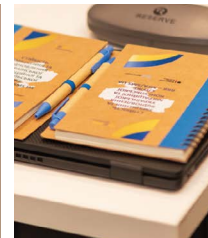
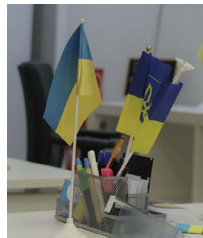



THE ROLE OF UKRAINIAN DIASPORA IN CRISIS RESPONSE, FUTURE RETURN AND RECONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINE: CASE STUDY FROM GERMANY, CZECH REPUBLIC AND POLAND

Resilience, Recovery and Reinforcement of Ukrainian Migration
and Consular Services (RRR-MFA/SMS UA) Project





This report has been produced within the framework of the Resilience, Reinforcement and Recovery of Ukrainian Migration and Consular Services (RRR-MFA/SMS UA) Project and was completed by **Dr. Valeria Lazarenko** (PhD) and edited by the project implementation team.

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INTRODUCTION

About the Project

Resilience, Reinforcement and Recovery of Ukrainian Migration and Consular Services (RRR-MFA/SMS UA) project aims to support the State Migration Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Consular offices abroad) to continuously protect and provide state services and assistance to the citizens of Ukraine. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the resilience, reinforcement and recovery of Ukrainian migration and consular governance by strengthening the capacities of national authorities to ensure safe international mobility of Ukrainian citizens, including preparations for a sustainable return. The project started in October 2022 and is foreseen to run for 36 months. The project is funded by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees of Germany (BAMF) and the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic.

Specific objectives of the project are the following:

-  Ensured efficient services to provide assistance, documentation, information on rights and obligations related to temporary protection status and consultations on voluntary repatriation and reintegration back in Ukraine;
-  Enhanced technical and operational capacities of consular services for the optimisation and modernisation of consular crisis management system;
-  Restored and enhanced migration procedures in Ukraine;
-  Supported harmonisation of migration and consular procedures with the respective EU Acquis, including strengthening anti-corruption measures and human resource management.

The activities of the project include measures to be implemented in Ukraine and in the largest EU host countries of temporary displaced persons from Ukraine: Czech Republic, Germany and Poland. The final beneficiaries of the action are persons fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Moreover, the project aims to provide care to the Ukrainian displaced people arriving to the three destination countries, with strong support from civil society and diaspora organisations; furthermore, the aim is to actively support the organised reception of migrants, early competence checks for labour market integration, economic self-sufficiency, assessment of needs and vulnerabilities, determination of educational needs and opportunities, and later after the war ends, dignified and sustainable return to Ukraine.

Following the Russian military attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the arrival of over 7 million displaced people to various European states within a short period of time represented an unprecedented movement of people seeking protection. After the official activation of EU's Temporary Protection Directive for people fleeing the war in Ukraine, it became apparent that the vulnerability of the new arrivals required exceptional measures from various state and non-state actors, further emphasising the role of the Ukrainian diaspora in relief efforts.

Background

Ukraine has a vibrant and well-organised diaspora active in all EU MS, many officially registered as non-profit associations in the destination countries, with established contacts with local and national governments. As a result of the Russian military attack on Ukraine, diaspora organisations promptly responded to the crisis, providing immediate support to newly arrived migrants, and they continue to carry out initiatives to benefit the Ukrainian migrants and temporarily displaced persons.

The RRR-MFA/SMS UA project aims to provide support to Ukrainian diaspora organisations and civil society to further enhance an organised reception of migrants, strengthen the capacities of the organisation's staff and volunteers, to act as integration mentors for Ukrainian displaced persons during the crisis period and contribute to the future return and reintegration efforts as well as the reconstruction of Ukraine after the war ends. The project has focused on empowering Ukrainian diaspora organisations through various initiatives and activities, networking events, workshops and trainings, mainly focused on capacity-building and engaging Ukrainian diaspora organisations active in the three destination countries: Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic. The project team also carried out an assessment in the three destination countries, held meetings with Ukrainian diaspora representatives and conducted a survey to better understand the needs and challenges the diaspora organisations face prior to launching activities. Since launching the RRR-MFA/SMS project in October 2022, the project team has collected information, analysis, impressions and ideas for what is needed to enhance and deepen diaspora engagement. The main conclusions of the assessment and mapping work confirm that the Ukrainian diaspora to possess enormous potential for the future safe return and reintegration of its citizens as well as rebuilding and reconstruction efforts of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian diaspora emerged as a crucial and proactive force in responding to the crisis following the Russian military attack on Ukraine in February 2022, playing a pivotal role in various aspects of humanitarian aid and support efforts. The Ukrainian diaspora was quick and efficient, mobilising resources, both financial and organisational, to provide immediate assistance to Ukrainian refugees who sought shelter in different parts of the world, particularly in European countries. Through establishing numerous organisations and collaborations with international entities, the diaspora engaged in activities such as humanitarian aid, legal assistance, healthcare provisions, educational support and social integration initiatives for displaced Ukrainians.

The importance of the Ukrainian diaspora in crisis response lies not only in its ability to mobilise resources but also in its unique position as a bridge between Ukraine and the international

community. With deep cultural ties and a shared sense of identity, the diaspora served as a powerful advocate for Ukraine's cause, raising global awareness about the war, the humanitarian crisis and the needs of displaced Ukrainians. By leveraging its networks, the diaspora facilitated partnerships with international organisations, governments, and non-profits, contributing to a more coordinated and effective response to the challenges posed by the conflict.

The Ukrainian diaspora is poised to play a critical role in the return and reintegration of Ukrainian refugees and the broader reconstruction efforts in Ukraine. The diaspora's continued involvement becomes paramount as the conflict subsides and the focus shifts from emergency response to long-term recovery. The diaspora's deep understanding of Ukrainian culture, language and societal nuances positions it as an invaluable asset in crafting policies and initiatives that address the specific needs of returning refugees. This includes facilitating employment opportunities, supporting educational endeavours and contributing to rebuilding communities affected by the conflict.

Furthermore, the diaspora's international connections and advocacy capabilities will be instrumental in garnering continued support from the global community for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. By maintaining and strengthening these bonds, the diaspora can help attract foreign investment, foster cultural exchange and ensure that Ukraine remains a priority on the international agenda. The diaspora's commitment to preserving Ukrainian identity and fostering a sense of belonging among those who have experienced displacement will be central to the success of reintegration efforts and the long-term resilience of Ukrainian communities affected by the war. In essence, the Ukrainian diaspora's role in the aftermath of the 2022 war extends beyond immediate crisis response – it becomes a cornerstone for shaping a hopeful and prosperous future for Ukraine.

In more detail, Chapter 1 covers a general overview of the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany, Czech Republic and Poland, including diaspora organisations in the three destination countries, their activities prior to the Russian military attack on Ukraine in 2022, the response and the ongoing support provided to the Ukrainian displaced persons and other migrants. The chapter also includes the main needs and challenges that the diaspora organisations face in these three countries. Chapter 2 provides information and analysis of the official approach to diaspora engagement, Ukrainian government and its ties to the diaspora and the migrant communities abroad. Chapter 3 covers the role of Ukrainian diaspora organisations and migrant communities in safe return and reintegration as well as rebuilding and reconstruction efforts in Ukraine. Finally, the report includes recommendations and conclusions on the importance of Ukrainian diaspora engagement in the development processes of Ukraine.

Methodology

The report was prepared based on analysing the policies and activities of Ukrainian diaspora organisations in three countries the RRR-MFA/SMS UA project covers: Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. In addition to desk research, study of policies and activity reports as well as observation during the project team activities, results of a questionnaire survey carried out by the RRR-MFA/SMS UA project team were analysed, which includes the needs, challenges and

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observations of Ukrainian diaspora organisation representatives. The survey/questionnaire topics were grouped into several topics: general information about the organisation, funding and support, challenges and difficulties, training and development needs. The responses from representatives of Ukrainian diaspora organisations were analysed, summarised and supplemented by the conclusions of the analytical report presented in the third section of this text.

The surveys were conducted within the Ukrainian diaspora networking events and trainings carried out by the RRR-MFA/SMS UA project team. The survey results include responses from the representatives of Ukrainian diaspora organisations from Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Greece, Estonia, Portugal, Croatia, Slovakia, Italy, Georgia, Spain, Germany, Canada, Montenegro, Moldova, Belgium and North Macedonia.

General disclaimer: The authors of this report acknowledge the enormous role of the Ukrainian diaspora. The analysis of the diaspora in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic may not reflect every organisation, association, community, entity or movement. Nevertheless, the report aims to summarise the overall contribution of the Ukrainian diaspora and migrant communities to the support provided to Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons in the three destination countries as well as the role they may play in the return and reconstruction efforts after the war.

CHAPTER 1

UKRAINIAN DIASPORA ORGANISATIONS IN GERMANY, CZECH REPUBLIC AND POLAND

1.1 General overview of Ukrainian diaspora in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic

Historically, a substantial part of the Ukrainian diaspora comprised those with Ukrainian ancestry, descendants of the migrants from previous decades, particularly those forced to migrate during the 1920s (due to the Soviet occupation) and 1940s (post-WWII). Ethnic Ukrainians were born in EU countries and held EU citizenship while preserving Ukrainian culture and language, thus being considered members of the Ukrainian diaspora.¹ Research indicates that the so-called ‘old diaspora’ typically tends to be conservative in preserving their cultural heritage and maintaining close ties within the community.^{2, 3}

Another wave of Ukrainian emigration started in the 1990s when people of specific origin were allowed to migrate under special conditions such as the ‘Kontingentflüchtlinge’ (contingent migrants of German or Jewish origin) and were welcomed in Germany, or those able to prove Polish roots under the ‘Karta Polaka’ programme in Poland. People arriving under with these conditions from Ukraine also preserved the cultural ties with Ukraine.⁴ Some of the most notable Ukrainian diaspora organisations were founded by the representatives of the ‘old diaspora’ mentioned above, including those who migrated from Ukraine in early 20th century and their descendants.

Prior to the outbreak of the full-scale Russian military attack on Ukraine, the European Union had hosted a significant Ukrainian diaspora and migrant communities. According to Eurostat,⁵ as of the end of 2021, 1.57 million Ukrainian citizens resided in the EU, constituting the third most significant group of non-EU citizens, surpassed by citizens of Morocco and Türkiye. The majority of Ukrainian nationals resided in Poland, Italy and the Czech Republic. Many recent migrants from

1 Isajiw, W. W. (2010). The Ukrainian Diaspora. In *The call of the homeland* (pp. 289-319). Brill.

2 Satzewich, V. (2002). *The Ukrainian Diaspora* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203217498>

3 Khanenko-Friesen, N. (2015). *Ukrainian otherlands: Diaspora, homeland, and folk imagination in the twentieth century*. University of Wisconsin Press.

4 Trzeszczyńska, P., Demel, G., & Błaszczak-Rozenbaum, B. (2023). Heritage in Diaspora-Forming Processes: Encounters of Local Ukrainians and Migrants from Ukraine in Poland. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 1-20.

5 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ukrainian_citizens_in_the_EU




Ukraine had moved to EU countries for employment opportunities or arrived for educational purposes and subsequently settled in the host country. Ukrainian diaspora organisations were active internationally before the full-scale war, mainly focusing on promoting Ukrainian culture, supporting the Ukrainian migrant communities and advocating for national interests. Some were founded in EU countries, while others were European branches of organisations originally established in the US and/or Canada. For example, the [Ukrainian World Congress \(UWC\)](#), one of the largest and most influential Ukrainian diaspora organisations globally, has focused on representing the interests of Ukrainians in various countries, including those within the EU. Founded in 1967, the UWC is recognised by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organisation with special consultative status and has a participatory status as an international NGO with the Council of Europe. Prior to the Russian military attack on Ukraine, the UWC was engaged in advocacy, human rights and cultural initiatives, often working closely with international institutions and the Ukrainian government. Following the outbreak of the full-scale war, the UWC became one of the biggest platforms for disseminating information about the country, drawing public attention and raising funds for those affected by the war.

Even though the UWC is a non-governmental organisation and does not receive any funding from the Ukrainian government, the organisation still cooperates closely with state agencies. This cooperation is based on a multilateral Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) concluded with Ukrainian authorities before the full-scale war, including with the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers (2020) and the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Information Policy (2016, 2021). In January 2023, the organisation also concluded a MoC with the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence and the Ukrainian Investment Promotion Office UkraineInvest. The main areas of partnership are strategic communication, such as the commemoration of [Holodomor](#), strategic campaigns like [#UniteWithUkraine](#), fundraising efforts and countering disinformation. Ukrainian authorities recognised the efforts made by UWC, honouring the organisation with the Presidential [award](#) in January 2023.

Another example of an active Ukrainian diaspora organisation is [Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organisation](#). Founded in 1911 in Lviv (under Austrian-Hungarian rule at the time) and banned during the Soviet era, Plast has remained active as a diaspora organisation and played a crucial role in preserving Ukrainian culture for those born abroad. In addition to the US and Canada, Plast has regional branches in various European countries, including [Poland](#), [Germany](#), [Slovakia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Latvia](#), [Estonia](#), [Belgium](#), [Austria](#) and [Ireland](#). As a scouting movement, Plast mostly focuses on youth development, cultural preservation and community engagement. Since the beginning of the full-scale war, Plast branches have been active in collecting humanitarian aid and welcoming Ukrainian temporarily displaced children to the hosting countries.

Among other internationally active organisations are those associated with Ukrainian churches. The Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian-Greek Catholic churches have a significant presence in the EU and have served as hubs for cultural and religious activities within the Ukrainian community. Religious associations collaborate with each other and governmental and non-governmental entities in the EU to address issues of common concern such as human rights, cultural preservation and the political situation in Ukraine. They have also played a crucial role in raising awareness about Ukraine and advocating for its interests at the international level.

It is important to note that most of the Ukrainian diaspora organisations, from local to international levels, had a pressing need to change their focus and activities following Russia's full-scale military attack on Ukraine in February 2022. Existing Ukrainian diaspora organisations played a crucial role in both responding to the humanitarian crisis in the country and accommodating forced migrants from Ukraine to EU countries. Their responses have included various humanitarian, advocacy and support efforts, which can be categorised into three main focuses:

-  **Humanitarian aid:** Raising funds and collecting donations to provide humanitarian aid to those affected by the war in Ukraine, including medical supplies, clothing, food and other necessities for internally and temporarily displaced persons. Some Ukrainian diaspora groups have initiated their relief efforts and projects to address specific needs (including support to orphanages, schools and medical facilities in conflict-affected areas).
-  **Supporting people seeking temporary protection in EU countries:** Providing both informational and on-the-ground support to persons seeking temporary protection in EU countries, including assistance with documentation, employment, housing and social integration. Networking has also been an essential part of their work. Some Ukrainian diaspora organisations have been advocating for changes in asylum policies in their host countries to provide more opportunities for Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons.
-  **Awareness raising and advocacy efforts:** Ukrainian diaspora organisations have been active in raising awareness about the situation in Ukraine and advocating for international support and intervention. They have often engaged in advocacy efforts to influence the policies of their host countries and international organisations, organising pro-Ukrainian demonstrations and performances in public areas. Cultural and educational initiatives also helped to maintain and promote Ukrainian culture and heritage among those displaced by the war and advocate for the country's heritage in the hosting countries.

Furthermore, many diaspora organisations have collaborated with international organisations, government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide coordinated support to Ukrainian migrants. These collaborations have continuously streamlined the delivery of assistance and ensured that resources have been allocated effectively.

It is important to note that the specific activities and contributions of Ukrainian diaspora organisations may vary depending on their size, resources and geographical location. These organisations often work in partnership with local and national governments, humanitarian agencies and other NGOs to address various challenges Ukrainian migrants face as a result of the conflict. All of the activities mentioned above contribute significantly to preserving Ukraine's human capital. More importantly, diaspora organisations kept Ukraine high on the agenda for many international actors as well as media, facilitating the provision of humanitarian, financial and military assistance to Ukraine.



1.2 Diaspora organisations in Germany

1.2.1 Overview

According to Germany's official statistics portal, the number of Ukrainian citizens reached 1,164,200⁶ at the end of 2022, making the Ukrainian migrant community second largest after the Turkish. This marked a significant increase from the previous year, where the number stood at 155,310, indicating that more than a million newcomers received temporary protection after the outbreak of the full-scale war. However, estimating the number of ethnic Ukrainians living in Germany with citizenship other than Ukrainian is challenging. Yet, these persons likely form a substantial part of the diaspora and actively participate in various organisations supporting Ukraine.

The 20th century Ukrainian diaspora in Germany resulted from various economic and geopolitical factors. Some Ukrainians arrived as labour migrants in the early years of the century, while others came in the 1920s following the Ukrainian national movement's failure.⁷ This is when, in addition to general support for Ukrainian organisations from the Weimar Republic, a Ukrainian Scientific Institute was established and the daily newspaper *Ukrainske Slovo* was published in Berlin. The Union of Ukrainian Students in Germany was also founded during this period. In the aftermath of WWII, a significant wave of Ukrainian displaced persons arrived in Germany,

⁶ Source: The Statistical Service of Germany, <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Tabelle/rohdaten-auslaendische-bevoelkerung-zeitreihe.html>

⁷ Cipko, S. (1991). In search of a new home: Ukrainian emigration patterns between the two world wars. *Journal of Ukrainian studies*, 16(1), 3

and many were housed in camps and hostels throughout the American, British and French occupation zones. The international community, including the Ukrainian diaspora organisations, provided support and assistance to the displaced persons and those who refused to return to the Soviet Union and remained in Germany, especially in the western part (Bavaria was home to about 44% of the Ukrainian diaspora). Munich was one of the biggest centres of the Ukrainian community, with the opening of the Ukrainian Free University in 1950 and the Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences. The Ukrainian Coordinating Committee, with a notable influence from the Ukrainian Youth Association⁸ played an important role as the community's political and social representative. These organisations, along with regional and local diaspora communities, provided assistance, cultural support and social services to the displaced Ukrainians. Over the years, Ukrainians who remained in Germany integrated into German society while maintaining their cultural and ethnic identity.

The fall of the Iron Curtain and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 20th century led to new waves of Ukrainian migration to Western Europe, including Germany.⁹ Ukrainians sought economic opportunities and political freedom in Germany and other Western European countries and were able to settle in Germany as *Kontigent refugees* if they could prove their German or Jewish roots.¹⁰

Ukrainian migration to Germany continued into the 21st century, with Ukrainians coming for work, education and family reunification. This diaspora was important in welcoming Ukrainians seeking temporary protection in Germany.

1.2.2 Diaspora organisations in Germany and their activities before 2022

Before the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine, several Ukrainian diaspora organisations were active in Germany, most of them working closely with the Ukrainian Embassy. A number of active and prominent organisations were united under the umbrella of Association of Ukrainian Organisations in Germany (Об'єднання Українських Організацій у Німеччині, Dachverband der Ukrainischen Organisationen in Deutschland e.V.), a member of the Ukrainian World Congress. This organisation has focused on promoting Ukrainian culture as well as supporting Ukrainian migrants in Germany. Moreover, 20 other organisations are under their umbrella, including but not limited to:

- Plast, the Ukrainian Scouting Association;
- Ukrainian Youth Association, an organisation with multiple branches around the world, including Germany, focused on cultural and educational activities to promote Ukrainian heritage among young people;
- Association of Ukrainian Students in Germany, provides support for educational and cultural initiatives.

8 Kobchenko, K. (2020). Ukrainian emigration to Germany after WWII: Formation and Self-Representation of a Transnational Community (1945-1991). *Euxeinos: Governance & Culture in the Black Sea Region*, 10(30)

9 Vollmer, B., & Malynovska, O. (2016). Ukrainian migration research before and since 1991. *Ukrainian migration to the European Union: Lessons from migration studies*, 17-33

10 Panagiotidis, J. (2020). Post-Soviet immigrants in Germany: current research perspectives. *Migration from the Newly Independent States: 25 Years After the Collapse of the USSR*, 277-298

Furthermore, the Central Association of Ukrainians in Germany (Zentralverband der Ukrainer in Deutschland) has operated independently, working mainly on strengthening connections between the Ukrainian community and German state actors.

Regional Ukrainian diaspora organisations have also been active in most of the federal states in Germany, for example, in Berlin (Alliance for Ukrainian Organisations), Hamburg (Feine Ukraine, Deutsche-Ukrainische Kulturverein), Thüringen (Ukrainische Landsleute in Thuringen e.V.), Lower Saxony (Ukrainische Verein in Niedersachsen), Bayern (Ukrainian Union of Franken) as well as on macro-regional level, e.g., the Union of Ukrainians of Northern Germany. Some organisations cover city and municipal levels such as the Ukrainian Community in Frankfurt, the Ukrainian Union in Augsburg, Platform Dresden, SIC Kulturzentrum in Schwerin, German-Ukrainian Centre in Rostock, AG Ukrainian Centre in Chemnitz, German-Ukrainian Community in Kiel, German-Ukrainian Community in Freiburg, Freie Ukraine in Braunschweig and many others. These organisations were mainly founded in the early 2000s by the members of the Ukrainian community.

An online media platform Ukrainian Dim was launched in 2020, serving the Ukrainian diaspora in Berlin. Kul'tura Agency, established in 2014, has focused on promoting Ukrainian art and culture, organising exhibitions and meetings with Ukrainian artists and representing the country at the annual Karneval der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin.

Ukrainian diaspora organisations in Germany have actively engaged in various projects and initiatives over the years to support the Ukrainian community and promote Ukrainian culture. While the specifics of the projects vary, some of the notable endeavours and areas of support include the following:



Cultural and educational events: Ukrainian diaspora organisations in Germany have often organised cultural and educational events such as art exhibitions, music concerts, dance performances, lectures and meetings with Ukrainian cultural figures. These events aim to showcase Ukrainian culture, history, traditions and enhance the capacity of the Ukrainian community. In addition, many organisations (e.g., Central Union of Ukrainians in Germany and German-Ukrainian Union in Düsseldorf) run Saturday/Sunday schools for children, with a primary focus on teaching the Ukrainian language and culture, sometimes incorporating a certain degree of religious education. Notable examples include the Ukrainian School in Berlin specialised in humanitarian education as well as the Ridne Slowo School in Düsseldorf.



Language and heritage preservation: Ukrainian diaspora organisations actively support initiatives focused on preserving the Ukrainian language and heritage. This includes language classes for children and adults, workshops and publications that help Ukrainian expatriates and their families maintain their cultural roots.



Scholarships and educational support: Recognising the importance of education, some organisations provide scholarships and financial support to Ukrainian students in Germany to help them pursue their education and professional goals while staying connected to their cultural heritage.



Humanitarian aid: Since the outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine in 2014, several organisations have rallied to provide humanitarian aid and support to those affected by the conflict. This assistance included sending medical supplies, clothing and other necessities to Ukraine.



Advocacy and awareness: Ukrainian diaspora organisations actively engage in advocacy efforts, organising rallies, meetings with government officials and awareness-raising campaigns to shed light on Ukraine's political, social and economic situation.



Cultural centres and community hubs: Many local organisations established cultural centres and community hubs for the Ukrainian community. These centres often host various events, including language classes, cultural workshops and art exhibitions.



Support for Ukrainian migrants: The organisations also extend their assistance to Ukrainian migrants by providing assistance with paperwork, housing, employment and social integration.



Moreover, online communities, especially on Facebook ([Ukrainians in Germany](#), [Ukrainians of Germany](#), [Ukrainians in Berlin](#), [Ukrainian Women in Berlin](#) and numerous local and regional communities) and on Telegram ([Ukrainer_in_Deutschland](#), [Ukrainian In Germany](#), [DeutscheUkraine](#), [Here in Berlin](#)) have played a crucial role for the Ukrainian diaspora. Even though the online communities are not affiliated with specific organisations and lack institutionalised structures, they connect thousands of diaspora members, facilitating networking and the exchange of information about Ukraine-related events.

Before the outbreak of the full-scale war, Ukrainian diaspora organisations in Germany primarily focused on cultural promotion and community integration, with many regional organisations involving children in Ukraine-related events, celebrations and language courses. However, after the outbreak of the full-scale war, the priorities of the diaspora organisations changed and became focused on raising funds and providing humanitarian aid, raising awareness of the war in Ukraine (including both sharing information on websites and organising pro-Ukrainian events and demonstrations) and supporting people arriving in Germany seeking temporary protection.

1.2.3 Response to the recent arrival of the displaced persons from Ukraine and support provided to them

Support for temporarily displaced persons in Germany is typically provided through collaborative efforts by established Ukrainian diaspora organisations, local and national government agencies, humanitarian organisations and NGOs. These agencies work together to address the needs of displaced persons, including various provisions such as housing, legal assistance, healthcare, education and support for social integration.

With the sudden influx of Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons in Germany, local diaspora organisations played a crucial role. Many offered *immediate on-the-ground support*, facilitating emergency accommodation, providing translation assistance at arrival centres and government offices and site-specific information on government assistance. In the initial months following the outbreak of war, assisting Ukrainians arriving in Germany became the primary focus for most diaspora organisations.

In the following months, as the urgency for emergency and humanitarian relief decreased, established diaspora organisations have been engaged in additional initiatives and activities:

- **Organising pro-Ukrainian demonstrations:** Organisations with existing institutionalised structures and connections to the municipalities, with knowledge of German federal and state legislation (e.g., notification period, permissions needed), played a critical role in organising demonstrations and rallying people to express solidarity with Ukraine, as well as to raise awareness of local population about the current situation and needs in Ukraine.
- **Facilitating Ukrainian-themed fundraising events:** Institutional structures and networks were pivotal for organising events aimed to both raising funds to keep Ukraine in focus and

consolidate Ukrainian community. These events include performances by Ukrainian artists, hosting art exhibitions, Ukrainian food markets, etc.

- ▶ **Supporting Ukrainians coming to Germany for recovery and rehabilitation:** Germany provides extensive healthcare opportunities for wounded Ukrainian military and civilians, therefore, those familiar with the German healthcare system or who can provide qualified translation services are highly needed. Local organisations, such as *Feine Ukraine* in Hamburg, indicate this activity as one of their priorities.
- ▶ **Empowering the Ukrainian community:** Several organisations have shifted their focus to becoming platforms that facilitate the Ukrainian activist movement and empower Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons, providing an alternative to employment during their temporary stay in Germany. Considering the demographic structure of the people fleeing the war (women and children), the focus of such activities was centred on supporting women and children in particular.

Some of the organisations have completely pivoted their focus and activities. One of the examples is *Cinemova*, a Berlin-based organisation initially established as a Ukrainian cinema club. Since the beginning of the full-scale war, they launched film screenings aimed to raise funds for Ukraine. Starting in autumn 2023, *Cinemova* became active in organising lectures and public events for Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons on different aspects of integration, including entering the job market and political participation (in collaboration with international and German-based NGOs, especially the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and support from Berlin municipal authorities). The organisation also advocates for better integration of Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons at the municipal level. Several other Ukrainian-founded organisations also aim to build capacities of Ukrainian activists and migrant communities, offering the organisations support with communication (*Common Sense Communications*), training for trainers (*LaruHelpsUkraine*), expertise on accounting and fundraising (*OPORA e.V. Eberswalde*) and exchange among the NGOs (Ukrainian-German organisation *Synergia*).

A number of prominent and active diaspora organisations emerged quickly after the onset of the full-scale war, primarily founded by members of the Ukrainian diaspora who had not previously been involved in activism. One prominent example is *Vitsche*, a Berlin-based Ukrainian association, founded in early 2022, with the aim to “organise protests, cultural and educational events, help refugees and organise humanitarian aid for Ukraine”. The association is currently the main organiser of creative Ukrainian demonstrations and public performances in Berlin. *Vitsche* also works with local activists, co-organising public events, exhibitions and music events. They are also known for their interventions in Berlin’s public space, most notably the erection of the Monument to Fallen Ukrainians in front of the Russian Embassy in Berlin, and the renaming of the popular Café Moskau into Café Kyiv.

Newly emerged organisations aim to provide information and consultations to support the integration and adaptation of the temporarily displaced persons. Among many organisations in this area are the Ukrainian Consultancy Centre in Dresden, Ukrainian-German Association *Opora* in Essen, *Association of Ukrainian Women* in Duisburg, *Ukrainian Association* in Zwickau

and the Ukrainian-German Association Dach in Lübeck. Another example of an organisation that specialises in consultancy and information provision to migrants is the [Ukrainian Consultation Centre](#), jointly established by a humanitarian aid organisation [LaruHelpsUkraine e.V.](#) and [ICMPD](#), and provides a wide range of consultations as well as professional and personal support to Ukrainians in Berlin. The centre offers online and offline counselling on numerous topics, including but not limited to filling out documents and bureaucracy-related matters, preparation of paperwork, matters related to education or childcare, and more.

Other organisations were founded by temporary protection status holders, specifically targeting others in similar circumstances. For instance, [Kwitne Queer](#), a Ukrainian LGBTQ organisation founded by persons under temporary protection who declared their mission to unite and empower the Ukrainian queer community in Germany. In addition to providing information, the organisation also hosts informal community events in Berlin. [Association of HIV-positive Ukrainians in Germany 'PlusUkrDe'](#) aims to counsel and support HIV-positive Ukrainians at all stages of integration, providing medical assistance and consultations.

In some cases, the new Ukrainian diaspora members, those who arrived in Germany and received temporary protection status immediately after the outbreak of the full-scale war, joined existing organisations, facilitating dialogue and enhancing solidarity among different migrant communities. An example is [Amal](#), a Frankfurt-based media platform funded by the Association of Evangelical Publicists in 2016 as a specific media for migrants and refugees in Germany. In 2022, Amal welcomed a Ukrainian team creating a Ukrainian version of the media. Amal currently covers life in three cities: Frankfurt, Berlin and Hamburg.

Some early response initiatives occurred within the Ukrainian community without prior institutionalisation (which followed afterward to comply with the legislative rules on accumulating donations). The project [AskSchmidt](#) is a good example, a chat service in Telegram run by volunteers aimed to support daily life of Ukrainian migrants by providing them with information on settling down and navigating the German bureaucracy.



1.3 Diaspora organisations in Poland

1.3.1 Overview

Poland is an interesting case when it comes to the Ukrainian diaspora, mainly due to intertwined historical ties. Ukrainians in Poland are considered to be an autochthonous (indigenous) population, which prior to the Soviet-orchestrated resettlements of 1944-1945 and Operation Vistula (1947), lived mainly in the south-eastern part of Poland.^{11 12} Ukrainian territories that had been part of Poland before the WWII came under Soviet control and Ukrainians in Poland faced pressure to assimilate into the Soviet system. This period had a significant impact on the Ukrainian community in Poland.¹³

According to the latest general population census conducted in Poland in 2021,¹⁴ the number of Ukrainian nationals at the time was more than 176,000, making them the biggest foreign-born population in Poland. The vast majority of ethnic Ukrainians live in the northern and western regions of the country. This population is officially considered a minority, rather than a diaspora due to their Polish citizenship, historical dispersion in the specific region and compact living as

11 Motyka, G. (2022). "Chapter 1 Gordian Knot. The Ukrainian Problem in the Second Polish Republic". In *From the Volhynian Massacre to Operation Vistula*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Schöningh. https://doi.org/10.30965/9783657795376_002

12 Trzecznyńska, P., Demel, G. & Błaszczak-Rozenbaum, B. Heritage in Diaspora-Forming Processes: Encounters of Local Ukrainians and Migrants from Ukraine in Poland. *Int. Migration & Integration* (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-023-01064-2>

13 Lapshyna, I. (2019). Do diasporas matter? The growing role of the Ukrainian diaspora in the UK and Poland in the development of the homeland in times of war. *Central and Eastern European migration review*, 8(1), 51-73

14 Statistics Poland / National Census / National Population and Housing Census 2021 / Final results of the National Population and Housing Census 2021 / Size and demographic-social structure in the light of the 2021 Census results

a community. Nevertheless, the organisations representing their interests maintain close links to the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland, which includes persons who migrated to the country for various reasons while maintaining close ties with their homeland.

The Ukrainian community in Poland has grown in recent years due to several factors, including economic opportunities, education and historical ties between the two nations. Since the 1990s, economic migration from Ukraine to Poland has become an observable trend. The opening of borders and economic opportunities in Poland attracted many Ukrainians seeking employment and better living conditions. The demand for labour in sectors such as agriculture, construction and services contributed to the growth of the Ukrainian migrant population. At the same time, the number of Ukrainian students choosing to study at Polish universities and continue to work in Poland has increased, forming a significant part of the Ukrainian diaspora and migrant communities in the country. As with any migrant community, Ukrainians in Poland face a number of challenges, including issues related to integration and obtaining a legal status; however, efforts are ongoing to address these challenges and support the Ukrainian community.

Due to close historical ties between Ukraine and Poland, many people living in Ukraine have ethnic Polish roots. As a result, they were able to apply for the *Karta Polaka* (Polish Card), a document confirming their membership of the Polish nation.¹⁵ As this document guaranteed access to the Polish education and labour market, many Ukrainians took advantage of this measure to migrate. Contrary to the notion of consolidating the 'Polish community in Poland', Ukrainians who migrated this way did not sever their ties with Ukraine; instead, they began to foster the development of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland. This phenomenon reveals the nuanced interplay between historical ties, migration patterns and the coexistence of multiple identities in the context of Ukrainian-Polish relations.

1.3.2 Diaspora organisations in Poland and their activities before 2022

Before the outbreak of the full-scale war, the Ukrainian community in Poland was represented by numerous organisations and associations. Their efforts and activities can be summarised by the diversity their work, more specifically:



Cultural representation and community activities of the Ukrainian minorities: The Ukrainian diaspora and migrant community associations in Poland have taken steps to preserve their Ukrainian identity and connect the community culturally and socially. One of the largest is the Association of Ukrainians in Poland (Związek Ukraińców w Polsce), founded in 1990. Its activities include establishing cultural organisations, community centres and events celebrating Ukrainian traditions, language, and heritage, such as cultural and youth festivals in various Polish cities. The Association was also an umbrella organisation for smaller associations, such as the Association of Ukrainians in Podlasia (a region with a large Ukrainian minority) or the Union of Lemks (Zjednoczenie Łemków). These organisations also run media platforms covering life as

¹⁵ Sendhardt, B. (2017). Theorizing the Karta Polaka. Debordering and rebordering the limits of citizenship, territory and nation in the EU's eastern neighbourhood. *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*. Pipss. org, (18).



a minority, such as Nashe Slovo and Vatra magazines. The Ukrainian scout organisation Plast has been active in many big cities nationwide.



Educational efforts: Since Ukrainians are recognised as a national minority in Poland, Ukrainian language has a special status.¹⁶ According to the interpretation of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Poland, in its educational system, only representatives of the Ukrainian national minority – Polish citizens of Ukrainian origin – have the right to Ukrainian language education. Furthermore, Ukrainian NGOs have established centres for Ukrainian language and culture as separate extracurricular activities, mostly in forms of Saturday schools, Vshkolu or extracurricular educational centres in Warsaw, Krakow and Wroclaw.



Networking and community life of recent diaspora: Ukrainians in Poland have made significant strides in integrating into various aspects of Polish society. While language and cultural differences present challenges, efforts have been made to facilitate the social integration of the Ukrainian community. Both governmental and non-governmental initiatives in Poland have aimed to support and assist the Ukrainian community, including legal assistance, language courses and programmes to help Ukrainians integrate into Polish society. For example, Nasz Wybór (established in 2009) aims to help Ukrainian migrants in Poland integrate into Polish society, introducing the Ukrainian culture to Poles and carrying out information campaigns, publishing a

¹⁶ According to the Law “On National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages” of 06.01.2005

newspaper Nasz Wybor for Ukrainians living in Poland and operating the online portal www.naszwybir.pl. The Foundation has organised regular meetings with cultural figures and conducted sociological research on the life of the Ukrainian diaspora. In addition, in 2014, the Nasz Wybor Foundation established the Ukrainian House in Warsaw to consolidate and support the Ukrainian community in Warsaw. At the moment, Nasz Wybor Foundation is in the process of rebranding it to Ukrainian House.

Euromaidan Warsaw is another active organisation when it comes to consolidating the Ukrainian diaspora and mobilising its efforts to express solidarity with Ukraine and raise funds to support those affected by the Russian military invasion in 2014. The Polish-Ukrainian Institute has been working in Krakow since 2019 to provide necessary information to Ukrainians living in Krakow and promote their integration, adaptation and development in the new environment. Another organisation, Foundation Ukraine, has been working in Wroclaw since 2013 and was established to support the adaptation, integration, personal and professional development of Ukrainian migrants. Since 2016, it has been running a community centre, the Ukrainian Centre for Culture and Development (CUKR). Foundation Ukraine also established the Institute for Migrants' Rights (IPM) and developed the Migrants' Info Point. All these diaspora organisations, with established community hubs in major cities, took active action to support Ukrainians arriving in Poland with the start of the full-scale war.

1.3.3 Response to the arrival of displaced persons from Ukraine and support provided to them

At the onset of the full-scale war, Poland became the main destination for temporarily displaced persons seeking to leave Ukraine. For eighteen months, Poland led in hosting the highest number of Ukrainian migrants, only relinquishing its position to Germany in late 2023. It is important to note that well-organised Ukrainian diaspora organisations and media platforms quickly shifted their focus to providing assistance to newly arriving persons, including providing medical aid, volunteering at the borders, organising logistics, collecting humanitarian aid, providing translation assistance, assisting with accommodation and disseminating information about other support efforts.

Polish organisations were at the forefront of on-the-ground support for millions of people arriving in the country seeking temporary protection, and they continue to play a crucial role in supporting migrants within the country. As in other countries, existing diaspora organisations needed volunteers and activists, and this involvement became significant for Ukrainians with temporary protection status.

The main activities of the Ukrainian diaspora organisations – both already existing and those established after 24 February 2022 – can be grouped in four main streams:

- **Unprecedented on-the-ground support:** Existing Polish organisations concentrated on supporting millions of people arriving in Poland, providing immediate care and shelter, and

facilitating logistics to further destinations. In addition to direct support and volunteering at the Polish-Ukrainian border, some organisations created platforms to organise multi-dimensional support for Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons, for example, Euromaidan Warszawa created a website to provide Ukrainians with free transport and accommodation in Poland. Direct psychological support (provided by Ukrainian-speaking specialists) for the newly arrived was also offered by organisations such as Euromaidan Warszawa in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross. It is important to note that Ukrainian migrants continue to arrive in Poland, with border towns offering emergency assistance, provided by volunteers and local organisations such as Narodnyj Dim in Przemyśl (run by the Association of Ukrainians in Poland), offering emergency shelter, transport and counselling to new arrivals.

- ▶ **Humanitarian support and fundraising:** Fundraising for those affected by the war in Ukraine was one of the main activities of many organisations. The Euromaidan-Warsaw social initiative set up the Stand with Ukraine foundation, initially to collect humanitarian aid, and later shifting its focus to the reconstruction of Ukraine. Fundraising campaigns were also coordinated with events in public spaces, charity fairs, crowdfunding projects and festivals.
- ▶ **Consolidation of the Ukrainian community in Poland:** Several organisations have expanded their focus to include community centres where the Ukrainian community can meet, network and engage in various activities. These centres are crucial for those Ukrainians who find participation in Ukrainian-themed events a valuable asset during prolonged unemployment. Examples include Ukrainski Dom in Warsaw, which offers in-person and remote counselling, job search assistance, free language courses and regular events for the Ukrainian community. Another centre that also caters to Ukrainian migrants is Wsparcia (supported by the Danish Refugee Council), which aims to support the Ukrainian migrant community in the country. Similar community centres exist in other Polish cities, such in Gdynia, Lublin, Wrocław and Krakow. Another example of a community centre established on the basis of an existing diaspora organisation is the TUTU centre in Rzeszów, which was set up by the Subcarpathian Association for Active Families to improve the social, professional and personal lives of refugees and residents.

Moreover, certain community centres emerged as bottom-up initiatives such as the Nic space in Krakow, established in 2020 as a coffee shop, bookstore and social enterprise (run by the Fundacja Aktywna Integracja SCO), and became an informal centre for the Ukrainian community in the city. In February 2022, the space became a volunteer hub and a centre for collecting humanitarian aid, and later re-established itself as a cultural centre for the Ukrainian migrant community.

In addition, a significant number of Ukrainians have moved their businesses to Poland, with many catering to the Ukrainian community members. This phenomenon reflects a dual function: contributing to the economic landscape of Poland while fostering a sense of community and identity among the Ukrainian population living in the country. The Association of Ukrainian Businesses in Poland is supported by the Embassy of Ukraine in Poland.

➔ **Informational support and media coverage:** Ukrainian media in Poland, already quite active before the full-scale war, underwent a significant reorientation, focusing almost exclusively on covering events in Ukraine and providing information support to the temporarily displaced persons. For example, the magazine *I am in Poland*, founded by representatives of the diaspora in Gdańsk in 2018, initially focused on the life experiences of labour migrants. Today, around 80-90% of their accessible content is geared towards the displaced persons. This strategic shift highlights the adaptability of Ukrainian media platforms when responding to critical events and aligning their coverage with the pressing needs of the displaced population.

The *UainKrakow* web-portal emerged in 2018 as its founders identified a significant Ukrainian population lacking dedicated media representation in Krakow. Currently, the portal collaborates with Poland's largest information resource [Onet.pl](https://onet.pl), where articles translated into Ukrainian can be found on the web-page [Ukraina.onet.pl](https://ukraina.onet.pl). The initiative reflects a strategic effort to address the informational needs of the Ukrainian community in Krakow, leveraging the extensive reach and resources of a prominent Polish media outlet to enhance visibility and communication for the Ukrainian population of the city.

Another one of the largest and most visited portals is <https://uapl.info/>, which shares news and detailed information to assist newcomers in settling in the country. This platform serves as a valuable resource, providing comprehensive guidance and insights for individuals seeking information and support in adapting to their new environment. The portal is supported by the Nash Wybór Foundation and the Association of Ukrainians in Poland. In 2023, they co-hosted a Ukrainian Media Forum in Warsaw, aimed to unite the journalists and publishers working for the Ukrainian community in the country.

At the outset of the full-scale war in February 2022, Polish *Gazeta Wyborcza* created a special edition of the newspaper for those fleeing the war and coming to Poland.¹⁷ This newspaper was distributed to Ukrainians at the border. Within a few days, the decision was to establish the separate media platform [Ukrayina.pl](https://ukrayina.pl) for the Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons specifically and the team behind the initiative were representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora.

In addition to the media platforms, some of the most important media outlets have been informal online communities, concentrated mainly on Facebook, Instagram and Telegram.

➔ **Education:** Between 400,000 and 800,000 Ukrainian children have moved to Poland¹⁸ due to the war, exacerbating the shortage of places in Polish public schools, particularly in larger cities such as Warsaw and Krakow. Several organisations have tackled the educational needs of these children, with active support from international organisations such as UNICEF and Save the Children. One of the examples is the *Unbreakable Ukraine Foundation*, an NGO that raises funds to implement the “First Ukrainian School in Poland” project, establishing

17 An example of such newspaper can be found here: <https://wyborcza.pl/multimedia/Witamy/Witamy-w-Polsce.pdf>

18 <https://www.humanium.org/en/the-situation-of-ukrainian-refugee-children-in-poland/>

a network of free Ukrainian schools in Warsaw, Wroclaw and Krakow, offering education according to Ukrainian standards. The organisation's mission is to educate children in the Ukrainian way and to promote the idea of the return and reconstruction of Ukraine. Many other organisations offer free Polish language courses to children and adults.

- ▶ **Advocacy and public events:** Similar to Vitsche in Berlin, the Stand with Ukraine Foundation in Warsaw is the main driver of the pro-Ukrainian agenda in public space. The organisation initiates and coordinates pro-Ukrainian rallies, Independence Day celebrations, demonstrations of gratitude to the Polish people and awareness-raising campaigns. Since the beginning of the full-scale war, the organisation claims to have organised over 700 actions, events, demonstrations, social and information campaigns aimed at putting pressure on politicians and decision-makers. Information campaigns debunking fake news and conveying the facts about the Russian invasion and Ukraine's courage were also among the joint efforts of the Stand for Ukraine Foundation and Euromaidan Warsaw. The organisation also holds information meetings with Polish politicians to explain the situation in Ukraine and the scale of aid needed.





1.4 Diaspora organisations in the Czech Republic

1.4.1 Overview

According to the latest census conducted in the Czech Republic in 2021, more than 78,000 persons identify as Ukrainian nationals.¹⁹ Recent data from the Czech Statistical Office shows that at the end of September 2021, 189,912 Ukrainian citizens had residence permits in the country, constituting 29.32% of the total number of foreigners, making Ukrainians the largest national minority in the Czech Republic, ahead of Slovak, Polish and German.

The formation of the Ukrainian diaspora in the Czech Republic can be divided into three major periods. Before the events of 1917, the majority of emigrants were representatives of the intelligentsia and students who left their homeland for political reasons and to enhance their education. Many Ukrainian students enrolled in the Mining Institute in Přebram and Charles University in Prague, where Ukrainian professors held notable positions.

In the early 1920s, a large wave of Ukrainian emigration, again dominated by exiled intellectuals and war refugees, left Ukraine as an aftermath of defeat in the struggle for independent Ukraine. During the interwar period, the Czech Republic became the largest political, scientific, cultural and spiritual centre for Ukrainians in Europe. Notable institutions such as the Ukrainian Free University moved from Vienna to Prague, and the Ukrainian Academy of Economics in Poděbrady,

¹⁹ Statistical data was retrieved from the public database of the Czech Statistical office: <https://scitani.gov.cz/ethnicity#null>

the Studio of Plastic Arts, the Drahomanov Pedagogical University, and a Ukrainian gymnasium were founded. Ukrainian newspapers and magazines were published while publishing houses thrived, reaching the highest level of advancement in migrant literature. However, the German and later Soviet occupation led to the decline of Ukrainian societies, and the growth of Ukrainian culture in the Czech Republic decreased significantly by 1989. Under the threat of repression by the local communist authorities and the USSR, a significant part of the Ukrainian intelligentsia was forced to move, causing the diaspora to slowly diminish, with Ukrainians moving further West after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968.

The third and modern wave of Ukrainian migrants to the Czech Republic consists of mostly economic migrants who have been arriving to the country since the early 1990s, with Ukrainians coming to the country for employment, education and family reunification purposes. Given the lack of an established diaspora upon the arrival, they saw a need to establish their own community organisations, with the biggest being the Ukrainian Initiative in the Czech Republic, founded in 1993. Even with an absence of historical ties, the organisations promoted the narrative of a long-standing Ukrainian presence in the Czech Republic and focused their efforts on rearticulating historical ties by organising commemorative events.

The presence of Ukrainians in Czech Republic became more visible in 2013-2014, when Maidan Prague organisation emerged to express solidarity with Ukraine and raise funds to help Ukrainians under attack. Even though the network of Ukrainian organisations in Czech Republic was seemingly smaller than in other countries, they played an important role in welcoming Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons and empowering the Ukrainian community in 2022.

1.4.2 Diaspora organisations in the Czech Republic and their activities before 2022

The Ukrainian community in the Czech Republic is united through an extensive network of national and regional NGOs based in Prague, Brno, Hradec Králové, Liberec, Pardubice and Karlovy Vary. Two of the oldest Ukrainian organisations in the Czech Republic, the Ukrainian Initiative in the Czech Republic and the Association of Ukrainians and Supporters of Ukraine, represent the Ukrainian national minority in the Government Council for National Minorities, the Committee for Cooperation with Local Authorities, the Committee for Subsidy Policy, advisory units of the Ministry of Culture and regional commissions for national minorities. The Ukrainian Embassy in the Czech Republic actively supports established diaspora organisations, approximately 30 registered associations as of now, with many receiving some sort of support from local authorities as well.

Prague hosts the headquarters of the European Congress of Ukrainians, an international coordinating organisation representing the interests of Ukrainians in Europe (founded in London in 1949). The organisation is notable for its active efforts to build the capacity of Ukrainian organisations and to establish networks and cooperation between different local diaspora organisations.

The Role of Ukrainian Diaspora in Crisis Response, Future Return and Reconstruction of Ukraine

The Ukrainian Initiative in the Czech Republic (Ukrajinská iniciativa v České republice, UIČR), founded in 1993, is the largest Ukrainian organisation in the country and a member of the Ukrainian World Congress. UIČR's mission is to preserve Ukrainian identity in the diaspora, and in order to achieve this mission it has addressed the issues of migration and integration. Before the outbreak of the full-scale war, the UIČR focused mainly on cultural and humanitarian activities such as educational events, commemorative activities, co-organising film and literature festivals and Ukrainian Culture Days in Prague and the regions. The organisation also supported Ukrainian studies as an academic discipline and published the monthly magazine *Porohy*. The organisation also supported smaller cultural foundations such as artistic collectives for children and adults. In 2011, UIČR launched a campaign on the importance of declaring Ukrainian identity in the months leading up to the national census.

The Ukrainian European Perspective, founded in Prague in 2011, strategically advocates for Ukraine's interests in Europe, aiming to sign the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU. Furthermore, the organisation is engaged in developing cultural, trade and economic cooperation between Ukraine and the EU. During the Maidan events, Ukrainian European Perspective collected humanitarian aid for Ukraine and continued its efforts to support the civilian population and Ukrainian military. Their activities also include projects related to rehabilitation for children from Ukraine, support to Ukrainian soldiers, music festivals, concerts, charity fairs and auctions, art exhibitions, creative meetings, and representing Ukraine at multicultural events and events in Prague.

Another active organisation is Prague Maidan, founded in 2014 by the activists of the Ukrainian European Perspective, who also organised pro-Ukrainian demonstrations in solidarity with the Euromaidan events. The organisation called for more support for the country and aimed to raise funds and direct humanitarian aid to those affected by the Russian invasion in 2014. Their ongoing action is considered to be the 'longest street protest' in a public space, as the tent with Ukrainian symbols erected in Staroměst Square since 2014 still serves as a hub for awareness raising and humanitarian aid.

Regional Ukrainian diaspora organisations are active in most of the big cities in Czech Republic including Ukrainian Initiative and the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre in Brno, Ukrainian Regional Association of Eastern Czechia in Hradec Králové, Association of Ukrainians in Bohemia in Karlovy Vary. The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic church, with branches in all major cities, plays an important role when it comes to diaspora relations.

Ukrainian diaspora organisations maintain a significant presence in media outlets, publishing articles and news in Ukrainian and on Ukraine-related topics. The Ukrainian Initiative in the Czech Republic runs an informational web-portal www.ukrajinci.cz/ and uaportal.cz/ (not updated since May 2022) covering Ukrainian-related news and opportunities for expats.

Similar to Germany and Poland, Ukrainian diaspora organisations in the Czech Republic have engaged in various projects and initiatives to support the Ukrainian community and promote Ukrainian culture. Although less institutionalised, the diaspora's activities are visibly impactful. Key areas of focus include the following:



Advocacy and awareness-raising: In 2013, Ukrainian diaspora organisations in Prague began organising events, meetings with government officials and awareness-raising campaigns to highlight the political, social and economic situation in Ukraine and to counter the anti-Ukrainian narrative within the Czech society. The Prague Maidan organisation was created for this purpose and has since grown in strength and influence.



Humanitarian aid: Since the outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine in 2014, numerous organisations have come together to provide humanitarian aid and support to those affected by the conflict. This aid has included sending medical supplies, clothing and other necessities to Ukraine as well as rehabilitation programmes for Ukrainian children and soldiers.



Cultural and educational events: Ukrainian diaspora organisations in the Czech Republic were involved in organising cultural and educational events such as cultural days, film festivals, exhibitions, music concerts, lectures and meetings with Ukrainian artists. The aim of these events was to present Ukrainian culture, history and traditions and to strengthen the capacity of the Ukrainian community.



Working with children: In the Czech context, Ukrainian schools (usually in the form of Saturday schools) were separate entities rather than side activities of larger organisations. The Ukrainian Saturday School Erudyt operates in Prague and issues Ukrainian state standard diplomas of general secondary education. In 2017, the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre Krok opened in Prague, where children are

taught Ukrainian language, literature, culture, ethnography and geography of Ukraine. In 2018, Ukrainian Saturday Schools opened in Brno and Hradec Králové.



Community and capacity-building: Some of the organisations such as the local branches of the Ukrainian Church aimed at keeping the Ukrainian community together and strengthening its capacity. Small artistic organisations such as the Ukrainian Choir and the Ukrainian Folk Dance Ansamble played a similar role.



Support to Ukrainian migrants: Including assistance with documentation, taxation, employment and social integration.

Before the full-scale war, Ukrainian diaspora organisations in the Czech Republic focused mainly on promoting culture and maintaining community integration as well as involving children in Ukraine-related events, celebrations and language courses. Similar to other countries, organisations with strong communities around them were the driving force behind activities on the three priorities mentioned above: raising funds and humanitarian aid, raising awareness of the war in Ukraine (including both sharing information on websites and organising pro-Ukrainian events and demonstrations), and supporting people seeking temporary protection.

1.4.3 Response to the arrival of the displaced people from Ukraine and support provided to them

Similar to other EU countries, emergency response and immediate assistance to individuals seeking protection in the Czech Republic after fleeing Ukraine was primarily led by the existing network of Ukrainian diaspora organisations. National and local diaspora organisations worked closely with Czech humanitarian NGOs and international actors such as the Red Cross Committee, IOM and UN agencies to address the needs of the temporarily displaced persons, including the provision of housing, legal assistance, health care, education and support for social integration.

Local diaspora organisations played an important role in the reception of Ukrainian displaced persons; they offered crucial immediate assistance by facilitating emergency accommodation, providing translation services at arrival centres and government offices and providing information on local government assistance. Many of the diaspora organisations provided immediate assistance such as spreading information about the situation in Ukraine, organising pro-Ukrainian demonstrations in Prague and other major cities, collecting humanitarian and medical aid and welcoming displaced persons to the Czech Republic. A number of diaspora organisations were established to broaden support. Many new diaspora organisations, such as [Slovo pro Ukrajinu](#), emerged to help Ukrainians integrate into Czech society, launched an information portal, and became involved in conducting surveys to better understand the Ukrainian population in the Czech Republic.

In the months that followed, when urgency for emergency relief subsided, established diaspora organisations became more actively engaged in additional initiatives, more specifically:

- ▶ **Pro-Ukrainian rallies and fundraising events:** Diaspora organisations utilised their experience in event organisation to establish links with municipalities, navigate state legislation and arrange demonstrations to express solidarity with Ukraine. Prague Maidan continued its tradition of protesting and fundraising, while other organisations like [Hlas Ukrajiny](#) were specifically created for coordinating the Ukrainian civil movement in Prague.
- ▶ **Assistance with learning Czech language:** Unlike Germany, where language courses are compulsory as part of an integration programme for persons under temporary protection (and are directly linked to the receipt of social benefits), the Czech Republic does not offer state-sponsored language courses. In response to the increased demand for free language courses and considering lack of social benefits for temporary protection status holders, diaspora organisations started offering free Czech language courses to Ukrainians.
- ▶ **Education and Schools:** Due to the limited capacity in the Czech Republic, some families encountered challenges while registering children in schools and certain Ukrainian organisations have carried out support measures when it comes to educational matters. The organisation [For Children of Ukraine \(Dětem Ukrajiny z.s.\)](#) provides Ukrainian-standard schooling and extracurricular activities, thus, enabling parents to work. This approach also aligns with the idea of facilitating a smooth return to education in Ukraine after the war. Moreover, the organisation provides jobs for teachers and tutors, many being temporarily displaced themselves. Children of Ukraine has strong support from the Ukrainian authorities, including the Embassy of Ukraine in the Czech Republic and the Department of Education and Science of the Lviv Regional State Administration. Other organisations, like Unikids, offer support to Ukrainian children with special educational needs.
- ▶ **Ukrainian community empowerment:** Several organisations shifted their focus and became a platform for Ukrainian activist movements, and aim to empower Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons to participate in Ukrainian-themed events.

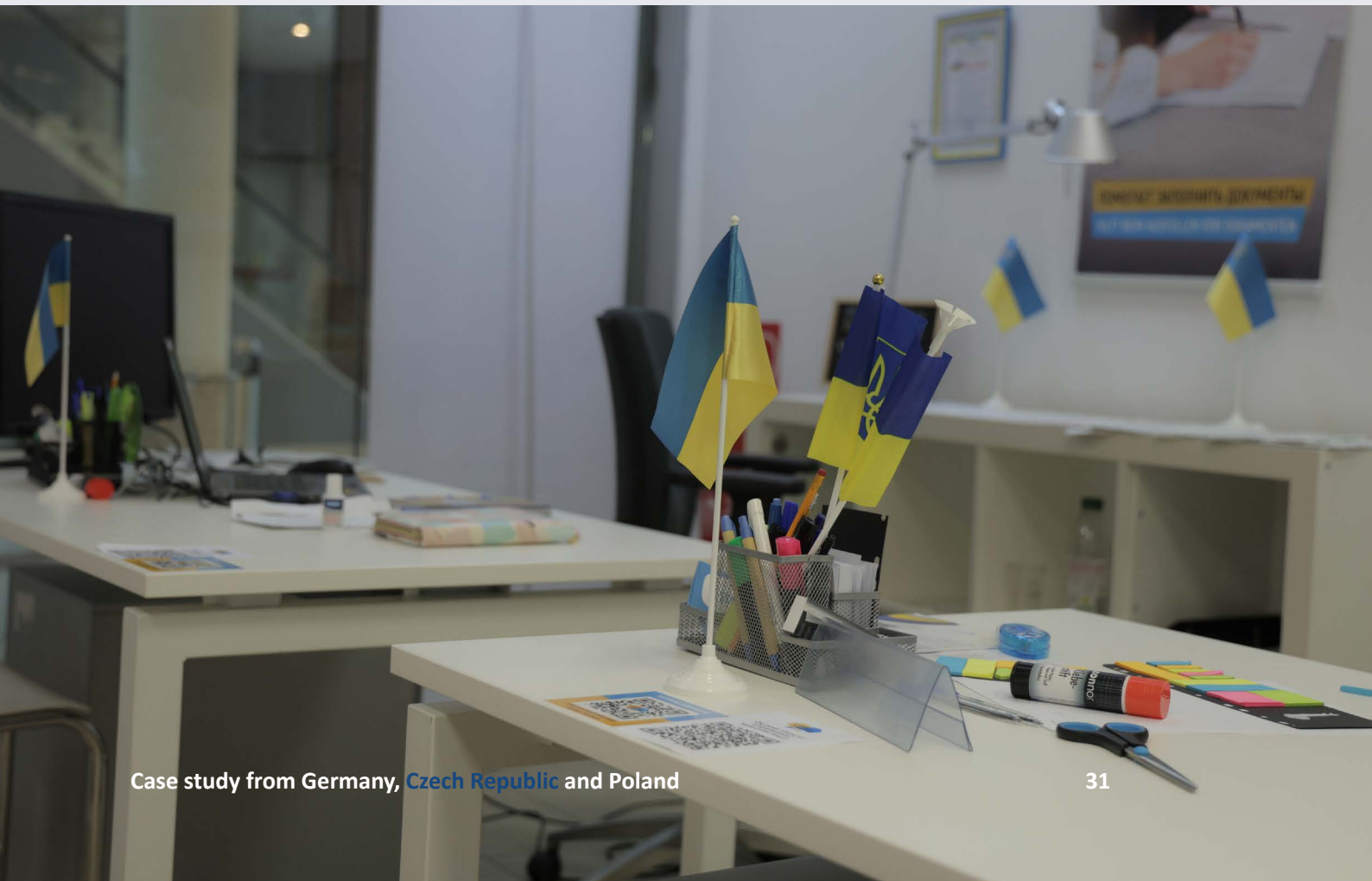
Some of the large Prague-based organisations, Prague Maidan and The Ukrainian European Perspective, joined forces and launched a Ukrainian community centre [Nusle](#). The idea was to create a safe space where Ukrainians under temporary protection could seek support with housing, employment, education for children, psychological support, counselling and humanitarian aid. The centre also aims to empower the community and has already reached out to more than 10,000 Ukrainians currently living in the Czech Republic. The centre also continues to collect, sort and send medical and humanitarian supplies to Ukraine.

The [Svitlo](#) Community Space opened its doors in June 2022, supported by both UNICEF and the City of Prague. The centre acts as an information point, an educational centre for learning the Czech language, a community centre offering sports and cultural activities, and a counselling centre working in cooperation with other organisations offering legal and psychological support. Another community centre, [Mriya UA](#), also supported by UNICEF, provides humanitarian and settlement assistance, such as a hotline, workshops (labour market integration, etc.) and acts as a counselling centre for more sustainable solutions. This centre attracts more than 120 volunteers, most of them under temporary protection.

- ➔ **Information provision:** Since the beginning of the full-scale war, existing Ukrainian diaspora organisations redirected their resources towards spreading information about events in Ukraine, collecting funds for the humanitarian crisis, and providing information support to Ukrainians arriving in the Czech Republic.

Media platform ProUkraïnu was founded in 2022 by a group of Ukrainian journalists, both temporarily displaced and members of the diaspora. The portal provides information support materials, acts as a news aggregator, offers integration advice and promotes cultural and community events. Furthermore, since March 2022 an online radio station Radio Ukrajina streams Ukrainian music and content from Prague. The station has round-the-clock broadcasting to help people who moved to the Czech Republic because of the war in Ukraine. The programmes on *Radio Ukrajina* explain how to settle in a new place, enrol children in school or kindergarten and where to get the services they need.

Despite the initiatives, it is important to acknowledge that the presence of Ukrainian diaspora organisations is concentrated in major Czech cities. This limitation, less evident before the war, became apparent as the temporarily displaced persons dispersed throughout the country. For the time being, community centres, systematic demonstrations, rallies and other pro-Ukrainian events are present in Prague. As a result, Ukrainians under temporary protection living in other regions are more exposed to separation from the Ukrainian community, which may facilitate their full integration into local Czech communities and hinder their aspirations to return. On the other hand, informal online communities could replace the role of community organisations in keeping Ukrainians connected to the diaspora and promoting their national identity.



1.5 Needs and challenges of the Ukrainian diaspora organisations and migrant communities

As the recent events have shown, the Ukrainian diaspora, an integral part of civil society within Ukraine and beyond, has played a pivotal role in responding to Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022. Diaspora engagement has primarily revolved around mobilising humanitarian assistance, organising support for temporarily displaced persons and collaborating with civil society, national and international organisations to establish partnerships for aiding Ukraine and its displaced population. Diaspora can serve as intermediaries, linking the homeland with international actors and advocating for political interests globally.²⁰ Diasporas also have a potential to serve as agents for post-war transitional justice, reconciliation and reintegration of the communities.²¹ Therefore, Ukrainian diaspora organisations should receive support, both from the Ukrainian government and society as well as destination countries and international organisations. Moreover, it is foreseeable that the diaspora will continue to hold a crucial position in the post-conflict phase, contributing significantly to safe return and reintegration of Ukrainian citizens in addition to reconstruction and development efforts.

Proactive and structured mapping of diaspora engagements and contributions as well as their needs and challenges, would prove advantageous, serving both to recognise their efforts and enhance coordination.

In Spring-Summer 2023, ICMPD collected over 65 questionnaires from workshop and networking event participants, primarily representatives of Ukrainian diaspora organisations active in Germany, Czech Republic, Poland and other countries (Greece, Estonia, Portugal, Croatia, Slovakia, Italy, Georgia, Spain, Germany, Canada, Montenegro, Moldova, Belgium and North Macedonia). According to the results of the surveys, the most urgent needs and challenges for diaspora organisations are the following:

- 1. Financial support:** The majority of surveyed representatives from Ukrainian diaspora organisations highlighted significant funding gaps for project implementation, with fundraising consuming a considerable portion of their time and resources. One of the main obstacles is securing premises for operations, particularly for establishing community centres—crucial for sustaining community life, networking, and connections to diaspora members, as demonstrated by the examples described earlier. Funding challenges also hinder organisations from expanding and hiring more personnel, despite the potential for activism and engagement in NGOs to address unemployment issues among Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons currently residing in EU countries. Most of the funding for diaspora organisations currently comes from various charitable donations, international donors (e.g. UNICEF), and municipal and state-level governments; the Ukrainian embassy is usually mentioned as partners in implementation of certain projects and activities.

20 Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2011). Diasporas and conflict societies: conflict entrepreneurs, competing interests or contributors to stability and development? *Conflict, Security & Development*, 11(2), 115-143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2011.572453>

21 Orjuela, C. (2018). Mobilising diasporas for justice. Opportunity structures and the presenting of a violent past. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(8), 1357-1373.

- 2. Human resources:** Most organisations lack experienced staff in project implementation. Possible solutions include coordinated efforts to be facilitated by Ukrainian embassies or international organisations, for example. Firstly, it would be beneficial to provide mentorship opportunities and carry out trainings of trainers to teach staff how to work in the specific sector within the country as well as engagement in fundraising. Furthermore, it is essential to equip Ukrainian diaspora organisations with proper financial, legal and informational support, thus, enabling employment opportunities for highly skilled Ukrainian migrants. Furthermore, it is important to underline the institutionalisation of diaspora organisations, mainly with a focus on organisational management of the associations. Self-organised communities lack experience and expertise, for example when registering as a legal entity, and subsequently, they are unable to obtain financial support and representation among local authorities. When it comes to officially registered organisations, most of the concern lies in the challenges related to organisational management, obtaining office space, human resource management, social media management, lack of expertise on financial and taxation matters.
- 3. Networking:** Surveyed representatives mentioned lack of cooperation and collaboration with authorities in destination countries, Ukrainian diplomatic missions, and, most importantly, with each other. Respondents expressed a strong desire to participate in capacity-building activities and coordinate their efforts with other organisations in the destination countries. This includes planning joint events, fundraising and information campaigns. Examples of such capacity-building events could be both online and offline, similar to activities conducted by ICMPD, such as a the workshop held for Ukrainian diaspora organisations in March 2023 in Prague supported by a local diaspora organisation and the Embassy of Ukraine in the Czech Republic.

Additional challenges noted include (4) the unpreparedness of the local community to support Ukrainian organisations in the country (since local communities are already experiencing compassion fatigue, directing their efforts primarily towards humanitarian activities), (5) passivity within the Ukrainian community itself, manifested in the limited number of demonstrations and actions, (6) bureaucratic difficulties in the operations of newly established organisations and (7) communication hurdles with authorities in EU countries.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT AND RELATIONS TO DIASPORA AND MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

2.1 Diaspora engagement and the Government of Ukraine

Ukraine does not have a diaspora engagement policy in place. In 2004, the Government of Ukraine issued a Law “On the Legal Status of Worldwide Ukrainians”²² where the definition of a “worldwide Ukrainian” is a person from Ukraine or with Ukrainian ancestry, recognising Ukraine as their homeland. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine also has a special Department for Ukrainians Abroad, however, the activities of the department are not accessible. As of now, the government of Ukraine is in the process of updating a newer structure within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and more recently, in November 2023, Ukrainian diplomat Mariana Betsa was announced to be taking up the role of ambassador-at-large for the Global Ukrainian Community.²³

Regarding the official state policy, the government elaborated the State Migration Policy Strategy of Ukraine for the period from 2017-2025, including 13 objectives, some of which apply to government-diaspora engagement.²⁴ Within the State Migration Policy Strategy of Ukraine, protection of rights of Ukrainian citizens working abroad is underlined, along with a strong emphasis on labour rights. Furthermore, the Strategy considers creation of conditions and measures for the voluntary return and reintegration of Ukrainian migrants by introducing a state credit system for those wishing to start businesses and tax benefits for those who invest money earned abroad. Furthermore, the Strategy includes the simplification of immigration and naturalisation procedures for Ukrainians living abroad as well as for representatives of Ukrainian ethnic minorities, encouraging the return of Ukrainians.

22 <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1582-15#Text>

23 <https://news.err.ee/1609164013/after-estonia-mariana-betsa-named-ambassador-at-large-for-ukraine-diaspora>

24 https://diasporaforddevelopment.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/CF_Ukraine-v.7.pdf

The role of Ukrainian embassies as agents of diaspora and migrant community consolidation varies across EU countries and, prior to the full-scale war, depended on the historical shape of the Ukrainian diaspora in a given country. In countries where the Ukrainian diaspora had a strong presence before 1991 (Austria, Germany, Czech Republic and Poland), Ukrainian embassies worked closely with established diaspora organisations. In other countries, close cooperation with the diaspora started building around 2014, driven by the societal need to represent the interests of the diaspora and to maintain closer ties with Ukraine. Ukrainian embassies focused mainly on cultural activities with diaspora and migrant community involvement as well as grassroots organisations at the national and local levels. Since the beginning of the full-scale war, Ukrainian embassies have established links with the governments of EU countries, for example, by providing them with Ukrainian translations of information materials on temporary protection.

One of the key actors in cultural diplomacy on the part of the Ukrainian government is the Ukrainian Institute, established in 2017. The Ukrainian Institute is a governmental institution that aims to promote Ukrainian culture, art and intellectual achievements worldwide. It was established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and operates under the auspices of the President of Ukraine. The primary goal of the Ukrainian Institute was to present Ukraine's diverse cultural heritage and contemporary art scene to an international audience.

Key aspects and activities of the Ukrainian Institute include:



Cultural diplomacy: As a government institution, the Ukrainian Institute plays a significant role in cultural diplomacy. It aims to build cultural bridges, enhance understanding, and strengthen relationships between Ukraine and other countries.



Cultural promotion and exchange: The institute is committed to promoting Ukraine's culture and fostering cultural exchange between Ukraine and the international community. It organises various cultural events, exhibitions and performances that showcase Ukrainian art, music, literature, film and other forms of creative expression.



Educational initiatives: The institute develops educational programmes and initiatives aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of Ukraine's cultural heritage, history and contemporary developments.



Cultural projects and partnerships: The Ukrainian Institute collaborates with cultural institutions, museums, galleries, universities and organisations globally to organise and support cultural projects that highlight Ukraine's rich cultural diversity.



Support for Ukrainian artists: The Ukrainian Institute provides support and opportunities for Ukrainian artists, creatives and intellectuals to exhibit their work and engage with audiences worldwide. It facilitates participation in international festivals, exhibitions and collaborative projects.



Media and publications: The institute also engages in media campaigns, publications and online content to disseminate information about Ukrainian culture and achievements to a broader audience.

Since the beginning of the full-scale war, the Institute has redirected its efforts to disseminate information about the situation in Ukraine, using arts and culture to draw attention to the ongoing challenges. These activities not only showcase Ukraine's cultural richness but also contribute to consolidating the community of Ukrainians living abroad under temporary protection.

Traditionally, diaspora contribution to development is measured by the volume of remittances sent to the country by the migrants. This is also the most visible and relatively easy measurable indicator of diaspora contribution to the development. However, Ukrainian diaspora potential to invest in the development of the country was not fully utilised before the war. Consequently, this potential needs to be unlocked for both resilience efforts of Ukraine and its reconstruction. As mentioned above, it is not easy to measure diaspora's direct investment (DDI) level, however, DDI is part of the foreign direct investments (FDI), which is measured by financial institutions. In the pre-war and after-covid period, where both remittances and FDI experienced growth globally, the level of remittances to Ukraine reached 18.06 billion USD, which constituted 9% of GDP. At the same time, FDI, despite the significant growth in 2021, only reached 7.95 billion USD (4% of GDP). In the first year of the Russian military invasion in 2022, the level of remittances decreased, however, remained higher than in pre-covid period: 16.71 billion USD. Obviously, this number included not only migrants' remittances but financial and resilience support from other people to friends and relatives in Ukraine. However, the FDI in the same year made up 366 million USD, i.e. 2% from remittances. All of this demonstrates that Ukraine does not fully utilise the potential of its diaspora, in particular, regarding the facilitation of the diaspora investments.

Consequently, the absence of a diaspora engagement strategy and the lack of a separate state agency that would actively develop relations with the Ukrainian community abroad, apart from embassies and consulates, hinders the utilisation of Ukrainian diaspora's full potential when it comes to supporting development processes within the country. The strategic foundation for ties between the government and its diaspora would further strengthen trust and engagement, which ultimately will support resilience and reconstruction of the country, reconsolidation of the society and as a result – preservation of Ukraine's human capital.

2.2 Ukrainian State relations with diaspora in Germany

Since 1993, a bilateral cultural cooperation agreement has been in effect between the governments of Ukraine and Germany, with the Embassy of Ukraine as the main implementer of the agreement and dedicating considerable effort to various cultural initiatives. The projects (for example, Ukrainian Language Year, academic exchanges, Ukrainian film festivals, support to the Ukrainian presence at the Frankfurt Book Fair, etc.) were either directly supported by the embassy or implemented in cooperation with local Ukrainian organisations. The embassy also initiated celebrations of Ukrainian national holidays and commemorative days for the diaspora and migrant community.

Given the diverse and well-established Ukrainian community in Germany, many organisations have received support from the embassy since 1993, including newly established organisations. As of 15 October 2023, the Embassy of Ukraine in Germany has extended support to 56 different

diaspora organisations,²⁵ including nation-wide Ukrainian associations as well as local and regional ones. This support may be financial (as reported by the informational portal [UkraineNOW.de](https://ukrainenow.de)), or rather informational, with the Ambassador attending cultural or charity events.

When asked about support and cooperation with the embassy and consulates, Ukrainian diaspora and migrant organisation representatives rarely cited financial support. Instead, collaboration was perceived more as maintaining communication, receiving informational support, participating in joint meetings and hosting visits from embassy representatives.

Some organisations collaborated with the Ukrainian government on their specific projects, for example, Vitsche organised the Independence Day demonstration in Berlin in cooperation with the Ukrainian Embassy. Ukrainian consulates in the regions are also involved in supporting commemorative activities organised by local Ukrainian associations. Another example, the consulate in Düsseldorf cooperated with the local German-Ukrainian Union for the Independence Day demonstration for a Ukrainian Day in Cologne, and the consulate in Hamburg supported the concert of the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra at the Elbphilharmonie. It is important to note that the current Ambassador of Ukraine is actively involved in events organised by the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany, frequently speaking about integrating the Ukrainian migrant community into the German society²⁶ while keeping the Ukrainian identity and maintaining their ties with homeland. This message, coupled with active support for Ukrainian initiatives in Germany (such as the opening of the Ukrainian passport service State Enterprise Document in Berlin, or even the first branch of Nova Poshta, a Ukrainian delivery service now operating in Germany), could play an important role in articulating the existing ties between the Ukrainian migrant community and their homeland, nurturing the idea of their eventual return to Ukraine when the security situation allows.

Furthermore, Germany was the first and only country where the [Ukrainian Institute's foreign office](https://ukrainianinstitute.de) was established as of October 2023. The decision to was influenced by the already-established close cooperation with various German cultural institutions such as the Goethe Institute, the Reeperbahn Festival, the Zentrum Liberale Moderne the Berlinale and the Frankfurt Book Fair. Although the Ukrainian Institute does not target the Ukrainian migrant community as its primary audience (focusing more on using decolonial perspectives and promoting Ukrainian culture to those less familiar with it), its events attract many Ukrainians, serving as a unifying focal point for the migrant community. The exhibitions and activities focusing on the Holodomor, the Revolution of Dignity and Crimean Tatar culture and society in 2023 draw large audiences and contribute to maintaining a sense of community and collective identity among Ukrainians in Germany.

25 The list of supported organisations can be downloaded from the Embassy's website (in Ukrainian): <https://germany.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobotnictvo/gromadski-organizaciyi-ukrayinstva-nimechchini>

26 See the interview for Amal Berlin (in Ukrainian) <https://amalberlin.de/ua/2023/10/20/interview-with-the-ambassador-of-ukraine-to-germany-makeev/>, or the interview to Focus (in German): https://www.focus.de/politik/oleksii-makeiev-neuer-ukraine-botschafter-brachte-melnyk-einst-das-twittern-bei_id_165781549.html

2.3 Ukrainian State relations with diaspora in Poland

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent independence of Ukraine had a profound impact on the relationship between Ukraine and Poland. With Ukraine becoming an independent state, diplomatic relations between the two countries were established and grew stronger. Before the outbreak of the full-scale war, the Embassy of Ukraine in Poland was mostly engaged in the activities related to Ukrainian minority in the country, advocating for their rights and fair representation. The embassy provided financial support to different organisations, contributing to initiatives such as the annual festivals “Lemkivska Vatra” and “Podlaska Autumn”, support for Internet resources and Saturday schools, improvement of Ukrainian memorial sites in Poland and more. In November 2006, the Coordinating Council of the Ukrainian minority was established at the Embassy of Ukraine in the Republic of Poland, similar to initiatives at Ukrainian embassies in other countries. However, this method of communication between the established diaspora organisations and the embassies is not regular nor consistent, and if improved, the platform could serve more beneficial for all.

The embassy has been a key supporter of major Ukrainian initiatives and has actively engaged in backing Ukrainian media initiatives and public actions. Additionally, with embassy-supported networking events for Ukrainian actors in Poland, media and Ukrainian business forums were organised, with the Ambassador actively participating in the engagements. Moreover, the embassy has demonstrated proactive involvement in commemorative and cultural events, showcasing a multifaceted commitment to fostering Ukrainian-Polish relations during this critical period.

2.4 Ukrainian State relations with diaspora in the Czech Republic

Ukraine was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the Czech Republic, marking one of the earliest instances on 1 January 1993, the inaugural day of the Czech Republic as an independent state. The Embassy of independent Ukraine in Czechoslovakia was opened in 1992.

Before the eruption of the full-scale war, the embassy primarily focused on supporting cultural events and occasional pro-Ukrainian initiatives in the country. However, since the beginning of the full-scale war, the embassy has intensified its informational initiatives to bolster support for Ukraine and assist those arriving in the Czech Republic, a sentiment echoed by the representatives of surveyed Ukrainian diaspora organisations in the country.

In the past year (2023), there has been a notable increase in the number of events organised by the embassy specifically aimed at capacity-building among Ukrainian diaspora organisations. The embassy’s prominent leadership role stands out as a positive example among the case study countries.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF UKRAINIAN DIASPORA ORGANISATIONS AND MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN FUTURE RETURN AND REINTEGRATION AS WELL AS REBUILDING AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS IN UKRAINE

The Ukrainian diaspora has undeniably played a pivotal role in the reception and settlement of Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons in EU countries. Both pre-existing and newly established diaspora organisations have been instrumental in organising and consolidating the new Ukrainian diaspora, primarily composed of individuals receiving temporary protection in the EU. It is imperative to assess the needs of these organisations to facilitate their on-the-ground efforts and potential contributions to the eventual return of temporary migrants to Ukraine.

The question of return is equally pressing. According to research by the NGO Centre for Economic Strategy, as of September 2023, approximately 6.7 million Ukrainians have left the country, with 3.3 million intending to remain in the countries where they currently benefit from temporary protection.²⁷ Furthermore, the prospect of post-war family reunifications poses an additional demographic risk for Ukraine, potentially doubling the number of Ukrainians abroad. In this context, state efforts dedicated to encouraging Ukrainians to return to the country should take precedence, while also acknowledging that a substantial number will likely remain in EU countries.

²⁷ Mykhailiushyna, D., Samoiliuk, M., Tomilina, M., & Vyshlinskyi, H. (2023, August 29). Refugees from Ukraine: Who Are They, How Many Are There, and How to Return Them? Final Report. Center of Economic Strategies. <https://ces.org.ua/en/refugees-from-ukraine-final-report/>

It is clear that the probability of return of forced migrants directly depends on the duration of their stay in other countries, in addition to the security and socio-political situation in both Ukraine and the host country.

Maintaining ties with Ukraine remains a critical task for the potential return of Ukrainian displaced persons to their homeland, despite the increasing complexities posed by the passage of time and the uncertainty surrounding the conclusion of the war. The most significant risk factors hindering the return of Ukrainians under temporary protection include:

-  **Uncertain temporal prospects:** Recent research by the Centre of Economic Strategy²⁸ indicates that the longer the war persists, the fewer individuals express a desire to return, accepting the necessity of settling in a new country;
-  **Inability to return to hometowns:** Due to occupation and ongoing shelling in the front-line regions of Ukraine, it is currently challenging to assess the extent of destruction and the potential for the displaced to return to their hometowns. In cases where returning home is impossible, some Ukrainians decide to continue settling in the new country rather than considering the option of living in other cities in Ukraine;
-  **Disparities** in the experience of war between those who left and those who remained in Ukraine, potentially becoming a source of conflict and an obstacle to the reintegration of returnees into Ukrainian society;
-  **Integration efforts of host countries**, especially Germany, where the state replaces humanitarian protection with labour market integration, providing Ukrainian temporary protection status holders with significant social benefits, housing, German language courses and education for children. This stimulates the search for employment in Germany and opens the prospect of obtaining German citizenship through a simplified procedure (in case of residence in Germany for more than three years, language proficiency, and employment). Since dual citizenship is prohibited in Ukraine, migrants integrating into German society may potentially consider renouncing Ukrainian citizenship and not entertain the option of returning;
-  **Isolation from the Ukrainian community**, particularly acute for those who have moved to small towns or villages where there are fewer community-building events.

In this context, the activities of diaspora organisations play a crucial role in maintaining the Ukrainian community and identity among those who have been forced to relocate beyond the country's borders. The Ukrainian diaspora has a strategically important role when it comes to the future return and reintegration efforts, considering they were the first responders to the migration crisis in 2022, they will act as information agents and consultants for those Ukrainian citizens who will choose to return after the war ends.

²⁸ Ibid

In the [Recovery Plan for Ukraine](#), presented following the Ukrainian Recovery Conference in Lugano in July 2022, *People* and *Institutions* are identified as one of the three pillars of smart recovery architecture. The issue of the outflow of skilled workers (brain drain), as stated in the document, also poses a threat to Ukraine's economic future. Considering the statistics on the number of Ukrainians who have left the country since the start of the full-scale war, the question of their return and potential contribution to the rebuilding and recovery of Ukraine is highly pressing. It requires a vision and systemic solutions from the government. The recovery strategy proposes multiple initiatives for the return of those who have left, especially involving the diaspora organisations into reconnecting the temporarily displaced persons with Ukraine, transferring skills and knowledge gained abroad and lobbying the possibility of having dual citizenship.

While 68% of respondents in the research conducted by the Centre for Economic Strategy²⁹ claimed they intend to return to Ukraine after the war, the practicality of their return and contributions to the country's recovery remains uncertain. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the role of the Ukrainian diaspora in resource mobilisation for eventual reconstruction and rebuilding efforts.

Considering the enormous role the Ukrainian diaspora had in responding to the Russian military attack on Ukraine in February 2022, and the continuous engagement in humanitarian aid provision and extensive support to the temporarily displaced persons in EU MS and elsewhere, high level of diaspora engagement is anticipated in the post-conflict phase of the reconstruction and development efforts as well. It is important to look closely at how the Ukrainian diaspora has responded to the full-scale war and to the surge of temporarily displaced persons in the three destination countries (Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic) and how they continue to move forward.

It is equally essential to address the so-called diaspora capital, namely, the social capital (networking and exchange skills), human capital (skills and capacities available or newly developed by diaspora), financial capital (investments and use of remittances for country's development on national, local and community levels), and finally, cultural capital (transfer of values and ideas). Some of the **strategies for continuous support for recovery** may be the following:



Fostering unity within the Ukrainian diaspora and migrant community:

Providing the Ukrainian community abroad with the sense of unity and fostering their sense of belonging to the Ukrainian nation *and* Ukraine as a country is a crucial step in bringing Ukrainians back and engaging them into rebuilding and restoration of the country. Various public and cultural events organised by the diaspora organisations in cooperation with Ukrainian diplomatic representatives will keep the community ties strong, contribute and promote cultural exchange and understanding, fostering a stronger sense of national identity and pride.

²⁹ Mykhailiushyna, D., Samoiliuk, M., Tomilina, M., & Vyshlinskyi, H. (2023, August 29). Refugees from Ukraine: Who Are They, How Many Are There, and How to Return Them? Final Report. Centre for Economic Strategy <https://ces.org.ua/en/refugees-from-ukraine-final-report/>



Transfer of skills and knowledge:

The transfer of skills acquired in emigration and the experience of the old diaspora members can play a key role in the reconstruction of Ukraine. Ukrainian diaspora organisations, by promoting return to the country, can also educate and employ young Ukrainians who will contribute to the future development, enabling them to gain experience and connections in the civil society sector. Diaspora organisations can facilitate the transfer of knowledge, skills and technical expertise to Ukraine by establishing mentorship and professional exchange programmes that will be necessary in the reconstruction process. Furthermore, the diaspora can also support educational initiatives that focus on training the workforce in specific skills that are needed for reconstruction processes in addition to providing educational opportunities for those Ukrainians who are interested in areas related to reconstruction and development.



Networking and international support:

Institutional links with other organisations in host countries, facilitated by the activities of Ukrainian diaspora organisations, are crucial for the promotion of ongoing inter-institutional partnerships. This is exemplified by efforts to improve civic oversight of the use of funds for Ukraine's reconstruction. The relationships forged between Ukrainian diaspora organisations and partners in host countries can also serve as a means of attracting new collaborators to projects aimed at Ukraine's recovery. This extends beyond the governmental sphere to a horizontal level, enabling engagement in targeted initiatives tailored to specific communities and includes collaboration with international organisations and NGOs, in order to ensure that resources and efforts are coordinated for effective impact. Furthermore, diaspora organisations have the capacity for advocating and attracting international support and assistance for Ukraine's reconstruction by engaging policy-makers, NGOs and the international community to gain support for safe return of Ukrainian citizens and rebuilding.



Advocating the rights of Ukrainians abroad and those returning:

Ukrainian organisations abroad also have a significant potential for legislative change, both in the host country and in post-war Ukraine. Some examples of areas where changes are needed include: (1) taxation and simplified registration of businesses in Ukraine for persons with citizenship other than Ukrainian, (2) transnational business partnership, (3) recognition of degrees obtained abroad and (4) dual citizenship. Currently, dual citizenship is not allowed in Ukraine, hindering the possibility of return for those who already hold non-Ukrainian citizenship and creating tensions for those who may become eligible for citizenship in destination countries before the end of the war. Dual citizenship may facilitate return and returnees' engagement in social and economic processes in post-war Ukraine.

Active promotion of the return of diaspora members:

The prospect of diaspora members returning to Ukraine holds significant promise. President Zelensky has underscored the importance of their return in his 2019 inaugural speech³⁰, emphasising that their wealth of experience and knowledge can be instrumental for Ukraine. Effectively implementing initiatives and providing support to Ukrainian displaced persons actively engaged in diaspora activities during their temporary stay in EU countries necessitates clearer coordination and backing from Ukrainian authorities and diplomatic missions on-site. It is this coordination and collaborative synergy among key stakeholders within the Ukrainian community abroad that can wield a decisive influence on the potential return of Ukrainian migrants to their homeland and, subsequently, their meaningful contribution to post-war reconstruction and recovery in Ukraine.

Financial Support:

The Ukrainian diaspora can actively contribute to the reconstruction efforts in the country by participating in sending financial support and remittances directly to family members or investing in smaller, local businesses in the area where they are from. In addition to remittances, the diaspora has the opportunity to organise fundraising events, crowdfunding campaigns and contribution to initiatives that support reconstruction projects, healthcare, education or other fields. Furthermore, the diaspora can encourage and facilitate direct investments in Ukraine, especially when it comes to areas that are important for reconstruction and economic development. The so-called 'old' diaspora plays an important role for facilitating business partnerships between Ukrainian and international companies, considering they have resided and accumulated professional networks in the host country.

Moreover, it is important to look beyond the remittances as the only financial contribution and place more importance on diaspora's direct investments, that could actively contribute to the development of businesses, government projects or non-governmental organisations' initiatives. The financial capital flow from the diaspora, in forms of investments as well as the remittances will greatly enhance the country's capabilities in reconstruction efforts as well as the overall development on national, local and community levels.

In addition, the diaspora has the capacity to support development of digital sphere by mobilising support for technology hubs and innovation centres that can drive economic growth and technological advancement in Ukraine. Diaspora organisations can also utilise and enhance the use of digital platforms to connect Ukrainians with opportunities, resources and global networks.

30 <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/inavguracijna-promova-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelensk-55489>

CONCLUSIONS

Diaspora organisations and migrant communities have been instrumental when it comes to responding to a crisis caused by the military situation in Ukraine, shaping the international perception and mobilising support. Ukrainian diaspora organisations, operating at local and international levels, underwent a significant transformation in their primary activities with the onset of the full-scale war. These organisations have played a pivotal role in responding to the humanitarian crisis within Ukraine and accommodating forced migrants in EU countries. Their multifaceted responses encompassed activities including provision of humanitarian aid, support for temporary protection seekers, organising protests and advocacy campaigns, supporting diplomatic efforts, and more. Moreover, these associations have been collaborating extensively with other international organisations, government agencies, and NGOs, streamlining support efforts for Ukrainian migrants. Many Ukrainian organisations also dedicate efforts to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation, an area that is also an interesting topic for a number of diaspora associations (In December 2023, ICMPD held a training for Ukrainian diaspora organisation representatives on Communication and Anti-Propaganda in Prague, Czech Republic). The specific activities and contributions varied based on the organisations' size, resources and geographical location. Often working in tandem with local and national entities, these organisations addressed the diverse challenges faced by Ukrainian migrants resulting from the conflict.

The Ukrainian government recognises the importance of the diaspora for Ukraine's future reconstruction and further development, even though the diaspora policy and diaspora engagement strategy remains underdeveloped. Furthermore, diaspora is being recognised as one of the key factors in rebuilding Ukraine (both in economic and human capital terms) by the Recovery Plan for Ukraine blueprint (www.recovery.gov.ua) does not feature programmes and information on strengthening the connection with Ukrainian diaspora. Nevertheless, it is crucial for Ukrainian government to institutionalise and strengthen a mutual partnership with the diaspora, with both shaping post-war reconstruction and encouraging the diaspora's participation in the process. Maintaining links with Ukraine remains a critical task for the potential return of Ukrainian temporarily displaced persons. The main risk factors hindering the return of Ukrainians under temporary protection include uncertainty about the future, inability to return to their home towns, potential differences in the experience of the war between those who left and those who remained in Ukraine, integration efforts by host countries and isolation from the Ukrainian community. In this context, the activities of diaspora organisations play a crucial role in maintaining the Ukrainian community and identity among those who have been forced to relocate beyond the country's borders. Diaspora support is therefore expected to be essential in the post-conflict phase of reconstruction and development.

The roles and initiatives of old and newly emerging diaspora organisations are now intertwined, with many collaborations between different organisations and the national government. Key strategies for diaspora organisations to promote return and engage in the reconstruction of Ukraine could include: fostering unity within the Ukrainian community, transferring new skills

and knowledge, networking, and actively promoting the return of diaspora members through their own example. Considering the potential contribution of diaspora to rebuilding Ukraine and facilitating the return of the migrants, the partnerships between the Ukrainian government and the diaspora organisations remain an important issue to tackle while elaborating the recovery blueprint for Ukraine.

To conclude the report, there are a number of open questions that could not be covered within the scope of the research carried out, for example, the possibilities of elaborating a practical approach to utilise the full potential of diaspora direct investment and remittances and the scope of support to the return and reconstruction efforts of Ukraine. Furthermore, tools and mechanisms for consular crisis management with active involvement of diaspora could be further explored, including the technical capabilities and lessons learned of various consular offices in various countries. In addition, there is a need to carry out deeper research and analysis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs internal statistics on diaspora engagement and to assess their capabilities in supporting the development efforts of the country. These are a few examples of additional research topics left to analyse and assess that was not possible within the framework of the current report, however, these topics are not overlooked and will stay on the radar of the RRR-MFA/SMS UA project for future undertaking.

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