and find psychological relief.” Camino Podolico has thus become a symbol of cultural resilience, demonstrating how community-led heritage projects can survive and even thrive amid conflict.

4.12.3 Expectations and Needs

Key expectations for Camino Podolico focus on strengthening local capacity, ensuring sustainability, and enhancing integration within the broader European pilgrimage network:

- Capacity-building and mentoring: Municipalities along the route require training and guidance in route management, pilgrim services, heritage preservation, and community engagement. The experience of Vinnytsia region demonstrates the importance of structured support: as the main coordinator, it not only manages its own section of the route but also provides mentoring to smaller municipalities, helping them develop logistical capabilities and host pilgrims effectively.
- Financial support: Membership fees to the European Federation of the Way of St. James, together with ongoing infrastructure maintenance, remain a challenge for local authorities. Vinnytsia currently contributes €2,000 annually, while future participants like Lviv may face fees of up to €5,000. Ensuring predictable funding is essential to maintain signage, pilgrim passports, accommodations, and other services along the 280-kilometer route.

- Recognition and coordination: Strengthening links between Ukrainian partners and the European Route's network would facilitate strategic planning, participation in forums, and access to technical assistance. Interviewee noted, *"Any support from the European Institute would help us connect municipalities, maintain quality standards, and ensure that Camino Podolico becomes a sustainable and recognised part of the network"*
- Route expansion and historical integration: During 2023-2025, the idea emerged to expand the route beyond Podillia, creating the Camino-Ruten ("Rus Way"), which links historic towns of the Galician-Volhynian principality. Interviewee explained, *"Camino-Ruten traces 13th-14th century princely towns where archaeological finds of Santiago shells confirm that local nobility or their envoys undertook pilgrimages."* The initial section from Chortkiv to Lviv is currently on paper, with future plans to connect Camino Podolico with Via Regia, forming a continuous transnational path.
- Community-led multiplier effect: Larger cities such as Vinnytsia serve as a hub and mentor for smaller towns along the route, supporting heritage preservation, guiding pilgrims, and building tourism capacity. This local ownership and engagement of communities is crucial for long-term success. As highlighted by stakeholder, *"Camino Podolico became a way for local communities to revive forgotten heritage sites, reconnect with their history, and attract both domestic and international pilgrims."*

In conclusion, Camino Podolico exemplifies resilience and innovation under wartime conditions. With institutional support, financial resources, and enhanced visibility, it has the potential to connect Ukraine to a wider network of pilgrimage and heritage pathways.

4.13 Viking Route

[The Viking Route](#), established in 1993, is one of the oldest Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. It currently unites around 60 members worldwide, including 15 European countries and several non-European partners such as the United States, Canada, and Greenland. The route traces the historical expansion of Viking heritage from Scandinavia to other regions, connecting sites of historical, cultural, and maritime significance.

Prior to 2022, Ukraine was not formally represented in the Viking Route network. The route's eastern expansion had included Russia, which held membership until 2022. Following the outbreak of the war and the suspension of the Russian member, the Viking Route welcomed a partner organization from Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, in late 2024–early 2025. As the interviewee explained, *“we actively then wanted to try and find something from Ukraine... so that was our partner on the road”*. The Ukrainian organisation aimed to develop a route reflecting Viking-era heritage along the historical *“Varangians to the Greeks”* corridor, which follows the trade and cultural networks connecting Eastern Europe to the Byzantine world.

To facilitate Ukraine's participation during the ongoing conflict, the Viking Route temporarily waived membership fees. However, operational challenges quickly emerged: Zaporizhzhia is close to active frontline areas, and recent months have seen a complete loss of communication with the local partner. Travel restrictions, martial law, and the dangers associated with the war zone have prevented representatives from attending international meetings or collaborating on joint projects.

Despite these difficulties, the Viking Route continues to recognize Ukraine's substantial Viking-era heritage and strategic significance within historical trade and cultural networks. The initiative reflects both the potential and challenges of integrating Ukrainian sites into European cultural routes during wartime.

5. Conclusions

The study demonstrates that despite four years of armed aggression by the Russian Federation, Cultural Routes in Ukraine have not only continued to operate but have significantly expanded— from five to thirteen routes. A key factor in this achievement was the solidarity of European partners, who enabled Ukrainian participants to continue their engagement without the obligation to pay membership fees. At the same time, Ukrainian partners exhibited remarkable resilience and initiative: despite the ongoing challenges of war, they successfully prepared the necessary documentation, secured their official partner status within the programme, and continued active international cooperation. This experience highlights both the importance of external support and the critical role of local coordinators in ensuring the resilience and development of Cultural Routes.

The analysis indicates that all Cultural Routes in Ukraine have been directly and indirectly affected by the Russian armed aggression, and they have responded in different ways – ranging from continuing their activities despite the war circumstances to temporarily suspending operations.

Among the Cultural Routes in Ukraine that have temporarily suspended their activities are the European Mozart Ways and the European Route of Jewish Heritage. Several routes that joined between 2021 and 2025 have been unable to establish operational collaboration due to the war, including the Phoenicians' Route, the Leonardo da Vinci Route, and the Viking Route. These cases illustrate the ongoing impact of the armed aggression on five routes that are currently non-functional and face challenges in integrating into the European network, highlighting the need for proactive support, flexible mechanisms, and potentially the identification of new Ukrainian partners to ensure continuity and engagement.

Camino Podolico, the Ukrainian branch of the Santiago de Compostela route, has demonstrated remarkable resilience, resuming full operations in 2024 after a two-year closure due to the war and reaching a total of 500 pilgrims. The route has successfully combined heritage preservation with tourism, adapting to challenging conditions by providing safe pathways, temporary shelters in case of attacks, and digital navigation tools for pilgrims. It also exemplifies effective institutional cooperation, with Ukrainian representatives serving as Vice-President and ensuring Ukraine's direct involvement in strategic decision-making within the broader European pilgrimage network.

Most Cultural Routes currently operating in Ukraine, such as the European Route of Historic Gardens, Via Regia, Iter Vitis, the European Route of Industrial Heritage, and the European Route for Ceramics, have shifted their focus to the domestic tourism market. The target audience has been profoundly affected by the armed aggression, now encompassing internally displaced persons, military personnel, and families of fallen or missing soldiers, with women and children representing a significant proportion. Notably, Truskavets, as the Ukrainian partner of the European Route of Historical Thermal Towns, has emerged as a hub for the rehabilitation of both wounded military personnel and civilians. These developments highlight the adaptability of

Cultural Routes, demonstrating their continued relevance as instruments of social cohesion, and cultural continuity.

Among all European Cultural Routes in Ukraine, only one – RANN – has successfully engaged a Ukrainian partner in a project with financial support, demonstrating that such collaboration is possible even under wartime conditions, but requires adaptation. Within the framework of the Creative Europe project, RANN and its Ukrainian partner adapted project objectives to wartime realities, including the development of a heritage database and online exhibitions. This experience highlights key lessons for future project cooperation: flexible funding mechanisms, capacity- building for staff retention, and advocacy to enhance visibility are essential. While financial support is crucial, its effectiveness depends on the availability of trained personnel and institutional capacity. The RANN case illustrates that Ukrainian partners can maintain high-quality work and integrate into European projects, provided there is proactive coordination, flexible administration, and recognition of the human and institutional constraints imposed by the conflict.

6. Recommendations

A structural issue affecting the development of Cultural Routes in Ukraine is the absence of a clearly defined national coordination mechanism, despite Ukraine having signed the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA) in 2021. While this formal commitment establishes a framework for cooperation with the Council of Europe, it has not yet been translated into an operational governance model at the national level. The interviews clearly indicate institutional fragmentation as a central challenge. Responsibilities relevant to Cultural Routes are currently divided between the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, responsible for cultural heritage, and the Ministry for Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine, which oversees tourism policy through the State Agency for Tourism Development. This division creates a gap in ownership: cultural routes fall between sectors and are not fully prioritised by either institution.

In this context, the establishment of a national coordination mechanism is recommended:

- 1. Ukraine should formally define institutional responsibility for the implementation of the EPA.** This requires:
 - Official recognition of Cultural Routes within the mandates of both ministries;
 - The designation of a lead coordinating body or inter-ministerial working group;
 - The development of a clear mechanism for cooperation between the culture and tourism sectors.
- 2. Proactive facilitation by the European Institute of Cultural Routes:** A formal outreach from the European Institute of Cultural Routes to the Ukrainian authorities, proposing the establishment of a coordination mechanism and offering institutional support, would be both timely and well received. According to stakeholders, such an initiative would provide legitimacy and momentum for inter-ministerial cooperation.
- 3. Regular participation of Ukrainian representatives in the Annual Advisory Forum and other EPA-related activities** should be ensured. This would improve policy alignment, visibility, and access to expertise. It is strongly recommended to invite representatives of the relevant Ukrainian ministries well in advance of the Annual Advisory Forum. A dedicated bilateral or multilateral meeting could serve as a platform to jointly develop a practical coordination model and clarify institutional roles.
- 4. Capacity-building and targeted training programmes.** It is recommended to organise a structured programme of training sessions for main partners of all Cultural Routes operating in Ukraine, as well as for representatives of the relevant ministries. These trainings, facilitated by the European Institute of Cultural Routes, should clearly outline the opportunities for cooperation within the framework of the Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA).

Evidence from the interviews demonstrates that many of the most active routes currently depend on a single highly committed coordinator. This creates a structural vulnerability and limits long-term sustainability. In this context, *it is strongly recommended to involve 2–4 representatives from each route in training programmes* in order to develop “back-up staff” and ensure continuity of knowledge and management capacity.

Furthermore, despite ongoing armed aggression, Ukrainian partners continue to demonstrate exceptional commitment, travelling long distances to participate in international events. Structured training and capacity-building will provide them with the necessary tools, knowledge, and confidence to engage in the European cultural space. Ensuring their visibility, active participation, and integration into European networks reinforces both operational resilience and a sense of belonging to shared European cultural values, which is particularly vital in the current context.

5. Integration with broader European programmes. It is recommended to strengthen the integration of Ukrainian Cultural Routes with existing European funding and mobility programmes. Coordinated access to instruments such as EU funding such as Erasmus exchanges, Creative Europe grants, and cross-border projects can significantly enhance both the sustainability and international profile of these routes. Trainings and capacity-building initiatives should include practical guidance on identifying relevant programmes, developing competitive proposals, and establishing transnational partnerships. This approach will allow Ukrainian routes to leverage European networks, share best practices, and align local initiatives with broader cultural and tourism priorities at the continental level.

6. Branding and awareness. Stakeholders consistently highlight the need to increase national and international visibility of certified European Cultural Routes in Ukraine. The European certification should be recognised by pilgrims, cultural tourists, and the wider public as a mark of quality, authenticity, and European integration. Effective branding and communication strategies – covering signage, digital platforms, publications, and international promotion – are essential for positioning Ukrainian routes within the broader European cultural heritage landscape.

7. Development of a unified crisis response mechanism. The analysis indicates that the Cultural Routes programme currently lacks a structured mechanism to respond to crises. Support for Ukrainian partners during the armed conflict has largely depended on the personal commitment of route coordinators and initiatives undertaken by individual routes. A commonly adopted measure across routes has been the temporary exemption of Ukrainian partners from membership fees.

It is recommended to establish a formal crisis response mechanism within the framework of the Cultural Routes programme. This mechanism should allow for flexible, case-by-case support, including temporary financial relief, technical assistance, or targeted mentoring during exceptional circumstances. Individualised measures are particularly important, as

even post-conflict many Ukrainian partners will face limited tourism flows and restricted financial resources, making it difficult for them to cover membership fees ranging from €2,000 to €5,000. A proactive and structured approach will safeguard the continuity of Ukrainian participation in European networks and ensure resilience of the routes in times of crisis.

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Annex 1: List of Interviews with Management Representatives of Cultural Routes and Their Ukrainian Partners

Cultural Route	Interviewee Name	Email	Date
1. Réseau Art Nouveau Network	Erika Giuliani and Irene Domènech Comella	erika.giuliani@artnouveau-net.eu irene.domenech@artnouveau-net.eu	08.01.2026
	Stefaniya Topylko	lkphheritage@gmail.com	12.01.2026
2. Phoenicians' Route	Antonio Barone	direttore@fenici.net	09.01.2026
	Maurizio Aronica	president@ffun.foundation	16.01.2026
3. European Route of Historic Gardens	Iryna Denysko	denpark@ukr.net	12.01.2026
	Ana Rosa Moreno	technicalmanager@europeanhistoricgardens.eu	06.02.2026
4. Leonardo da Vinci Route	Iryna Denysko	denpark@ukr.net	12.02.2026
5. VIA REGIA	Mykola Mandzyuk	mmmactacus@gmail.com	16.01.2026
	Caroline Fisher	netz@via-regia.org	24.02.2026
6. European Mozart Ways	Gerhard Spitz	office@mozartways.org	20.01.2026
7. ITER VITIS Cultural Route	Natalia Turcanu	nataliaturcanu@gmail.com	23.01.2026
	Alexander	Communication via mobile phone	24.02.2026

	Palariev		
8. European Route of Industrial Heritage	Christiane Baum	germany@erih.net	26.01.2026
	Hannah LitvinchukViktoria Patsiuk	annaserbina2009@gmail.com	13.02.2026
9. European Route of Jewish Heritage	Victor Sorensen	director@jewishheritage.org	28.01.2026
10. European Route of Ceramics	Iryna Fediv	i.fediv@hutsul.museum	06.03.2026
	Yaroslava Tkachuk	Communication via mobile phone info@hutsul.myseum	12.03.2026
11. European Route of Historic Thermal Towns	Simone Zagrodnik	sz@historicthermaltowns.eu	11.03.2026
12. Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes	Oleksander Vesheleni	o.vesheleni@tourism.gov.ua	24.03.2026
	Tsyhankova Svitlana	tsyhankova@vmr.gov.ua	
13. Viking Route	Ben Baillie		25.03.2026

Annex 2: State of Cultural Routes in Ukraine – 2022-2025 (Photographs)



Figure 1. Damage to the “Sunny Villa” in Lviv following a missile strike on 4 September 2023. The building is located within the UNESCO-listed historic centre and its buffer zone, which sustained damage to multiple heritage sites during the attack.

Source: Lviv Heritage Bureau (Lviv City Council). “Villa Sonechko before and after the missile attack”. Available at: [Villa “Sonechko” before and after the missile attack - spadshchyna.lviv.ua](https://spadshchyna.lviv.ua/villa-sonechko-before-and-after-the-missile-attack/)



Figure 2. Training of young restoration specialists in Lviv in response to the shortage of professionals mobilised to the armed forces. The initiative includes restoration schools aimed at preserving traditional skills, such as work on early 20th-century wooden architectural elements. *Source:* Lviv Heritage Bureau (Lviv City Council). Available at: [Restoration school dedicated to an early 20th-century wooden gate - spadshchyna.lviv.ua](https://spadshchyna.lviv.ua)



Figure 3. Iryna Denysko (third from the right), representative of the European Route of Historic Gardens in Ukraine, at the 12th Annual Advisory Forum of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, Łódź, 20–22 September 2023.

Source: Sofiyivka National Dendrological Park (provided by route representatives in Ukraine)



Figure 4. Damage to the landscape of a dendrological park participating in the European Route of Historic Gardens, where shockwaves from nearby missile and drone attacks have led to the collapse of mature trees and changes to the historic landscape.

Source: Sofiyivka National Dendrological Park (provided by route representatives in Ukraine)



Figure 5. Guided visit to Dubno Castle for families of Ukrainian servicemen who were killed, went missing, or are held in captivity. The visit illustrates how the profile of visitors to cultural sites in Ukraine has changed during the war, including internally displaced persons and military families.

Source: Provided by Via Regia route representative in Ukraine, 2026.



Figure 6. UNESCO and ICOMOS monitoring mission at Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, demonstrating international solidarity with Ukraine, assessed risks to the World Heritage site amid Russian attacks.

Source: Facebook post by State Historical and Cultural Sanctuary "Kyiv Pechersk Lavra". Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1384294720407996&set=pcb.1384295000407968>

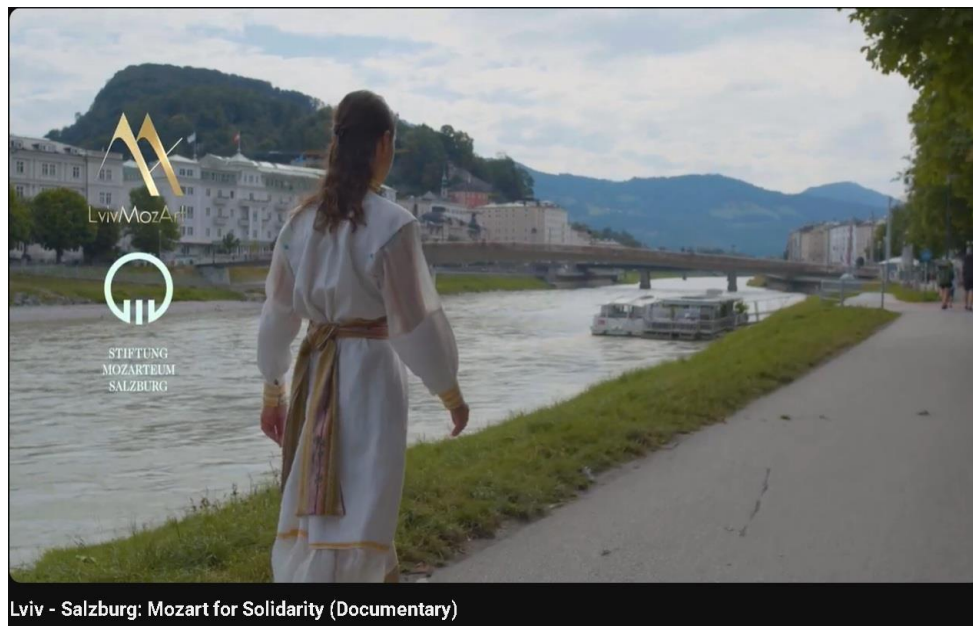


Figure 7. Screenshot from the documentary film “Lviv – Salzburg: Mozart for Solidarity” (2022), a collaboration with the International Mozarteum Foundation, highlighting cross-border support for Ukrainian music within European Mozart Ways.

Source: Link: YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdW96TRi7Sw>



Figure 8. Mayor of Truskavets, Andriy Kulchynskyi, presenting the city as a partner of the European Historical Thermal Towns Association during a tourism congress in Ourense, Galicia, Spain, September 2022.

Source: Official information of the Truskavets City Council, 2022.



Figure 9. Interactive exhibition at the Museum of Folk Art and Life of Hutsul region in Kosiv, Ivano-Frankivsk region, developed within the project “Interactive Museum – promoting the traditions of Kosiv ceramics through the modernization of part of the museum’s exhibition,” demonstrating the continuity of cultural life in Ukraine.

Source: Provided by Route representatives in Ukraine, 2026.



Figure 10. Excursions of the “IRON DVIZH” project during the autumn school holidays

(27 October – 2 November 2025), involving 353 participants from seven districts of Kryvyi Rih. Excursion activities at the route sites are primarily oriented towards local tourists.

Source: Provided by European Route of Industrial Heritage representative in Ukraine, 2026.