

UKRAINIANS ABROAD: NEWS AND VIEWS #168

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1. Argentina. “Curso de ucranística reunió en Alem a jóvenes de varios puntos del país” [Ukrainian Studies Course Brings Together Young People from Across the Country in Alem], *Primera Edición* (Posadas), 13 January 2026.
2. Australia “Ukrainian-Australians Call for Further Action on Russian ‘Blood Oil’ Entering the Country,” *Special Broadcasting Service*, 8 November 2025.
3. Brazil. “Meu Avô Stanislau: ‘Prudentópolis me atravessou como artista e como pessoa’, afirma Ranieri Gonzalez” [My Grandfather Stanislau: ‘Prudentópolis Shaped Me as an Artist and as a Person,’ Says Ranieri Gonzalez], *Redeglobo.globo.com*, 28 January 2026.
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6. Canada. “Jets’ Ukrainian Heritage Night Returns Jan. 6, 2026,” *Nhl.com*, 22 December 2025.
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8. General. “Seventh Group of Ukrainian Legion Volunteers Signs Contracts with AFU in Lublin,” *Ukrinform*, 23 January 2026.
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13. Italy. “Ukrainian Christmas Festival in Caserta Unites Diaspora in Italy,” *Mezha.net*, 6 January 2026.

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16. Poland/Eastern Europe. "Eastern Europe Ukrainians Forum Unites Diaspora for Stronger Future," *Mezha.net*, 15 December 2025.
17. Serbia. "Fifth Ukrainian Christmas Songs Festival Celebrates Diaspora Culture in Serbia," *Mezha.net*, 7 January 2026.
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20. Spain. "Las asociaciones de ucranianos en España luchan por la integración local y contra el olvido de la invasión" [Ukrainian Associations in Spain Push for Local Integration and Against Forgetting the Invasion], *Lamarea.com*, 18 December 2025.
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1. Argentina. “Curso de ucranística reunió en Alem a jóvenes de varios puntos del país” [Ukrainian Studies Course Brings Together Young People from Across the Country in Alem], *Primera Edición* (Posadas), 13 January 2026.

Se trata de la edición 38, que lleva adelante el Instituto de Cultura y Educación Ucrania “Patriarca Jósyf Slipyj”. Quince días de actividades intensivas

La 38 edición del Curso de Introducción a la Teología y Ucranística -conjunto de estudios sobre Ucrania, su cultura, su lengua- se desarrollará en Leandro N. Alem hasta el fin de semana y alberga a más de 40 estudiantes y docentes provenientes de distintos puntos de Argentina. Esta actividad intensiva que tiene lugar todos los veranos es organizada por el Instituto de Cultura y Educación Ucrania “Patriarca Jósyf Slipyj”, dirigido por el sacerdote Nazari Kashchak.

Víctor Basterretche, de Buenos Aires, y Liliana Schwiderke, de Oberá, son en esta ocasión, directores interinos del curso del que fueron alumnos. Explicaron que el objetivo es aprender, en primer lugar, el idioma. Se trata de un nivel básico que, en el caso de viajar a Ucrania, el alumno pueda “defenderse, entenderse e ir profundizándolo”. Asimismo, se dan nociones de geografía y de historia, y se estudia la cultura popular ucraniana y la cultura académica. En la práctica de la cultura se enseñan artesanías: ornamentación de los huevos de pascua (pesanké), bordado, collares con mostacillas, tallado, y la cuerda de oración, una especie de rosario confeccionado con nudos. Se estudia el catecismo católico con una adaptación al rito bizantino. Se complementa con “la historia de la Iglesia ucraniana, la literatura ucraniana y un poco de la filosofía”, dijo Basterretche, quien recordó al fundador de este curso, el doctor en economía, Miguel Wasylyk, “ucraniano nativo, con una cultura amplísima”.

Contó que en la Catedral Ucraniana de Buenos Aires “Santa María del Patrocinio” se hacía algo parecido a esto, todos los domingos antes de la celebración de la Divina Liturgia. Estaba destinado a niños pequeños hasta quienes estaban finalizando el secundario. De esta manera, iban aprendiendo el idioma, la catequesis y se iba incorporando la historia, la filosofía, la literatura. “Pero solo se hacía en la Catedral, no así en las parroquias ucranianas del país, debido a la falta de personal. Entonces Wasylyk, tuvo la idea de hacer algo compacto en verano. Habló al cardenal Slipyj -cuyo nombre lleva el instituto organizador-, quien reunió dinero y lo envió a nuestro país para que la obra se organice y se ponga en marcha. El primero se hizo en Buenos Aires y después se trasladó a Misiones, con sede en Apóstoles y luego, aquí en Leandro N. Alem”, expresó.

En esta oportunidad, asiste un alumno de Chaco, un profesor de Mendoza, alumnos de la ciudad de Buenos Aires, dos de CABA -uno nacido en Venezuela y otro en España- y, de Misiones llegaron desde Oberá, Concepción de la Sierra, Posadas, San Vicente y Apóstoles, además de los locales. La mayoría de los integrantes del cuerpo docente realizó el curso como alumno y luego se incorporó como profesor. El único caso es el de Carlos Antonio Titus Peczak, que ingresó a la actividad como profesor de historia, al igual que las religiosas de la Orden de San Basilio Magno (OSBM) que siempre se destacaron en la enseñanza. Este año, son representadas por la hermana Daniela, que está radicada en Leandro N. Alem y está abocada al dictado de idioma y rito bizantino. Este año se desempeña como profesor de geografía, Ezequiel Montero Benítez, un veterano de la guerra de Ucrania.

Basterretche sostuvo que, a pesar de la situación de dolor por la que atraviesa Ucrania, “tenemos pibes que se interesan mucho por aprender y vienen al curso, a pesar que algunos están sacrificando sus vacaciones o una parte de ellas. Es horrible la situación de la madre patria invadida arbitrariamente por alguien que no se resigna que el régimen soviético ya ha muerto”.

Amar lo que se conoce

Schwiderke indicó que, en los alumnos, “genera muchísimo interés conocer estas realidades dolorosas. Para nosotros como profesores y, ya un poco más grandes, la sensibilidad está muy a flor de piel. Cuesta en algunos casos porque nos gana la emoción, porque uno ya no solamente cuenta las cosas hermosas y bonitas que tiene el país de nuestros abuelos, sino que también hay que contar todo este sufrimiento y obviamente que juegan muchísimo las emociones, pero creo que esa también es una forma de transmitir realmente”.

Añadió que “insisto con que no puede amar aquello que no conoce. Noches atrás, luego de la cena, monseñor Daniel Kozelinski, nos brindó una charla sobre cómo fue el camino de sufrimiento de la Iglesia Greco-Católica Ucraniana bajo el régimen soviético, el nivel de hostigamiento, el nivel de persecución hacia sacerdotes, obispos, religiosas, consagrados que han sido deportados a Siberia, torturados por defender a la Iglesia, por defender su fe. Y, cómo, a pesar de la clandestinidad se daba catequesis, se celebraban los sacramentos, se formaban seminaristas y se consagraban sacerdotes”.

Emocionada, aseguró que, cuando “uno conoce la historia plena de todo lo que involucra al pueblo ucraniano, no se puede menos que sentirse orgulloso de la sangre que corre por nuestras venas porque realmente es un pueblo que sufrió muchísimo y continúa sufriendo, pero que, a pesar de eso, no piensa en ningún momento en doblegarse. Está dispuesto a defender su libertad, su derecho a la autonomía, el derecho a su fe, con todos los elementos posibles. No se ve que en Ucrania haya interés en terminar la guerra y doblegarse. Ucrania anhela defender hasta el último pedacito de su territorio. Y eso logramos también, a veces desde la emoción, transmitírselo a los chicos”.

Experimentando

Ivo Fideleff (21), es de Capital Federal. Comentó que es la primera vez que participa del curso. “Vine principalmente porque me interesaba profundizar el idioma ucraniano. Mis bisabuelos se escaparon de las persecuciones en Ucrania. Ingresé a la catedral de la Eparquía, y hace dos años recibí el bautismo”.

“Allí me enseñaron un ucraniano propicio para el habla, pero me interesaba mucho el estudio un poco más formal del idioma. Vine específicamente por el idioma, cosa que está siendo espectacular. Me gusta. Es personalizado, se nota que saben mucho y lo hacen con mucho cariño”, contó. También “me sorprendió el nivel de geografía, de historia, cultura, las manualidades, las artesanías. No puedo decir que son vacaciones porque el curso es intensivo, pero es algo distinto, muy lindo”, agregó.

Confió que “tenemos liturgia todos los días. Es algo a lo que no estoy acostumbrado, pero es hermoso poder comulgar, cantar. Vale la pena despertarse temprano. Creo que la fe tiene que ir

primero por sobre la cultura, por, sobre todo, porque es la raíz de todo”. Sobre la convivencia aseguró que “es espectacular. Todos vienen acá a ser amigos, a pasarla bien”.

“Siempre es muy duro hablar sobre la guerra”

Ezequiel Montero Benítez (34) es explosivista y fue convocado a dar clases de geografía para los alumnos del primero de cuatro niveles, que asisten al curso. También tuvo a su cargo la charla para graficar la invasión rusa a Ucrania. Manifestó que viajó para “trabajar en la invasión a gran escala, en lo que conocemos como guerra de Ucrania, porque tengo amigos del Ejército Argentino que fueron a pelear por esta ‘causa justa y santa del pueblo ucraniano’. Cuando llegaron, vieron que faltaban explosivistas, me invitaron y estuve tres meses desminando, demoliendo y formando a explosivistas ucranianos”. Su tarea se desarrolló en Kyiv, la capital. También “en el Sur, en la zona de Mykolaiv y Jersón; en el Noreste, en Járkov y en Kramatorsk y alrededores, Limán, Izium y pasando un poquito Pokrovsk, que ahora está rodeada por los rusos”.

Sostuvo que antes de la guerra no tenía ningún tipo de contacto con la colectividad ucraniana. “Después pasó lo que pensé que no iba a pasar, que era que iba a ir a trabajar como un profesional e iba a regresar a mi vida normal. Viendo el dolor del pueblo ucraniano, viendo todo lo que sucede en Ucrania, que Occidente no cuenta, que en Argentina no se escucha, no podía no conectarme con la colectividad ucraniana y empezar a transmitir lo que había vivido allí”, subrayó.

Al regresar, “empecé a asistir a la Divina Liturgia en la catedral de Buenos Aires, y a participar de actividades en distintas asociaciones ucranianas”. El Vicario General de la Eparquía Ucraniana, el padre Nazariy Kashchak, lo invitó a participar del curso para dar una charla sobre la guerra y contar las experiencias en ella para que todos los jóvenes que vienen a este curso escuchen lo que no pueden ver en las noticias o que otros no les cuentan”.

Finalmente, “terminé dando Geografía 1 porque sobre muchos de los lugares que tengo que enseñar, los caminé personalmente. El primer contacto de los alumnos con el mapa de Ucrania y sus provincias que se llaman óblast, está a mi cargo”.

[*Translation into English follows – S.C.*]:

This is the 38th edition, organized by the Patriarch Josyf Slipyj Ukrainian Institute of Culture and Education. Fifteen Days of Intensive Activities

The 38th edition of the Introduction to Theology and Ukrainian Studies Course—a series of studies on Ukraine, its culture, and its language—is taking place in Leandro N. Alem [a city of ca. 27,000 inhabitants in the Province of Misiones] until the end of the weekend and is hosting more than 40 students and teachers from various parts of Argentina. This intensive program is held every summer and is organized by the Patriarch Josyf Slipyj Ukrainian Institute of Culture and Education under the direction of Father Nazari Kashchak.

Víctor Basterretche, from Buenos Aires, and Liliana Schwiderke, from Oberá [Misiones], are on this occasion interim directors of the course, which they themselves had attended. They

explained that the primary objective is to learn the language. The aim is to learn the language at a basic level, enabling the student “to get by, understand others, and deepen their knowledge” if they travel to Ukraine. It also covers basic geography and history, and includes the study of Ukrainian popular culture and academic culture. As part of cultural practice, students learn crafts such as Easter egg decoration (pysanky), embroidery, beadwork, carving, and the making of prayer ropes, a type of knotted rosary. The Catholic catechism is studied with adaptations for the Byzantine rite. This is complemented by the study of “the history of the Ukrainian Church, Ukrainian literature, and some philosophy,” according to Basterretche, who recalled the course’s founder, Dr. Miguel Wasylyk—an economist and “a native Ukrainian with vast knowledge.”

He noted that a similar program took place every Sunday before the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Santa María del Patrocinio Ukrainian Cathedral of Our Lady of the Patronage in Buenos Aires. It was aimed at children from an early age through the end of high school. In this way, they learned the language and catechism and were gradually introduced to history, philosophy, and literature.

“However, it was offered only at the Cathedral and not in Ukrainian parishes throughout the country due to a lack of staff. Wasylyk then had the idea of creating a more compact summer program. He spoke with Cardinal Slipyj—for whom the organizing institute is named—who raised the funds and sent them to our country so the project could be organized and launched. The first program was held in Buenos Aires and later moved to Misiones, initially in Apóstoles and then here in Leandro N. Alem,” he explained.

This year, attendees include a student from the Province of Chaco; a teacher from the Province of Mendoza; students from the City of Buenos Aires—two of whom were born abroad, one in Venezuela and the other in Spain—as well as students from Misiones, specifically from Oberá, Concepción de la Sierra, Posadas, San Vicente, and Apóstoles, in addition to local students. Most members of the teaching staff first took the course as students and later joined as teachers. The only exception is Carlos Antonio Titus Peczak, who entered directly into the profession as a history teacher, as did the sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great, long renowned for their dedication to teaching. This year, the order is represented by Sister Daniela, who lives in Leandro N. Alem and teaches the Byzantine language and rite. Ezequiel Montero Benítez, a veteran of the war in Ukraine, is teaching geography this year.

Basterretche stated that, despite the painful situation endured by Ukraine, “we have students who are deeply committed to learning and attend the course even at the cost of giving up all or part of their vacations. The situation in the [ancestral homeland], arbitrarily invaded by someone who refuses to accept that the Soviet regime is dead, is horrific.”

Loving What You Know

Schwiderke noted that among the students, “learning about these painful realities generates a good deal of interest. For us as teachers, and, being a bit older, our sensitivity is heightened. It can be difficult at times because we get carried away with emotion. We’re no longer just talking about the beautiful and wonderful aspects of our grandparents’ country; we also have to recount

its suffering. Emotions obviously play a huge role, but I think that's also a way of truly transmitting knowledge."

She added, "I insist that one cannot love what one does not know. A few nights ago, after dinner, Monsignor Daniel Kozelinski gave us a talk on the suffering endured by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church under the Soviet regime—the harassment and persecution of priests, bishops, sisters, consecrated persons who were deported to Siberia and tortured for defending the Church and their faith. He also spoke of how, despite being forced underground, catechesis continued, the sacraments were celebrated, seminarians were trained, and priests were ordained."

Visibly moved, she affirmed that when "one learns the full history of the Ukrainian people, one cannot help but feel proud of the blood that runs through our veins. They are truly a people who have suffered immensely and continue to suffer, yet never once consider surrendering. They are prepared to defend their freedom, their autonomy, and their faith by every means at their disposal. In Ukraine, there is no desire to end the war by giving in; rather, the country is determined to defend every last piece of its territory. And that is something we also manage to convey to the students, sometimes through emotion."

Experiencing

Ivo Fideleff (21), from Buenos Aires, said this is his first time participating in the course. "I came mainly because I wanted to deepen my knowledge of the Ukrainian language. My great-grandparents fled persecution in Ukraine. I began attending the cathedral of the Eparchy, and two years ago I was baptized."

"There, I was taught Ukrainian that was easy to speak, but I was interested in a more formal study of the language. I came specifically for that, and it's been spectacular. I really like it—it's personalized, and you can tell the instructors are very knowledgeable and teach with great care," he said. He added, "I was also surprised by the level of geography, history, culture, crafts, and artisanal work. I can't say it's a vacation, because the course is intensive, but it's something distinct and very beautiful."

He confided that "we have liturgy every day. It's something I'm not used to, but it's beautiful to be able to receive communion and to sing. It's worth waking up early. I believe faith has to come first—above culture, above everything—because it's the root of all else." Regarding the experience of communal life, he added that "it's spectacular. Everyone comes here to make friends and to enjoy being together."

"It's always very hard to talk about war."

Ezequiel Montero Benítez (34), an explosives expert, was invited to teach geography at the first of the course's four levels and was also responsible for a lecture illustrating the Russian invasion of Ukraine. He explained that he traveled there "to work during the large-scale invasion—what we know as the war in Ukraine—because I have friends in the Argentine Army who went to fight for this 'just and holy cause of the Ukrainian people.' When they arrived, they realized

explosives experts were needed, invited me, and I spent three months demining, carrying out demolitions, and training Ukrainian explosives specialists.”

His work took place primarily in Kyiv, the capital, as well as “in the south, in the Mykolaiv and Kherson region; in the northeast, in Kharkiv, Kramatorsk and its surroundings, Lyman, Izium, and a little beyond Pokrovsk, which is now surrounded by Russian forces.”

He maintained that before the war he had no contact whatsoever with the Ukrainian community. “Then what I thought would never happen, happened: I was going to work as a professional and return to my normal life. But witnessing the suffering of the Ukrainian people—everything taking place in Ukraine, things the West doesn’t talk about and that aren’t heard in Argentina—I couldn’t help but connect with the Ukrainian community and begin sharing what I had experienced there,” he emphasized.

Upon returning, “I began attending the Divine Liturgy at the Buenos Aires cathedral and taking part in activities of various Ukrainian associations.” The Vicar General of the Ukrainian [Catholic] Eparchy, Father Nazariy Kashchak, then invited him to participate in the course, giving a talk on the war and sharing his experiences so that the young people attending could hear what they don’t from watching the news or what others don’t tell them.

Finally, he noted, “I ended up teaching Geography 1 because I personally walked through many of the places I now teach about. I’m responsible for the students’ first contact with the map of Ukraine and its provinces, known as oblasts.”

2. Australia “Ukrainian-Australians Call for Further Action on Russian ‘Blood Oil’ Entering the Country,” *Special Broadcasting Service*, 8 November 2025.

The Ukrainian-Australian community wants more government action to close a loophole allowing sanctioned Russian oil to enter the country.

Key Points

Experts say a “shadow fleet” continues to bring Russian oil to Australia via refineries in third countries.

Members of the Ukrainian-Australian community say more should be done to stop Russian oil entering Australia via such channels.

A recently launched Senate inquiry will look at how to stop the importation of fuels derived from Russian crude oil.

Oryssia Pryslak was born and raised in the small Ukrainian community in Victoria’s port city of Geelong, where oil tankers were a common sight. Until recently, she had no idea that some of those ships might be carrying sanctioned oil from Russia.

“I was in disbelief, to be honest,” the 26-year-old told SBS News.

In October, SBS revealed that Australia is the biggest importer of oil products refined from Russian crude oil in third countries.

Australia sanctioned the direct import of crude oil from Russia after the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, but experts say a “shadow fleet” of at least 25 ships continues to bring oil ashore via refineries in countries such as India and China.

“It’s blood oil,” said Oryssia’s mother, Luba Pryslak, who is president of the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria.

Oryssia and Luba were among roughly 50 protesters who stood at the jetty in Geelong on Saturday morning to protest the arrival of a tanker believed to be transporting products refined from sanctioned Russian crude oil.

Speaking after the rally, Luba told SBS News the Ukrainian community in Australia is calling on the government to close a loophole allowing such oil products to enter Australia and properly investigate whether current sanctions are effective.

‘Blood Oil’

To date, the government has sanctioned more than 150 “shadow fleet” ships, often uninsured vessels that avoid detection by regularly changing their nation of registry (a practice known as flag-hopping) and disabling their tracking systems, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

However, data provided to SBS News in October by the Centre of Research on Energy and Clean Air showed that 25 ships remain in the supply chain of Australian companies.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong has said there is no mechanism that would allow the government to track the origin of Russian crude oil that enters Australia via third-country refineries.

At Senate estimates on 10 October, Wong said the government expects the private sector to manage its own supply chains.

“Australians also expect businesses to prevent their supply chains from inadvertently funding Russia’s illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine — and we ask businesses to uphold that responsibility,” a DFAT spokesperson told SBS News.

In September, Tasmanian senator Jacqui Lambie likened the situation to that of diamonds mined in areas of conflict.

“Over 10 years ago, Australia was calling for blood diamonds to be included in the international definition of conflict diamonds, and now we’re accepting Russian blood oil,” she said in the Senate.

Oryssia, who recently returned from a visit to Ukraine, said knowing Australian money is going back to Russia gives her “a sense of guilt”.

“All these people in Ukraine are like ‘thank you so much for your help’. And in our backhand, we’re actually sliding more money over to Russia.”

“You’re putting money into the pockets of people who are bombing civilians,” Oryssia said.

US sanctions Russian oil companies as Trump says Putin summit ‘didn’t feel right’

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, over 14,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and more than 37,000 injured, according to the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU).

HRMMU head Danielle Bell said in early October: “High civilian casualties last month confirm this year’s disturbing pattern of intense violence in Ukraine, as virtually no day passes without civilian deaths or injuries, especially in frontline communities.”

More transparency needed

On Wednesday, the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee launched a Senate inquiry into Russian sanctions, which will specifically look at how to stop the importation of fuels derived from Russian crude oil in Australia.

It will report back in March 2026.

Luba said the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria want the inquiry to be moved forward.

“We won’t wait until March until we get a report while people are dying and suffering,” she said.

Luba also told SBS News the association wants greater transparency and accountability for private fossil fuel companies when it comes to their supply chain.

“Companies need to be more aware of their supply chain and where things are coming from, whether that comes from more government regulations [or somewhere else],” she said.

“Let’s just be more transparent about what’s really happening,” Oryssia said.

DFAT told SBS News that “Australia remains steadfast in its support for Ukraine as it defends itself against Russia’s illegal and immoral invasion.”

“As a result of measures we have already taken, direct Australian imports of Russian energy products have fallen from \$80 million to zero since before Russia’s invasion,” the spokesperson said, adding that the government was "evaluating options to place further pressure on Russia’s oil revenues".

Keeping Ukraine in ‘eyesight’

Luba said the Ukrainian community in Australia was mostly proud of how the Australian

government has supported Ukraine.

“The Ukrainian diaspora has been proud that Australia has been able to support Ukraine, sending Bushmasters and humanitarian and military support,” Luba said.

In February, DFAT said it has committed more than \$1.5 billion to help Ukraine defend itself, including more than \$1.3 billion in military support through equipment and training.

However, with the conflict soon heading into its fourth year, Oryssia is concerned that “war fatigue” could be setting in — “especially with so many horrible things happening all around the world”.

“Australians say, ‘oh you’re Ukrainian, how’s it all going’? And you have to say, ‘it’s going sh-t, actually’.”

“I think Australians should really try to understand that we do need to keep it in our eyesight. We need to keep it in our minds.”

“It’s happening right now still.”

3. Brazil. “Meu Avô Stanislau: ‘Prudentópolis me atravessou como artista e como pessoa’, afirma Ranieri Gonzalez” [My Grandfather Stanislau: ‘Prudentópolis Shaped Me as an Artist and as a Person,’ Says Ranieri Gonzalez”], *Redeglobo.globo.com*, 28 January 2026.

Ator vive o avô Stanislau no filme que foi gravado no Paraná; confira a entrevista completa

Por RPC

Com mais de 30 anos de carreira no teatro, na televisão e no cinema, Ranieri Gonzalez dá vida a um personagem carregado de afeto, memória e identidade em *Meu Avô Stanislau*, telefilme que estreia no dia 2 de fevereiro, segunda-feira, logo após o *Big Brother Brasil*, na Tela Quente apresenta: Cine BBB, na tela da RPC e da TV Globo.

Reconhecido pela crítica e dono de uma trajetória premiada, Ranieri interpreta Stanislau, líder comunitário de uma colônia ucraniana em Prudentópolis, no interior do Paraná. Um avô carismático, orgulhoso das próprias raízes e profundamente conectado à comunidade onde vive. Para o ator, o filme vai muito além do choque entre o mundo digital e o analógico. Ele fala, sobretudo, sobre aquilo que muitas vezes se perde na correria do dia a dia.

“A história faz a gente resgatar um processo de comunidade, de ajuda, de companheirismo, de relações humanas e familiares. Coisas que, morando em cidades grandes como Curitiba, a gente acaba perdendo” — reflete Ranieri

Apesar de já conhecer Prudentópolis de nome, essa foi a primeira vez que o ator esteve na cidade. E o impacto foi imediato: “Você chega num lugar com cachoeiras, montanhas, pessoas que te convidam para entrar em casa e tomar um café. Isso é maravilhoso”, conta.

As paisagens naturais e o cotidiano simples da vida no interior foram fundamentais para a criação do Stanislau que chega à tela. Ranieri revela que resgatou memórias da própria infância para dar vida ao avô da história.

“O cenário ajuda muito a criar um personagem. Aquela área rural, a natureza, tudo isso faz parte da minha memória afetiva. Esse avô é comunicativo, alegre, orgulhoso de ser presidente da associação ucraniana e de fazer tudo pela comunidade” — afirma

No filme, Stanislau é um homem respeitado, que representa a ponte entre gerações e valores, alguém que acredita no coletivo e no poder das relações humanas.

Um mergulho na cultura ucraniana no Paraná

Ranieri também destaca a experiência de viver de perto a cultura ucraniana, tão presente em Prudentópolis. Igrejas, culinária típica, vestimentas, danças e a própria forma de se relacionar com o outro marcaram profundamente o ator.

“Esse mergulho foi importante para o personagem, mas também para mim, como pessoa. Conhecer essas pessoas, ouvir as histórias, participar desse cotidiano... isso fica para a vida inteira” — diz

Um dos encontros mais marcantes foi com uma senhora da comunidade que, todos os dias, chegava de madrugada ao set para levar lanches feitos com carinho para a equipe. Segundo Ranieri, ela contava a história da vida dela, dos filhos, dos netos: “Aquilo é amor, acolhimento. Isso não tem como não atravessar a gente”, relembra emocionado.

Aos 54 anos, Ranieri vive pela primeira vez um avô na ficção, um personagem que, segundo ele, já existiu de alguma forma e representa muitos avôs reais espalhados pelo Paraná e pelo Brasil. “Eu espero que o público sinta carinho, afeto. Que esse avô possa abraçar todo mundo, do Paraná e do Brasil inteiro, com o mesmo acolhimento que eu senti em Prudentópolis” — afirma.

O ator também destaca o orgulho de integrar um projeto feito com artistas paranaenses, valorizando talentos locais e histórias que nascem no estado: “Que seja o primeiro de muitos filmes feitos aqui, com cineastas do Paraná, junto com a RPC e a TV Globo. Vamos juntos”, finaliza.

Sobre o filme Meu Avô Stanislau

Meu Avô Stanislau é uma coprodução da TV Globo, RPC e GP7 Cinema, com elenco e equipe paranaenses. A obra celebra as paisagens, as tradições e o jeito de ser do interior do estado, construindo uma história universal a partir de um cenário profundamente regional. A trama acompanha Boris, um jovem de 17 anos, gamer e apaixonado por mangá, que vê sua vida virar de cabeça para baixo ao ser enviado para morar com o avô Stanislau, na zona rural de Prudentópolis, após um conflito com a mãe.

Cercado por cachoeiras, tradições e pela forte cultura da comunidade descendente de ucranianos, Boris acaba se envolvendo no grande sonho do avô: criar um projeto de turismo rural para a região. Quando um acidente coloca em risco o evento mais importante da comunidade, o garoto se vê diante de uma escolha decisiva: disputar a final de um campeonato de games ou ajudar a salvar o sonho coletivo.

O filme fala sobre família, pertencimento e redescoberta, equilibrando emoção e leveza, e ainda conta com participações especiais de influenciadores gamers e um grande nome da música sertaneja.

Meu Avô Stanislau é um filme paranaense, feito por paranaenses, com elenco paranaense. É o Paraná ocupando as telas do cinema e mostrando para todo o Brasil que boas histórias também nascem fora do eixo tradicional, com identidade, afeto e muito orgulho regional.

[*Translation into English follows – S.C.*]:

Actor brings grandfather Stanislau to life in a film shot in Paraná; full interview with Ranieri Gonzalez.

By RPC

With over 30 years in theatre, television, and film behind him, Ranieri Gonzalez brings a character full of warmth, memory, and identity to life in *My Grandfather Stanislau*. The TV film premieres Monday, February 2, right after *Big Brother Brasil*, as part of *Tela Quente presents: Cine BBB*, airing on RPC and TV Globo.

Critically acclaimed and with an award-winning career, Ranieri plays Stanislau, a community leader in a Ukrainian settlement in the Municipality of Prudentópolis, Paraná. Charismatic and proud of his roots, Stanislau is deeply connected to the people and traditions of the community where he lives.

For the actor, the film is more than a story about the clash between digital and analog worlds. It is about what is often lost in the rush of daily life.

“The story makes us rediscover community, help, companionship, and human and family relationships—things we end up missing out on living in big cities like Curitiba,” reflects Ranieri.

Although he had heard of Prudentópolis before, this was Ranieri’s first visit. The impact was immediate:

“You arrive in a place with waterfalls, hills, and people who invite you into their homes for coffee. It’s wonderful,” he says.

The natural landscapes and the simplicity of life in the interior were essential in the shaping of Stanislaw on the screen. Ranieri also drew on memories from his own childhood to bring authenticity to the grandfather's character.

"The scenery helps a lot in creating a character. That rural area, nature—all of it is part of my emotional memory. This grandfather is communicative, cheerful, and proud to lead the Ukrainian association and to do everything for the community," he explains.

In the film, Stanislaw is a respected man who represents the bridge between generations and values, a person who believes in the collective and power of human relationships.

A Dive into the Ukrainian Culture of Paraná

Ranieri also emphasizes the experience of immersing himself in the local Ukrainian culture. From churches and cuisine to clothing, dances, and way of relating with others, the community left a lasting impression.

"This immersion was important for the character, but also for me personally. Meeting these people, hearing their stories, participating in their lives....it stays with you forever," he says.

One encounter stood out: a local woman who arrived at dawn every day with lovingly prepared snacks for the crew. According to Ranieri, she shared the story of her life, her children, her grandchildren.

"That's love and acceptance. It's impossible not to be touched," Ranieri recalls emotionally.

At 54, Ranieri is playing a grandfather in fiction for the first time. He says the character reflects many real grandfathers across Paraná and Brazil.

"I hope the audience feels affection and warmth. May this grandfather embrace everyone, from Paraná and across Brazil, with the same warmth I felt in Prudentópolis," he affirms.

He also expresses pride in supporting a project created by local artists, showcasing Paraná talent and stories:

"I hope this is the first of many films made here, with filmmakers from Paraná, together with RPC and TV Globo. Let's go together," he concludes.

About My Grandfather Stanislaw

My Grandfather Stanislaw is a co-production of TV Globo, RPC, and GP7 Cinema [co-founded by filmmaker, director, and producer Guto Pasko, who directed the film***], featuring a cast and crew from Paraná. The film celebrates the state's landscapes, traditions, and lifestyle, building a universal story from a profoundly regional setting.

The story follows Boris, a 17-year-old gamer and manga enthusiast, whose life changes when he is sent to live with his grandfather in rural Prudentópolis after a conflict with his mother.

Surrounded by waterfalls and strong Ukrainian-descended traditions, Boris eventually becomes involved in his grandfather's dream of creating a rural tourism project. When an accident threatens the community's most important event, Boris must choose between competing in a gaming championship or helping save the collective dream.

The film explores themes of family, belonging, and rediscovery, balancing emotion and lightness. It also features special appearances by gaming influencers and a major figure in Brazilian country music.

My Grandfather Stanislau is a Paraná film, created by Paraná artists, and with a cast from Paraná. It demonstrates to all of Brazil that good stories also emerge beyond the conventional framework, shaped by identity, affection, and strong regional pride.

*** *For an interview (in Portuguese) with Guto Pasko about the film, see “Meu Avô Stanislau: diretor do filme fala sobre história e comenta a produção da obra,” at:*

<https://redeglobo.globo.com/rpc/cinema/noticia/meu-avo-stanislau-diretor-do-filme-fala-sobre-historia-e-comenta-a-producao-da-obra.ghml>

4. Brazil. “У Бразилії заснували новий Український вільний університет” [A New Ukrainian Free University Was Founded in Brazil], *Ukrinform.ua*, 11 December 2025.

У Бразилії створили Український вільний університет імені Віри Вовк (UNILUC). Про це повідомив член Ради директорів Світового конгресу українців і колишній очільник Українсько-бразильської центральної репрезентації Віторіо Соротюк, передає Укрінформ з посиланням на сайт СКУ.

UNILUC заснували на віртуальній генеральній асамблеї у середу. До заходу доєдналися 52 учасники з різних штатів та міст, серед яких: бразильські та українські університетські професори, фахівці різних професій. Своє послання з Києва надіслала Уповноважена із захисту державної мови.

Зокрема серед присутніх була ректорка Українського вільного університету з Мюнхена, який має 105-річну історію, професорка Лариса Дідковська. Серед інших учасників асамблеї були також професор Сергій Ципко з Центру українських студій Університету Альберти в Канаді та професорка Марілея Гартнер з Центру слов'янських студій з Бразилії.

Український вільний університет у Бразилії — це неприбуткова громадська асоціація з культурним та науковим характером. Його метою є викладання, дослідження та поширення знань про українську мову, літературу, історію, мистецтво, право, політику та культуру як у діаспорі, так і в Україні.

Науковий заклад діятиме як вільний університет відповідно до бразильського

законодавства.

Як повідомляв Укрінформ, у державних школах бразильського міста Куритиба українська мова стала офіційним предметом.

[*Translation into English follows – S.C.*]:

The Vira Vovk Ukrainian Free University (UNILUC) has been established in Brazil.

The announcement was made by Vitório Sorotiuk, a member of the Board of Directors of the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) and former head of the Ukrainian-Brazilian Central Representation, Ukrinform reported, citing the UWC website.

UNILUC was founded during a virtual general assembly held on Wednesday. The event brought together 52 participants from various states and cities, including Brazilian and Ukrainian university professors and specialists from different professional fields. The Commissioner for the Protection of the State Language sent a message from Kyiv.

Among those present was Professor Larysa Didkovska, rector of the Ukrainian Free University in Munich, which has a 105-year history. Other participants included Dr. Serge Cipko of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta and Professor Marileia Gartner of the Centre for Slavic Studies at UNICENTRO [Universidade Estadual do Centro-Oeste, in the Brazilian state of Paraná].

The Ukrainian Free University in Brazil is a non-profit public association with a cultural and scholarly mission. Its purpose is to teach, research, and disseminate knowledge of the Ukrainian language, literature, history, art, law, politics, and culture, both in the diaspora and in Ukraine.

The institution will operate as a free university in accordance with Brazilian law.

As previously reported by Ukrinform, the Ukrainian language has become an official subject in public schools in the Brazilian city of Curitiba.

5. Canada. “U of T Library Helps Preserve Ukrainian Voices as War Rages On: ‘If It Was There, It Would Be Destroyed,’” *Toronto Star*, 28 January 2026.

Reports from occupied territories show that Ukrainian-language literature has been systemically collected and destroyed.

By Anastasia Blosser Staff Reporter

After nearly four years of war in Ukraine, the damage is easy to see in shattered cities, but easier to miss is the fight over language, memory and identity.

Ksenya Kiebusinski, who heads the Slavic and Eastern European collections at the University of Toronto, is quietly providing books a refuge far from the front lines.

U of T has the second largest collection of Ukrainian texts in North America, including materials produced by refugees who fled westward during and after the Second World War, keeping them safe while Ukrainian-language literature has been systemically collected and destroyed by the current invasion, reports from occupied territories show.

The tactic as old as conquest itself. Empires have long burned libraries, banned languages and erased manuscripts to assert control not only over land, but over identity — a practice so destructive it was recognized as a war crime under the 1954 Geneva Convention.

Kiebusinski sees Ukraine as the latest chapter in this history, and says the international scramble to preserve its books is driven by a shared fear.

“Culture cannot survive without its language and literature,” she explained.

U of T may seem an unlikely choice but it plays a critical role, with more than 40,000 Ukrainian-language texts.

Although the university did not establish a department of Slavic studies until 1949, the collection expanded rapidly in the decades that followed, fuelled by a surge of Ukrainian immigrants to Toronto after the Second World War and by university leaders with a devotion to Ukrainian studies.

Erasing a language to control history

Following the Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014, Kiebusinski began seeing waves of aggressively anti-Ukrainian works, thinly sourced and filled with what she described as disinformation. The Russian government also expanded a list of banned “extremist literature,” particularly books on Ukrainian history and nationalist movements that supported its independence.

After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the challenges became more urgent.

Ukrainian as a literary language developed rapidly when the Russian empire fell, but as the Soviet Union formed, a policy was introduced that made Russian the standard language of teaching.

“Books were translated from Ukrainian into Russian,” Kiebusinski said. “It didn’t have a place in culture for a very long time, and even in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, it took a number of years for Ukrainian literature to resurface.”

With the reoccupation of some Ukrainian territories, some of the first policies introduced have eliminated the Ukrainian language. For citizens, that has meant watching familiar books disappear from classrooms and libraries almost overnight and a looming fear their culture could be swept away with it.

As of November, 1,630 cultural heritage sites have been destroyed or damaged by “Russian aggression,” according to Ukraine’s Ministry of Culture. Nearly 2,500 cultural facilities have also been under fire, including 853 libraries. Those statistics are incomplete since many regions are occupied and the ministry cannot survey the destruction.

Rescuing books from a disrupted supply chain

Getting books out of Ukraine grew increasingly difficult as publishers, printers and supply routes were disrupted, particularly in eastern cities such as Kharkiv and Donetsk. Academic books were often printed in very small runs, sometimes distributed entirely to authors, leaving librarians dependent on personal networks to locate copies. Those books then make a long journey, collected by vendors, moved across the border into Poland and shipped onward.

Today, Ukrainian scholars still write to Kiebusinski asking for access to sources they can no longer reach at home. She sends scanned articles and rare texts back across the Atlantic, fragments of a cultural record that survived earlier waves of repression.

“I don’t like that it’s here and it’s not there, but if it was there, it would be destroyed,” she said.

Libraries and scholars outside Ukraine have mobilized to help. Within days of the 2022 invasion, a volunteer initiative called Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online (SUCHO), began digitally archiving the websites of Ukrainian libraries, museums and cultural institutions, preserving material that could disappear if power or internet access failed. The University of Toronto became one of the major sites storing those archived files, with the intention of returning them when the war ends.

Digitization has become one of the most powerful tools of preservation. Ukrainian archivists are racing to scan their most important collections, sometimes around the clock, knowing that some materials have already been seized and taken out of the country. Even then, electronic copies are not a complete solution to the preservation crisis, Kiebusinski warned.

“War disrupts electricity. Servers cannot survive bombings,” she said.

Fireproof wrapping materials are being imported to protect physical artifacts that cannot be digitized. Other efforts focus on correcting how Ukrainian culture is represented globally — reattributing artists and writers whose Ukrainian roots were long subsumed under Russian or imperial labels — or on direct financial support for booksellers and library workers who suddenly lost their income.

A library built in exile and renewed by war

Displaced scholars and writers rebuilt cultural life in camps and exile following the Second World War, publishing journals, books and children’s literature. Decades later, their collections, often saved from destruction and passed down through families, ended up on the university’s shelves under Kiebusinski’s care.

“What they brought with them were their valuables, and what’s more valuable than books?”

In recent years, Kiebusinski has noticed another shift in Ukrainian content. Where there were once conventional academic works, there are now war diaries, poetry, novels and speeches — first-person attempts to record life under invasion.

“If your identity is being destroyed, if access to your culture is being destroyed, that makes some people even more resistant,” she said.

She hopes Ukraine’s libraries can one day be rebuilt so they no longer have to rely on safe havens abroad. Until then, the task is to hold on to what can be saved.

“There would be no future if we didn’t have the libraries,” Kiebusinski said.

6. Canada. “Jets’ Ukrainian Heritage Night Returns Jan. 6, 2026,” *Nhl.com*, 22 December 2025.

Autographed team-issued Winnipeg Jets Ukrainian Heritage jerseys will be available for auction online

By True North Sports + Entertainment / Press Release

WINNIPEG, Dec. 22, 2025 – The Winnipeg Jets will host their second annual Ukrainian Heritage Night on Jan. 6, 2026, when they face the Vegas Golden Knights at 7 p.m. The game will celebrate Manitoba’s Ukrainian community, which is one of the largest Ukrainian populations in Canada, with Ukrainian dance, music and food.

Rusalka Ukrainian Dance will perform pre-game and during intermissions and local band Zrada will bring the energy on the in-bowl stage with their modern take on Ukrainian folk music. The Ukrainian Kyiv pavilion’s trident, which is an important symbol of Ukrainian national identity, will be on display at the game.

Canada Life Centre Executive Chef Steven Squier has collaborated with the Ukrainian community on the food features of the game, which will include perogies, borscht, cabbage rolls, cabbage roll poutine and a perogy Jet Dog with garlic sausage, sour cream and onions.

Autographed team-issued Winnipeg Jets Ukrainian Heritage jerseys will be available for auction online at [tnyfauction.ca](https://www.tnyfauction.ca) starting Jan. 6 from 9 a.m. CT to 9 p.m. CT with jerseys displayed at the game. The jerseys feature the Ukrainian Heritage logo designed by Ukrainian newcomer and graphic designer Andrii Sobchuk and proceeds from the auction will go toward grassroots and cultural initiatives in the Ukrainian community. Merchandise with the logo is available at Jets Gear stores and online at [truenorthshop.com](https://www.truenorthshop.com).

Tickets for Ukrainian Heritage Night are available at [winnipegjets.com/tickets](https://www.winnipegjets.com/tickets)

[<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/jets-ukrainian-heritage-night-returns-jan-6-2026>]

7. Denmark. “Ten Danish Schools Join Effort to Teach Ukrainian History and Strengthen Diaspora Identity,” *New Voice of Ukraine*, 12 December 2025.

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Ten schools and educational centers across Denmark have joined the Roots and Wings program, an initiative of the Pylyp Orlyk Foundation aimed at introducing Ukrainian history as a separate subject in diaspora classrooms.

The Danish city of Skive hosted the program’s first mentoring session, where teachers from Copenhagen, Esbjerg, Odense, Kolding, and Stockholm were introduced to an interactive teaching method called Memories in Boxes. The model combines work with historical and cultural artifacts, music, creative assignments, and interactive elements — allowing children not only to learn information but to feel history through touch, sound, and personal experience.

Teachers highlighted the practicality of the approach, its adaptability for different age groups, and its ability to strengthen the self-identification of Ukrainian children living abroad. “Returning to our roots gives us strength to move forward. Knowing our history helps us understand who we are and keeps us united even when we are scattered around the world,” educators said.

The method was presented by the Foundation’s educational project coordinator and historian Nataliia Omelchuk, and project manager and Odesa National University PhD candidate Svitlana Kvitnytska.

The Pylyp Orlyk Foundation continues to expand the Roots and Wings program internationally, supporting Ukrainian educators and amplifying the Ukrainian voice worldwide through education, memory, and culture. Since September 2025, teachers from eight Ukrainian schools in six Czech cities have been teaching Ukrainian history and undergoing methodological training to ensure lasting results.

At the Educational Academy for Ukrainian weekend-school teachers in Europe in August 2025, organizers reported that 67% of Ukrainian diaspora schools did not teach history at all.

“We are working to change this critical situation. Knowledge of one’s national history helps our children, who are forced to live abroad, preserve their identity and remain part of our nation divided by war,” said Yaruna Yasynovych, program director of the Pylyp Orlyk Foundation.

The program is being implemented in partnership with NGO Help Ukrainian Children, the civic organization Lastivka, and with the support of the Embassy of Ukraine in the Kingdom of Denmark.

8. General. “Seventh Group of Ukrainian Legion Volunteers Signs Contracts with AFU in Lublin,” *Ukrinform*, 23 January 2026.

The seventh group of Ukrainian Legion volunteers, consisting of Ukrainian citizens living abroad, signed contracts with the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) on Friday in Lublin.

This was reported to Ukrinform by Petro Horkusha, a representative of the recruitment center at the Ukrainian Consulate General in Lublin, and by the Consul General of Ukraine in Lublin, Oleh Kuts.

“Several dozen Ukrainian citizens signed contracts. In addition to Poland, volunteers arrived from Norway, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom,” Horkusha said.

According to him, the average age of the volunteers is 35–45 years. The group includes several women, who expressed interest in becoming UAV operators, while the men wish to work as UAV operators, drivers, or in the medical field.

Horkusha noted that most of the volunteers signed three-year contracts.

“One 19-year-old signed a one-year contract, and another volunteer from Norway expressed the desire to sign a contract until the end of the special period, emphasizing that he will serve until peace is restored in Ukraine,” Horkusha added.

The Consul General of Ukraine in Lublin expressed satisfaction that the recruitment center is working successfully, helping cooperation with Polish partners, who are currently providing active support to Ukraine, particularly during the energy crisis caused by Russian aggression.

“We are grateful to the Polish side, as their contribution is significant. We also thank our citizens who, despite poor weather, came to Lublin from different European countries. It is very important that they actively communicate with the press, share their motivation, and thereby help counter Russian fake news,” Kuts emphasized.

An especially important aspect, according to the Consul General, is that some volunteers in this group decided to join the AFU after communicating with contract soldiers from the earlier Ukrainian Legion groups.

“They confirmed that everything they had been told by acquaintances already serving in the AFU is true, and all contract conditions are being respected. This helps counter Russian disinformation claiming that volunteers are immediately sent to the front without training,” the Consul General said.

After signing the contracts, the group will go to one of the training centers in Poland for 45 days of basic military training. Once training is complete, the group will be deployed to Ukraine.

Earlier volunteers who had already completed training in Poland and combat drills at permanent deployment points in Ukraine were sent to the combat zone several months ago.

The creation of the Ukrainian Legion was announced in July 2024, following a security agreement signed in Warsaw between President Volodymyr Zelensky and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk. One of its provisions involves training Ukrainian military units on Polish territory.

The recruitment center for Ukrainian volunteers at the Consulate General in Lublin opened in early October 2024.

Volunteers in the Ukrainian Legion can sign contracts for one year (for youth under 25), three years, or until the end of the special period. After signing contracts with the AFU, the volunteers are sent to a training ground near Lublin for instruction by NATO instructors.

By agreement, the Ukrainian side provides the volunteers with military uniforms and medical supplies, while Poland provides infrastructure, equipment, and weapons for the training period.

The first group of Ukrainian Legion volunteers signed contracts with the AFU in November 2023, the second in January 2025, the third in late February, the fourth in early June, the fifth in early August, and the sixth last October.

9. General. “Ukraine Launches Diaspora Alliance for the Restoration of Ukraine,”
***En.interfax.com.ua*, 16 December 2025.**

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KYIV. Dec 16 (Interfax-Ukraine) – Minister of Social Policy, Family and Unity Denys Uliutin has announced the launch of a global platform for coordinated cooperation between the state, the Ukrainian diaspora and international partners - the Diaspora Alliance for the Restoration of Ukraine.

“Today, millions of our citizens are outside Ukraine, working, studying, integrating into the communities of the host country. But at the same time, they remain deeply connected to Ukraine through families, financial support, volunteering, expertise and advocacy of our interests in the world,” Ulyutin’s press service quotes him as saying after participating in events on the occasion of International Migrants’ Day.

He stressed that the state policy towards Ukrainians abroad goes beyond the protection of rights and covers issues of long-term social support, demographic sustainability and restoration of the human potential of Ukraine.

According to him, work in this direction is based on supporting and protecting Ukrainians abroad, integrating without losing touch with Ukraine, as well as involving them in the restoration of the state.

“It is in this context that we are launching the Diaspora Alliance for the Restoration of Ukraine - a coordination tool designed to transform the solidarity of Ukrainians abroad and international partners into coordinated, concrete and long-term actions aligned with Ukraine’s national priorities. In addition, the Alliance aims to reduce duplication of initiatives and increase the

effectiveness of support programs,” the minister said.

It is expected that the work of the Alliance will cover economic interaction, social cohesion and community development, the return and reintegration of Ukrainians, as well as systematic data collection and research necessary for effective coordination and policy formulation.

As reported, the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity is working on a strategy to facilitate the return of citizens who fled abroad back to Ukraine.

10. General. “On Ideas, Institutions, and Identities: The Origins of the Modern Ukrainian Diaspora,” *Kyiv Post*, 15 December 2025 and (Part II) 4 January 2026.

In the first of a two-part examination of modern Ukrainian ideas and identities, Canadian scholar Bohdan Krawchenko examines the evolution of the diaspora.

The following are excerpts from a conversation recorded during a discussion organized at the Invisible University for Ukraine Summer School 2025, “Beyond the Post-Soviet: Rethinking Environmental, Social, and Cultural Agency in Wartime Ukraine” (1-10 July 2025, Budapest), moderated by Ostap Sereda and Nadiia Chervinska. A transcript of the full discussion can be read here [<https://visibleukraine.org/story/on-ideas-institutions-and-identities-a-conversation-with-bohdan-krawchenko-first-part/>]

By Bohdan Krawchenko

The post-1917 revolutionary period produced political émigrés in the classical sense, concentrated primarily in France and Czechoslovakia. In the latter, with support from Presidents Masaryk and Beneš, a veritable “Ukrainian Piedmont” emerged. The authorities there supported thousands of emigrants and students, fostering major Ukrainian institutions, such as the Free Ukrainian University, the Ukrainian Higher Pedagogical Institute, the Ukrainian Studio of Plastic Arts, and the Ukrainian Economic-Cooperative Faculty.

This ecosystem also included the Ukrainian Institute of Sociology – headed by a socialist revolutionary – which had an affiliated workers’ university and a press that published journals and books like Mykyta Shapoval’s *Sotsiolohiia ukrainskoho vidrodzhennia*. Politically, this milieu was a diverse hub, encompassing former officials of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and Skoropadsky’s Hetmanate, activists from the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers’ Movement, and the Socialist-Revolutionaries. It also served as the birthplace of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). This vibrant period ended abruptly with the Nazi and subsequent Soviet occupations, which inflicted another discontinuity on Ukraine’s political tradition.

The post-WWII diaspora political landscape, however, was quite different. Around 2.3 million Ukrainian SSR citizens had been taken to Germany as forced laborers. While most returned after the war, approximately 250,000 became Displaced Persons (DPs) in camps in the American and British zones. Demographically, 70-80 percent were from pre-WWII Polish, Romanian, and Czechoslovak territories; only about 60,000 were from central or eastern Ukraine, the latter including a small group from the industrial centers.

Though most DPs were young and from peasant or working-class backgrounds, a crucial core of intellectuals, professionals, and political activists from Galicia and Czechoslovakia had also fled to avoid Soviet repression. Living in camps with ample free time due to a lack of employment, they channeled their energy into education, culture, and religion. This activism energized the community and prevented the apathy seen in other DP contexts, creating ideal conditions for political mobilization. They spent about three years in these camps (1945-48) before systematic resettlement began.

Within the camps, the OUN-Bandera faction (OUN-B) emerged as the dominant political force. With about 5,000 members in postwar Germany, it was the only significant political organization and aggressively attempted to hegemonize all spheres of Ukrainian life.

Living in camps with ample free time due to a lack of employment, the Displaced Persons channeled their energy into education, culture, and religion.

In contrast, the Ukrainian National Rada, representing the government-in-exile, had only 200 members, and there were only a few Skoropadsky supporters. The Banderites promoted an ideology of integral nationalism, which placed the nation above all, advocated for an authoritarian Ukrainian state, and emphasized action, strength, and willpower. They often viewed Ukrainian DPs from the core lands (“naddnipriantsi”) with disdain for their perceived weak national consciousness, considering them in need of “re-education.”

It is important to note a key ideological shift that occurred within Ukraine during this time. In 1943, the OUN and UPA created the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR), led by Roman Shukhevych. Influenced by reports from eastern Ukraine, it replaced integral nationalism with a program promoting democratic rights. However, this shift had little impact on the diaspora Banderites in the DP camps, who remained rooted in European interwar authoritarian traditions.

The OUN-B’s primary postwar political project was the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN), a Munich-based coalition that lobbied Western governments for the independence of nations subjugated by the USSR. Yet, as a nationalist, conservative, and often authoritarian-right alliance, it remained politically marginal, and this marginality continued into the modern era.

In 1992, in Ukraine, the OUN-B was reconstituted as a political party – the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (CUN). Led by Slava Stetsko, it remained a fringe far-right group, a fact evidenced by its candidate receiving only 1.6% of the vote in the 2019 presidential election and 0.04% in parliamentary elections. Despite its minimal role, the group has been effectively exploited by pro-Kremlin propaganda to tarnish Ukraine’s political culture.

DP groups who disagreed with the Banderites or hailed from outside Galicia formed their own smaller organizations. Eastern Ukrainians, who were Orthodox, organized around the Autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

In 1946, the Ukrainian Revolutionary-Democratic Party (URDP) was founded. Led by the celebrated writer Ivan Bahrianyi, it became the largest political group among the Eastern

Ukrainian émigrés. The URDP advocated for a “democratic nationalism,” standing in stark contrast to OUN-B’s integral nationalism.

Crucially, they believed that meaningful change in Ukraine would ultimately have to emerge from within the USSR, predicting that autonomist forces would eventually gain momentum.

In 1990, URDP changed its name to the Ukrainian Republican Democratic Party. A left-wing faction of URDP emerged and published a monthly newspaper, *Vpered* (Forward, 1949-59), which featured articles on developments in Soviet Ukraine, international politics, and émigré life from a democratic socialist perspective. Its editorial board comprised a roster of prominent intellectuals, including Ivan Maistrenko (a former Borot’bist), Vsevolod Holubnychyi (an economist), Borys Levytsky (a political analyst), Hryhoriy Kostiuk (a literary critic), and others. Decades later, when a new Ukrainian left-wing intellectual group emerged around the journal *Diialoh* in the 1980s, the *Vpered* group formally dissolved itself, passing the torch to a new generation.

Most of the 35,000 Displaced Persons who arrived in Canada starting in 1947 settled in Toronto and nearby areas, with smaller groups in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Montreal. The 1950s experienced strong economic growth, social conformity – especially regarding gender roles – high birth rates, an expanding welfare state, growing consumerism, and the appearance of “teenage culture.” Canada differed from the USA, where approximately 80,000 Ukrainians had settled. It had a more liberal and socially oriented political culture. It saw itself as a “cultural mosaic” rather than a “melting pot,” and lacked powerful ultra-conservative, anti-communist movements like the John Birch Society or McCarthyism. Canada had a Progressive Conservative Party that was critical of the USSR and supported Ukraine, which also introduced major social programs and the Canadian Bill of Rights.

The Canadian context allowed émigrés to find employment easily, support their children’s education, and donate to establish new Ukrainian organizations that addressed social, cultural, and educational needs.

The role of the OUN-B’s community organization was significant, with youth groups, Saturday schools, dance groups, and choirs forming the core of community life. Others from Galicia organized *Plast*, which, like the OUN-B youth group, promoted Ukrainian patriotism. Political activity was mainly limited to calls for a free Ukraine made at community events. The new émigré community could not effectively explain the Ukrainian struggle to Canadians generally or to the 360,000 Ukrainian Canadians concentrated in the Prairie Provinces, many of whom had lost fluency in their heritage language since settling in 1891. This task fell to English speaking intelligentsia and professionals who understood Canadian society. The “baby boomers,” born after 1946, began to take on this work.

Part II (*Kyiv Post*, 4 January 2026)

In the second of a two-part examination of modern Ukrainian ideas and identities, Canadian scholar Bohdan Krawchenko remembers the heady days and “hollow state” after independence.

The following are excerpts from a conversation recorded during a discussion organized at the Invisible University for Ukraine Summer School 2025, “Beyond the Post-Soviet: Rethinking Environmental, Social, and Cultural Agency in Wartime Ukraine” (1-10 July 2025, Budapest), moderated by Ostap Sereda and Nadiia Chervinska. A transcript of the full discussion can be read [here](#).

I came to Ukraine in January 1991 on a sabbatical leave, intending to write a book. Every day life in the 1990s did not surprise me; the big eye-opener was the “hollow state,” which I could closely observe from my vantage point.

Shortly after arriving, I met Bohdan Hawrylyshyn, who in 1989 established the International Institute of Management in Kyiv, financed by George Soros. They had also formed a Council of Advisors to the Praesidium of the Ukrainian Parliament, whose members included Sir Geoffrey Howe, Zbigniew Brzeziński, and Shirley Williams.

At that time, the Praesidium, headed by Leonid Kravchuk, served as the political leadership of the country. The Council needed a Secretariat, and when Soros asked me about my plans, he said, “You can sit and write about history, or you can be part of its making.” I jumped at the opportunity. I spent a lot of time in the Verkhovna Rada, witnessing the key dramatic events that unfolded. I was a member of working groups on monetary reform and the anti-crisis program. One of my tasks was to write a policy paper outlining the key steps Kravchuk should take in state-building when he assumed the presidency.

Under the Soviet regime, there was no civil service as such. The USSR was a bureaucratic behemoth because the state owned everything; the Communist Party existed at every level and institution, and GOSPLAN determined the economy. In this scheme of things, the actual “state,” especially in the republics, was small.

When the entire Soviet edifice disintegrated, one found that Ukraine, with 52 million people (1991), had only 12,000 people working in central government agencies. The comparable number in Greece, with a population of 10 million people, was 60,000. Eighty percent of Ukraine’s economy was under the Union jurisdiction but now came under Ukrainian purview. Moreover, as a colony, Ukraine faced institutional incompleteness – no central bank, customs service, ministry of defense, a tiny ministry of finance that was in reality an accounting office. Since there was no justice under the Soviets, the Ministry of Justice had only 130 employees.

With independence, the central government had 35 agencies which retained the same names and people as in the previous period, although the functions of government had changed, and policy development was added, something few understood.

Kravchuk’s team agreed with my recommendation to establish a national school of public administration to educate a new cadre of civil servants who understood the challenges of the time, especially a market economy and rule of law. I became the founding director of the Institute of Public Administration and Local Government, Cabinet of Ministers, modelled after the French École nationale d’administration, which opened its doors in 1992.

Women's new role

The school was a rigorous, intensive 12-month program ending with internships in Canada, France, or Germany. It recruited on a competitive basis current mid-career civil servants from central and oblast structures, who on graduation would either move to a new position in a government entity or be promoted at their previous place of employment. But much to my surprise no women had applied. When I called Volodymyr Piekhota, Minister of the Cabinet of Ministers, for an explanation he said that the heads of personnel departments did not realize women would be eligible. On the contrary, I said that at least 40% of the learners have to be women. He picked up the *vertushka* (government phone) and called every ministry. Two days later, we filled the quota. When I met Piekhota he asked, "Is this how you do it in Canada?" I said, "No, but your way is more efficient."

Also in 1992, we wrote, and parliament passed a law on the civil service – the first such act in the former USSR – that defined the hierarchy of authority and established a system of rules governing the rights and duties of employment, promotion, and selection based on merit. I also managed to convince donors of the obvious fact that you cannot teach courses without books, and they agreed to support an ambitious publications program implemented by *Osnovy*, which was established that year and headed by Solomiia Pavlychko.

Solomiia, like others, was working in institutions led by individuals whose intellectual and administrative practices had been shaped by the Soviet system. With *glasnost*, the Institute of Literature could finally discuss Ukrainian writers whom Soviet authorities had forbidden, and it became a hotbed of the national movement before 1991.

However, when Solomiia and her colleagues sought to take their reading of Ukrainian literature further and apply the insights of contemporary literary criticism, they encountered resistance. I heard someone say, "We do not need Western fads. Lesia Ukrainka was a Ukrainian patriot, not a feminist," as if one precluded the other.

The "old guard," apart from being culturally conservative, did not access new scholarship for the simple reason that they did not know foreign languages. However, for Solomiia, integration into the international scholarly community was a far greater priority than arguing with the current leadership. And there was *Osnovy* to take care of.

The broader problem was the state of the humanities and social sciences, which were the most politicized and tightly controlled by the Soviet regime. These fields, a key stepping stone to party careers, attracted mediocre students.

The smart ones studied math and physics, fields relatively free from ideological interference, and they were the most politically active groups in the mass movements. Recall, the 1990s expression – "фізики і лірики," (physics and lyrics) and that all *Rukh* meetings in Kyiv were at the Polytechnical Institute, not Shevchenko University.

A key social science, i.e., sociology, did not exist as a discipline. Natalia Chernysh was the first

to receive a PhD in the field. During her dissertation defense in Kharkiv in 1991, I had to stand up and speak in support of the intellectual legitimacy of her study, as the academic council was inclined to deny her the degree.

Living and working in Ukraine, I was taken aback by the blatant discrimination against women, where it was simply assumed that certain types of jobs would be only for men.

With this in mind, we supported Olha Kulachek's work "The Role of Women in Public Administration" published by Osnovy in 1995. Surprisingly, I got a medal from the Ministry of Education for promoting gender studies.

With near-total employment, women bore the burden of domestic and childcare responsibilities. The situation deteriorated in the 1990s, with mass unemployment among males, who often sat at home, depressed. Women turned en masse to the service sector and trade to keep the family afloat. The economic crisis debased the role of males as providers and was a cause of increased domestic violence. I often thought that while studying feminism, we should also research masculinity, its cultural and historical construction.

The fields needed in the 1990s were economics and sociology. At that time, not one single person with a Western degree in economics worked in the government. Another critical field was public policy, the application of knowledge to public problems – a concept that did not exist.

At the Institute of Public Administration, with World Bank support, we launched the Economics Training Center. However, we were unable to recruit learners from the faculties of economics, because they lacked quantitative skills and would have to spend months unlearning Soviet concepts that shaped their understanding of economics. We recruited those with backgrounds in physics, math, and engineering because of their good quantitative skills and ability to understand theory.

Assessing the 1990s

It was somewhat surreal that the USSR collapsed "not with a bang, but with a whimper." It was a great period of hope and discovery, so many new things happened. However, the first five years were also a period of colossal policy failure, revealing serious weaknesses in the political leadership's understanding of social and economic processes and the actions that the government should take.

Rukh did not have an economic program, and during the miners' strikes, it failed to develop a social vision with a broader appeal.

Understandably, the center of attention was on building the basic institutions of the state, on the army, international recognition, politics, appointments, and measures to promote the national idea.

Ukraine's economic structure led to a deep crisis, with the economy in free fall: savings wiped out and inflation was at 1,500%. Kravchuk and his patriotic supporters failed to take necessary

steps for macroeconomic stabilization initially.

These measures were only achieved under Kuchma. Ukraine adopted a neoliberal approach to economic transition favored by international financial organizations and certain Ukrainian circles. While Poland had “Shock Therapy,” Ukraine experienced “Shock without Therapy.” Under Kuchma, crony capitalism or oligarchic structures emerged, with a few powerful individuals capturing the economy and state, causing extreme inequality and corruption – similar to Russia’s social formation.

The Orange Revolution interrupted this trend, leading to clashes between two social systems. The key lesson of the 1990s is that economic and social issues are central to nation-building and must be prioritized for success. But nonetheless, the 1990s were a wonderful time to be alive, and I remember them with great nostalgia.

International aid

I witnessed first-hand the detrimental impact of externally imposed policy models in Ukraine, Central Asia, and Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the failure to engage national stakeholders was so extreme that donors drafted development plans exclusively in English; these documents were never seen by Afghan ministers, who consequently had no stake in their implementation. This profound disconnect directly contributed to the government’s collapse and President Ashraf Ghani’s ignominious flight.

The central task for any country is the development of endogenous policy-making capacity. Solutions cannot be outsourced. This requires two elements: first, education in policy analysis methods, paired with deep, context-specific research.

The challenges facing Ukraine are analytically complex, with no simple solutions; they require rigorous investigation to develop practical strategies. Second, public policy must become the guiding paradigm for governmental decision-making. Currently, the public finds government processes to be opaque and often incomprehensible.

In functional European systems, each ministry is supported by a robust policy and evaluation unit that serves as its analytical engine, ensuring leadership makes informed decisions. One mechanism to enforce this standard is to mandate that all submissions to the Cabinet meet strict criteria: they must include a clear problem definition, a rationale for government intervention, proposed solutions with considered alternatives, a cost-benefit analysis, a regulatory impact assessment, and a summary of public consultations.

In the mid-1990s an international expert did a functional review of Ukraine’s Ministry of Finance. This is a critical ministry – it prepares the budget which is the main instrument of public policy and a place where you would expect policy analysis to occur. The review showed that only 4% of the tasks performed involved analysis – such as analyzing the efficiency of public spending, etc. The entire focus was on dealing with daily operational issue, putting out fires. Ruchne upravlinnia (manual control) was the norm.

In 2000, as part of a team under Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko, I helped draft and implement new regulations for the submission of documents to the Cabinet of Ministers. Furthermore, Ukraine once possessed a vibrant Institute of Public Administration, which educated a core cadre of civil servants in policy analysis – a program supported by a body of literature from Osnovy publishers. Regrettably, this progress was halted when Yushchenko was replaced, and the successor Academy of Public Administration was later liquidated.

For Ukraine to progress, public sector reform must be a top priority. Building national policy capacity and policy as the guiding principle for how government should work is a fundamental precondition for a successful fight against corruption and for building an effective state and European integration.

Bohdan Krawchenko is a Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Afghanistan Research Initiative at the University of Central Asia and its former director-general; former director of the Institute of Public Administration and Local Government in Kyiv, Ukraine; and former director of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies in Edmonton, Alberta.

11. General. “Opinion: False Panic over Fleeing Ukrainians,” *Kyiv Post*, 4 November 2025.

The Western press has recently offered headlines to the effect of: “100,000 youth fled Ukraine.” But what does that really mean? And is there any reason to panic?

By Michał Kujawski

Within two months of Ukraine easing its border restrictions, nearly 100,000 young men were said to have left the country. It sounds dramatic – but the narrative is misleading. The law allowing them to leave was introduced precisely so that young people could do so. So, the exodus should come as no surprise.

On Aug. 28, 2025, Ukraine lifted restrictions on men aged 18 to 22 leaving the country. Just two months later, international media reacted with alarm. Headlines such as “Almost 100,000 young men flee Ukraine in two months” and “Ukraine’s exodus of young men could be fatal” (The Telegraph) quickly spread across global outlets. However, the data behind those claims came from Poland’s Border Guard and referred to the number of border crossings, not the number of individuals who had permanently left Ukraine.

A distorted picture

The entire debate about the supposed “flight of young Ukrainians” is distorted. If lawmakers in Kyiv allowed young men to leave, they did so intentionally – so that they could leave legally. The aim was not to escape, but to let them continue their education and gain experience abroad.

The Ukrainian government is well aware of the country’s severe demographic crisis. Even before Russia’s full-scale invasion, Ukraine had one of the lowest fertility rates in Europe. After 2022, millions of refugees – mostly women and children – fled the country. Allowing young men to travel abroad is part of a long-term strategy: maintaining ties with the vast Ukrainian diaspora

and helping a new generation acquire skills that will one day contribute to rebuilding the country.

Why did Ukraine let young men leave?

There are several reasons. First, education and skills. Thousands of young Ukrainians were already studying in Western universities before the war. In the new wartime reality, giving them the option to continue their studies – while still being able to visit family in Ukraine – makes sense.

Second, connections with the diaspora. Many teenagers who fled Ukraine in 2022 would not be able to re-enter the country without risking forced conscription. The new law solves that issue, letting them travel safely. Of course, the move has raised questions about the army and mobilization, but that situation is far more complex than most headlines suggest.

Mobilization: “not bad, not terrible”

Contrary to popular belief, the mobilization age in Ukraine starts at 25. Estimates suggest that up to one million people serve in the armed forces, while there are roughly six million men of conscription age in the country. The decision not to draft younger men is intended to protect Ukraine’s demographic balance.

While issues such as rotation, desertion, and morale do exist, it does not mean that “there’s no one left to fight.” Increasingly, technology and drones are taking over many frontline roles, while national defense also depends on logistics, infrastructure, and the functioning of the civilian economy.

Recruitment today looks very different from the viral videos circulating online. The army appeals less through coercion or patriotic slogans and more through training opportunities, professional growth, and targeted recruitment campaigns run by individual battalions.

Too early for conclusions

The uproar over the alleged “mass exodus of young Ukrainians” reveals how easily parts of the Western media and commentariat can oversimplify a complex issue. Lack of context leads to flawed conclusions. Whether allowing 18-22-year-olds to leave will turn out to be a mistake or an investment in Ukraine’s future – it’s simply too early to tell.

The views expressed in this opinion article are the author’s and not necessarily those of Kyiv Post.

12. Greece. “Ukrainian Christmas Festival Unites Diaspora and Cultures in Athens,”
***Mezha.net*, 30 December 2025.**

As Ukrinform reports, this is stated on the Facebook page of the Center for Support and Development of Cultural Heritage ‘Trembita’

In Athens, the traditional winter festival of Ukrainian culture “Ukrainian Christmas in Athens” was held, organized by the Trembita Society for the Support and Development of Cultural

Heritage. The event brought together the Ukrainian diaspora, diplomats, and representatives of other national communities in Greece.

According to Ukrainian news reports, the event is also mentioned on the Trembita Center for the Support and Development of Cultural Heritage's page.

The festival took place with the support of the Peristeri City Hall. The organizers expressed gratitude to Mayor Andreas Pachaturidis for supporting the Ukrainian initiative and openness to intercultural dialogue.

Diplomats from the Embassy of Ukraine in Greece joined the celebration. Chargé d'Affaires Vita Holets personally greeted the community, highlighting the importance of preserving traditions.

The celebration became a platform for performances by numerous artistic groups. In addition to Ukrainian ensembles, participants from Moldovan, Georgian, Albanian, and Bulgarian communities took part. Ukrainian groups: Edelweiss, Mini Edelweiss, "Cheerful Notes," the ensemble "Vykrutasyky" (Berehynia School), "Melodzvin" (Trembita School), "Ukrainian Crane Country," the school of the parish community of Saint Nicholas of the UGCC.

Key Highlights of the Festival

Among the guests were the Moldovan ensemble Dansul Neamului, the Georgian centers "Caucasus" and "Colchida," the Albanian vocal-dance group, and the Bulgarian group Ludi-Mladi.

The musical accompaniment was provided by CATS Studio, and gifts for children were prepared by the associations "OPORA" (OPORA) and UA EduHub in Greece.

The main inspirations of the event were Alla Lobach, head of the Trembita society, who united the cultural communities, and Olena Umrysh, who was responsible for the organizational part of the festival.

The organizers emphasized that through joint efforts they managed to create a celebration of unity and hope, demonstrating the richness of Ukrainian culture in the heart of Greece.

Also on December 24, the corridors of the Ukrainian Consulate in Thessaloniki (Greece) were filled with the sounds of the homeland carol. Young scouts, students of the Saturday school, and artists visited the diplomatic mission to greet staff and visitors with the bright Christmas celebration.

In Athens, a large-scale festival "Ukrainian Christmas" was held.

13. Italy. “Ukrainian Christmas Festival in Caserta Unites Diaspora in Italy,” *Mezha.net*, 6 January 2026.

As reported by Facebook page of Fr. Ihor Danilchuk, the pastor of the Ukrainian parish of the Holy Trinity in the city of Caserta, with reference to the Communications Department of the Apostolic Exarchate.

On Sunday, January 11, Caserta will become the center of Ukrainian Christmas traditions in southern Italy: the Apostolic Exarchate for Ukrainians in Italy is organizing the traditional Festival of Nativity Scenes and Carols, which will unite the region’s diaspora.

Fr. Ihor Danilychuk, the pastor of the Holy Trinity Parish in Caserta, announced this on social media, citing the Apostolic Exarchate’s Communications Department.

The celebration will begin with a joyful procession and will end with a solemn gala concert. The organizers have also released the schedule of events:

Festival Program and Location

- 11:00 – Christmas Parade: participants in traditional costumes will walk the main streets of Caserta with nativity scenes and songs; the gathering will take place in the courtyard of the Salesian Fathers near the Don Bosco Theatre.
- 12:30 – Hierarchical Divine Liturgy: the service at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Heart of Mary will be presided by His Grace Bishop Hryhoriy Komar, with the participation of priests of the Neapolitan deanery.
- 13:30 – Shared Meal: a festive lunch for participants and guests.
- 14:00–20:00 – Arts segment: on the Don Bosco Theatre stage, nativity scenes, Malanka performances, choirs and vocal ensembles will perform, including soloists, duets and quartets, showcasing the richness of Ukrainian folklore.

The main events are located at: Via Roma, 73, 81100 Caserta, where the Cathedral of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Don Bosco Theatre are located. Organizers expect to share more detailed information.

These events highlight the active participation of the Ukrainian diaspora in Italy’s cultural life and strengthen the bonds between Ukrainian communities abroad.

We also recall that earlier the northern city of Ferrara in Italy became a hub of Ukrainian Christmas traditions: there, the II Festival of Ukrainian Living Nativity Scenes was held, bringing together communities from several towns and becoming a symbol of Ukrainians’ unity abroad.

Such events enrich the cultural dialogue between Ukrainians and residents of southern Italy and strengthen the festive spirit in society.

14. Jordan. “Ukrainian Diaspora Unites in Jordan at Final Unique Project Meeting,” *Mezha.net*, 23 December 2025.

As noted on the Facebook page of the project ‘Nepovtorni’

In Amman, at the premises of the Embassy of Ukraine in Jordan, on December 22, the final meeting of the Unrepeatables community members took place, summarizing the completion of the homonymous information and communications project.

The Embassy of Ukraine in Jordan reported details of the event, highlighting the initiative’s significance for the Ukrainian diaspora in the country.

The “Unrepeatables” project was initiated by activist Oksana Lavrenchuk and gathered about fifty Ukrainian women who live permanently in Jordan.

Over two years, weekly interviews appeared on the corresponding YouTube channel: participants shared life stories in Ukraine and in Jordan, remembered their hometowns that had suffered from Russian aggression, and opened up about traumatic experiences related to the war.

Such stories proved a valuable tool for disseminating objective information about events in Ukraine among the local Jordanian audience and helped people better imagine the scale of the aggression.

Event outcomes and the project’s impact

The project head, Oksana Lavrenchuk, expressed gratitude to the participants for their honesty and engagement. She stressed that, in the face of the ongoing war, unifying the Ukrainian diaspora is extremely important.

The participants of the creative center discussed ways to promote Ukrainian culture in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, ways to strengthen ties within the diaspora, and further steps to support Ukraine on the information front.

It should be noted that the event took place against the backdrop of global events and served as a reminder of the close cultural and humanitarian ties between the Ukrainian community and Jordan.

The Unrepeatables project became an example of successful self-organization and significantly increased the active participation of the Ukrainian diaspora in Jordan, becoming a platform for bringing people together and exchanging experiences.

15. Norway. “The Number of Ukrainians Employed in Norway Continues to Increase,” *Nordic Daily*, 5 January 2026.

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Oslo, Norway: The number of Ukrainians employed in Norway continues to increase. Nearly 27,000 Ukrainians who arrived after the full-scale invasion are now employed, a clear increase from 2024. New figures from Statistics Norway show that both counties and municipalities across the country are succeeding in getting more people into the workforce. Ukrainian displaced persons are offered an introductory program and Norwegian language training in the municipality where they are resettled. In 2024, the government tightened the requirements for work placement in the introductory program, and the experiences have been good.

Several counties stand out with high shares of employed Ukrainians. Troms is at the top with over 51 percent, closely followed by Nordland with over 46 percent. Buskerud, Finnmark and Møre og Romsdal also have high shares. A number of municipalities have a particularly high proportion of Ukrainians in employment. The ten municipalities with the highest employment rates are all above 70 percent.

16. Poland/Eastern Europe. “Eastern Europe Ukrainians Forum Unites Diaspora for Stronger Future,” *Mezha.net*, 15 December 2025.

As reported on the World Congress of Ukrainians (WCU) website

In the Polish city of Przemyśl, December 12–14, the Forum of Ukrainians of Eastern Europe took place – the first large-scale gathering bringing together representatives of Ukrainian communities from thirteen countries, including the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

According to the World Congress of Ukrainians, the event served as a platform for discussing the future of the Ukrainian diaspora and strengthening the Ukrainian voice on the international stage.

Key Milestones of the Forum

«The Forum became a joint space of action for Ukraine’s victory, its European future, and the strengthening of unity and cooperation among Ukrainian communities of Eastern Europe» – Pavlo Grod, President of the World Congress of Ukrainians (WCU)

Over the three days in Przemyśl, participation was taken by senior officials from Ukraine and Poland, diplomatic personnel, prominent public figures, activists, military personnel, spiritual and educational leaders, as well as leaders of the region’s Ukrainian communities.

Participants discussed the key challenges faced by Ukrainians amid Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, shared practical experience, and launched new initiatives aimed at strengthening Ukraine’s voice at the international level.

The forum brought together communities from the WCU and ECU networks, as well as

representatives of patriotic Ukrainian organizations and associations operating in Eastern European countries who share the common values of freedom, democracy, and Ukraine's European choice.

The forum program included plenary sessions, roundtables, group discussions and presentations of practical solutions. The main discussions focused on international advocacy, countering disinformation, youth development and education, affirming spiritual values, preserving Ukrainian identity, and strengthening the Ukrainian presence in the region.

Participants outlined new formats of partnership, interaction and co-creation that enable strengthening Ukrainian agency in Eastern Europe and laying the foundations for sustainable development of cooperation between the state and civil society.

Participants paid significant attention to the role of Ukrainian communities in Eastern Europe, new forms of self-organization among indigenous, migrant and refugee communities, political participation and leadership, challenges of integration and preserving identity, and opportunities for interregional cooperation.

An important part of the discussions was the question of partnership between European Ukrainians and Ukraine, joint action on the path to EU and NATO membership, advocacy as a tool of political influence, and education as a strategic investment in the future of the Ukrainian community.

One of the main topics was the development of Ukrainian schooling abroad, preserving the linguistic identity of younger generations and modern educational programs for Ukrainians outside Ukraine.

A separate focus of the forum was devoted to the role of youth as a driving force of the Ukrainian movement abroad. The discussions covered political and patriotic education of young leaders, shaping values through culture and spirituality, new formats of youth leadership and cooperation and the integration of youth into regional and international institutions of the Ukrainian world.

«The Forum in Przemyśl confirmed the readiness of the Ukrainian communities of Eastern Europe for joint, coordinated action and was an important step towards strengthening a united, strong and European future of Ukraine» – President of the World Congress of Ukrainians (WCU)

The Forum of Ukrainians of Eastern Europe took place on the initiative of the World Congress of Ukrainians in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, ECU, the Union of Ukrainians in Poland, the Ukrainian House in Przemyśl, and the International Institute of Education, Culture and Diaspora Relations of Lviv Polytechnic.

According to the organizers, the forum officially opened in Przemyśl and gathered community

representatives from thirteen countries who will chart the future course of the Ukrainian community abroad.

17. Serbia. “Fifth Ukrainian Christmas Songs Festival Celebrates Diaspora Culture in Serbia,” *Mezha.net*, 7 January 2026.

As reported on Facebook, the European Congress of Ukrainians (EKU)

In the city of Sremska Mitrovica, the fifth annual Ukrainian Christmas carol festival was held. The event took place at the Greek-Catholic Church of the Ascension of the Lord and became an important element in preserving Ukrainian identity among the diaspora in Serbia.

The organizer of the festival is the Society for the Cultivation of Ukrainian Culture (SPUC) “Kolomyika,” which traditionally draws talented ensembles and choirs from various Ukrainian centers across the region.

On the stage of the Ascension Church, leading ensembles and choirs of the Ukrainian community from different corners of Serbia performed: CUK “Kobzar” (Novi Sad), the church choir of the Church of the Holy Trinity (Sabac), KMT named after Ivan Senyuk (Kula), KPT “Carpathians” (Verbas), Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, KPT named after Ivan Kotliarevsky (Bikyeh-Do) and the hosts of the festival – SPUC “Kolomyika” (Sremska Mitrovica).

Features of the festival and participants

As part of the event, the preservation of Ukrainian folk songs is celebrated, with carols forming a particularly prominent part of the repertoire. Their tradition has been passed down from generation to generation as a living link to the language, faith, and identity of the community.

The festival underscores the importance of cultural initiatives for the Serbian diaspora and helps preserve the richness of Ukrainian song heritage among both youth and adults.

18. Slovakia. “Ukraine Opens General Consulate in Prešov Strengthening Diplomatic Ties,” *Mezha.net*, 5 December 2025.

As reported by Ministry of Foreign Affairs

On December 5, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sibiga visited Slovakia for the ceremonial opening of the General Consulate of Ukraine in the city of Prešov.

Official opening was confirmed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and took place with the participation of the heads of Prešov and Košice, the Prešov and Košice self-governing regions, the Ukrainian community in Slovakia, as well as Slovakia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs Juraj Blunar.

“I am proud that the Ukrainian flag flies over me in Prešov, in this wonderful city. It is a symbol and pledge of friendship between our peoples” – Andriy Sibiga

After the ceremonies, the minister met with the Ukrainian community, participated in the opening of the Saturday school “Ukrainian Studies of Prešov” and solemnly unveiled a memorial plaque in honor of the renowned Ukrainian philosopher, poet, and educator Hryhoriy Skovoroda.

“Many of them stayed here, on our lands, and we have always been ready to help them” – Juraj Blanar

Key highlights of the opening of the General Consulate of Ukraine in Prešov

The General Consulate of Ukraine in Prešov will soon provide a full range of consular services to Ukrainian citizens within its consular district, which covers the territory of the Prešov and Košice self-governing regions.

While in Prešov, Andriy Sibiga also met with the Ukrainian community, participated in the opening of the Saturday School “Ukrainian Studies of Prešov” and solemnly opened a memorial plaque in honor of Hryhoriy Skovoroda, the renowned Ukrainian philosopher, poet and educator.

The opening of the new institution focused on further strengthening friendly relations between Ukraine and Slovakia and supporting the Ukrainian diaspora on Slovak soil.

The opening of the General Consulate became an important step in expanding opportunities for interaction and providing high-quality service for Ukrainians abroad.

19. Spain. “Ukrainian Associations Congress in Spain 2026 Unites Diaspora for Democracy and Unity,” *Mezha.net*, 6 January 2026.

As reported by Ukrinform, the information is taken from the KRAI website

In Murcia on January 24–25, a large Congress of Ukrainian associations in Spain (KRAI) will take place under the slogan “Ukrainian Horizon: Democracy and Unity in Action.” The event promises to become an important platform for consolidating the efforts of the Ukrainian diaspora.

The format of the event foresees bringing together representatives of the diplomatic corps, public associations, business structures, and institutions with the aim of jointly shaping strategies for the development of the Ukrainian community in Spain and outlining ways to support the rebuilding of Ukraine.

Among the main topics are: the integration of Ukrainians into Spanish society, preserving national identity, strengthening diaspora networks, advocacy of Ukraine’s interests, coordination of humanitarian initiatives, support for the frontline, and deepening ties between Ukraine, Spain, and the EU.

Key Aspects of the Event and Participation

For Ukrainian associations in Spain, the congress will serve as a platform to present their own initiatives, exchange experiences, and establish new partnerships, which will increase the visibility of Ukrainian projects on the international stage.

“The Congress is a unique opportunity to strengthen our unity and create new directions of cooperation that empower our diaspora” – Organizers

Participation in the KRAI 2026 Congress is possible upon prior registration.

Earlier, in 2025, in Pamplona, the II Congress of Ukrainian Associations in Spain “KRAI” with the motto “Alliance for Ukraine’s Future,” brought together about 30 associations and more than 120 participants from across Spain.

20. Spain. “Las asociaciones de ucranianos en España luchan por la integración local y contra el olvido de la invasión” [Ukrainian Associations in Spain Push for Local Integration and Against Forgetting the Invasion], *Lamarea.com*, 18 December 2025.

Fermín Grodira

Febrero de 2022 es un mes que ningún ucraniano olvidará. La invasión total de Rusia, tras anexionarse de forma ilegal Crimea y apoyar a los separatistas prorrusos en el este del país en 2014, marcó de por vida a sus habitantes, no solo a aquellos que viven en las zonas más cercanas al antiguo imperio. Algunos recalaron en España. El número de empadronados en el país subió de 110.977 a 1 de enero de 2022 a 199.200 a 1 de junio de 2022, según el Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE).

Antes de la guerra, la mayoría vivían en Madrid, Barcelona, Alicante, Málaga, València y Murcia. La provincia que más población ucraniana ha acogido desde 2022 ha sido Alicante. A raíz del conflicto bélico total, en Galicia un grupo de españoles y ucranianos fundó la Asociación Gallega de Ayuda a Ucrania, con sede en A Coruña. Con 615 socios, según indican a La Marea, han lanzado el proyecto ‘Apoyo integral a ucranianos’, que incluye acceso a terapia psicológica con terapeutas de origen ucraniano para evitar la barrera lingüística, clases de castellano con profesoras nativas ucranianas y orientación laboral y administrativa.

Esta asociación destina el 90% de su presupuesto y “esfuerzo para ayudar en territorio ucraniano”. Se centran en dar asistencia sanitaria como comprar audífonos, una necesidad creciente por la pérdida auditiva causada por las bombas y misiles. La Diputación de A Coruña les otorgó 100.000 euros para equipamiento médico destinado a un centro de sangre en Odesa, una de las ciudades más afectadas por la guerra y puerto esencial en el esfuerzo bélico. Desde Galicia también mandan camiones con conservas, ropa nueva térmica y ropa para niños. Llevan un total de 34 vehículos enviados a Ucrania, según indica la organización.

El dinero que gestiona la Asociación Gallega de Ayuda a Ucrania viene principalmente de capital privado por donaciones directas o a través de cenas y conciertos benéficos. También ingresan por cuotas de socios, además de “algo muy residual de dinero público mediante

convenios nominativos”, aclaran. Denuncian que Ucrania no está en la lista de países principales de los planes directores de cooperación al desarrollo, sino que queda limitado a emergencia humanitaria, lo que reduce el acceso a convocatorias públicas.

Para mantener el vínculo de los menores con su país natal, la asociación gallega organiza espectáculos en su idioma natal para mantener “las tradiciones y el folklore”. La prioridad es que sus madres aprenden la lengua local porque es la clave para “su incorporación al mercado laboral”. Ellas son quienes más sufren a nivel psicológico en su nueva casa. “Muchas madres no logran encajar del todo por la barrera del idioma, y la convalidación de títulos profesionales es lenta y complicada. Las oportunidades laborales quedan reducidas casi siempre a trabajos precarios, mientras que el acceso a una vivienda digna se ha convertido en una auténtica odisea”, añaden.

“La situación se ha vuelto muy difícil después de más de tres años. Los ucranianos no terminan de estar plenamente integrados en España, pero tampoco pueden volver a su país. El acogimiento inicial de 2022 fue muy generoso, pero ahora los dramas se concentran en el día a día”, concluye la asociación: “Es una situación muy dura que no debemos dejar de visibilizar»”.

Antes de la guerra

Otras asociaciones son previas a la agresión rusa. En 2007 nació la Asociación de Ucranianos de Cantabria (Oberig) con el objetivo de ayudar a ciudadanos de la antigua Unión Soviética a adaptarse a su nuevo hogar. Los datos recogidos en la página web de la Embajada de Ucrania en España contabilizaban 26 asociaciones en 2012. La presidenta de Oberig, Mariya Kurnytska, indica a La Marea que en España hay ya más de 50 grupos o asociaciones ucranianas, 31 de las cuales están registradas en la embajada.

La llegada de la crisis económica de 2008 cambió la función de Oberig. Entonces pasó a ayudar en el regreso y adaptación de los ucranianos que volvieron a su país. Su función fue asistirles en la búsqueda de trabajo y en facilitar que sus hijos se adaptasen a ir al colegio en un nuevo idioma: el ucraniano o ruso. Pero la violencia desatada tras el Euromaidán y la guerra soterrada de Rusia desde 2014 cambió el sentido migratorio de la población ucraniana. Y por tanto, la ayuda que ofrecen desde entonces.

[Translation into English follows – S.C.]:

By Fermín Grodira

February 2022 is a month no Ukrainian will forget. Russia’s full-scale invasion, following the illegal annexation of Crimea and its support for pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine in 2014, left a lasting mark on the country’s population—not only on those living closest to the former empire. Some Ukrainians settled in Spain. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the number of registered Ukrainians in the country rose from 110,977 on 1 January 2022, to 199,200 on 1 June 2022.

Before the war, most Ukrainians in Spain lived in Madrid, Barcelona, Alicante, Málaga, Valencia, and Murcia, with Alicante becoming the province that has taken in the largest Ukrainian population since 2022. Following the outbreak of the full-scale war, a group of Spaniards and Ukrainians in Galicia founded the Asociación Gallega de Ayuda a Ucrania, based in A Coruña. With 615 members, as reported to *La Marea*, the association launched the project “Apoyo integral a ucranianos,” which includes psychological therapy with therapists of Ukrainian origin to overcome language barriers, Spanish classes taught by native Ukrainian teachers, and job and administrative guidance.

The association devotes 90% of its budget and “efforts to providing aid in Ukraine.” Its work focuses largely on healthcare, including the purchase of hearing aids—a growing need due to hearing loss caused by bombs and missiles. The A Coruña Provincial Council granted the organization €100,000 for medical equipment for a blood bank in Odesa, one of the cities most affected by the conflict and a key port in Ukraine’s war effort. From Galicia, the association has also sent trucks carrying canned goods, new thermal clothing, and children’s clothes. According to the organization, a total of 34 vehicles has been sent to Ukraine.

The funds managed by the Asociación Gallega de Ayuda a Ucrania come primarily from private donations, either directly or through benefit dinners and concerts. The group also receives income from membership fees, as well as “a very small amount of public money through normative agreements,” they explain. They denounce the fact that Ukraine is not included among the priority countries in development cooperation master plans and is instead limited to humanitarian emergency frameworks, which restricts access to public funding opportunities.

To maintain children’s connection with their country of birth, the Galician association organizes performances in their native language to preserve “traditions and folklore.” At the same time, the association prioritizes helping mothers learn the local language, as it is key to “their integration into the job market.” The mothers are those who suffer the most psychologically in their new environment. “Many mothers struggle to fully integrate due to language barriers, and the validation of professional qualifications is slow and complicated. Job opportunities are almost always limited to precarious work, while access to decent housing has become a real ordeal,” they add.

“The situation has become very difficult after more than three years. Ukrainians are not yet fully integrated into Spanish society, but they also cannot return to their country. The initial welcome in 2022 was very generous, but now the hardships are concentrated in their daily lives,” the association concludes. “It is a very difficult situation that we must not stop bringing to light.”

Before the war

Other associations predate Russia’s aggression. In 2007, the Asociación de Ucranianos de Cantabria (Oberig) was founded with the aim of helping citizens of the former Soviet Union adapt to their new home. According to data collected on the website of the Ukrainian Embassy in Spain, there were 26 such associations in 2012. The president of Oberig, Mariya Kurnytska, tells *La Marea* that there are now more than 50 Ukrainian groups or associations in Spain, 31 of which are registered with the embassy.

The arrival of the 2008 economic crisis changed Oberig's role. The association began assisting Ukrainians returning to their country with reintegration and readjustment, helping them find work and supporting their children's transition into schools where the language of instruction was Ukrainian or Russian. However, the violence unleashed after the Euromaidan protests and Russia's covert war since 2014 altered migration patterns within the Ukrainian population and, therefore, the type of assistance these associations have provided ever since.

21. United Kingdom. "Cultural Impact of Ukrainians Who Sought Refuge in Scotland to Be Celebrated," *National*, 8 November 2025.

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By Nan Spowart

A SPECIAL event is to be held at the Scottish Parliament this week to celebrate how Ukrainians are enriching the cultural life of Scotland.

The first event of its kind it will showcase how Ukrainians who have sought refuge in Scotland from the Russian invasion of their country are contributing to Scottish life.

The Light We Share will weave together exhibitions, moving testimonies and performances.

"As a Ukrainian living in Scotland, this event is deeply personal," said Zhenya Dove, chair of the Culture Working Group in the Cross Party Group on Ukraine.

"We want to show that creativity can survive even the hardest journeys – that it can become a way to heal, to connect and to find belonging.

"It's a thank you to Scotland for its warm welcome and a celebration of the incredible talent Ukrainians brought here. Through every painting, film, song, and gesture, we're saying – we are still here, and we are building beauty from everything we carried."

The event is being sponsored by SNP MSP Colin Beattie who said it was an "honour".

"This landmark event gives the Parliament an opportunity to celebrate how Ukrainians are now enriching the cultural life of Scotland," he said.

Among those who will be present at the event is Polina Moshenska (below), an independent Ukrainian filmmaker based in Edinburgh, whose work features at international festivals.

Her notable recent film, *Re-creations*, delves into the experiences of the Ukrainian diaspora and the emotional struggles of young Ukrainian women living abroad during the war. It is described as an intimate exploration of identity, resilience and the search for belonging far from home.

Alongside her, Viktoria Bavykina, a Ukrainian curator, art critic, and sociologist of culture, brings her expertise in contemporary Ukrainian photography and political art to Scotland.

A co-founder of Ukrainian Photographies and co-curator of the Ukrainian National Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale, she is now continuing her research as a British Council Fellow at the University of Edinburgh's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. Her work aims to build bridges between Scottish and Ukrainian photographic cultures.

In Wishaw, Kateryna Tsyvunova's Tunnel of Friendship mural has transformed a grey pedestrian passage into a 16-metre celebration of unity, painted collaboratively by Ukrainians and Scots. What began as a gesture of gratitude has become a popular landmark and a permanent testament to shared humanity.

In the far north, Alona Patliarska has been making waves on Orkney's art scene. Her award-winning short film, *Savage Song*, and her striking paintings have earned her international acclaim while inspiring her peers with her creativity and vision.

Around 30 Ukrainian students have joined the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland since the start of the latest Russian invasion of their country in 2023 and on Wednesday at the Parliament they will perform their interdisciplinary project *Culture Code*, a fusion of music and visual art.

The Abandoned Artists collective, another key participant on Wednesday, provides a vital platform for displaced Ukrainian creatives to rebuild, collaborate and share their voices within Scotland's thriving contemporary art scene.

Among the artists and creators who have built new lives in Scotland is Oleksandra Novatska (pictured), an artist, curator, and educator whose contemporary botanical art bridges nature and culture.

Since arriving in Scotland, Oleksandra has held solo exhibitions, joined national group shows and developed her own art courses.

In the world of fashion, Valeriya Semchuk has brought a distinctly Ukrainian sensibility to Scotland through her sustainable label *Selera*. Founded in 2020 in Ukraine and now rooted here, Scotland's landscapes have deeply influenced her vision and her latest collection, *SE TO BE*, is inspired by the colours and textures around her.

Visual art is also serving as a link between communities. Natalia Babych, a ceramic artist working in porcelain, has rebuilt her creative practice in Edinburgh, exhibiting at Leith Makers Gallery and Custom House while offering workshops that unite Ukrainian and Scottish makers.

Olha Nosova-Yeliseeva, founder of Olya Kivlin *CONCEPT* and an art educator with Perth and Kinross Council, leads clay workshops aimed at fostering creativity, inclusion and connection among locals and newly arrived Ukrainians.

The upcoming Parliament showcase follows on from *The Weight We Carried*, an exhibition by the Museum of Ukrainian Craft and Culture Scotland (MUCCS).

The exhibition told the stories of Ukrainians forced to relocate to Scotland through the deeply

significant objects they chose to carry with them – small fragments of home that hold the weight of memory, identity and love.

22. USA. “Why Gathering Matters for the Ukrainian Diaspora and Supporters of Ukraine,” *Kyiv Post*, 27 December 2025.

The Ukraine Action Summit (UAS) hosted a large event that brought together much of the diaspora and the broader community, highlighting the need for more spaces that allow these connections to form.

By David Kirichenko

October hosted the seventh Ukraine Action Summit (UAS), where supporters across America came together to advocate for Ukraine. While I did not attend this time, I have attended two prior summits. In covering the diaspora and its diversity, I’ve come to understand that the real value of events like the UAS isn’t only the advocacy, important as it is, but the relationships formed. Those connections can open unexpected doors.

At the UAS in April 2025, I received a text message from a friend urging me to drop what I was doing and go to dinner. “It’s important you meet these people,” they said. I finished my advocacy meeting and went to meet the individuals they spoke so highly of. What followed was a brief 15-minute meeting with the Dignitas team, including Lyuba Shipovich, the co-founder and CEO. We talked, got a sense of each other, and she told me that once I came to Ukraine, I should let her know so she could organize a trip for me to the front to meet units working on ground robotics.

A few months later, as I planned my frontline reporting, I reached out to Shipovich. I arrived in Kyiv after a sleepless night of Russian bombardments. The next morning, we left for the front, and over the following week I met with various robotics units and observed several frontline missions that became central to my reporting.

A consistent theme emerged in conversations with commanders: they wished they had more soldiers to send to the drone training centers run by Dignitas.

After finishing the robotics work, I arranged to embed with a drone unit through contacts in a territorial brigade. Shipovich was worried about me embedding with a unit that might be under-equipped and urged me to go with a better-supported brigade. She connected me with a commander from the 110th Separate Mechanized Brigade.

Within days, I was sitting in a dugout on the frontline, being told to prepare for imminent glide bombs and a major Russian assault on our position. I was able to bring a friend, Ryan Van Ert, a filmmaker from Los Angeles, who later said it was the first time he felt “true fear.” Shortly after we were dropped off, our driver narrowly escaped a Russian drone ambush. In the months that followed, that same driver was killed in action.

I still struggle to put the experience into words. Among the embedded drone missions I’ve done

over the years, this one felt like standing at the world's edge. Ruslan Tsarenok of the 27th Brigade of the National Guard of Ukraine told me that addressing what is happening in the war matters. "I hope this will gain attention," he said. "I hope people will start to understand and speak about it."

Perhaps my experience would have been different had I not met Shipovich at the summit and embedded with another unit. Had I embedded myself with a lesser-equipped unit on the front, my body might be lying in a field in Donetsk Oblast.

In any case, I wouldn't have gained such deep exposure to frontline robotics or been able to report on it to audiences in the West.

All of this speaks to the value the UAS brings by hosting a large event that brings together much of the diaspora and the broader community, and highlights the need for more spaces that allow these connections to form.

In Washington State, the opening of a local cultural center sparked a rush of events and gave Ukrainian organizations a long-awaited place to gather, something that had not existed before, despite the state having one of the largest Ukrainian diasporas in the country. It showed how quickly momentum can build once there is a physical space for people to meet, organize, and imagine new possibilities together.

These gatherings also draw a much wider circle than Ukrainians alone. The UAS brings together both members of the diaspora and Americans with no personal ties to Ukraine who nonetheless feel invested in defending the values Ukrainians are fighting for. It is a broad coalition – Ukrainians by blood and Ukrainians by choice – bound together by shared principles rather than ancestry.

Why advocacy matters

The UAS also gives people with no prior advocacy experience a clear way to get involved. Andrew Fylypovych, a delegate from Pennsylvania who has attended nearly every Summit, said the value goes far beyond policy. "The summits bring together disparate groups from the diaspora and people from the general community. This creates a great opportunity to learn from each other as well as to get mutual support. Nothing is better than knowing you are not alone," he told me. "And being in DC does keep the pressure up, however small, on the powers that be."

Eddie Priymak, a delegate from Washington State and a Ukrainian American Protestant, told me earlier: "The more active the diaspora, the greater the possibility of influencing our politicians. This was just one summit, but a continued effort by the diaspora can play an important role in helping Ukraine."

Stephanie Dowbusz, a Texas-based organizer, said that while "phone calls are important," meeting lawmakers in person "has a bigger impact." That work does not happen in isolation.

Jacqueline Colgan, a delegate from New Jersey, echoed that point. "While we all can, and

should, be reaching out to our elected officials regularly to express our desire that the US continue to support Ukraine, it is very impactful to show up, en masse, in DC, all at one time, to make both our presence seen and our voices heard,” she told me. American veterans and Gold Star Families have also advocated at the summit.

Maria Marini, an American Coalition for Ukraine (ACU) delegate from Houston, told me the challenge is uneven capacity across the country. “Since 2022, we’ve been working on an emergency timeline, and that’s meant we haven’t always had the time to cultivate our communities the way we could,” she said.

“In places like Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, California, and Washington State, the diaspora is concentrated, but in much of the South there often isn’t a critical mass of Ukrainian institutions with enough weight to bring people together.”

She added that one priority for the ACU now is “building advocacy capacity in those regions, not just relying on individual delegates who show up to the Summit, but creating the infrastructure that allows Ukrainians and Ukraine supporters to organize year-round.”

Oleksii Plastun, a professor at Sumy State University, stressed that diaspora engagement carries unique weight in Washington. “It is hard to overestimate this importance,” he told me. “Voices from within the US, especially from the Ukrainian diaspora, may have far greater impact.”

Multiple organizations now form the backbone of this advocacy network. Nova Ukraine is one of the founding organizations behind the Ukraine Action Summits, helping turn them into the largest coordinated advocacy effort in the Ukrainian diaspora.

Igor L. Markov, a board member of the organization, said, “Nova Ukraine’s volunteers have been involved in advancing every Ukraine aid bill passed by the US Congress since 2022. Our coordinated advocacy helped secure passage of major military and fiscal support packages, including H.R. 8035 and H.R. 8038.”

He noted that “the Spring 2025 Summit alone brought together more than 600 advocates who held over 440 congressional meetings, contributing to additional co-sponsors on key legislation.” In his view, “the Ukraine Action Summits have been among the most impactful diaspora-led advocacy events organized in recent years.”

Mykola Murskyj, a director of advocacy at Razom, said the organization works closely with civil society partners and is one of the lead sponsors of the upcoming Ukraine Action Summit. “Our policy experts have worked with the American Coalition for Ukraine to identify the most impactful legislation that hundreds of Americans will advocate for when they come to Washington,” he told me.

Policy experts note that the summits carry weight beyond the diaspora community itself. Katerina Sedova, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, said the summits reveal the scale of grassroots engagement across the country.

“These events show Congress just how much bipartisan support for Ukraine still exists among their constituents,” she told me. “As a result of the summits, representatives sign on as co-sponsors to key legislation, express public support, and work across the aisle to get vital bills passed.”

Delegates, she added, often become “go-to expert voices” for congressional staff, building long-term relationships that strengthen US-Ukraine policy over time.

The network built around the Summits now extends into adjacent policy efforts. Bill Cole of the Peace Through Strength Institute, who has been active at recent Summits, has worked to advance US-Ukraine cooperation on unmanned and autonomous systems – one of several advocacy initiatives that have grown out of relationships formed at the UAS.

Eugene Goncharov, Policy Lead for the ACU, stated that important efforts are also conducted outside the Summits. “Our goal is not just to meet with congressional offices twice a year, but to develop a relationship and understanding with them that improves over time,” he told me.

“Summits are great, but communication with offices continues year-round. After each Summit we review how the meetings went, then hold calls with each state to discuss impressions and next steps,” said Goncharov. “Those steps vary by district and by the strength of existing relationships.”

Goncharov added, “The ACU provides updated priorities, talking points, and recommendations, answers questions, and when needed steps in to manage conversations with offices, especially on legislative specifics or coordination across states.”

But these networks are shaping more than policy outcomes.

The need for structure

The need for these gathering spaces goes beyond political advocacy; they have also begun to reshape how Ukraine is understood in the United States, after decades in which American academia and policy institutions framed Ukraine primarily through Moscow.

“Recent events have helped produce a better understanding of Ukraine, and the irony is that the public at large has a better understanding than many politicians and journalists,” said Oleh Wolowyna, director of the Center for Demographic and Socio-Economic Research of Ukrainians in the US at the Shevchenko Scientific Society in New York.

Benjamin Maracek, a social studies teacher and volunteer English instructor at Balakun, said decades of scholarship left a deep imprint on how Ukraine is still understood in the United States. “Much of the foreign policy community has an innate Russian bias,” he told me. “They never get beyond seeing Ukraine and Belarus as ‘parts’ of imperial Russia.”

Maracek added many Americans only began “discovering” Ukraine after 2022. “For years, Western media framed the conflict in the Donbas as a ‘civil war,’ not what it was: Russian

imperialism,” he told me. “That old Russo-centric viewpoint still shapes how policy makers and educational institutions inform the American public.”

This mindset was reinforced by an oversimplified narrative dividing a “Russian-speaking East” from a “Ukrainian-speaking West,” a frame that felt familiar to Americans but flattened Ukraine’s far more complex social and historical landscape, Maracek noted.

Those outdated frameworks also make the public more vulnerable to manipulation. Plastun noted that Russian disinformation continues to distort the public narrative. “The narrative is being deliberately distorted by Russia. Strengthening public understanding of the basic facts is essential,” he said. “Countering this influence requires more visibility for Ukrainians, Europeans, and independent experts who can present the real picture rather than propaganda narratives.”

Some of that advocacy has also found traction among Republican lawmakers. Maracek told me that groups have made gains by highlighting Russia’s attacks on Christian communities in occupied regions and the abduction of Ukrainian children. He noted that figures like Pastor Mark Burns, one of former President Trump’s spiritual advisers, have become “a valuable asset to Ukraine’s cause” in conservative circles.

With each successive generation, the emotional connection to the “homeland” inevitably weakens unless it is actively cultivated.

Where to go from here

But the key question is what happens after the Summit. How much infrastructure exists to help supporters of Ukraine keep their advocacy efforts going year-round? One individual I interviewed, who has attended nearly every Summit, told me that each gathering has become more professional, with far greater investment in media and public messaging.

Their concern, however, is whether comparable investment is being made in the infrastructure that supports diaspora groups and their American allies after the Summit ends – and how to sustain that momentum once everyone returns home.

“This is what I tell delegates: ‘We are here to cultivate relationships. ACU mostly serves to collect constituents and zip codes. The constituents have the power that the NGOs don’t,’” said Marini.

Organizations can provide resources from a distance, but without formal organizing points, local efforts struggle to gain momentum.

In Washington State, some churches have often stepped into this role by necessity rather than design. The Council of Ukrainian Christian Churches of Washington State was formed to coordinate support for refugees, assist with integration into American civic life, and amplify advocacy efforts aimed at both state and federal officials.

As Dr. Maksym Vasin, the council’s executive secretary, put it: “Support from the United States

is crucial for Ukraine, not only in the political and military spheres, but also at the level of public opinion within American society.”

Alexander Romanishyn, a former deputy minister of economy of Ukraine and a board member of the ISE Group think tank, argues that advocacy succeeds or fails based on the strength of local institutions. “In many Ukrainian communities, churches remain the strongest anchor institution, not only for religious life, but as trusted hubs where people meet, organize, and share resources,” Romanishyn said.

But Romanishyn stressed that economic and civic engagement accelerates only when communities develop additional, non-religious gathering points like cultural centers, Ukrainian schools, community spaces, and grassroots NGOs that organize people outside church life.

He added that business-focused institutions matter just as much. Chambers of commerce, professional networks, and startup accelerators provide what he called the “practical glue” of diaspora life: mentorship, introductions, first customers, hiring pipelines, and access to capital. Initiatives such as Ukrainian Valley in California or the ISE Accelerator, which helps Ukrainian startups enter the US market through trade missions and networking, show how diaspora engagement can move from symbolism to sustained capacity.

In Washington State, one of the country’s largest Ukrainian diasporas, there had been no secular Ukrainian-language school for decades, and still no real authentic Ukrainian restaurants. The proportion of Ukrainian refugees coming to Washington, compared to other states, has increased year over year, with the state absorbing the most refugees.

This local effort also reflects how political realities shape diaspora engagement. Adam Smith, then chair of the House Armed Services Committee and the region’s most influential member of Congress, said in a 2024 Foreign Policy interview that Ukraine should essentially be given only enough support to stay alive and negotiate. It raised an uncomfortable question for many in Washington State’s Ukrainian community: What impact had the local diaspora really had on its own representative?

A similar dynamic surfaced in Ohio during the 2022 Senate race involving JD Vance. Several outlets asked whether the Ukrainian community there might be decisive in preventing his election. Before the vote, Politico wrote that “Ukrainian Americans are an important bloc of voters in Ohio, whose Senate race this year could help decide which party controls the chamber.”

Vance would go on to win by a wide margin.

The picture is different in places where Ukrainian communities are newer or less organized. In Kentucky, the state’s first Ukrainian restaurant opened only this August. I have more than a dozen cousins living there who are Protestants, yet their local churches are not engaged in any advocacy efforts.

That gap is striking, given that Kentucky has well over 10,000 Ukrainian Americans and several members of its congressional delegation hold positions that are damaging for Ukraine. With

Mitch McConnell stepping down next year – a rare Republican voice who consistently supported Ukraine and warned that Putin had been “playing Trump for a fool” – the stakes are even higher.

Vance took to X to respond to McConnell’s comments, writing: “This is a ridiculous attack on the president’s team, which has worked tirelessly to clean up the mess in Ukraine that Mitch – always eager to write blank checks to Biden’s foreign policy – left us.”

He then asked whether any of the three Republican candidates running to replace McConnell “share his views here.” US House Rep Thomas Massie from Kentucky, followed up on the post, writing: “As you know, @realDonaldTrump has endorsed a neocon for US Congress in KY-4 who wants to escalate the war in Ukraine.” Massie also recently introduced HR 6508, “to end our NATO membership.”

There is a lot of potential there, but without any organized effort, it isn’t being used.

Lukian Selskyi, editor-in-chief of Vilni Media, wrote: “Yet all of that colossal energy still refuses to convert into our own senators, governors, or even mayors of big and small cities.”

The contrast is sharp when compared with regions where Ukrainian communities have deeper roots. However, political policies are much stronger in places where Ukrainian communities have existed since before World War II, such as Chicago and New York. In those regions, there are long-established institutions, cultural centers, restaurants, schools, and networks that make advocacy easier to sustain. But in many other states, especially those shaped by recent waves of immigration, that infrastructure is still missing.

More restaurants, cultural centers, community hubs, and year-round organizing spaces are needed. Foundations have to be built not just for advocacy but for community life itself. Without that, the diaspora’s energy risks fading once people leave Washington, DC and return to their daily lives. There is also a case to be had for churches to get more involved in advocacy as well.

And that is the real lesson of the Ukraine Action Summits. Advocacy matters. Showing up in Washington matters. But none of it is enough on its own.

So where are the Ukrainian-American business leaders who could be supporting endowments or providing funding to expand Ukrainian studies programs at universities across the country? Where are the investments needed to strengthen academic research and improve how Ukraine is understood in America?

The community needs more infrastructure for lasting success. Once the war ends, will the summits stop? Will people simply pack up and go home? The real question is how the diaspora and its supporters are being set up for long-term success. With each successive generation, the emotional connection to the “homeland” inevitably weakens unless it is actively cultivated.

That future will depend on what is built locally – the institutions, gathering places, and organizing networks that can outlast any single moment of crisis. Real structure meant to last. Without those foundations, the energy we see at the summits risks fading, but with them, the

diaspora can become a durable force for Ukraine for decades to come.

The views expressed in this opinion article are the author's and not necessarily those of Kyiv Post.

23. USA. “Ukrainian School in Raleigh Brings Together Refugees, Longtime Immigrants to Keep Culture Alive,” *Ncnewsline.com*, 23 December 2025.

Founded in the wake of the Russian invasion, the Ukraine House school and cultural center in Raleigh has been a source of solace and community for refugees.

By Brandon Kingdollar

Dozens of children, some dressed as angels, shepherds, and farm animals, stood flanked by twinkling blue and white lights as they sang Ukrainian Christmas carols at a Raleigh church recently.

Nearly four years ago, many of the children on stage were forced to flee their homes as Russian forces swept into Ukraine and drone strikes turned their neighborhoods to rubble. For some, it was their first opportunity to share in the cultural tradition of Vertep with other Ukrainian families since leaving home.

Held on Saint Nicholas Day, Dec. 6, Vertep marks the start of weeks of yuletide celebration in Ukraine. The performance is what Ukraine House founder Iryna Borodina describes as a “Ukrainian interpretation” of the nativity play, full of traditional folk songs and characters unique to the country. It’s the first time her organization has held the performance for Raleigh families.

Formed in the wake of the invasion, Ukraine House provides a Saturday school at Ridge Road Baptist Church in Raleigh where around 30 children learn Ukrainian art, history and language skills as well as activities like choir, guitar lessons, and ballet.

Parents say it is a crucial connection to the home their children were forced to leave behind. Some had lost much of their ability to read, write, and speak Ukrainian, more accustomed to English in day-to-day life. Others left at such an early age they never learned those skills in the first place.

“We left when [my daughter] was eight years old, so it was like second grade, and now she speaks English very well, more than Ukrainian,” said Yuliia Sytnyk, an art curator from Kherson who teaches at the Saturday school. “For kids, it seems like they get used to everything so fast, but of course it’s hard, all these changes.”

‘Each person tries to give something’

When Iryna Yermolaieva fled the war in Ukraine with her family, her oldest daughter had not yet started grade school. She did not know how to read and write in Ukrainian.

Traveling from place to place in Europe searching for refuge, there was no opportunity for her daughter to attend a Ukrainian school. It was only after coming to Raleigh that her child finally got the opportunity to become literate in her family's language.

"We started attending classes in Ukrainian school, and in just a few months, she started reading Ukrainian," Yermolaieva said. "She writes better than even me and my husband. Her handwriting is so perfect."

Halyna Seredyuk, a longtime Ukrainian educator in the U.S. and overseas, was a big part of that journey. She has taught for 40 years, first as a high school teacher in Ukraine and then through Ukrainian Saturday schools abroad, including in Sweden and for roughly 20 years in Atlanta.

Seredyuk creates her own lesson plans, weaving in traditional Ukrainian proverbs such as *Bdzhola mala, a y ta pratsyuye* ("The bee is small, but it works too"). She brings back a big bag of handmade notebooks for the children every time she returns from a trip to Ukraine.

"They are reading, they are writing, they are talking," Seredyuk said.

Though Yermolaieva's daughter came to the school two months after classes began, Seredyuk worked one-on-one with her to get her up to speed. "She helped us so much," Yermolaieva said. Now, Yermolaieva volunteers her own time as a substitute teacher as many of the other parents do. "Each person tries to give something," she said.

Yermolaieva said her daughters have made fast friends at the school. Her youngest, turning five years old this month, invited all of her classmates from the Ukrainian school to her birthday party.

"She just started [learning the] alphabet, a little bit of reading, art," she said. "I hope everything will work out like with my oldest."

At its core, she said, the school has provided an opportunity for her kids to experience their culture that she will be forever grateful for.

"I hope that this school will stay here for a long, long, long time and will help a lot of Ukrainian kids to know better their culture, language and history," Yermolaieva said.

'We need to build a new life'

Sytnyk, the former curator who teaches art at the school, feels she has no home to return to. "I don't miss my home because I know that around, everything is destroyed," she said. Kherson's population has fallen from nearly 300,000 to roughly one-fifth of that, with much of the city laid to waste under Russian occupation. Even two years after its liberation by Ukrainian troops, the city faces hundreds of drone attacks every week.

"Nothing exists right now, and we cannot come back [to] our life," Sytnyk said. "That's why we need to build a new life, and how it will be, it's only God knows."

Since coming to the U.S., Sytnyk has worked to keep the arts of Ukraine alive through visual and musical exhibits and hands-on workshops with institutions like UNC Chapel Hill, Carnegie Hall, and Yale.

One project she's proudest of is a virtual tour of the vibrant home of Kherson artist Polina Raiko, its interior blanketed with painted representations of the artist's grief. The home, a national cultural monument, was destroyed by floodwaters in 2023, after Russian soldiers destroyed a nearby dam.

She learned about the Saturday school program through Ukrainians in the Carolinas, a nonprofit that sprang up during the war to support the more than 2,000 refugees who have come to the state from Ukraine. As a teacher, she has brought her cultural expertise to the classroom.

Like Seredyuk, she has developed her own lesson plans for the classes at Ukraine House with the goal of connecting the children with their home country through its art. She also teaches a class for adults, open to Ukrainians as well as Americans who wish to better understand the country and its culture.

For a workshop on Petrykivka painting, a distinct floral pattern of painting originating from a village in Ukraine, she said some Ukrainian attendees came from as far as Wilmington.

"They said, 'We don't have anything about Ukraine, no events, nothing that we want to share with our kids,'" Sytnyk said.

"The parents want their kids to know about Ukraine and know their history, their culture, and it's really important," Sytnyk said. "Some people understood it only here when they're so far from Ukraine."

'I live for two countries'

Under Iryna Borodina's watch, the Ukrainian school has grown from a single weekly language class in 2023 to a full-fledged Saturday school, with four classes a day for everyone from preschoolers to fifth and sixth graders.

Borodina sees her work not as building an enclave for Ukrainians in the Triangle, but as creating a bridge between two nations.

"This school is a part of our war to save and preserve our culture," Borodina said. "We do not want to allow our culture to disappear even in the USA, because Russia, for example, in this war declared that we are not existing, and our culture is not existing culture."

In her view, the war has forced Ukraine to become a "global nation." She is in communication with Ukrainian schools from all around the world, from North Carolina to Germany, aimed at raising a generation of children fluent in the cultures of their native and adopted countries — future ambassadors in a world where Ukraine must work alongside countries across the globe to defend itself and rebuild.

“Right now, I live for two countries,” she said. “This is my mission.”

Borodina said she’s thankful for the help and support she’s received in this country. But she’s troubled by a year of sometimes hostile rhetoric by President Donald Trump toward Ukraine’s government and deep uncertainty over the future immigration status of Ukrainian refugees in the U.S.

Unlike some families who belong to Ukraine House, Borodina does not wish for her children to remain in the United States indefinitely.

“I would like my children to come back to Ukraine,” she said. “Actually, I would like other American children to come back to Ukraine, because they are our heritage.”

She said she had plans to found a secondary school for Ukrainians in North Carolina that could serve a similar purpose, but abandoned those plans after Trump made it clear he would take a hardline stance on refugees.

The school she leads and the welcoming community within it will persist, though, she says. It’s part of their culture.

“I believe this Saturday school will live even without me,” Borodina said. “We [Ukrainians] used to help each other ourselves, always, and this is our history.”

This story has been updated to correct the year the school was founded. It was in 2023, not 2022.

24. USA. A Ukrainian School in Washington State Evolves into a Diaspora Community Lifeline,” *Kyiv Post*, 4 December 2025.

In Bellevue, Washington, a grassroots cultural center shows how one immigrant’s determination to teach her children Ukrainian became a community hub for hundreds

By David Kirichenko

When Oksana Krivizuk arrived in Washington State in 2015 with two small children, she faced a familiar immigrant dilemma: how to pass on her language and culture in a place where neither seemed to exist outside of church walls.

Within a month, she started her own school.

“We simply decided we were on our own,” Krivizuk said. Her children were five and three years old. The only Ukrainian-language programs she could find near her home were church-based, taught through religious Sunday school. As someone who values Christian principles but doesn’t practice religion institutionally, she wanted something different.

“School should be separate from church or religion,” she said. “It’s a child’s choice, or a family

decision. Families have different backgrounds, so we wanted a space that gave kids freedom.”

What began with eight children meeting in borrowed library rooms has grown into Toloka, a thriving Ukrainian cultural center that now serves 80 students and hosts wine tastings, art exhibitions, and fashion shows alongside traditional folk festivals.

The transformation reflects a broader shift in the Ukrainian diaspora in America. As waves of new immigrants have arrived, first following the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea, then after the 2022 full-scale invasion, they are building institutions that look different from the ones their predecessors created generations ago.

Finding space, building community

For years, the school moved between public libraries on Saturday mornings. Krivizuk and other parents taught language for one hour, then activities such as history, geography, embroidery or crafts for another. Finding consistent space was the constant challenge.

“You can have initiative, but it’s very difficult to rent something for just two hours on Saturdays,” she said. “Community centers are usually fully booked.”

In 2023, Krivizuk asked the local Ukrainian association to help find permanent space. They didn’t respond, so she and a small group took matters into their own hands. They signed a lease, forming a nonprofit board, and opening Toloka’s doors by September. The formal governance structure took a year to solidify, but the community showed up. Today, despite their independence, Toloka collaborates regularly with the association.

Toloka now occupies a rented building in Bellevue with a monthly lease of \$8,500. The name means “collective work” in Ukrainian, evoking the tradition of neighbors gathering to help with harvests or building projects.

The center’s monthly budget runs around \$11,000 including teacher salaries. Krivizuk insists on paying educators \$30 an hour to make the project sustainable. The school accepts every child regardless of ability to pay, charging an average donation of \$60 per month for two hours of instruction.

“The point is not profit,” she said. “It’s to keep the kids in school.”

Beyond language lessons

Students range from three-and-a-half to 17 years old. Classes meet every Saturday, divided into small groups of no more than 12 children per teacher. Ukrainian textbooks, Krivizuk discovered, don’t work well for children growing up in American schools. She and her teachers develop their own materials, experimenting each year.

“Two hours is not enough for fluency,” she acknowledged. “But it’s enough for kids to understand, read, write, and – most importantly to us – be proud that they are Ukrainian.”

Many students come from families that speak Russian at home or have already switched to English. For them, those two hours on Saturdays matter in ways that transcend vocabulary.

Daniel Galian, a Ukrainian-American from Washington State, said he grew up with a complicated relationship to his own language. “Growing up in a Ukrainian evangelical family, my sense of being Ukrainian often felt overshadowed as Russian dominated the language of school, church circles, and everyday life. There were few chances to study or truly use Ukrainian, so it stayed mostly in small moments at home.”

Krivizuk’s own 16-year-old son, who started at the school when it launched, speaks mostly English now. Like many teenagers, he has gone through phases of questioning why he needs Ukrainian. The school tries to make the answer compelling through festivals, celebrations, and connections to other young people.

“We now have around 30 teenagers,” Krivizuk said. “Which is amazing.”

A new model for the diaspora in the Northwest

What sets Toloka apart from older Ukrainian organizations is its approach to community building. Rather than focusing primarily on commemorating historical figures like the poet Taras Shevchenko, whose portrait still hangs in Toloka’s library, the center hosts modern fundraisers, art shows, and social events designed to appeal to younger Ukrainian-Americans.

“Older groups cling to traditional events,” Krivizuk said. “Younger volunteers bring fresh ideas – fashion shows, wine tastings, modern exhibitions.”

“Having a place to come together as a community has long been a desire for Ukrainian-Americans in the Greater Seattle area,” said Katerina Sedova, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Eurasia Center.

“Diasporas of every generation develop their own version of Ukrainian culture... but culture is a living and evolving reflection of lived experience. Physical spaces like Ukrainian Centers give shape to that experience and help bridge the gap between Ukrainians in the US and those in Ukraine, especially in wartime.”

She added that these centers also help introduce Ukraine to the broader American public through food, film, and shared cultural events – “the last three feet of diplomacy,” as she put it.

The center survives without grants, relying instead on patrons who cover about 40 percent of the budget, ticket sales from events, space rentals, and two major festivals each year. Summer months, when school is on break, are the hardest financially. The Toloka website lists its motto as: “A vibrant space where the Ukrainian language, art, and contemporary perspectives unite people in an open community.”

Yet building that unity across Washington’s Ukrainian community remains an uphill battle.

Vitaliy Piekhotin, a Ukrainian-American evangelical living in Federal Way, said his own experience shows how uneven the diaspora's evolution can be.

Earlier this year, he invited 10 local bishops and pastors to a Ukrainian flag-raising ceremony at Federal Way City Hall, asking them to come and pray for Ukraine and the United States. "None came," he said. "It's hard for me to say evangelicals are really advocating for Ukraine outside their church buildings."

In a social media group of 260 evangelical ministers, he posted an invitation to an association meeting in Bellevue, asking if any church leaders could join and share stories from their families or friends. Almost no one responded.

For Piekhotin, the message is clear: private sympathy does not always translate into public action. "Toloka-style centers need to be in every city," he said. "That's why we started the Ukrainian Community of Federal Way – to support Ukraine, to support Ukrainians in the US, and to be part of the community where we live."

He believes these centers succeed because they connect culture, service, and civic engagement – something churches, he argues, have struggled to do consistently.

"When funds are short, it's stressful," Krivizuk admitted. "We gather the team and say, 'We're short this month, let's make something happen.'"

About 20 deeply engaged volunteers keep Toloka running, each bringing their own projects and audiences. The governance structure reflects this: only projects that contribute at least 20 percent of the rent get board membership, ensuring decisions are made by those who rely most heavily on the space.

"Younger generations dislike hierarchy," Krivizuk explained. "They want flexibility and projects that interest them, not strict rules."

Looking ahead

Krivizuk plans to step down as board chair within three years, believing that leadership must rotate to keep organizations alive. But she's already thinking about bigger questions, particularly how to translate the Ukrainian community's growing numbers into political influence.

"We have many voters but few elected officials," she said. "We live our own diaspora life instead of trying to shape the environment around us."

Reading about other Ukrainian organizations in Washington State and across the country, she realized how disconnected different groups remain from each other. Religious communities prioritize faith over national identity.

Eddie Priymak, a Ukrainian-American scholar from Washington State studying religion in the Ukrainian diaspora, explains that Ukrainian evangelicals aren't a monolithic group. "Most

evangelicals remain insulated within their particular denominational networks – whether Baptist, Pentecostal, or Charismatic – and have limited interaction with the broader Ukrainian diaspora,” he said.

That fragmentation has deep historical roots. Even within evangelical communities, Pentecostals and Baptists rarely intermingled in the diaspora. While Russia’s invasion has created new opportunities for interreligious advocacy, and prompted many Russian-speaking churches to create Ukrainian-language schools, Priymak notes these efforts have largely been driven by clergy, with most congregants remaining distant from broader civic engagement.

Still, Toloka exists as proof that something new is possible. What began as one mother’s determination not to lose her language has become a space where hundreds of families maintain connections to Ukraine, and to each other.

“A Ukrainian house only exists if people actually need it,” Krivizuk said. “If the community stops supporting us, there’s no point in keeping the doors open.”

For now, people keep coming. Every Saturday, children fill the classrooms. Every month, new events draw crowds. The space remains full of life, sustained by the collective work its name promises.

25. USA. “Pilgrims Retrace Steps of Ukrainian Immigrants Who Walked from McAdoo to Worship in Shenandoah,” *Pottsville Republican Herald*, 24 November 2025.

By Ron Devlin

SHENANDOAH — Walking past the site of the old St. Nicholas colliery, Christine Harasymczuk felt the presence of her grandparents, Dmytro and Matrona Capitula. Before St. Mary’s Ukrainian Catholic Church was built in 1925, the Capitulas would walk from McAdoo to Shenandoah to attend services at St. Michael the Archangel Ukrainian Catholic Church.

“It touches my heart,” Harasymczuk said. “They were so deeply steeped in their faith, they walked this road to church in all kinds of weather.”

Harasymczuk, 72, a retired IBM sales executive, and her husband, Louis, made the 14-mile trek recently in honor of the families who emigrated from Ukraine to McAdoo to work in the coal mines.

The Montrose couple were among about a dozen pilgrims who made the demanding trek to St. Michael’s, the first Ukrainian Catholic Church in America.

Archpriest Mark Fesniak, pastor of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Minersville, conferred a blessing on the walkers as they left McAdoo at 8 a.m. on Nov. 22.

The group took a lunch break at Delano Fire Co. No. 1 before heading to Mahanoy City.

Carrying a Ukrainian flag, 23-year-old Vladimir Holoviak of Hazleton led the group on the final segment of the walk along Route 54 between Mahanoy City and Shenandoah.

Paula Holoviak, one of the organizers, said the walk was initially dedicated to the devout Ukrainian immigrants when it began about a decade ago.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, the focus of the walk has been on calling attention to the plight of the Ukrainian people, said Holoviak, a Sugarloaf resident who teaches political science at Kutztown University.

Authorities reported that 46,000 have died and 380,000 Ukrainians have been injured since the fighting began.

Joseph Krushinsky, a Tamaqua consultant, said the walk helps raise funds for the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia's humanitarian efforts in Ukraine.

Through its Healing of Wounds Fund, the archeparchy has raised \$7.2 million for food assistance, medical care and aid to displaced persons and refugees, according to its website. Among the walkers were three Marian Catholic High School seniors — Alex Krapf, Alex Holoviak and Samuel Farrone.

Rev. Bohdan Vasylyv, pastor, greeted them on the steps of St. Michael's about 2 p.m. when they arrived in Shenandoah.

The day's activity ended with a brief service at St. Michael's.

In the Ukrainian Catholic tradition, with heads bowed and palms raised, the pilgrims were blessed with a crucifix containing a spiritual relic.

26. Venezuela. "Ukrainian Diaspora in Venezuela History and Cultural Influence," *Mezha.net*, 8 January 2026.

As reported by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

The Ukrainian diaspora in Venezuela formed gradually, through several waves of migration, starting in the interwar period and especially after World War II. It was not as large as in Canada or the United States, but its impact on the country's cultural and scientific life was noticeable. In this article we will examine the main stages of migration, their impact on Venezuela's art and science, and we will also highlight notable Ukrainians who left a mark in Caracas and beyond.

The First Volynian in the Tropics

The first wave of emigration unfolded as early as the 19th century: individual travelers and specialists sought new opportunities overseas. The most well-known figure from that period was

Mykhailo Skibytskyi – the first documented Volynian in Venezuela, who took part in the local people's national liberation movement.

After military service, Skibytskyi became the personal assistant to Venezuela's first president José Antonio Páez and wrote his biography. According to some accounts, he was the first in history to provide an engineering calculation for the Panama Canal, around which various plans and calculations would later be developed. After returning to Ukraine in 1835, he was arrested by order of Emperor Nicholas I. His villa marked "Ukraine" in Maracaibo has survived to the present day as a witness to that era.

The Ukrainian Woman Who Changed Medicine in Venezuela

The inspiration for many future medical professionals was the Ukrainian Lya Imber. She was born in 1914 in Odessa and emigrated to Venezuela with her family at a young age, seeking safer conditions after revolutionary and wartime upheavals. She showed an early interest in medicine and child care.

Lya Imber entered Venezuelan history as the first woman to earn a Doctor of Medicine degree in pediatrics and actively worked on developing child medicine. She served on the council of the Medical School of the Federal District and was co-founder of the Venezuelan Society of Pediatrics and Child Care, which she chaired from 1949 to 1951. Her contribution laid the foundations of modern Venezuelan pediatrics and became an important example for the next generations of medical professionals.

"Golden Migration" of Ukrainians to "Little Venice"

The second, main wave of Ukrainian migration unfolded after World War II. Thousands of Ukrainians found themselves in displaced persons camps in Germany and Austria, but they could not return to the Soviet Union due to repression. Venezuela at that time was experiencing an oil boom and needed labor and intellectual potential. In three years (1947–1950) the port of La Guaira welcomed about 3,500–4,000 Ukrainians. Among them was [Halyna] Mazepa, daughter of Isaac Mazepa, the prime minister of the Ukrainian People's Republic government, together with her husband Volodymyr Koval and their newborn son Bohdan. The relocation was a forced measure: during the war the family endured a tragedy – the deaths of the painter's children and mother during the bombing of Prague.

Settling in Caracas, Galina Mazepa quickly integrated into the local artistic scene. By 1948 she began work at the advertising and film studio ARS Publicidad/Bolívar Films as an illustrator and animator. That same year marked her first solo exhibition in Venezuela, solidifying her status as a professional artist in the new country. A particularly long-lasting and influential collaboration was with the children's educational magazine Tricolor, published by the Venezuelan Ministry of Education. For over 25 years Galina Mazepa illustrated the magazine, shaping the visual language for several generations of Venezuelan schoolchildren, earning her national recognition. In Mazepa's work Ukrainian motifs, modernist aesthetics, and Latin American folklore blended. She worked in painting, graphics, and ceramics, creating decorative series on mythological and historical themes. For these works the artist was awarded the National Prize of Venezuela for

Applied Arts (1956) and received international recognition, notably the UNESCO Gold Medal as the best illustrator of children's books in 1980. Her ceramics and mosaics adorn various buildings in Caracas to this day.

Another line of the Ukrainian footprint in Venezuela centers around the Krychevsky dynasty. Vasyl Krychevsky – an architect, artist, and author of the small coat of arms of Ukraine – settled in Caracas after the war and worked in painting, graphics, and decorative arts, blending Ukrainian motifs with the new Latin American cultural reality. His works demonstrated not only craftsmanship but also the desire to preserve Ukrainian identity in a foreign environment, translating tradition to a new continent.

His granddaughter Galina Krychevskaya-Linde continued the family's artistic momentum in Venezuelan émigré circles. She grew up in an artistic milieu where Ukrainian roots intertwined with European art schools, and from a young age actively participated in Caracas's cultural life. Her works combined color, form, and decorative details, reflecting Ukrainian origin in a Latin American context. She exhibited at numerous exhibitions and worked in painting, graphics, and decorative arts, often drawing on history, mythology, and the natural landscapes of her new home.

Images from Galina Krychevskaya-Linde's works and details of her artistic output emphasize the interaction between Ukrainian modernist tradition and the Venezuelan cultural milieu.

Great-granddaughter of Vasyl Krychevsky – Oksana Linde – was born in Caracas in 1948. By education she is a chemist, but for decades she has also experimented with electronic music, working in her own home studio. Her compositions on Polymoog and Casio synthesizers drew the attention of world critics after the release of the album *Aquatic and Other Worlds* in 2022. Linde's musical path has become an example of how Ukrainian cultural heritage can take root in the Latin American underground.

Ukrainians – in Opposition

Among the active figures of the Venezuelan Ukrainian diaspora is David Smolansky, a politician and journalist, born in Caracas in 1985. His Ukrainian-Jewish heritage shaped his understanding of migration processes and the country's public life. Smolansky became one of the young leaders of the opposition to Maduro's regime: during his tenure as mayor of the El Hatillo municipality, he advocated for reforms, governance transparency, and the fight against corruption, supported civil movements that raised human rights issues. Due to political pressure he was removed from office in 2017, and the threat of arrest forced him to leave the country. Today Smolansky continues to work abroad, focusing on protecting refugee rights and documenting democracy violations in Venezuela.

The Era of an Independent Ukraine

After Ukraine gained independence in 1991, a new wave of migration to Venezuela emerged, smaller in scale but more meaningful in terms of professional composition. Among the new Ukrainians there were many scientists, entrepreneurs, and cultural figures who kept close ties

with the homeland, participated in international projects, and developed the Ukrainian community in Caracas and other cities in Venezuela.

The Ukrainian heritage in Venezuela remains alive through art, medicine, and public life – from the work of artists and medical professionals to modern scientific and cultural initiatives. This is evidence that the cultural dialogue between Ukraine and Venezuela continues, creating new stories of shared achievements and mutual inspiration.

*** *Also of interest for the history of Ukrainians in Venezuela:* “Crónicas Digitales de Ucrania en Venezuela” at: <https://chegoyo.com/proyecto-ves/cronicas-digitales-ucrania/>

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