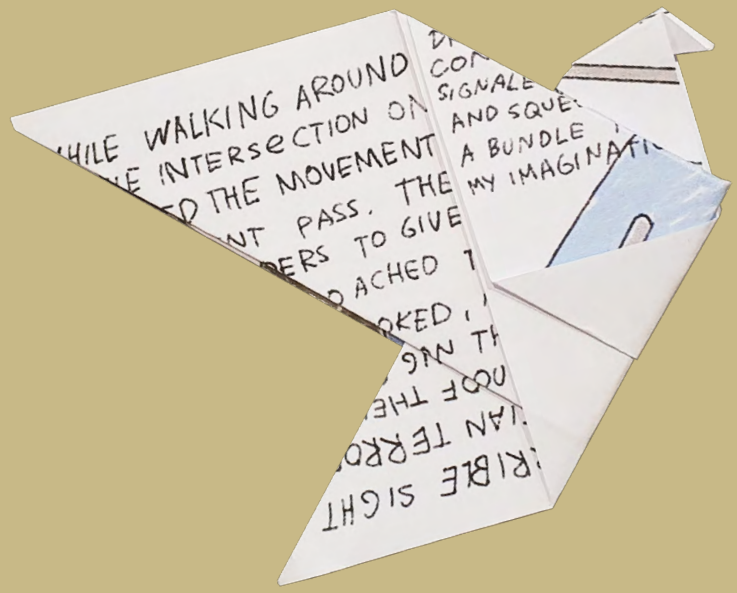
# STARTER KIT:
# WHAT CAN HELP UKRAINIAN ARTS AND CULTURAL PROFESSIONALS?

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# INTRODUCTION

Something has happened now that no one wanted to believe possible. After eight years of war in eastern Ukraine, on 24 February 2022 Russia began a grasp for dominance over the whole of Ukraine in a war of aggression the likes of which we in Europe no longer thought possible.

Since then, millions of Ukrainians have left the country. More and more people are fleeing to western regions of Ukraine trying to survive from Russian bombs and damage in their cities and villages. A significant number of people are willingly staying or are trapped in the brutally destroyed towns and areas, occupied by Russian troops in Chernihiv, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Luhansk, Mariupol, Sumy, Zaporizhzha and other regions of Ukraine.

Many people want to help, though helping is not easy. There are so many activities and possibilities, sometime also a lot of actionism. In addition, many people, for example in Western Europe, know very little about Ukraine and have had no contact with this country. This often leads to misconceptions, excessive demands, or simply to unintentionally putting one's foot in one's mouth.

This »starter kit« seeks to support people who want to help Ukrainian cultural and arts professionals at this terrible time. It offers some selected basic information and defines and categorizes needs based on the thousands of discussions in social media and other group forums.

**About the authors**

**Yaroslav Minkin**, Cultural activist, chairman of the youth organization STAN and trainer Cultural Leadership Academy Ukraine, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.

**Patrick S. Föhl**, international cultural development planner and trainer, Berlin, Germany.

Both have been working together since 2014 in various projects in the field of decentralization, community building and empowerment in the field of culture throughout Ukraine.

The authors have discussed the starter kit with many colleagues in Ukraine, Germany and the U.S. and thank them for their critical review and additions.

**About the artist**

**Masha Vyshedska** is an artist from Ukraine born and raised in Bakhmut, a small town in the Donetsk region. Since 2018 she has been collaborating in socially significant projects with various public organizations. Since the Russian invasion began, artist Masha Vyshedska has been illustrating touching and personal stories of people at war and on the run. Some of these pictures are used in this starter kit.

# UKRAINE: SOME BASIC INFORMATION, RULES AND ADVICE

For many people Ukraine is new or unknown territory. Perception is often shaped by old patterns. In addition, Ukrainian culture, for example, plays almost no role in the Western media (this applies in principle to whole Eastern Europe and, of course, many other countries of the world). As a result, there are also no everyday references. Therefore, it is important to start with very simple information, references and advice:

Ukraine is a **European country**.

Ukraine has **42 million** inhabitants.

Ukraine is geographically almost **twice the size** of Germany.

Ukraine has a strong **independent identity** and culture.

Ukrainian is an **independent language.**

Ukraine has been **independent since 1991** and has been undergoing an intensive transformation process since the **Euromaidan 2014** at the latest.

The war in Ukraine should also be viewed in terms of **Russian colonialism**. This means that existing narratives must be questioned and the spectrum of observation expanded (for example, that many Russians also suffer. That may be true, but it is **relativizing** in a direct comparison and is also not true one-to-one, since they are not exposed to bombs and shelling).

The fact that **many people** in **Ukraine speak Russian** does not mean that they automatically **identify with Russian culture**. They use the language as an everyday language. Moreover, for hundreds of years there have been **repeatedly attempts** on the part of Russia to combat the Ukrainian language.

In the discussion of war, the **boundaries** very often become **blurred**. There is a need for very precise **differentiation** and prioritization in dealing with and talking about the war in Ukraine – **especially on the part of non-Ukrainians**.

It is important that the **focus is on the victims** of the war of aggression and only on them. Anything else is right now inappropriate and – certainly sometimes unintentionally – trivializing.

Most of the media outside Ukraine uses the **Russian translation of Ukrainian city names**. The most prominent example is the capital of Ukraine. The Ukrainian name is Київ, transcribed Kyiv in English or Kyjiw in German. Mostly you will read Kiev or Kiew, the English and German transcription of Киев (Russian name). Sometimes it's the little things that make a difference. **The correct translation** of Ukrainian city names from Ukrainian is a sign that the people and the country and their language are **taken seriously** and not equated with the former Soviet Union or Russia.

There are many ways to help and there are many that help concretely. Besides the many ways to donate money or give humanitarian help, in the meantime, there are already many offers that bundle the possibilities to help or to find help specifically in the field of culture.

Here are some Website-examples – just click logos below:

ARTISTS AT RISK
a Perpetuum Mobilezation

UKRAINIAN EMERGENCY ART FUND

MitOst

Deutscher Kulturrat

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# DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF UKRAINIAN ARTS AND CULTURAL PROFESSIONALS AFFECTED BY THE WAR

Concerning the situation of Ukrainian cultural and arts professionals affected by the war they can be differentiated in four mayor categories. This differentiation is important because not everyone can be helped in the same way and not everyone has the same needs.

## PEOPLE WORKING IN ARTS AND CULTURE ...

**1**

**THAT CANNOT OR DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE**

**2**

**FLEEING AND RELOCATING WITHIN UKRAINE**

**3**

**LOOKING FOR (TEMPORARY) ASYLUM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**4**

**WHO FLED TO OTHER COUNTRIES**

## PEOPLE WORKING IN ARTS AND CULTURE ...

# THAT CANNOT OR DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE

The Ukrainian cultural sector is under transformation since 2014. Lots of opportunities, grants and educational programs created a new generation of cultural and civil society leaders in amalgamated communities all over the country. Special focus of international institutions was put on the eastern and southern part of Ukraine. For eight years cultural workers transformed themselves to actors of change and peace builders. Many were conformists and bureaucrats before that change. Since the war expanded on February 2022 many people didn‘t leave their communities even after the brutal bombing by Russian troops and during the ongoing military occupation in Chernihiv, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Luhansk, Mariupol, Sumy and Zaporizhzha regions of Ukraine. In destroyed settlements people are trying to survive with the help of local farmers. They mostly can’t receive money or humanitarian aid because of intensive fights around them. Also bridges and roads were bombed and people cannot move out of their locations. All these factors have a strong influence on their stressed psycho-social condition.

In occupied areas cultural workers started guerilla humanitarian aid actions to support people in need in their communities. Many significant cultural and educational objects have been transformed to bomb-proof houses. Also, they are involved in the public protests against Russian troops including through their personal art practices. Another huge issue is preserving the cultural heritage which is under urgent threat of being destroyed.

1

## PEOPLE WORKING IN ARTS AND CULTURE ...

# FLEEING AND RELOCATING WITHIN UKRAINE

Many people from cultural spheres decided to move. The primary motivation is to save children and elderly family members. Central regions of Ukraine became an area of ongoing movement. Thousands of people are making a stop in middle-size towns like Aleksandria and Uman. These people are trying to reach western regions of Ukraine or even flee to the European Union. Many cultural and educational objects have been transformed to shelters and bombproof houses. Cultural workers actively support militaries and territorial militia groups by working with received humanitarian aid, creating camouflage nets, cooking, and serving warm food for local defenders.

Western regions of Ukraine become a final destination point and a shelter for hundreds of thousands of people. People are living everywhere, including at night clubs and offices. They lost their homes, their jobs, and all social capital. Lacks of job, volunteer participation and other social activities influence their psycho-social condition. Also many stereotypes about newcomers awakened in social media. All cultural and educational objects were relocated to (the) shelters and bombproof houses as well. Local cultural workers also actively support militaries and territorial militia groups by working with received humanitarian aid, creating camouflage nets, cooking and serving warm food for local defenders. Well-known art institutions presenting theatre performances and other cultural events in the bombproof houses. On the other hand, many cultural practitioners who moved from other regions are out of activities.

2

# LOOKING FOR (TEMPORARY) ASYLUM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

There are at least two different groups of people who moved to the European Union:

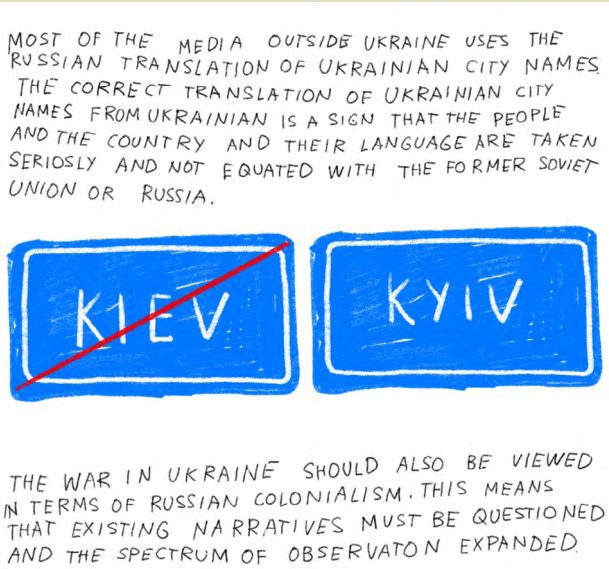
1. People with contacts, who moved to their relatives and friends and are looking for opportunities to work using their networks.

2. People from the cultural sphere without contacts, who are staying in refugee camps or private homes, usually with their and their friends' children and elderly people.

Their main need is guidance and building up networks.

3

# WHO FLED TO OTHER COUNTRIES




Besides the European Union many Ukrainians fled to Moldova. Moldova is one of the main refugee-hosting and transit countries. According to UNHCR up to now almost 300,000 Ukrainian refugees have entered Moldova. More than 100,000 have stayed in Moldova, which makes it the country with the most refugees per-capita. The situation is volatile and is changing rapidly. Many refugees stay in hotels or rented accommodation, and prices are increasing. Temporary accommodations and shelters are urgently needed. The urgent needs identified by UNHCR to date include strengthening and supporting access to mental health and psychosocial support; provision of basic and domestic items including food, and core relief items, education and health services. There is no information yet about the specific situation of cultural workers.

According to UNHCR up to now about 10,000 people fled to Belarus and 270,000 to Russia. In both cases there is little or no information about their situation. There is unconfirmed information that people were deported to Russia against their will and even were put into filtration camps and that Russian police forcibly confiscated passports.

Small numbers of people fled to other countries including Georgia and the U.S.

4

# CHECKLIST: HOW WE CAN SUPPORT UKRAINIAN ARTS AND CULTURAL PROFESSIONALS?

## IN THE UKRAINE

In all cases it is important to stay in contact via digital devices, exchange and sharing of information or even platforms
(e. g. open up own social media accounts to publish information about the war/help, create web talks, seeking for direct contact).

| Region | Area | Needs | Main ways of support |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eastern, northern and southern regions of Ukraine | Bombed areas | • Safe space<br>• Food and water<br>• Electricity and heating<br>• Money in cash<br>• Humanitarian corridors<br>• Make suffering / needs visible | • Basic humanitarian support<br>• No way to give financial support |
| Eastern, northern and southern regions of Ukraine | Occupied areas | • Freedom of expression to show their political position and not to be kidnaped and tortured by Russian army administration | • Informational support<br>• No way to give basic humanitarian support or financial support |
| Central regions of Ukraine | Transition cities | • Support of their activities<br>• Rest<br>• Psychosocial support | • Financial support<br>• Psychosocial support |
| Western regions of Ukraine | Shelter regions | • Rest<br>• Psychosocial support<br>• To be integrated into the community<br>• New ways of work | • Financial support<br>• Psychosocial support<br>• Social integration<br>• Job and/or place to work/practice |

# IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND IN OTHER COUNTRIES

| Region | Area | Needs | Main ways of support |
|---|---|---|---|
| European Union camps | Mainly eastern, but also western Europe | • Basic work<br>• Money for basic needs<br>• Work with trauma<br>• Find new contacts<br>• If they are staying in camps in Germany for example, they are allowed to work (also see box below) | • Financial support<br>• Psychological first aid<br>• Psychosocial support<br>• Social integration |
| European Union – private homes, friends, family | Western Europe | • Money for basic needs<br>• Work with trauma<br>• Find new contacts<br>• Be back to cultural work:<br>  • Jobs<br>  • Grants<br>  • Networking<br>  • Places to show work/exchange/practice | • Financial support<br>• Social integration<br>• Psychological first aid<br>• Psychosocial support<br>• Job and/or place to work/practice |
| Other countries | Moldova | • Basic work<br>• Money for basic needs<br>• Work with trauma<br>• Find new contacts | • Financial support<br>• Psychological first aid<br>• Psychosocial support<br>• Social integration |
| | Russia | Unknown | No way to give support right now |
| | Belarus | Unknown | No way to give support right now |
| | Other countries such as Georgia and U.S. | See boxes for European Union | See boxes for European Union |

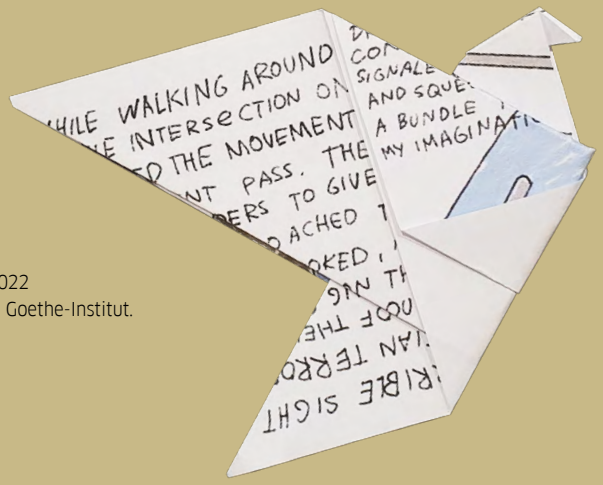
**Useful publication of the authors:**

Cultural Leadership Academy:
Champion of change in the cultural sphere of Ukrainian communities ↗

Road Map for cultural development in Ukraine ↗

»It must go on …« ↗

Kultur und Konflikte
Die Rolle der Kulturarbeit bei nationalen
und internationalen Konflikten ↗

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