

UKRAINIANS ABROAD: NEWS AND VIEWS #166

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26 June 2025

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1. Armenia. “Armenia’s Ukrainians Celebrate National Holiday,” *ARMINFO News*, 16 May 2025.

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By Alina Hovhannisyan

Yerevan. On May 15, a procession of the Ukrainian community in Armenia in national dress - embroidered shirts - took place from Yerevan’s Freedom Square to the monument to the great Ukrainian poet and artist Taras Shevchenko in Yerevan.

The event was dedicated to the International Vyshyvanka Day, which has been celebrated worldwide since 2006 on the third Thursday of May.

Representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora in Armenia, as well as employees of the Embassy of Ukraine in Armenia, students of the Yerevan Educational and Scientific Institute of the West Ukrainian National University, heads of Ukrainian public organizations – “Ukrainians in Armenia”, “Ukrainian House in Armenia”, “Federation of Ukrainians in Armenia” (Yerevan and Vanadzor) took part in the procession. At the monument to Kobzar, the event began with the performance of the Ukrainian anthem on the duduk by the student of the Yerevan Conservatory Narek Avetisyan, then poems of Ukrainian poets and their own composition were recited. In addition, the vocal ensemble “Dnipro”, already known in Armenia, which has been operating in our country for more than 20 years, performed before the audience.

Charge d’Affaires of Ukraine in Armenia Valeriy Lobach noted that this holiday symbolizes unity, dignity and endless love for Ukraine. “For Ukrainians, vyshyvanka is not just clothing, but the legacy of ancestors, which is embroidered with threads of history, traditions and the unbroken spirit of Ukrainians. Today we came here in beautiful national attire from the symbolic Freedom Square to an equally symbolic place for Ukrainians - the monument to Taras Grigorievich Shevchenko. Every step you take, every vyshyvanka on the streets of Yerevan is the voice of Ukraine, which sounds beyond its borders. This is a reminder to the whole world that we are strong, united, we cherish our identity, being thousands of kilometers away from our

native land. Today's holiday is not only about traditions, but also about our unity and resilience. Each pattern of the vyshyvanka is a symbol of hope, a symbol of faith in the victory of goodness and light", - the diplomat noted.

He also stressed that the Ukrainian people remain strong because they have support from all over the world, including Armenia. Wishing everyone peace, harmony and good health, he expressed hope that the friendship between Armenia and Ukraine will only grow stronger every day.

2. Brazil. "Ukraine's Ambassador Andrii Melnyk: 'Situation in the World is the Most Difficult since 1945,'" *Newsukraine.rbc.ua*, 5 May 2025.

[Excerpted for content on Brazil only. The article in its entirety can be read at:
<https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/interview/ukraine-s-ambassador-andrii-melnyk-situation-1746432825.html>]

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By Liliana Oleniak, Milan Lelich

Ukraine's Ambassador to Brazil, Andrii Melnyk, talks about Russian influence in Brazil, the new German government, Donald Trump, negotiations with the United States, and his future work at the UN in an interview with RBC-Ukraine.

Takeaways

Why does Ukrainian diplomacy need to take off its rose-colored glasses?

Why has Brazil become so close to Russia in recent years?

What will be the first test for the new German Chancellor, Merz?

Why is Ukraine doomed to find an approach to Trump?

Andrii Melnyk is probably the best-known Ukrainian diplomat to the general public. His long tenure as ambassador to Germany, which took place during the first months of the full-scale Russian invasion, contributed to this. The German authorities demonstrated miraculous indecision at that time and constantly tried to prevent further escalation.

Melnyk, in turn, publicly acted in ways that were extremely atypical for a diplomat, and his public criticism of the German authorities was often on the verge of, or even beyond, a foul. However, thanks to such non-standard methods, the Germans were stirred up a bit in 2022.

From November 2022 to mid-2023, Melnyk worked as deputy foreign minister, and then went on a business trip this time to Brazil. This country with a huge GDP and population is rightfully considered one of the leaders of the Global South, with growing geopolitical ambitions.

What is important - and unfortunate - for Ukraine is that in recent years, Brazil has been drifting quite rapidly toward Russia. And in a conversation with RBC-Ukraine, Ambassador Melnyk

explains why in great detail. He also suggests countermeasures, which, however, will require Ukraine to allocate more resources (although still much less than Russia).

However, another diplomat will soon have to continue to counteract the Russians. In a few weeks, Melnyk will move to New York, where he will become Ukraine's representative to the UN, an organization that is not viewed favorably by Ukrainians.

— For you personally, was this cadence as ambassador to Brazil more of an honorable exile or a challenge?

— For me, Brazil was a real challenge, a kind of diplomatic shake-up, and not only because it was the first assignment outside my native European continent, which I have been doing all my career.

To be honest, when the decision was made to send me to Brazil, I did not jump for joy, as I was very skeptical. Moreover, I tried my best to convince them that it would hardly be the best use of my abilities and experience for the benefit of the state during this critical period of the war.

— Why?

— For various reasons, but believe me, it was not because I was afraid or afraid of any challenges in my life. The fact is that as Deputy Foreign Minister at the time, I was actually in charge of Latin America. So I knew perfectly well that we could not have any breakthrough with Brazil soon. Instead, false expectations were created in society that Melnyk would be sent across the ocean, and Lula (Brazilian President - ed.) would immediately give Ukraine weapons.

From the very beginning, I realized that it would be naive to hope for this, at least. Unfortunately, there is a huge gap between these artificially inflated expectations and the brutal reality that exists here in Brazil on the ground, and over the past two years, unfortunately for Ukraine, this gap has widened even more.

What has been achieved in these conditions? Quite a bit has been achieved, and this is despite the unfriendly political environment for Ukraine. However, before I mention some of the achievements, I would like to say that during this time, I was able to feel the Brazilian matrix from the inside, to understand the limits of what is possible and impossible for Ukraine. The sad conclusion is that we have missed and lost so much here in the last twenty years that it will be almost impossible to make up for this gap in political mentality. It will require the courage to take radical measures.

This Brazilian train has run so fast in the opposite direction from Ukraine, towards the new matrix of the Global South, but what is especially painful, there has been a radical tilt towards Russia at the same time.

In my opinion, we should always be realistic and set ourselves realistic goals. Today, the truth is that Brazil's political beau monde, and I mean not only the current leftist government, but the entire political elite in general, does not see any benefit in developing relations with Ukraine. We

are not among their priorities, neither in terms of geopolitics, nor in terms of economy and trade.

This statement is quite bitter for us, but unfortunately, it is an obvious fact. Although government officials occasionally say that Brazil views Ukraine as a partner (indeed, this was agreed on paper back in 2009), the real course has long been untrue. In words, the Brazilians will tell you that they are for world peace, for dialogue, for partnership, for equidistance from the parties to armed conflicts, in short, for everything good and against everything bad. All this talk is very nice to listen to, but it just makes you very sad.

Because all this rhetoric has been and remains, and de facto there is a drift towards Russia, I would even say a smooth rollback from the Western world, really by leaps and bounds. This new reality simply needs to be realized to act correctly and effectively and to advance our interests. It is high time for Ukrainian diplomacy to put aside its rose-colored glasses.

— **So what did you manage to achieve in such circumstances?**

— I have only been in this country for a year and a half. I arrived in early September 2023, and two weeks later, we managed to organize the first meeting between Presidents Zelenskyy and Lula in New York on the sidelines of the UNGA session. Believe me, we had to use many, to put it mildly, non-standard methods, because Brazil had no particular desire to do so. And although the conversation itself was called frank and constructive by both heads of state, it unfortunately became the first and last one so far. The real breakthrough that many expected never materialized.

— **Why is this so?**

— There are objective reasons for this, because at the end of 2023 and beginning of 2024, Brazil made a behind-the-scenes strategic decision, which, of course, no one has announced and will never announce, that it is better not to risk a revival in the Ukrainian direction, but to deepen the dialogue with Moscow on a large scale.

All of this geopolitical shift has taken place against the backdrop of a dramatic shift in emphasis not just toward the Global South or the BRICS. It is a Brazilian train that has begun to move full steam ahead towards the two most important actors: China and Russia. And over the past year, it was the ties with Moscow that began to gain momentum. Lula had four cordial phone conversations with Putin.

However, all our efforts to continue the Zelenskyy-Lula dialogue have been in vain. Even the agreement reached on the visit of the Ukrainian Foreign Minister to Brazil was quietly torpedoed by the Brazilian side. Instead, the red carpet was rolled out for Lavrov, and Lula welcomed the Kremlin propagandist with open arms at his official residence, Alvorada.

Against this not particularly friendly backdrop, we still managed to achieve some progress, even in the political dimension, although - and I felt this in my daily work - an unspoken stop signal was given throughout the government system.

First of all, I am happy that we were able to establish communication at the level of Vice President Geraldo Alckmin for the first time in the history of bilateral relations. This is one of the most powerful figures. Rumor has it that it was largely thanks to him that Lula managed to win the last election. After much preparatory work, an online meeting was organized between the Brazilian Vice President and First Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine, Yulia Svyrydenko.

In the same format, the deputy prime minister spoke with one of the most influential and close to Lula, his fellow party member, Minister of Labor Luiz Marinho. The online meeting between the two defense ministers, Rustem Umerov and José Múcio, was also important, for the first time in history.

Despite the existing rules of protocol, I managed to meet with almost a third of the members of the Brazilian government, including key ministers from the ruling Workers' Party: Wellington Diaz of Social Policy, Paulo Teixeira of Agricultural Development, Luiz Marinho of Labor, and many others. However, and I am convinced of this now, all the agreements reached were put on hold by a team from the highest offices to prevent anything serious from happening with Ukraine.

The reason for this inhibition, in my opinion, is more than banal: it was deemed appropriate not to take unnecessary steps in order not to irritate Russia, God forbid. It was from the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine that the formal strategic partnership between Brazil and Moscow became more of a strategic partnership in essence.

— **How does it manifest itself?**

— The main thing is the economic track. It is in the last three-plus years of the war that Russia has become not just one of Brazil's main trading partners, becoming the top five largest importers. In the interim, Moscow has become one of the largest suppliers of goods that are truly critical to Brazil's economy: first and foremost, diesel and mineral fertilizers.

Let me give you a few illustrative examples. As of today, Russia has become a de facto monopolist in diesel imports. Its share in the Brazilian market is 65% of all diesel imports. Just think about it - 65% is two-thirds! Before the large-scale invasion of Ukraine, this share was less than 1% in 2021. Thanks to dumping prices due to Western sanctions, the Russians were able to displace the Americans, who had previously held the lion's share (now only 15%). Brazil paid Russia almost \$10 billion for 6.5 million tons of diesel. In other words, for comparison, it is about one-tenth of the total defense budget of Russia. With this money, the Kremlin can finance its military campaign against Ukraine for more than a month. This is our vision of diesel supplies.

And as for Brazil itself, diesel is one of the main factors in curbing inflation. What is inflation control? This is one of Lula's biggest challenges ahead of the presidential and parliamentary elections that will take place next fall. And the recent sharp rise in prices for basic products threatens the support of Lula's core constituency, the poorest segments of the population. That's diesel diplomacy for you.

A similar situation is observed about wheat imports - it was during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine that the volume of supplies from Russia to Brazil increased thirtyfold: from 28,000 tons in 2021 to 900,000 tons in 2023! Today, Russians are the second largest supplier after Argentina and occupy more than 20% of the Brazilian market. And all thanks to significant discounts of about \$60 per ton, which Russia has offered to its Brazilian allies since 2022.

Not to mention the fact that Russia has been and remains a key player in the import of mineral fertilizers, which affect the yields and profits of the agro-industrial complex (its market share ranges between 20 and 25%, with a value of about \$4 billion a year). I don't remember a single meeting with Brazilian politicians who didn't mention the importance of Russian fertilizers.

This is what we have. It is not surprising that in the context of Brazil's growing economic dependence on Russia, any Ukrainian initiatives have been blocked and, I am afraid, will continue to be blocked for one simple reason: there is a general line not to make unnecessary moves, because any progress in relations with Kyiv could jeopardize this truly strategic track with Russia.

Forgive me for all these details. I think it would be important for our readers to understand the behind-the-scenes of the Brazilian file better. So we had to look for, so to speak, workarounds to promote Ukraine's interests.

The main track on which we managed to make significant progress was working with the National Congress. Brazil, despite all the nuances, has been and remains a democratic country for more than 200 years of independence, with a traditionally high influence of parliamentarism and powerful independent media. The main task was to expand the circle of sympathizers and friends among congressmen, both in the government coalition camp and among opposition circles. As a result, for the first time in a decade and a half, we organized two visits of Brazilian parliamentarians to Kyiv. As a result, they not only talked to the President and members of the Verkhovna Rada, but most importantly, they saw the consequences of the Russian war with their own eyes and conveyed their impressions to the public.

Many important decisions were also made in the parliamentary track, including a resolution of solidarity with the Ukrainian people, calling on the Lula government to change its approach to Ukraine on the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion.

The second, no less important block of work is the media. Two years ago, there was no bias on the part of the leading media towards Ukraine at all. Of course, they wrote about Ukraine, but mostly in terms of news.

Unfortunately, there are still no Brazilian journalists who are permanently accredited in Ukraine, but we have created a wide pool here that already includes several dozen influential journalists. We have organized a number of their visits to Ukraine, not only to Kyiv but also to the East, and we have prepared all the meetings and exclusive interviews with the Ukrainian President for them. There is not a day that goes by when I do not communicate with the local media in one format or another. And this is also beginning to bear fruit because there is a circle of people for whom Ukraine is no longer an abstract concept. We have established a close emotional

connection between the Brazilian media and Ukrainians and their struggle.

The third block, which has concrete achievements even after a year and a half, is work at the state level because Brazil is a federal state, like Germany. I managed to travel to more than half of the states, meet personally with governors, speak in many parliaments, and visit a large number of influential mayors - perhaps for the first time in history. Among the examples is the municipal partnership between Odesa and Fortaleza, the capital of Ceará, the fourth largest city in the state. These regional trips allowed us to open a parallel track of engaging political elites in favor of Ukraine. It so happened that the work of the diplomatic mission used to be focused on the capital, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and the state of Paraná, where our Ukrainian community is located. We have changed this matrix.

— By the way, many ethnic Ukrainians are living in Brazil, does this diaspora play a role in promoting our interests?

— This is perhaps the most painful topic for me. Our community includes more than a million Brazilians of Ukrainian descent. A million! And although Brazil itself has a population of over 200 million, this million of our compatriots living compactly in one state, Paraná, is a truly powerful force.

In general, this wonderful Ukrainian community has lived and continues to live its life for over 130 years. This is the fifth generation of migrants, sometimes even the sixth, and they feel comfortable here. People from Ukraine feel happy here, and many of them have achieved a high status in society. These are wonderful people who have preserved Ukrainian identity, culture, customs, and our religion. In Paraná alone, Ukrainians have built more than 240 churches. But, unfortunately, the political influence of our unique community in Brazil is almost zero. This makes me very bitter.

Moreover, this influence is almost absent both at the federal level and at the level of the state of Paraná, which has become a new homeland for Ukrainians. In the state parliament, where I had the honor of speaking recently, there is only one deputy with Ukrainian roots, Marcia Husuliak. Therefore, in cooperation with the Central Representation of Ukrainians in Brazil, we have begun to take steps to radically change this deplorable situation so that the voice of our community, of these Brazilian citizens as voters with their preferences, cannot be ignored.

And the last challenge is language. Although Ukrainians in Brazil have preserved their identity, almost no one speaks Ukrainian, especially among young people. Therefore, we have also started a serious effort to ensure that Ukrainian language lessons are included in the public school system in the state of Paraná, in those cities where our compatriots still live compactly, so that children can learn Ukrainian as a foreign language.

This requires that the Ministry of Education of Ukraine finally start sending teachers on long-term business trips, as our neighbors Germany and Poland have been doing successfully. Unfortunately, all of our proposals to create such a network have so far gone unanswered by Kyiv.

— Sometime in the second year of Russia’s full-scale invasion, the Ukrainian government declared a course toward the Global South, and there was a great deal of activity in this direction. But given Ukraine’s limited resources, how much sense does it make to disperse them and try to reach everyone? Perhaps it is better to concentrate on the countries where decisions are made: The United States, France-Germany-UK, perhaps China, but not Africa or Latin America?

— You are right. Of course, the country has been at war for four years now, and everyone understands that all available resources should be directed primarily to defense, to the army. This is obvious. It is also clear that the main foreign policy priorities should be focused on those countries that are our key allies.

But I have always advocated and will continue to advocate the idea, at all our internal meetings within the diplomatic system, that, especially against the background of these huge expenditures on our army, we need to increase in parallel the funding of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the entire embassy system dramatically, tenfold.

Does it sound too ambitious? But it is only at first glance. Let me give you some figures: the share of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the total budget of Ukraine is currently about 0.19%. In Germany, this figure is 8 times higher (1.46%). I hope that the top leadership of the state will be able to make a historic decision to gradually increase spending on domestic diplomacy to at least one percent.

One new small embassy that we could open in Latin America, for example, would cost 200-300, let alone 400 thousand dollars for the whole year! That is much less than one (!) missile for the German IRIS-T air defense system, which we managed to break through during my ambassadorial cadence in Berlin back in 2022. Of course, this comparison is very conditional.

But still, for this amount of money, Ukraine can finally be diplomatically represented in one of the countries where we have never had a presence during all the years of independence. I’m talking about an ambassador, plus one diplomat, one technical officer, so it’s a minimum 1+2 or 1+3 format. Our embassy in Brazil, by the way, is not much bigger.

It would be naive to hope for quick results from such an expansion of the geography of our diplomatic missions. But we can all see how complicated the situation is among the countries of the Global South in their relations with Ukraine. It is finally time to start this process. This world is moving so fast in a direction that we do not like, and if we do not change our approaches right now, it will be too late tomorrow.

That is why I am convinced that our basic priorities must remain, and you have mentioned them, and it is clear that we need to invest even more human resources in relations with major players, just as tenfold. But at the same time, we cannot forget about this when we vote at the UN General Assembly, where the voice of each country, whether it is the G7 or an island nation in the Caribbean, has equal weight.

Therefore, I am convinced that we must expand the network of embassies in parallel. Believe

me, this is an investment that will pay off a hundredfold, not today, but this diplomatic profitability will be tangible, maybe in 5 years, maybe in 10 years, and maybe in a year. This is not the kind of money that you need to save on, because it will all come back to bite you, and not just at the UN.

— You mentioned at the very beginning several reasons why Russia has such a strong position in countries like Brazil. Multibillion-dollar contracts for diesel, grain, whatever. Obviously, in many countries of the Global South, there are also some long-standing ties with Moscow, even from the Soviet era. There are narratives of anti-Americanism that bring the South closer to Russia. There is probably also a powerful factor of direct corruption of elites by Russians, not only political but also influencers and public figures. What can Ukraine do to counteract all this, except for our absolute moral rightness as a victim of unprovoked aggression, even with better funding for diplomacy than we have now?

— Look, as of now, we have embassies in Latin America in Brazil and Argentina, which have been there since the first years of independence, followed by an embassy in Peru, and only recently in Chile. That is, we have only 4 diplomatic missions on the entire Latin American continent so far.

We have two embassies in Central America, in Mexico and Cuba. That is, for more than 30 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, we have as many as six diplomatic missions. And all of them are small: I have three diplomats working with me in Brazil, and last year I had only one diplomat for a long time. Is this normal?

How can we expect significant changes if in many countries in our region, Ukrainian diplomats or our delegations have been seen several times in three decades, not to mention the last years of Russia's full-scale invasion? At best, a few MPs or a deputy foreign minister will come for consultations, which is all very important and necessary, and they will talk about something and leave. This is not how it works, you know? Because if there is no one in place to implement the agreements reached, then everything goes down the drain.

I am convinced that most countries in the world should have Ukrainian embassies. If we don't do this, we can't hope for a miracle. This is the first story.

The second story is that Russia's influence in Latin America is supposedly so unshakable that it cannot be moved. This is just a myth.

At least here in Brazil, we have never had any super friendly relations with Russia. Even if you compare it to Germany, which I can tell you a lot about, it's absolutely different, because the historical and cultural influence of the Russians there is still enormous, and that's a risk for us. As for Brazil, Russia was indeed one of the first countries to recognize Brazil's independence in 1828. But nobody cares about that. Historically, there have been no close cultural or even economic relations between the two countries.

Just the other day, I had a meeting with the Vice President of Brazil, who received me on the eve

of the end of my diplomatic mission and told me himself: Mr. Ambassador, a survey of public opinion in Brazil was recently conducted, and 70% of Brazilians support Ukraine. Of course, I knew about this, as well as about another result of this poll that only 7% support Russia.

The current influence of Russia, which I partially described, has only emerged since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Before that, and I am told this directly by Brazilians, no one here knew or heard of Russians in particular, and no one wanted to know. Trade after the collapse of the USSR grew gradually, but it never really affected Brazil's overall balance sheet, and Moscow was never among the top 10 or 15 partners.

When Russia found itself isolated at the beginning of the great aggression in 2022, the lion's share of resources was directed to Latin America and Brazil, as the largest country in the region. And I won't say that from scratch, but from a very low start, the Kremlin has reached the level of strategic relations that I told you about at the beginning of our conversation, and which is now harming Ukraine.

What does this mean? It means that if Kyiv starts acting similarly, i.e. investing in human and diplomatic resources, a real economic presence, in the popularization of national culture, in our media voice (from morning to evening in Brazil, the Portuguese-language Russia Today and Sputnik litter the airwaves), we will be able to compete on equal terms with the Russian garbage.

There is no dominance of Russian narratives that the political elite and society would blindly accept. This can and should be changed.

Unfortunately, the domestic system lacks a real, live link between diplomacy and Ukrainian business. Unfortunately, all attempts to create an effective mechanism through which our embassies could successfully help businesses have failed. Everyone lives on their own. Our companies mostly make their way to new markets on their own, and they rarely manage to achieve real synergy. It is very frustrating.

Here's an example: last year, we managed to increase trade between Ukraine and Brazil by 30%. This is supposedly positive news, but when I tell you that it reached \$300 million, it's just ridiculous, and not only against the background of Brazil-Russia trade (\$12.5 billion). After all, 17 years ago, trade between Ukraine and Brazil amounted to 1.1 billion, or almost four times more than today. So there is nothing to be particularly happy about.

If you read the Brazilian Foreign Ministry's website, it publishes press statements every day. I think that more than half of these statements are not about foreign policy, but about opening new markets. For example, just the latest news from the website that thanks to the efforts of their ministry, together with the Ministry of Agriculture, they managed to open the Turkish market for cattle exports, or the Indian market for citrus fruits. That is, this is a priority for Lula personally, and not just for the Foreign Ministry. The state system is working to open new markets for Brazilian exports every day. This deserves to be recognized. We do not have all this. It is time to change approaches....

3. Canada. “President Zelensky Meets with Ukrainian Community Leaders in Calgary Following G7 Summit in Canada,” *Ukrainianworldcongress.org*, 18 June 2025.

Calgary, Canada – June 17, 2025 — Following his participation in the G7 Leaders’ Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky met with leaders of Canada’s Ukrainian community in Calgary to discuss continued support for Ukraine’s defense, recovery, and global advocacy.

The meeting was co-led by Ms. Alexandra Chyczij, President of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), and Mr. Pavlo Grod, President of the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC). Participants included senior representatives from leading Ukrainian Canadian institutions, including the Canada-Ukraine Foundation, Taras Shevchenko Foundation, Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce, Ukrainian Canadian Students’ Union (SUSK), and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS). Also in attendance were former Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach and former Member of Parliament Borys Wrzesnewskyj.

Ms. Chyczij spoke about the UCC’s work to build strong, sustained support for Ukraine across Canada’s political landscape, working closely with federal, provincial, and municipal governments to ensure that Ukraine remains a national priority.

In his remarks, Mr. Grod opened by expressing condolences to the people of Ukraine for the devastating loss of life and injuries caused by the recent Russian terrorist attacks on civilians. He condemned these brutal assaults and reaffirmed the Ukrainian diaspora’s solidarity with Ukraine in the face of continued aggression.

Mr. Grod then provided an update on the global Ukrainian community’s strategic initiatives since his last meeting with the President, highlighting two major areas of achievement:

1. Direct Support for Ukraine’s Armed Forces

“We do not simply advocate—we act,” Grod said. “Through the generosity of our global community across more than 70 countries, we have delivered nearly €3 billion (approximately USD 70 million) in equipment and aid for Ukraine’s defenders.”

This includes drones, armored vehicles, tactical medical kits, and even a medevac helicopter from Vancouver—demonstrating the power of coordinated diaspora action.

2. Global Advocacy for Ukraine’s Interests

Grod highlighted coordinated advocacy efforts focused on:

- Strengthening political support in the U.S., Canada, Australia, South America, Asia and Europe.
- Securing the seizure and transfer of frozen Russian state assets to Ukraine.
- Advocating for the return of Ukrainian POWs and children abducted by Russia.

“You can continue to count on us,” Grod said. “Our collective strength lies in our unity—and we are fully committed to Ukraine’s victory and recovery.”

Grod also outlined the UWC’s forward-looking priorities:

- Promoting a just and lasting peace including Russia’s criminal responsibility for war crimes, reparations and sanctions.
- Supporting the passage and implementation of the multiple citizenship law, which the UWC has championed by working through over 1,300 legislative amendments in close coordination with the Office of the President, the Ministry of National Unity, and all parliamentary factions.
- Inviting President Zelensky to participate in UWC’s upcoming Global Summit of Ukrainians in Kyiv on August 22–23, 2025.
- Contributing to the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome, where the UWC will stress the need to preserve Ukrainian identity abroad as essential to rebuilding Ukraine’s human capital and national resilience.

“Preserving our identity has been the mission of the UWC for almost 60 years,” Grod noted. “We must ensure Ukrainians abroad remain part of the Ukrainian nation—not just emotionally, but institutionally.”

President Zelensky expressed appreciation to the Ukrainian community organizations for their critical role in advocacy and fundraising, acknowledging the strength of diaspora influence in his recent meetings with Canada’s newly elected Prime Minister Mark Carney. He also welcomed the upcoming Global Summit of Ukrainians in Kyiv, recognizing it as an important moment of solidarity and strategic coordination.

4. Canada. “Oseredok Becoming a Cultural Hub,” *Winnipeg Sun*, 8 June 2025.

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By Guest Columnist Marty Gold

A familiar face to those of us covering the political scene has taken a permanent detour to the arts and culture sector, and the East Exchange has gained a newly popular destination as a result.

Brad Salyn spent twenty years inside City Hall and the Legislature handling government communications, organizational management, and developing policy. But last March, he took his career in a new direction, assuming the duties of Executive Director of the Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre at 184 Alexander Avenue East. The job is ideally suited to Salyn, who is an avid collector of Ukrainian music and literature and a well-known musician in local bands.

A year ago, he took over the vacant hosting slot for the Zabava Hour on 92.7 CKJS, spinning polkas, waltzes, and special tributes to Manitoba staples like the Dennis Nykoliati Band every Friday and Saturday evening. When the opportunity to take the helm of Oseredok came up, he

jumped at the chance.

“Oseredok was founded in 1944 and serves as the Ukrainian-Canadian community’s collective memory. Our museum acquires, preserves, and interprets ethnology, folk art, fine art, and historical archives,” he told me. “We have more than 100,000 people in Winnipeg who identify with Ukrainian heritage, as well as 25,000 newcomers who have fled the unprovoked Russian aggression in Ukraine. We are a home of education and celebration for all the achievements of our community in Manitoba and Canada.”

The museum had fallen out of the spotlight in recent years, as the East Exchange struggled to maintain its position as an arts and culture destination for locals and tourists alike. Salyn found that, as with any 80-year-old institution, there were challenges in getting the operation up to speed and finding new approaches to promoting the remarkable cultural displays of art, artifacts, and pysanky - the colourful Ukrainian Easter eggs.

“The first 90 days on the job involved meeting with many community members whose lives have intersected with Oseredok over our entire history,” said Salyn. “There has been a lot of listening, but also immediate action taken to be at the forefront of the collective Ukrainian consciousness so that Ukrainians from the fifth generation all the way up to our newcomers feel there is a welcoming open door with programming, excitement, and a sense of community pride.”

A major goal of Salyn and the volunteer board of directors is to identify opportunities that will ensure the facility thrives as a community centre as well as a museum.

“One of our challenges remains letting the community know that we are not just a museum - we are one of North America's largest and most unique Ukrainian cultural and non-profit heritage resource centres, which also includes an art gallery, library, archives, cultural programming, and a boutique.”

The building is just east of Main Street as it turns toward the Disraeli Freeway, which led to a unique opportunity to pair Salyn’s interest in music with a chance to introduce the presence of Oseredok to the community.

“I’ve always taken the Gordian knot method to problem-solving. I certainly bring a different perspective towards promotion and programming - whether it was jumping at the chance to deliver up a home-cooked Ukrainian meal to Randy Bachman and Fred Turner of BTO for the renaming of the Disraeli event, to reaching out to all the young positive cultural entrepreneurs in our city and simply saying ‘yes’ to their ideas to bring people through the door.”

The value of the museum and cultural centre is obvious once you go in. The displays, memorabilia, and artifacts are amazing to see and learn about. There’s a lot of pride to be taken in the work they’re doing to retain, teach, and commemorate Ukrainian culture and history. Salyn is optimistic that, with a new executive director and a new board after the AGM, bright times are ahead for this gem of the East Exchange.

“Of course it is a challenge taking over any organization with an inherited operating deficit. We

have an AGM coming up and frankly I look forward to the tough questions, as long as people are prepared for the tough answers,” said Salyn. “My approach isn’t different than any methods in government - expand your membership, provide and communicate value for that membership, and raise money to deliver the priorities the community expects.”

However, Salyn recognizes that increasing awareness of the organization and their good work is key to growing support.

“If the community truly values Oseredok, then now is the time to step up and show that support. We can only be as strong as the community we serve,” Salyn stated.

The Ukrainian community can be confident that their support will be rewarded as Oseredok moves into an exciting new era.

Marty Gold is a Winnipeg journalist and a guest writer for The Winnipeg Sun. You can find more of his work at The Great Canadian Talk Show

5. Canada. “UCHV Fire: A Profound Loss for Alberta,” *Sherwood Park News*, 1 May 2025.

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PG A26

By Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk

On the evening of Friday, April 18, a devastating fire broke out near the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village.

Thanks to the swift and courageous response of first responders, the site’s historical buildings were preserved. However, we are deeply saddened to confirm that the Visitor Centre buildings were lost in the fire. These buildings housed exhibit spaces and irreplaceable artifacts that shared the stories of generations of Ukrainian Albertans.

This is a profound loss, not only for the Ukrainian community but for all Albertans who value and honour our province’s rich cultural heritage.

To the many who hold this site dear, please know that we share in your grief. We recognize the cultural significance of the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village and its role in preserving the identity, history, and contributions of Ukrainian Albertans. More information will be shared as it becomes available in the coming weeks. Alberta’s government is committed to supporting the site's reopening when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

If you would like to offer support or donate to the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, please reach out to the Friends of the Ukrainian Village Society at 825-419-3855 or info@fouvs.ca

This tragedy also highlights the vital work of our constituency’s incredible firefighting teams. Whether responding to fires, attending vehicle collisions, or delivering emergency medical care, our firefighters are essential to the safety and well-being of Alberta's communities. As part of our

ongoing support, the United Conservative government is investing over \$1 million through the Fire Services Training Program Grant, supporting more than 65 local fire services across the province.

Locally, Lamont County is receiving \$19,180, County of Two Hills is receiving \$16,200, and Vegreville is receiving \$11,810.

These grants will provide essential training opportunities for our firefighters, ensuring they remain well-equipped to protect the communities they serve.

Additionally, we encourage all Albertans to support our province's agriculture and food sector through our 'Buy Local' campaign. By choosing Alberta- and Canadian-made foods and products, you're helping support our farmers, ranchers, and producers, and strengthening our local economy.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact my office at 780-632-6840 or fortsaskatchewan.vegreville@assembly.ab.ca.

Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk is the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, which includes parts of rural Strathcona County, and Parliamentary Secretary for Settlement Services and Ukrainian Evacuees.

6. Canada. "A Ukrainian Church Serves as a Lifeline for Community," *Globe and Mail*, 19 April 2025.

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PG A19

A Saturday Report on Business article about the fundraising efforts of Patti Harbman, president of Canadian Nurses for Africa, incorrectly stated that Dr. Harbman lives in Toronto. She lives in Oakville, Ont. The article also incorrectly stated that Dr. Harbman was inspired by a U.S. organization operating a motorcycle ambulance service in Uganda. It was a British organization.

As war in Ukraine grinds on, Ontario parishioners gather to celebrate culture and Easter traditions

Irene Chewchuk was pensive, wrapping one of her intricately decorated eggs for a customer at the Easter bazaar put on by St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Oakville, Ont. on a sunny spring Saturday.

Born in Canada to Ukrainian immigrants, Ms. Chewchuk was introduced to the art of writing pysanky – careful hand-drawing on eggs – at Ukrainian school six decades ago. The word comes from pysaty, which means "to write." Dating back to pre-Christianity, the tradition was adopted by Ukrainians for Easter, symbolizing rebirth and renewal.

Ms. Chewchuk has written on all kinds of eggs: quail, guinea, duck, goose, swan, ostrich. When one of her treasures cracks, she gives the fragments to her daughter, who crafts them into jewellery.

“Every once in a while, mishaps happen – they’re eggshells, after all,” Ms. Chewchuk says.

“The broken shards of pysanky represent the situation in Ukraine.”

As Russian attacks rage on and the United States turns its back, she worries watching Ukraine slip from people’s minds.

“Canada stepped up initially and spoke up for Ukraine,” she said. “I hope we continue to do that.”

Trepidation hummed under the surface at the church bazaar, where Ukrainian newcomers, earlier waves of immigrants and Canadians of Ukrainian descent filled their Easter baskets. There was warmth in the room, people talking nostalgically about parents’ and grandparents’ traditions. But also anxiety, as war grinds on and the world looks away from Ukraine.

Inside the church, clothing racks brimmed with traditional embroidered shirts (vyshyvanky).

Vendors showcased beaded necklaces (kryvulky), floral wreaths (vinok), candles and religious icons. There were wooden ornaments crafted like tridents, the Ukrainian coat of arms now so recognizable and T-shirts proclaiming, “Ukrainian by Marriage.”

Home cooking smells wafted from the church café, where volunteers served Ukrainian dumplings (varenyky), plump cabbage rolls and borscht, and plum-filled doughnuts (pampushky).

The church has been a refuge for Ukrainians fleeing the war. In the early months, parishioners organized donation drives, meal vouchers and meet-and-greets.

They directed newcomers to community resources for help finding English courses, housing, work and access to health care. A psychologist was brought in from Ukraine to help people cope with what they’d seen, with grief and uncertainty.

More than three years into the war, growing numbers of parishioners have lost close relatives.

“You can see it and you can hear it in the voices of some, that it’s taken a tremendous emotional and psychological toll,” says church pastor Michael Loza. “Every time there is news of lack of support or of Russian advances, they struggle with hopelessness that it won’t end well.”

He spoke about the outpouring of sympathy and moral support from Canadians with no Ukrainian connection, describing the Canadian government’s openness to receiving Ukrainians as “a haven of hope.”

Nearly 300,000 Ukrainian nationals arrived under the CanadaUkraine Authorization for Emergency Travel program before applications closed in 2023. Many find themselves in limbo: to stay, hoping for extended work permits or permanent resident status, or risk returning.

Choir singers Ross Kudlyk and Iryna Olijnyk emigrated from Ukraine in the nineties. At the bazaar, they sell homemade cookies nestled in boxes lined with blue and yellow Easter grass.

They are fundraising, independently from the church, to help equip two Ukrainian brigades fighting on the frontlines.

Their efforts have helped deliver tires, fuel, antifreeze, heaters, extension cables – “not-so-glamorous items” necessary on the frontlines, said Ms. Olijnyk, an engineer.

On the eve of a federal election, Mr. Kudlyk sees as an opportunity for Canada to differentiate itself from the United States, where the Trump administration has sown hostility against Ukraine.

“We know that Canada cannot change the game entirely but it’s still very important for us as citizens of this country that Canada is actively involved and has a voice on the world stage,” Mr. Kudlyk said.

“For us, this is the most paramount question to the elected officials in Canada. We are really watching the language – what they say about their level of support. We are talking about the survival of democracy, the survival of our previous homeland.”

Iryna Havryliv remembers the terror of Feb. 24, 2022, when the first Russian bombs rained down on Ukraine.

“My daughter was 10 months only,” Ms. Havryliv said. “It was so stressful. I can’t eat. I can’t sleep. I can’t nothing. It was a few days and we were gone.”

Ms. Havryliv, her husband and their three children fled Lviv for Poland. When they arrived in Canada in June, 2022, an aunt and cousins welcomed them. The challenge now is landing permanent resident status. Her husband is self-employed, his English poor; a new baby was born two years ago.

At the bazaar, Ms. Havryliv sells beeswax candles she's crafted like dragons, moons and suns.

With her is Anna, her eldest daughter, dressed in a vyshyvanka embroidered with rich, red poppies. She misses home but has made many friends, some Ukrainian, in her Grade 10 class: “We support each other.”

The family left grandparents behind. Nearly every day, the relatives set aside time for a video call.

“I hope the war will end soon,” Anna says, “so they will be safe.”

Laurisa Hrycyna hands out brochures for the Ukrainian Museum of Canada, Ontario Branch, where she is president. Founded in 1944, the museum's mandate was to safeguard artifacts representing Ukrainian heritage, in the face of Soviet suppression. Preservation is especially

urgent again.

“There is a lot of propaganda, which tries to subvert the recognition of Ukraine and its culture,” Ms. Hrycyna says. “This erasure, this Russian propaganda, has been going on for well over a century.”

She sees long-lasting fallout for Ukrainians: “There are so many people – men, women, children – who’ve been killed, but also maimed, without an arm, without legs. The Ukrainian society is absorbing all this during the time of war.”

Liza Tkaczyszyn saw the damage firsthand. With her background in emergency room nursing, she volunteered for a 2022 medical mission to Czeladz in southwestern Poland with the Canada Ukraine Surgical Aid Program.

There, she cared for Ukrainian civilians whose homes were bombed out, and soldiers with catastrophic combat wounds – missing noses, chins, eyes.

She has a vivid memory of young nurses flying in from British Columbia, some bearing tattoos of the Ukrainian trident.

“We’re proud of what Canada has given us,” Ms. Tkaczyszyn said.

This Easter, the retired nurse is volunteering again. She works the bazaar’s frozen food counter, where potato and cheddar varenyky fly off the shelves. A small army of volunteers – the “dough boys” and the “pinchers,” as they dub themselves – prepared the dumplings in advance of the holiday.

Ms. Tkaczyszyn’s family has been with this church for 15 years.

Since the invasion, there is a heaviness in the pews.

“Many new faces. Many sad faces. I look at them, and they really are praying, and you can see it in them,” the nurse said. “We pray for the deceased. It’s war. It’s awful.”

7. Cyprus. “25% of Ukrainians Say Would Return Home,” *Cyprus Mail*, 4 May 2025.

By Katy Turner

Peace in Ukraine could see a quarter of the Ukrainians who have moved to Cyprus and their businesses return home, reports said on Sunday, underlining the potential impact on the island’s economy.

These are the conclusions of a Fiscal Council survey, which were published in *Phileleftheros* on Sunday.

Those who fled to the island after the Russian invasion of Ukraine have contributed in a

professional capacity to the island's economy, mainly in the field of information technology and technology.

It is estimated that about three quarters of the Ukrainians who currently live on the island came here after the Russian invasion and that about 80 per cent of them are also tax residents. Last summer, the council expressed concerns about what would happen if these people left en masse, which coupled with a perceived lack of a government policy on how to protect these investments, led to the study.

It commissioned IMR/University of Nicosia to carry out the survey, which reportedly shows that the government has underestimated the contribution of Ukrainians to the economy. It showed that 25 per cent of the Ukrainians asked said they would return home if the war came to an end, although it could end up higher.

Wealthy Ukrainians with incomes of more than €75,000 would be the first ones to leave, the Fiscal Council said. In a note forwarded to parliament, it said this "should be a cause for concern, since it would probably also affect the middle income strata through employment". In total, 44 per cent said they were 'not likely' they would stay.

At the same time, the Ukrainians who have expressed their intention to remain in Cyprus are mainly middle-income executives, with earnings of €35,000 to €75,000. Among these, 24 per cent said they would definitely stay in Cyprus while 66 per cent said they would 'very likely' stay.

According to the Fiscal Council, the Ukrainian community in Cyprus is economically active, with 35 per cent of individuals and 44 per cent of businesses operating in the technology sector, where Cypriot exports and value added increased sharply after 2022.

In terms of employment, 44 per cent of Ukrainians in Cyprus are full-time employees, while 12 per cent declare themselves self-employed and five per cent are an 'investor or director'. The Ukrainian community in Cyprus as a whole has higher incomes than the domestic average: almost one third (28 per cent) have incomes between €35,000 and €75,000, with an additional six per cent above €75,000.

The Council said there is satisfactory integration with the Cypriot economy, but with significant room for growth. Two thirds said they cooperate with Cypriot businesses, and the same percentage that their supply is located within Cyprus. Meanwhile, one third said they employ Cypriots.

In addition to the value their taxation provides the Cyprus economy, almost 80 per cent of Ukrainians questioned said they spend more than 50 per cent of their income in Cyprus, although the richest say they spend a smaller percentage here.

Meanwhile, 14 per cent of Ukrainians say they have invested in Cyprus, with 74 per cent investing in real estate, 11 per cent in IT, 14 per cent in both trade and financial services, and nine per cent in hospitality.

The Fiscal Council now plans to conduct a new survey with a larger sample and by using government data.

“A clearer picture will allow for the timely formulation of policies and incentives, with the main aim of encouraging Ukrainians in Cyprus, instead of relocating their businesses here back to Ukraine, to make foreign direct investment (FDI) from Cyprus to their country,” it said. This, it said, could turn a potential risk for the economy into an opportunity.

8. Czechia. “Zelenskyy Announces Plans to Create Unity Hubs for Ukrainians in Czechia and Other Countries,” *Ukrainska Pravda*, 5 May 2025.

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By Mariya Yemets

Ukraine and Czechia have signed an agreement to establish a unity centre for Ukrainians in Czechia – the second such centre in Europe aimed at maintaining the connection between Ukrainians abroad and their homeland, as well as encouraging their return. More centres are planned in other countries.

Details: The agreement was signed live on air before the joint press conference of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala in Prague.

The document on the establishment of the national unity centre or unity hub in Czechia was signed by Ukraine’s Minister for National Unity Oleksii Chernyshov and Czech Interior Minister Vit Rakušan.

At the press conference, Zelenskyy said such centres would be opened “in many countries where there is a significant Ukrainian presence”.

He specifically named Germany – where the process has already started – Czechia, Spain, Poland and possibly the United Kingdom.

“This is ongoing work. I only understand when it started – I don’t know when it will end, or how many hubs we’ll need to avoid losing contact with Ukrainians abroad,” Zelenskyy said.

He noted that these centres would offer legal consultations and help Ukrainians “find their place” in Ukraine – particularly with employment opportunities. Zelenskyy expressed hope that many Ukrainians would return home after the active phase of the war ends.

For his part, Petr Fiala noted that 160,000 Ukrainian citizens are currently working in Czechia.

The first reports of plans to establish such a centre in Czechia appeared in winter 2025.

9. General. “Ukrainians Continue to Emigrate: IMF Predicts Population Decline,”
Finway.com.ua, 28 April 2025.

By Roman Vovk

According to sociological research, 13% of Ukrainians intend to leave the country within the next six months for temporary or permanent residence. The most popular countries among emigrants remain Germany and Poland, which is explained by the search for a safe environment, employment opportunities, and support from relatives.

This is reported by Finway

The main reasons driving Ukrainians to leave abroad continue to be the threat to life and health, as well as the risks of occupation in regions of the Russian Federation (approximately 50% of respondents). The National Bank of Ukraine predicts that by 2025, around 200,000 Ukrainians may leave the country. The return of Ukrainian migrants is expected only after a significant reduction in security risks, according to experts.

Adaptation of Ukrainians Abroad

Research indicates that Ukrainians are becoming increasingly well adapted to life in foreign countries, which in turn reduces their willingness to return home. The growing likelihood of family reunification abroad, rather than in Ukraine, is another factor influencing emigrants' decisions. Experts estimate that only a third of the millions of refugees plan to return after the war ends.

Population Decline in Ukraine

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ukraine had a population of 41 million in 2021, but by 2024, the population had decreased to 33.3 million. A further decline to 32.9 million is projected for 2025, after which the population is expected to grow slightly, reaching 33.9 million by 2030.

10. General. “Ukraine Debates the Fate of the Men Who Fled,” *Kyiv Post, 20 April 2025.*

By David Kirichenko

While most Ukrainians fight valiantly for their survival, some men have chosen to illegally avoid conscription. Now a backlash is growing in Ukraine and abroad.

One of the more uncomfortable challenges facing the Ukrainian government in recent years has been how to address military-age men who avoided conscription, whether by paying bribes, using falsified documents, illegally crossing into neighboring countries on foot, or even swimming across border rivers.

This issue has also fueled resentment among frontline soldiers, who have spent years in trenches

only to open social media and see former classmates or friends living comfortably abroad, untouched by the consequences of war. But what will happen to these draft dodgers if they decide to return, or once the war is over?

Ukrainian soldiers have held the front lines since the start of the full-scale invasion, many without rotation. Even setting aside the issue of men who illegally fled the country, the frustration is palpable. One tank operator pleaded for the chance to take a break, sharing how exhausted he was and how painful it had become to watch his daughter grow up without him: “I see her growing through pictures and videos on my phone,” he told me.

Despite Ukraine’s ban on military-age men (18-60) leaving the country, hundreds of thousands are estimated to live abroad. In response, Ukraine has restricted consular services for draft-eligible men to encourage their return. One Ukrainian man who fled the country illegally and now resides in the United States, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that many Ukrainian men left to avoid being forced to fight in the war: “If this is all just being done for money, and ordinary people are dying for nothing, then what’s the point of fighting?”

Anastasia Kharitonova-Gomez, a Ukrainian-American whose graduate research focused on the Ukrainian community in the United States, highlighted the complexity of the issue.

“It has become extremely difficult for Ukrainian men to be able to leave Ukraine legally,” she said. “This was not the case at the outset of the war, but the restrictions have certainly tightened. I think most people can understand the different concerns at play.”

She continued: “On one hand, Ukraine simply needs Ukrainians to defend itself. The stakes for the entire country are extremely high – higher than most people realize. If men leave, the country’s survival is literally at risk. On the other hand, individuals have a very human, very fundamental desire to survive.”

“I don’t think I have the right to pass judgment on anyone or say what the right choice is for any given individual. We are living in horrible, impossible times,” said Kharitonova-Gomez.

There has been chatter about returning men who fled abroad. During a Jan. 11, 2023, meeting in Tallinn with Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged Ukrainian men of mobilization age who fled abroad to return, either to fight or to support the economy by working and paying taxes. Emphasizing the ethical and financial burden on those remaining in Ukraine, Zelensky said the country needs all citizens to contribute in some way, noting that it takes six taxpayers to support one soldier.

While he didn’t directly call for Estonia to extradite Ukrainian men, he noted that without such contributions, there won’t be enough resources or defenders. Zelensky also thanked Estonia for its significant military aid and political support, while Kallas reaffirmed Estonia’s long-term commitment to Ukraine.

At the Yalta European Strategy summit in September 2024, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski pointed out that EU countries should stop providing social support to Ukrainian male

refugees of military age, arguing that it creates incentives for draft dodging and undermines Ukraine's war effort.

Hundreds of Ukrainian men have recently applied for asylum in Poland to avoid being drafted into Ukraine's armed forces. Although nearly one million Ukrainians currently have temporary protection status in Poland, which grants access to jobs and healthcare, some are now seeking asylum, a more permanent legal status, out of fear of being drafted.

In 2024, around 7,000 Ukrainians applied for asylum, including 3,900 men aged 18-64. By March 25, 2025, another 1,900 men in that age group had applied. Polish authorities note that fear of military service does not qualify someone for asylum under international law and such applications are being thoroughly scrutinized.

In early 2025, the Trump administration considered revoking the legal status and protections granted to Ukrainian refugees who had fled the Russian invasion. Approximately 240,000 Ukrainians had been admitted to the US under humanitarian parole programs initiated during the Biden administration, such as Uniting for Ukraine (U4U).

Andrij Dobriansky, Communications Director for the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, commented: "For those who chose to leave, there has been an undercurrent of opinions on the matter since 2022. But I can't point to a specific incident within the community that has brought such an uncomfortable topic to the forefront."

Dobriansky added: "The longer the war continues, the more likely it is that something will happen to force a conversation, if not a community-wide reckoning."

Recent US executive orders on immigration have raised concerns about the possible deportation of Ukrainian refugees who arrived after Russia's full-scale invasion. Estimates vary, but about 210,000 Ukrainians have entered the US under humanitarian parole, while around 104,000 received Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which was extended by 18 months in January 2024.

The 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) provides detailed demographic and socioeconomic data on 98,000 Ukrainian migrants who arrived in 2022 and 2023. The data, though covering about half of the total, shows a majority are women (56,000 vs 42,000 men), especially in certain age groups. Among the 18,000 Ukrainian refugee households, 69% are family households with both spouses present.

Not everyone is thrilled to see Ukrainian men of fighting age living abroad. In April 2024, Polish Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz stated: "I think many Poles are outraged when they see young Ukrainian men in hotels and cafes, and they hear how much effort we have to make to help Ukraine."

Taras Kuzio, a political science professor at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, didn't hold back when discussing Ukrainians who fled military service: "A student of mine in Germany was giving accommodation to a guy who bribed his way out of Ukraine. I told her he was a traitor and she was an idiot for helping him," he said. "Such people are spreading

corruption within the military, border guards, and the SBU.”

Kuzio believes Western governments should repatriate draft dodgers, though he doubts they will. “Ukraine can argue that it recognizes conscientious objection and provides non-combat roles in the military,” he said. “But at the front, such men are more of a hindrance than an asset, their disinterest in fighting will only get themselves and others killed.”

Tensions also exist in the Ukrainian diaspora abroad in the United States.

Inna, a Ukrainian-American from North Carolina, shared her strong views on Ukrainian men of fighting age who came to the US after 2022. “JFK famously said, ‘Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country,’” she began. “From an ethical standpoint, fleeing your motherland at a very critical time is appalling.”

She continued: “Violating the law is a crime. Basically, all men who fled Ukraine illegally are criminals. It’s that simple. Why would the countries that accepted them want those criminals?”

Looking to the future, Inna raised a broader concern about draft dodgers: “Tomorrow, those countries could be attacked, what would those men do then? I wouldn’t want criminals from Ukraine living in the US and using this country as a refuge.”

Vasyl Jarostowski, a Ukrainian-American from New York, said, “If they came here and are seeking asylum through the official process, they shouldn’t be deported.” Jarostowski added that “if they entered illegally and are here without going through any official process, they should be deported, as that’s in line with US immigration policy.”

David Pavenko, a Ukrainian-American from Washington State, shared his frustration about how the US program for displaced Ukrainians is being misused:

“I attend a Slavic church in the Seattle area, and since the 2022 invasion, it’s grown so much we had to add another Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking service,” said Pavenko. “Most newcomers arrived through the Uniting for Ukraine (U4U) program, meant to help those displaced by the war. But many of the men I meet aren’t from frontline cities – they’re from places like Kyiv, Lviv, or Ivano-Frankivsk. These aren’t war zones.”

“Out of hundreds in our church, I’ve met only two families from Donetsk Oblast,” he said. “Those truly affected by the war are still in Ukraine. What I see here are military-aged men driving nice cars, wearing designer brands, and showing off their social lives on Instagram. It doesn’t look like they fled a war.”

“I’ve been to eastern Ukraine five times since 2022, and when I return home to the States, hardly anyone at church asks about it,” he said. “There’s no fundraising for chaplains, medics, or soldiers. There are no awareness efforts on social media, just summer barbecues and movie nights. Unlike missions to other countries, there’s no push to send humanitarian volunteers to Ukraine at all.”

“When I ask church leaders about this, they say, ‘We do pray for Ukraine.’ But that’s not enough. People need material support,” said Pavenko. “Soldiers on the front lines need fresh, warm clothes every winter. Chaplains need their vans repaired. Medics are always short on tourniquets.”

Pavenko added: “The best of Ukrainian men stayed to fight. Many didn’t come back. Meanwhile, those who ran are living comfortably here. Americans see this and it breeds resentment. It plays right into the hands of people like Tucker Carlson, who use it to turn the public against supporting Ukraine.”

However, Pavenko acknowledged that many individuals and churches are actively supporting Ukraine. “Americans, Ukrainian-Americans, and Ukrainian immigrants alike continue to help in any way they can.”

Members of Pavenko’s family were among the first to be killed by Russian-backed forces in Sloviansk in 2014.

“If you were living in Ukraine when the full-scale invasion began, then in some form or capacity, you have a responsibility to defend your nation,” said Mikhail Pavenko (the older brother of David Pavenko), a Ukrainian-American volunteer chaplain who has been serving on and off with the Ukrainian Army since 2015.

Viktor from the State Border Guard Service stationed in Sumy Oblast, has served for 27 years in various locations, including in the Anti-Terrorist Zone (ATO) in Luhansk Oblast. He expressed skepticism about the idea of forcibly returning Ukrainian men who left the country. “The men who fled, I don’t believe they should be brought back,” he said. “Most of them, if sent to the military, will be morally unprepared. What will happen is what we’re already seeing: they’ll abandon their units, what we call ‘unauthorized abandonment of military units.’”

Viktor noted that this is already a growing problem in Ukraine, as Ukraine races to train more soldiers. “Military offices are forcibly taking people into service, and then those people leave their units and positions en masse. As we say in the military, there’s a lot of quantity, but no quality.”

“Whiskas,” the commander of an aerial reconnaissance unit in the 128th Separate Mountain Assault Brigade, shared strong views about men who fled Ukraine illegally. “Certainly, people who break the law must face appropriate punishment. At the very least, it’s unfair to those who are fighting for Ukraine,” he said.

“Being Ukrainian in today’s world means benefiting from all kinds of support. It is undeserved to exploit the trust that has been earned before the entire world through blood and sacrifice.” He added, “Even the word ‘peremoha’ – victory – in Ukrainian means to do more than you are capable of. So, simply reading or talking about this isn’t enough. These men must absolutely be brought back.”

As Ukraine fights an existential battle for its survival, Kyrylo Budanov, head of Ukraine’s

military intelligence agency (HUR, or the Main Directorate of Intelligence), recently stated, “If a person is neither at the front nor helping in the rear, they have no right to call themselves a citizen of Ukraine. And society should perceive it that way. How harsh it even sounds.”

11. Germany/Poland. “Ukraine’s Diaspora Is a Vital Part of Its Civilian Resistance,” *Ip-quarterly.com*, 14 May 2025.

By Paul Hockenos

It is young, largely female, decentralized, tech-savvy, and mostly volunteer-run. Its grassroots diplomacy is a prodigious asset to Ukraine.

Before dawn breaks on an icy post-Christmas morning, a convoy of seven ambulances, several large trucks, five fire engines, and a dump truck lumber out of the Blau Gelbes Kreuz (BGK) warehouse compound in Cologne, western Germany. Driving the vehicles—castoffs all of them, donations from across the state of North Rhine-Westphalia—are a quirky hodgepodge of volunteers: a retired civil servant, several Ukrainian refugees, a German police officer, and a handful of Ukrainian Germans. Blue-and-yellow Ukrainian flags fly from the chassis. The drivers know the drill—and one another, judging by the rapport—having made the two-day trip to the Polish-Ukraine border many times since Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

“With a convoy of this size it’s never smooth,” says Linda Mai, BGK’s director and co-founder, who has organized hundreds of such caravans over the past decade. Sure enough, two of the second-hand vehicles break down near Dresden, halting the convoy for hours. By the time the fleet reaches its layover destination in Poland, it is 2 a.m. No matter, the show is on the road again the next morning at 7 a.m., en route to the Ukrainian border where drivers from six cities pick up the vehicles, have them inspected and serviced, and then deliver them.

BGK was founded in 2014 by Mai, a professional pharmacist and native of western Ukraine, and her German husband, a medical doctor, in the aftermath of Ukraine’s Maidan Revolution and Russia’s first invasion. In 2022, BGK exploded in size and scope as sympathizers rushed to Ukraine’s cause while over a million Ukrainian refugees joined the already existing Ukrainian community in Germany. It is one of many thousands of diaspora-driven initiatives across Europe—the most numerous are in Germany and Poland where the new diasporas (about one million respectively) are largest—that have brought concerned citizens, businesses, schools, and towns together to raise money and funnel a myriad of humanitarian aid to war-torn Ukraine.

Non-military Aid

Much of the cargo—medical supplies, baby-care products, mini-generators, school supplies, motor vehicles, and more—is equipment for towns, schools, and hospitals, some of which could be used by units at the front, too. BGK, with six branch offices across the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, distinguishes itself as one of Germany’s most prodigious: Since 2022 it has delivered €30 million worth of goods, over half of which is medicine, paramedic kits, ambulances, and hospital equipment. And the aid deliveries are only part of the local, behind-

the-front support that BGK and the other European diaspora organizations carry out on behalf of besieged Ukraine.

This engagement from across Europe is essential for Ukraine's survival and defense, and particularly so for its medical sector and frontline emergency medical services. At the June 2024 Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin 120 diaspora organizations came together with international organizations to facilitate the country's rebuilding—evidence that this diaspora envisions itself as an integral part of postwar Ukraine.

Diaspora groups like the Centre for War Crimes Documentation in Poland document alleged war crimes. In Berlin, the NGO Vitsche counters Russian disinformation narratives while others, such as the CineMova Ukrainian Empowerment Network shows newcomers to Berlin how to establish Ukrainian associations, cafes and restaurants, cinemas, Christmas markets, radio stations, and more—all of which illustrate that Ukrainians in their new homes are not just on the receiving end but engaging productively in their new locations, too.

Local Diplomacy and Multipliers

All of the diaspora exiles explain Ukraine's plight to their host countries and make the case to bolster Ukraine's defense, conceivably one reason for Germans' continued high level of support for arming Ukraine. These projects in exile liaise with civil society counterparts in Ukraine, just as select European cities do with their partner cities in Ukraine: engagement that has reinforced decentralized governance and civic democracy in Ukraine, in stark contrast to authoritarian Russia where since 2022 autocracy has grown deeper and more firmly embedded.

In total, there are about seven million war refugees and tens of millions of longer-standing diaspora Ukrainians scattered across the globe, including large communities in North America. While only a fraction of these populations constitutes mobilized activists (6 percent according to one study), this core is an organized, highly motivated, many-sided asset for the homeland.

Since the full-scale invasion, the diaspora contingents have waged a powerful and relentless solidarity campaign that reflects Ukraine's domestic civic resistance. These exile contingents— young, largely female, decentralized, tech-savvy, polyglot, and mostly volunteer-run—are an integral part of the new Ukraine outside of Ukraine that has manifested itself since the Russian invasions and contributes emphatically not only to the homeland but to a Europe linked through ordinary human beings and localities.

Moreover, in addition to increasing resilience on the battlefield, the contribution of supplies to hospitals, paramedic services, and frontline emergency medical units has enabled Ukraine to distinguish itself from Russia in yet another way. “The Russians, like the Soviet army in the past, don't do much emergency medicine. They do meat assaults,” explains Fedir Serdiuk, co-founder of PULSE, an Odesa-based tactical medicine training program for Ukraine's defense units. “Meat assaults” are the waves of Russian soldiers sent into battle to die—with little respect for their lives.

Serdiuk and two colleagues founded PULSE in 2022 to enhance Ukraine's own battlefield

medical capabilities. As a result of PULSE's activities and other such NGOs across the non-occupied part of the country, Ukraine's defenders have a mortality rate significantly lower than that of Russian forces. They couldn't do it, Serdiuk says, without the steady flow of non-state donations from abroad.

Enhancing the War Effort

Most of the vehicles in BGK's Christmas convoy will enhance the war effort, either on the frontline or in cities fending off the attacks of Russian drones and missiles. In its warehouse, BGK displays one of the ambulances that it had sent to the front city of Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine in 2023. It returned totaled: a towed wreck sprayed with bullet holes, its windshields smashed, and black holes where its headlights once shined. "You see the red cross on it," says Mai, "for the Russians that's a target. We can't send enough [ambulances] because they don't last long."

Mai and BGK's CEO Julia Chenusha, the latter a native of Nova Kakhovka, are representative of the figures one finds behind so many of the civil society projects in Ukraine and abroad. In the sprawling warehouse, their thin voices are diminished amidst the voluminous, packed cardboard boxes, hospital beds, and wheelchairs that are stacked to the ceiling. The donated and purchased wares are meticulously organized and documented before transfer.

It works like this: Via its website, BGK receives requests from Ukrainian organizations and localities, which it tries to meet itself—or, if it can't, sends on to networked counterparts. "We're demand oriented and there's no middleman," says Chenusha. Before Ukrainian LKWs pick up the goods in Cologne, every item is entered into a digital accounting system that enables BGK to track its shipment, arrival, and final destination. "Donors must have full confidence that their money is being spent as we say it is," says Chenusha. "If that trust didn't exist, we'd be worthless."

One of BGK's products is a self-designed rescue backpack: bulky blue rucksacks filled with medical supplies, including tourniquets, chest patches, bandages, emergency resuscitation kits, and other equipment, as well as 200 types of medication. One of these packs, BGK claims, can save five lives. While European NGOs cannot send any weaponry, the backpacks are the kind of kit that frontline Ukrainian medics use. BGK designed and refined the rescue backpack in consultation with battlefield professionals: just one example of the hand-in-glove communication between diaspora and homeland that accounts for its high efficacy.

Horizontal Diplomacy of Sister Cities

Most of the vehicles in the Christmas convoy weren't from BGK's own supply but rather donations from the German cities that have sister cities in Ukraine. Aachen, a city at the German-Belgian and German-Dutch border, sent three ambulances and two fire trucks, via BGK, to Lviv in western-most Ukraine. Bonn had three fire engines for its sister city, Kherson. The state of North-Rhine Westphalia sent a fire engine to its partner, the eastern city of Dnipro. And Bochum donated the convoy's lone dump truck to besieged Zaporizhzhia. BGK took over all of the logistics, including the mountain of red tape that transports entail.

Sister cities—also referred to as twin towns or partnerships—link and network localities across the European Union and beyond, and have since the postwar years when the first (West) German sister cities were established with US and British cities, and then with French municipalities, in what one scholar called “one of the greatest peace projects of the twentieth century.” And their thickly woven, grassroots networks have proven crucial to the efforts of diverse sympathizers in Europe to leverage aid to Ukraine, not least because they entail partially-funded structures that activists plug into. Furthermore, because they include participants from both countries—with granular knowledge of their homelands—highly effective cooperation is facilitated in a way that top-down state aid often fails to do.

As of late 2023, Ukraine boasted around 356 municipalities with over 1,500 partnerships, many with Polish cities and municipalities, but also German, Hungarian, and Romanian, among many others. The western Ukrainian city of Lviv has 24 partners and most of them are new since 2022. Over 200 German and 500 Polish cities boast partnerships with Ukraine, most of which profit from full-time staff in city halls and limited but important official funding. The organization Cities4Cities, funded by Sweden, helps link Ukraine’s currently unpartnered towns with potential partner cities abroad; but it admits that interest in new partnerships has decreased since the 2022 boom. There are 1,000 Ukrainian towns and villages that want partners and can’t find them, it says.

The difference between a sleepy partnership and a dynamic one is usually a handful of people: in Germany it tends to be a Ukrainian national like Daryna Illienko, native of Sumy oblast, who runs the partnership with the town of Riwne in the offices of the Berlin municipality of Pankow. Illienko arrived in Stuttgart 13 years ago to complete a doctorate in political science at Augsburg University and became involved in Ukraine support during the 2014 Maidan uprising. Since 2023, she has been coordinating the Pankow partnership as a full-time employee, though without a budget.

The sister-city offices, such as Illienko’s, function as beacons for a vast array of smaller solidarity projects and interested local clubs, including the likes of soccer teams and hunting clubs that might raise a few thousand euros for a project and throw in a dozen soccer balls. The partnership association Berlin Pankow-Riwne is volunteer-run and conducts its own activities, though usually in consultation with Illienko’s office. For example, it is fundraising to send 50 second-hand hospital beds and other medical technology donated by the Caritas clinic St. Marien in Brandenburg to a Riwne hospital as well as the Luhansk medical university, which had fled the now-occupied eastern city of Luhansk in 2014. The breadth of these networks is uncanny: the Caritas clinic donation was facilitated through another local association, namely Ukraine-Hilfe Lobetal, a tiny NGO that was launched in 2022 in a town north of Berlin. Illienko’s office is contributing to the transportation costs with funds raised through social media and grants.

Illienko and the five other Berlin districts with Ukrainian partners, as well as the city of Berlin itself with Kyiv, work in close contact with volunteer-run NGOs, like Ukraine Hilfe Berlin which is orchestrated by Tetyana Sell. Since Sell arrived in Berlin in 2022, Ukraine Hilfe Berlin has collected and dispersed humanitarian aid in excess of €7 million; over half of that sum in 2022 alone and funneled a large share of it to hospitals and clinics. The ingenuity at work is

remarkable: Ukraine Hilfe Berlin has raised one million euros through the sale of Ukrainian children's art works. A German volunteer crisscrosses Ukraine in a van to collect art projects and bring them back to Berlin where they are put on tour and sold, the revenue going to injured Ukrainian children in the homeland.

Rear Support in Poland

Poland's Ukrainian diaspora looks and functions differently to Germany's. It's spearheaded by a long-standing Ukrainian ethnic minority of about 1.5 million that has been represented in the Union of Ukrainians in Poland since the 1990s and was boosted by over one million Ukrainians who arrived between 2020 and 2022 and then another million refugees who arrived during the full-scale invasion and remained in Poland. Its Warsaw central office and 10 regional branches, as well as about 80 smaller local groups, are organized horizontally and work in cooperation with local authorities. The Union only has five paid staffers—everyone else is a volunteer.

Many of the untold number of aid deliveries, the medical supplies, and thousands of vehicles resemble those sent from Germany. But they are financed by Ukrainian businesses, says Natalia Panchenko, who founded the Warsaw-based Stand with Ukraine Foundation in 2022. They are companies that now operate in Poland or conduct business in Ukraine and Poland, sometimes even with offices in both countries.

Poland's diaspora is close to Ukraine in more ways than geographic proximity. Rather than acting as multipliers, as their cousins in Germany do, they are the homeland's rear guard: namely a logistics hub that supplies the frontlines with whatever they can't get in Ukraine. In contrast to the German groups, the Ukrainians in Poland make plain that they are supporting Ukraine's defensive forces. All of the Union's €20 million in collected donations went to the military, says Mirosław Skórka, president of the Union of Ukrainians in Poland. "It was the only way to reach our brothers on the front directly," Skórka explains. "Their lives were more important to us than adhering to the letter of administrative procedures." The Union sent drones, bulletproof vests, night-vision devices, telescopic sights, and specialized communications equipment.

"We receive very precise requests," Skórka explains, from the Armed Forces of Ukraine, National Guard of Ukraine, military intelligence, and special operations forces. Poland's Ukrainians outfitted the 110th Separate Mechanized Brigade for the duration of the two years that it defended the city of Avdiivka in the Donetsk Oblast until it finally fell in February 2024.

"It's Never Enough"

As impressive as the international Ukrainian diaspora's self-styled operations may be, they must also be put into perspective. The quantity of the financial and material donations pale in comparison to state aid, which is measured in billions not millions. Moreover, of the NGOs interviewed in this research, all save BGK, admitted that fundraising has become increasingly more difficult. "People give once or for one ambulance and then they think that's it. But the war consumes everything," says Sell. "There's never enough."

In the media, other conflicts, like that in Gaza, crowd out the familiar reports from Ukraine:

more drones, more destruction, more misery. The activists say that they too experience burnout; after three years of war their energies have depleted since 2022. Whenever the war does finally end, the diaspora leaders know that the next campaign will be: aiding in recovery and reconstruction, a task that will cost hundreds of billions more. At the third annual Café Kyiv festival in Berlin on March 11, 2025, the many events looking toward recovery underscored that it is at the forefront of Ukrainians' minds—and that they're already on it.

An extremely sensitive topic, of course, is the prospect of return: Eventually Ukraine will need its diaspora millions to come back and participate in the country's postwar recovery and rebuilding. Surveys show that about half plan to return. Even the most committed activists are unsure what they'll do. This is why Ukraine's Ministry of National Unity is setting up "unity hubs" abroad that will act as points of contact for Ukrainian refugees and will assist with finding jobs in Ukraine and Germany, as well as provide advice on returning to Ukraine voluntarily and helping to rebuild the country.

The first such hub's location: Berlin.

Paul Hockenos is freelance journalist and author based in Berlin.

12. Italy. "Ukraine: Oleksiy Chernyshov Meets with Ukrainian Community in Rome," *Business World Magazine*, 30 April 2025.

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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Unity of Ukraine Oleksiy Chernyshov met with the Ukrainian community in Rome, where he presented a project to establish a Unity Centre in Italy. According to him, the centre will serve as a hub where Ukrainians can access essential information, administrative services, and actively contribute to Ukraine's reconstruction in the future. The centres will also help bring people together around Ukrainian culture and events.

"Our community in Italy is highly active and very enthusiastic about the establishment of such a hub. Together, we are building a strong Ukraine, and this journey is impossible without the support of every Ukrainian," emphasised the Deputy Prime Minister.

The meeting also addressed issues of countering enemy propaganda and preserving Ukrainian identity. Oleksiy Chernyshov stressed that the best defence against disinformation was a strong sense of conviction, Ukrainian identity and connection to the homeland. Additionally, the community raised numerous questions about multiple citizenship. The Deputy Prime Minister informed them that Ukrainian MPs, the Ministry of National Unity team, and colleagues from other agencies and state institutions are already preparing a revised draft of the relevant bill for its second reading. Oleksiy Chernyshov explained that the Ministry of National Unity's priorities included systematic engagement with Ukrainian communities abroad and their involvement in the life of the state.

"The unity of the Ukrainian people is the Ministry's key objective. Wherever Ukrainians are today, we are one nation. I thank everyone who attended the event, and I express particular

gratitude to all those who, despite challenges and distance, continue to maintain a strong bond with the homeland,” concluded the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Unity.

(Government portal/Business World Magazine)

13. Romania. “Maramures: Projects for Ukrainian Community Addressed in Dialogue between Prefect and Deputy Nicolae-Miroslav Petretchi,” *AGERPRES*, 14 May 2025.

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Bucharest, May 14 /Agerpres/ - The establishment of a home for the elderly and various cross-border projects and cultural interest specific to the Ukrainian community were addressed by the prefect of Maramures County, Florian Salajeanu, in a dialogue held on Wednesday with deputy Nicolae-Miroslav Petretchi, representative of the Union of Ukrainians in Romania.

“Among the topics addressed were projects dedicated to the care of the elderly - the establishment of nursing homes and the provision of mobile equipment for home care, cross-border projects and bilateral collaborations, with an emphasis on the social and cultural component, the development of the connection infrastructure between Romania and Ukraine, especially in the border areas in the north of the county, the promotion of cultural and ethnic tourism, with the support of the Ukrainian community in Maramures, but also joint initiatives for greening and environmental protection,” Florian Salajeanu stated in a post on his Facebook page.

The discussions focused on strengthening inter-institutional collaboration and developing joint projects, given that Maramures is home to the largest Ukrainian community in Romania.

He also stated that the Prefect’s Institution - Maramures County reaffirms its support for projects that contribute to the harmonious integration of national minorities, to the respect of cultural identity and to the development of local communities through cooperation and dialogue.

Nicolae-Miroslav Petretchi is president of the Union of Ukrainians in Romania and vice-president for Western Europe within the international structures representing Ukrainians, holder of the National Order “For Merit”, 3rd Class, conferred by the President of Ukraine, on the occasion of the 29th anniversary of the proclamation of Ukraine’s Independence, in recognition of his contribution to supporting the Ukrainian community and promoting bilateral relations.

AGERPRES (RO - writing by: Leontin Cupar, editing by: Irina Poenaru EN - writing by: Catalin Cristian Trandafir)

14. Spain. “Ukrainian House Opens in Torrevieja,” *Theleader.info*, 28 March 2025.

By Staff Reporter -

The first centre to assist Ukrainian refugees in Spain has officially opened in Torrevieja. The new facility, known as the Ukrainian House, will be managed by the Ukrainian government as part of a broader initiative to support displaced persons. This centre marks the first of its kind in Spain, with similar centres planned for other regions in Europe.

The inauguration took place yesterday, with Minister of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, Elma Saiz, attending the event to formalize the opening and sign a collaboration agreement with Oleksiy Chernyshov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Unity of Ukraine. This collaboration is part of the “Unity Hub” project, which aims to provide ongoing support and guidance for Ukrainian refugees.

Minister Saiz explained that the Ukrainian government will have full autonomy in designing and managing the activities, organization, and services provided at the centre. The Ukrainian House will offer essential services such as information, advice, support, and job opportunities. It will also serve as a cultural hub, offering a space for Ukrainians to connect, celebrate their identity, and foster a sense of community.

Chernyshov expressed his gratitude to the Spanish government, stating that the centre will not only help Ukrainians integrate but will also assist those wishing to return to Ukraine when security conditions permit.

Since the start of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, more than 48,000 people have passed through the Crede in Torrevieja, seeking temporary protection and other resources. The Ukrainian community in Torrevieja has grown significantly, with over 10,000 Ukrainians now registered, including 3,500 schoolchildren. Before the war, around 3,500 Ukrainians were already living in the city, with many more arriving following the outbreak of conflict.

Mayor Eduardo Dolón highlighted that many of the support services provided at the Ukrainian House were already being delivered by local associations, acknowledging their ongoing contributions.

15. Turkey. “Türkiye Reports Drop in Russian, Ukrainian War Refugee Numbers,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, 8 April 2025.

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The number of Russian and Ukrainian nationals residing in Türkiye under official permits has nearly halved compared to the first year of the war, according to data from the Turkish Interior Ministry.

As of March 13, the total number of foreign nationals residing in Türkiye with valid residence permits stood at over 1 million, the ministry announced on April 7.

The majority of these permit holders originate from Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

Following the outbreak of the Russia – Ukraine war in February 2022, Türkiye witnessed a significant influx from both nations.

Yet, as the war surpasses its third year, the number of Russians and Ukrainians remaining in the country under legal residency has markedly diminished, now totaling 114,420.

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, the number of Russian and Ukrainian nationals with residence permits reached nearly 201,5000 by Jan.19, 2023.

Currently, there are 81,635 Russian citizens legally residing in Türkiye, more than double the 32,785 Ukrainians.

The war has had profound ripple effects on local economies, particularly in Türkiye's Mediterranean province of Antalya, where both rent and property values have soared since the onset of the conflict, driven by the relocation preferences of displaced Russians and Ukrainians. Historically a favored destination for tourists from both countries, Antalya has long hosted a sizeable Russian and Ukrainian diaspora. Yet even there, a downward trend is noticeable.

According to the latest data, the number of foreign nationals holding residence permits in the city dropped from 157,575 on Jan. 19, 2023, to 117,052 by the end of that year and further to 108,506 as of March 13.

In a diplomatic development in March, Russia and Ukraine agreed to suspend military offensives in the Black Sea and refrain from targeting energy infrastructure — an accord facilitated by the United States.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky pointed to Türkiye's assistance in monitoring adherence to the arrangement.

16. United Kingdom. “Documentary about Young Ukrainians in Shropshire Premieres,” *Ludlowadvertiser.co.uk*, 13 May 2025.

By Alexandra Cooke

A documentary about young Ukrainians in Shropshire is to be shown for the first time.

The film, titled “Children,” will be screened at the Old Market Hall Cinema in Shrewsbury on Saturday, May 17, at 11am.

This is the second film by Ukrainian filmmaker Lora Arkhypenko, who left Kyiv after the Russian invasion.

Supported by Shropshire Council, Shropshire Supports Refugees, and funded by Homes for Ukraine, the film explores the lives of young Ukrainians growing up between two worlds.

Ms Arkhypenko, who was studying film when she left Ukraine, completed her studies at Newtown College.

She said: “‘Children’ picks up their story and more importantly focuses attention on their children who, in some instances have spent more of their young lives in the UK than Ukraine and adapted to life in Shropshire.”

Craig Reeves, assistant theatre manager at The Old Market Hall Cinema, said: “It’s been inspirational to hear about the resilience of the younger members of the Ukrainian community.”

17. USA. “New ‘Kyiv Street’ in Springfield Honors Ukrainian Community and Heritage,” *OregonLive.com*, 18 June 2025.

By Kimberly Cortez | The Oregonian/OregonLive

A street in the city of Springfield has been renamed to reflect its Ukrainian roots and community.

Last week, the city installed a new street sign officially changing the name from “Kiev Street” to “Kyiv Street,” reflecting the Ukrainian rather than Russian spelling of the capital city.

The new sign is painted blue with a bold yellow lettering, the colors of the Ukrainian flag.

Andriy Sculyar, a parishioner at the nearby Nativity Ukrainian Catholic Church, spearheaded the change. Sculyar started a petition in April and organized community members, including those who live on the street and have no Ukrainian ties, to testify in front of the Springfield City Council to have the street renamed.

In May, the city council voted unanimously to approve the measure.

“Springfield is a town that honors immigrant roots,” Sculyar said in his testimony. “The Ukrainian community has been part of this fabric for nearly a century. Updating the name of Kyiv Street is a small local action but has a powerful resonance with the Ukrainian American community.”

Before Ukraine gained independence, the Soviet Union repressed Ukrainian language and culture, which is reflected in the street’s previous Russian spelling, said Richard Janowicz, a pastor at Nativity Ukrainian Catholic Church.

He said he believes renaming the street accurately reflects Ukrainian culture and history. Amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, he also sees it as a chance to uplift the community.

“I think it’s a boost in morale during this time of war,” Janowicz said. “There’s a recognition that Ukraine should exist, that Ukrainian language, culture and tradition should be respected, and the city of Springfield has done a tremendous job in helping us achieve this goal.”

Kyiv Street is located in Springfield’s Uke Village neighborhood, which was founded in the late 1970s by Ukrainian immigrants. Other streets in that neighborhood carry Ukrainian roots such as Poltava Street, named after the Ukrainian city, and Oksanna Street, derived from the Ukrainian name “Oksana.”

While few Ukrainians live in the neighborhood now, the Ukrainian church remains the heart of the neighborhood, Sculyar said.

Long time resident Charlotte Behm, who has called Uke Village her home for 30 years, said she's in strong support of the change.

"We have a lot of pride in our neighborhood and part of what makes the neighborhood great is the Ukrainian church there," Behm said. "They're wonderful neighbors. I've always been really proud that our neighborhood has this identity."

18. USA. "Sobering Reality: Pittsburgh's Eastern European Community Feels the Strain of War - and U.S. Politics," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 17 June 2025.

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PG. A-4

Olga Kornat longs for many aspects of her old life.

She misses Lviv, the largest city in western Ukraine and which, until August, she called home. The 18-year-old spends much of her time reminiscing about the small, clean streets and where every neighbor felt like family.

Her heart aches for her father, who remains in war-torn Ukraine, defending their country in the drawn-out war with Russia that entered its fourth year in February.

But there are parts of Ms. Kornat's new life - the one she's building in Pittsburgh - that bring her joy, too. She graduated last week from Mt. Lebanon High School, where she was able to explore a wide range of electives. She has taken to the hilly terrain of the suburb and the pristine homes lining the streets.

Most of all, she's grateful for the people who've welcomed her and supported Ukraine along the way.

"People want to help you," Ms. Kornat said in an interview. "I don't like to talk about war, but it's a big part of my life, and [Americans] are supportive, and I'm really thankful."

Yet, on the global stage, that sentiment hasn't been fully reflected by American leaders. President Donald Trump campaigned on ending the Russia-Ukraine War in 24 hours after he took office.

Trump has described Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as a "dictator without elections," and has argued that the U.S. was pushed into "a war that can't be won."

Since Russia invaded in February 2022, cities across Ukraine have come under near-constant bombardment. More than 12,000 civilians have been killed, according to the United Nations.

Military officials in Kyiv on Thursday reported the number of Russian troops killed or wounded in Ukraine had topped 1 million.

The war, considered to be the biggest threat to security and peace in Europe since the end of the Cold War, has left widespread devastation.

Its toll is deeply felt in Pennsylvania, home to the second-largest Ukrainian population in the United States. That includes the Pittsburgh region, where generations of Eastern European immigrants have formed a close-knit Ukrainian community.

That community, some say, has grown increasingly uneasy since Trump returned to office.

“It’s been heartbreaking; it’s been a sense of real betrayal,” said Stephen Haluszczak, a third-generation Ukrainian-Pittsburgher and head of the Ukrainian Cultural and Humanitarian Institute, which has been offering assistance to Ukraine.

“I mean, the people [in Pittsburgh] who have ties to Ukraine, the refugees who are here, the newer immigrants, everybody’s lives are affected by this.”

Some saw a shift earlier this month, when Ukraine launched a covert operation that damaged or destroyed nearly a third of Moscow’s strategic bomber fleet - a potential turning point both militarily and politically.

Then on June 6, Trump said it might be better to let Ukraine and Russia “fight for a while” before pulling them apart and pursuing peace - a detour from his often-stated appeals to stop the war and signaling he may be giving up on recent peace efforts.

To Ms. Kornat, Trump’s tone toward Ukraine feels foreign compared to the warmth she’s received in Pittsburgh. In February, when Trump and Vice President JD Vance publicly criticized Mr. Zelenskyy and questioned Ukraine’s gratitude toward the U.S., she says friends and classmates rallied around her.

“Many people from my job and school just talked to me and they said, like, ‘I’m sorry,’” she said. “So it doesn’t feel like Americans support that.”

Members of Pittsburgh’s Russian community have noticed a similar attitude - not indifference from others, but empathy.

George Bubanic, a second-generation Russian American and vice president of St. Gregory Russian Orthodox Church in Homestead, said that both Russian and Ukrainian refugees attend his church. There’s no animosity, he said, just a mutual desire for peace.

“We pretty much don’t talk a lot of politics or anything like that,” Mr. Bubanic said. “[But] Everybody understands that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin shouldn’t have gone into the Ukraine.”

19. USA. “‘Forgiveness Is Very Difficult’ – Election of New Pope Shocks Chicago, Home to Huge Ukrainian Diaspora,” *Kyiv Post*, 9 May 2025.

By John Moretti

Former US President Obama sends his congratulations to “fellow Chicagoan” as the West Side, South Side, and North Side embrace one of their own, the first American pontiff.

The election of Robert Francis Prevost as the Catholic Church’s 267th pontiff stunned audiences in America on Thursday, especially those in his hometown of Chicago, as his much-awaited name was read in Latin from a balcony of St Peter’s Basilica.

There has never before been a Pope from the United States.

“I’m astounded,” said Olympia Onesto from Deerfield, IL, a western suburb, on Thursday night. “I never thought they would elect an American, let alone someone from Chicago.”

A devout Catholic for 79 years, Onesto told *Kyiv Post* she didn’t know enough about the new pontiff to say whether she was optimistic about his direction for the Church, but she said she was “very, very happy,” adding only that it would be great if he could “do something about the corruption in Illinois.”

Chicago has always represented the melting pot of America, with a myriad of ethnicities arriving there especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Catholic churches in the western suburbs sit alongside Ukrainian Orthodox ones, and even Ukrainian Catholic ones as well.

St Joseph the Betrothed Ukrainian Catholic Church, for example, near O’Hare airport, is only about five miles up Cumberland Avenue from the mostly Italian St Vincent Ferrer, where many of Onesto’s family members went to church, and where one of her cousins served as an altar boy.

The West Side of Chicago is well-known for its Eastern European diaspora as well. The neighborhood known as “Ukrainian Village” sits about three miles west of the downtown Chicago skyline, and the even more famous Polish neighborhood of Bucktown is only a mile or two north of that on Western Ave.

The new pope is from the South Side of Chicago, a less-affluent neighborhood, and at the time of Prevost’s youth, it was mostly poverty-stricken.

Like his Jesuit predecessor and friend, Francis, the Chicagoan archbishop of the Augustinian mendicant order administered to the poor as a missionary in South America. Prevost is also known for his affinity for the working class, just like the fin-de-siècle pope, Leo XIII, after whom he named himself.

Pundits took that to believe that Prevost would be an advocate for the working class in the new American Gilded Age, following in the footsteps of other Chicago-educated socialists such as US Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

While not projecting any possible leanings of the newly announced pope, an NBC reporter on Thursday commented that the new pontiff “showed courage as a Cubs fan on the South Side” of Chicago.

While the Chicago Cubs baseball team plays in the wealthier northern neighborhood of Wrigleyville, the South Side’s team is the Chicago White Sox.

Former US President Barack Obama, a White Sox fan, congratulated his “fellow Chicagoan” on his historic election as the first pope from the United States.

“Michelle and I send our congratulations to a fellow Chicagoan, His Holiness Pope Leo XIV.”

“This is a historic day for the United States, and we will pray for him as he begins the sacred work of leading the Catholic Church and setting an example for so many, regardless of faith,” he said.

Former president Joe Biden, a devout Catholic, also sent his best wishes to the new pontiff.

“Habemus papam,” Biden wrote on social media, echoing the Latin words of “We have a pope” that precedes any new pope’s introduction at the Holy See. “May God bless Pope Leo XIV of Illinois.”

Ukrainian Catholics in Chicago and around the world have memories of Leo XIV’s predecessor, Francis, as the late pontiff told a video call of 250 young people gathered in Chicago, as well as the Donetsk region and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Cathedral of the Resurrection in Kyiv, that “I must forgive as I have been forgiven. Each one of us must look in our own life for how we have been forgiven.”

Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas, the Vatican nuncio to Ukraine, organized the online meeting.

“Forgiveness is very difficult,” Francis said to the online gathering in February. “We always try to wage war and respond to a punch with another punch... We have to forgive each other. Always.”

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