

Ukraine gets its first national team of cultural first aiders thanks to EU

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Photo By: CCROM/ACURE, Bohdan Poshyvailo

With support from the EU-funded Creative Europe programme, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) has trained the very first team of cultural first aiders in Ukraine, ready to recover and safeguard the nation's invaluable heritage amid the ongoing armed conflict.

To address the critical situation created by the Russian aggressive war and to help safeguard Ukraine's remaining cultural heritage, the European Commission granted €100,000 to the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property to train the country's very

first team of “cultural first aiders”.

Following three online modules held in May and June 2024, 23 participants from nine regions in Ukraine gathered in Kyiv from 5 to 14 July 2024 for an in-person training. The training equipped participants with the skills and knowledge to provide first aid and planning recovery for movable, immovable, and intangible heritage.

The training also provided participants with a chance to put their learning into practice, developing an action plan for the 160-year-old wooden Historical Church of Viazivka, a national monument severely damaged by shelling. Over three days, with support from disaster risk experts and emergency responders, the trained team of cultural first aiders carried out a thorough damage and risk assessment, enabling them to develop targeted salvage and evacuation plans for the site.

The newly trained team of cultural first aiders is now equipped to assess, mitigate, and reduce disaster and conflict risks to all types of heritage. They are prepared to be deployed to document, secure, and salvage historic structures and valuable collections from museums, libraries, and archives in the event of an emergency. Additionally, the team has developed essential skills to collaborate effectively with emergency responders, civil protection personnel, as well as military and humanitarian aid professionals to ensure coordinated action, while ensuring personal safety and security.

The Ukraine training scheme is supported by the European Commission’s Directorate-General of Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), and organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine (MCIP), the Maidan Museum, the Ukrainian Agency for Cultural Resilience (ACURE) and the Heritage Emergency Response Initiative (HERI).

