



UKRAINE

Cultural Leadership Dialogue
Summary and Reflections



ukrainian
institute

UK/Ukraine
Season

Photo: Andrew Cowan, Scottish Parliament



Key attendees at the Ukraine Culture Leadership Dialogue, representing Edinburgh International Culture Summit Strategic Board, Ukrainian Institute and Ukrainian cultural delegates in attendance at Culture Summit 2022.

Summary

2022 Edinburgh International Culture Summit

UKRAINE Cultural Leadership Dialogue Summary and Reflections

On Friday 26 August 2022, the Edinburgh International Culture Summit and the Ukrainian Institute co-presented a Cultural Leadership Dialogue at the Scottish Parliament, hosted by Clare Adamson, MSP, Convener, Constitution Europe External Affairs and Culture Committee. The dialogue was supported by the British Council as part of the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture.

The event brought together political and cultural leaders from countries who share a strong interest in strengthening Ukraine's international standing, and in supporting Ukrainian cultural colleagues and institutions affected by the invasion of their country since 24 February 2022.

Among the political and cultural organisations represented at this meeting were: British Council; Creative Scotland; Edinburgh International Festival; Festivals Edinburgh; Glasgow School of Art; High Commission of Canada, London; Korean Cultural Centre, London; Manchester International Festival; Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine; The Museums Association, Edinburgh; National Endowment for the Arts, USA; National Galleries of Scotland; National Theatre of Scotland; Royal Conservatoire, Scotland; Scottish Chamber Orchestra; The Scottish Government; Scottish Opera; The Scottish Parliament; UK Government; Ukrainian Institute; The Victoria & Albert Museum; and The Welsh Government.

Joining them were a delegation of seventeen representatives from the Ukrainian cultural sector, some of whom had journeyed from Ukraine, enduring perilous circumstances, to participate in this dialogue leaving families, colleagues, homes, and institutions under a constant threat of attack, while others were displaced Ukrainian citizens already living within the UK.

The opening remarks were provided by the dialogue's host, Deputy Minister of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine and the Directors of both the Edinburgh International Culture Summit and Ukrainian Institute, followed by a video message from the Minister of Culture containing stunning figures on the losses suffered by the Ukrainian cultural ecosystem. The programme was led by testimonies and analysis from six speakers from the Ukrainian cultural sector representing a range of art forms and regions of Ukraine. They described the invasion as a war on Ukrainian cultural identity, with cultural centres, artworks, books, journalists, and intellectuals specifically targeted to ensure the erasure of a decolonised and culturally distinct Ukraine.

The theme of understanding recurred throughout these testimonies, suggesting that the long-term survival of a free and culturally diverse Ukraine depends greatly on the willingness of the international community to amplify Ukrainian voices, increase visibility and awareness of Ukrainian culture, and to build capacity within Ukraine by forging resilient and proactive partnerships between governments, cultural agencies, and individuals.

Ideas and suggestions from the Ukrainian Cultural Representatives

- 1 There was a focus on exhaustion and the stretching of resources, human and material, and the impossibility of planning projects in an uncertain future.
- 2 Conservation and climate control will be badly affected during the winter due to issues around heating and energy supplies, and many cultural workers are working at severely reduced pay as the country pivots financially towards defence. There was the suggestion that international governments could finance salaries and energy bills throughout this time.
- 3 A Ukrainian writer suggested that Russian voices and perspectives have been historically privileged, allowing for the colonisation of Ukraine and other countries. Stories and perspectives from Ukraine, and other former Soviet countries should be told, shared, and amplified.
- 4 Ukraine seasons of culture could be organised across Europe and financed by host countries to redress this historical imbalance, helping Ukraine to become more understood internationally.
- 5 Strategically important countries could host branches of the Ukrainian Institute, enabling matchmaking, exchanges, programming of cultural events and other initiatives.
- 6 The long-term aim is for Ukraine to become so embedded into the cultural calendar that it is thought of by default when planning international cultural events.
- 7 The aim of the relationships between Ukraine and Europe is to achieve greater balance. The building of robust partnerships and the deepening of relations with countries who share the values of democracy, free expression, and pluralism, strengthens Europe while adding new cultural value.

Breakout Sessions

The Dialogue was then divided into three strands of discussion tasked with generating ideas for practical and actionable methods of achieving these aims. Thematically, these discussions were centred on People, a conversation focused on ways to sustain and develop individual professional cultural careers disrupted by the invasion; Places, a dialogue to explore the most effective and sustainable ways of repairing and enhancing Ukraine's cultural infrastructure; and Partnerships, which discussed avenues of domestic and international cooperation and collaboration.

Ideas and suggestions from the *People* discussion breakout:

Facilitator: **Olesia Ostrovska-Liuta, Director General of National Art and Culture Museum Complex, Mystetskyi Arsenal, Kyiv**

Rapporteur: **David Codling, Director, UK/Ukraine Season of Culture, British Council**

- 1 It is essential to maintain active connections between Ukrainian artists inside Ukraine and those displaced outside.
- 2 Setting up a fund for commissions for new work would be a powerful catalyst for dynamic and lasting relationships, and would provide vital nourishment to the arts sector in Ukraine.
- 3 Twinning, pairing, shadowing, linking, buddying: these reciprocal relationships can function at various levels and with degrees of formality, and are crucial for sustainable, adaptable relationships as circumstances evolve. At one end of the spectrum is institutional linkage such as that between the music conservatories in Glasgow and Kharkhiv but individual links at informal levels can also be very powerful, especially when based on communities of practice (which could be arts technicians or arts administrators as well as artists.)
- 4 Paying close attention to the local conditions in each of the links (the city the region or the neighbourhood) is an excellent way to linking arts practice and discourse to wider social, educational, and environmental themes.
- 5 It was suggested that visa regulations can be a barrier to exchange and that changes to visa rules for Ukrainian nationals could make cultural collaboration easier.
- 6 Mapping needed of the existing relationships between UK and Ukrainian arts organisations, large and small, throughout both countries.
- 7 Ukraine's arts sector is very rich in new technology knowhow, a resource on which to capitalise.

Ideas and suggestions from the *Places* discussion breakout:

Facilitator: **Tetyana Filevska, Creative Director of the Ukrainian Institute**

Rapporteur: **Claire de Braekeleer, Regional Arts Director, Wider Europe for the British Council**

- 1** This conversation was international, sharing practical examples and suggestions from countries who have engaged with Ukraine through cultural collaboration in the 6 months since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine – including Austria, Canada, Kosovo, Latvia, Poland, and the UK. Many initial examples of cultural collaboration have been virtual, but many participants expressed their plans to move to physical support mechanisms for Ukrainian artists and arts organisations. One example was the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's links with the Kharkiv Conservatory, which is now moving from an online teaching offer for displaced Ukrainian music students, to a Scottish government funded scheme which will bring 30 students from Kharkiv to study in person in Glasgow.
- 2** Cultural organisations and government representatives alike need to move now from short-term to long-term thinking around institutional collaboration and partnerships, accepting that these models take time and investment to build trust and achieve results.
- 3** The discussion of 'places' was wide-ranging, including buildings, institutions, cities, infrastructure, reconstruction, as well as the notion of being 'displaced' and the role of the Ukrainian diaspora around the world. There were several cultural organisations present – including Manifesta, National Theatre of Scotland, and Izolyatsia – without a permanent home city or space; providing important communities of practice for other Ukrainian institutions, especially from occupied territories or badly damaged places, who may find themselves in a nomadic situation.
- 4** Coordinated international planning and funding is crucial to the successful support of Ukraine's cultural infrastructure. Currently Ukraine does not have 3–5-year planning cycles, but this could be encouraged, and funding unlocked by international partners (including the European Commission) working with their Ukrainian partners to shape and implement coordinated long-term plans, allowing for the reconstruction of Ukrainian cultural infrastructure.

- 5 Ukrainian cultural professionals, especially in the museums sector, have learned new emergency response skills that have allowed them to protect collections and cultural spaces. Though these approaches have been honed under the most unimaginable of situations, this new expertise should be shared with the international cultural community.
- 6 Twinning initiatives, exchange, and student scholarships could be scaled up. The Ministry of Culture explained there are 4 national conservatories looking for collaboration, in particular physical access to large instruments that are not currently available.
- 7 Scottish and UK theatres are currently supporting writers' exchanges and collaborative projects, but would also like to build institutional connections with Ukrainian theatres. The Ministry of Culture suggested that there are 10 national theatres and over 100 in total in the country, including a lively independent scene. Displaced theatres and artists are looking for artistic mobility and residencies to produce new work.
- 8 The Ukrainian Institute and Architectural schools could be linked to UK architecture, education, and urban planning networks.
- 9 The Ukrainian Institute could help UK museums matchmake with Ukrainian museum peers.
- 10 An initiative from a European Ministry of Culture that has supported over 500 Ukrainian artists, allowing them to study or develop new projects, was especially praised. Such an initiative could be used as a model for other countries, including the UK.

Ideas and suggestions from the *Partnerships* discussion breakout:

Facilitator: **Anna Bubnova, Head of Arts, British Council Ukraine**

Rapporteur: **Stephanie Grant, Director, Cultural Protection Fund, British Council**

- 1** Culture departments are a key player in the war against propaganda. Participants in this discussion were able to list existing examples of collaboration and supporting initiatives, such as the partnerships between Polish orchestras and operas that offer rehearsal and performance spaces for Ukrainian professionals. In Glasgow, Ukrainian students can freely access online resources, and fees are waived for them to study. National Museums Scotland explored Ukrainian heritage in their cold war culture exhibition. In Ireland, Ukrainian heritage was celebrated on St Patrick's day.
- 2** While all these examples matter, it was agreed that the loss of people and knowledge from the country makes the increase of capacity within Ukraine the most important priority.
- 3** Ukraine being known but not understood was a theme, and advocacy, exchange and showcasing were recognised as strong partnership opportunities. The development of lasting cultural relations and diplomacy is key to substantiating our understanding of Ukrainian culture. One practical suggestion was for the UK government to build a UK presence and funding for the Ukrainian Institute to help identify and enable partnership opportunities sector wide.
- 4** Partnerships are not just at institutional level. Communities, schools, and individuals from younger generations can create and formalise relationships and collaborations using platforms in the model of the Erasmus programme, or bi-lateral Creative Europe, or existing networks such as European Festivals Association, International Society for Performing Arts, IETM.
- 5** The importance of Architecture was emphasised due to the social history that it represents, but also because of its physical vulnerability in the face of missiles. One suggestion was for the reorganisation of international organisations, allowing them greater agility and improving their ability to protect heritage. The need for management support is key, as currently a lack of coordination can create imperfect and uneven results.
- 6** Representatives from UK institutions highlighted the need for structured dialogue including issues around legal and planning, allowing them to better understand what key priorities are.
- 7** Potential partnerships were forming in the room. It is crucial that this dialogue and others like it, continue, creating more opportunities for collaboration.

Reflections



Galyna Grygorenko, Deputy Minister of Culture and Information Policy, Ukraine

International platforms where Ukrainian cultural institutions can establish new connections and new partnerships are extremely important for us. The Cultural Leadership Dialogue was a successful step in growing mutual understanding. For a long time, Ukraine has been a white spot, unknown to wider audiences and underrepresented on international scenes. The threat to Ukrainian cultural identity has revealed the gap between awareness and reality. As Oksana Zabuzhko, Ukrainian writer, has said – “You cannot protect what you don’t know about.” I believe that the connections established during the Edinburgh International Culture Summit, as well as awareness about the needs and urgency of protection of cultural ecosystem in Ukraine, will be our shared agenda. We are defending not only our right to freedom, but also protecting Ukrainian culture and heritage which is an integral part of the world culture.



Volodymyr Sheiko, Director General, Ukrainian Institute

Ukraine’s ability to sustain, rebuild, and further develop its war-torn culture ecosystem depends on engagement and solidarity from our international partners. Being a major target in the war, culture and identity are crucial to Ukraine’s agency, survival, and post-war recovery. Strengthening of cultural relations between people and institutions in Ukraine and other countries is crucial to make Ukraine better understood and supported internationally. Such platforms as Ukraine Cultural Leadership Dialogue help build mutually beneficial relationships between key stakeholders of this process and establish Ukraine as a full-fledged participant of international cultural relations.



Clare Adamson, Convenor for the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, Scottish Parliament

Scotland has opened our hearts and our homes to the Ukrainian people during the crisis caused by the illegal attacks on their country and their culture. We have seen so many inspiring and heart-breaking iconic moments of how culture and music can raise spirits at this time, from seven-year-old Amelia Anisovych to the incredible Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra and the Freedom Ballet of Ukraine who performed in our capitol during the Edinburgh Festivals. Our challenge to the Scottish Government, our local authorities, national institutions and culture sector is to ensure that the plight of Ukraine is in their minds, and that all opportunities to build cultural links, both in Scotland and in Ukraine, are embraced through joint working, projects and dialogue.



David Codling, Director, UK/Ukraine Season of Culture, British Council

An onslaught against Ukrainian culture was an explicit and declared intention of the February 2022 invasion. The discussions at the Edinburgh International Culture Summit, introduced so eloquently by leading practitioners from different parts of Ukraine's creative sector, made clear why culture is central to this conflict. Art and cultural practice defy and resist the aggressor because they reflect and express distinct collective memories and symbolism. For the cultural sector to be a force for healing and regeneration it must also be independent, and that independence of the cultural sector is essential to the dignity, prosperity and peace of free Ukraine. The UK Ukraine Season, devised in partnership by the Ukrainian Institute and the British Council, explores exchanges and collaboration between different forms of cultural practice and, as it looks to the future, celebrates the shared values of free expression and independent critical discourse which are fundamental to democracy.



Neil Gray MSP, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development, Scottish Government

I was honoured to attend such an important event. Ukraine is a nation with a rich cultural heritage. Its museums, theatres, libraries and archives are home to great collections of art which document the development of Ukrainian culture, identity and language. It is of vital importance to ensure that these cultural collections are protected for future generations. Scotland stands with the rest of the UK, Europe and the world, in condemnation of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.



Lord Neil Mendoza, Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal, DCMS, UK Government

We enjoyed an impressive set of events. In particular the participation of our Ukrainian colleagues whose contributions were moving, powerful and insightful. The UK stands with Ukraine and our support comes in all forms. Cultural partnerships provide much needed support for Ukrainian artists whilst providing enriching experiences for artists and audiences abroad.



Roy Luxford, Creative Director, Edinburgh International Festival

Edinburgh International Festival was co-founded in 1947 by Rudolph Bing, a refugee who fled to the UK during the rise of Nazi Germany. He sought to create a Festival which could help heal division, and create connection and understanding through shared experience. Our founders understood that the Arts speak a symbolic language that brings us to a more profound understanding of one another, and that principle is one we hold to this day. Participating in the Edinburgh International Culture Summit alongside leaders of Ukraine's cultural sector was a deeply moving experience which reiterated the urgent need for creative collaboration, and the significant impact it can have in times of conflict.



Sir Jonathan Mills, Programme Director, The Edinburgh International Culture Summit.

When I was a music student in Sydney in the 1980s, our tightknit group was augmented in 2nd second year by the arrival of a larger-than-life musician named Viktor. He was accompanied by a strange instrument whose identity was obscured by its travel case; its shape and size being entirely unfamiliar. Was it an overblown French horn? Some strange, gigantic lute? Or a pair of colossal cymbals? No, it was a bandura – a distinctive Ukrainian instrument that was prohibited and purged throughout Ukraine from the 1930s. In revealing this instrument, Viktor forced a bunch of laidback, complacent Australian teenagers to confront the inconvenient truths and uncomfortable situation of artistic censorship and suppression. He revealed the dangers associated with playing the bandura. The very notion of being censored or worse – seriously injured or killed – just for plucking a few strings on a plank of wood, was simply beyond our comprehension. Viktor reminded us of the privilege of studying, composing, and playing music in a free and open society; of the responsibility we have as artists to bring hope to humanity through sharing everyone’s birth right of – music. He challenged our reasons for wanting to be musicians. He played music to express, to preserve and to live within his language, customs, and cultural inheritance. To feel free. In producing this Dialogue, we were only too aware of the enormous personal sacrifices, time, and effort made by all members of the Ukrainian delegation joining us in Edinburgh. I hope Summit 2022 showed them how many people across Europe and the world care about their culture and continue to celebrate it.

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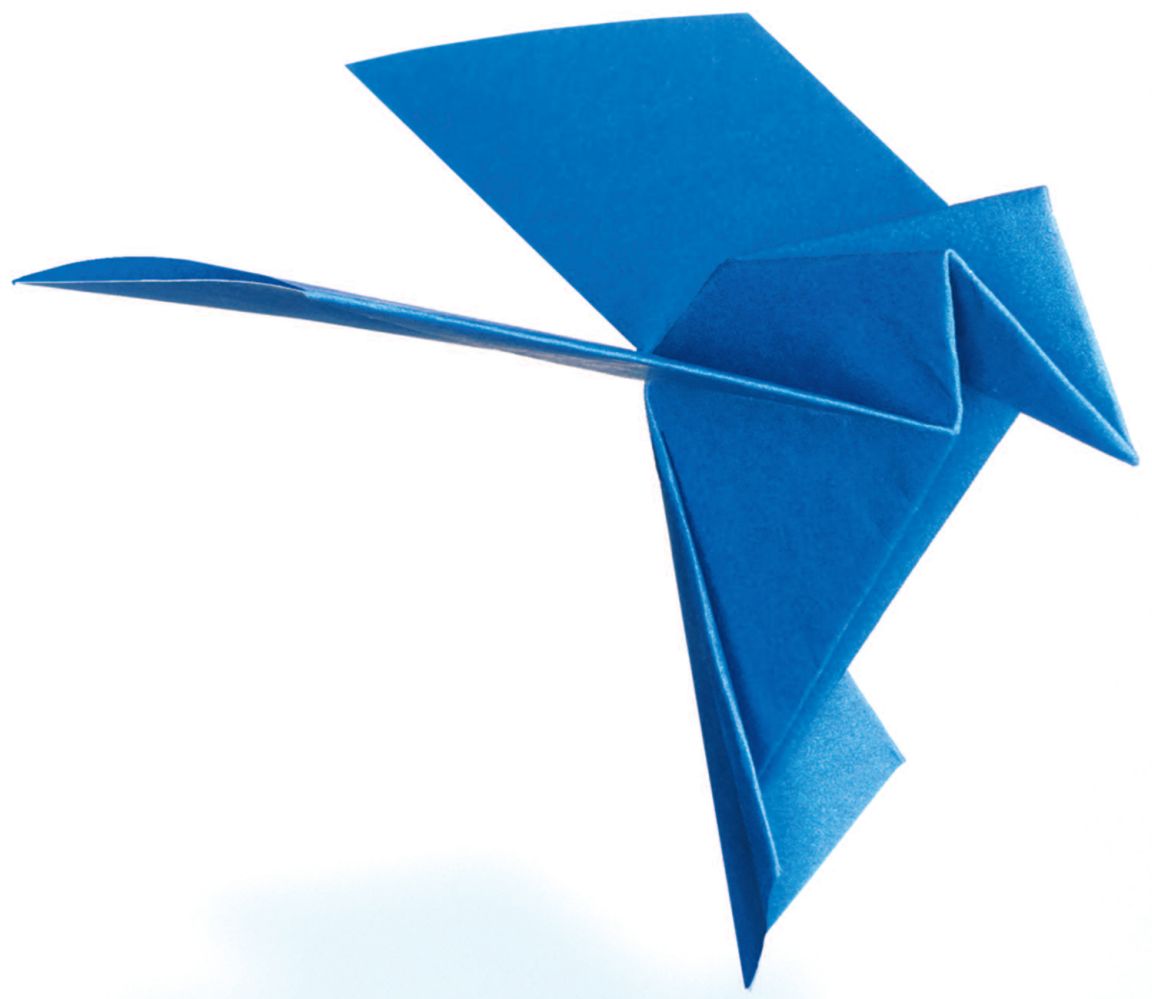
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