

**LEGAL STANDARDS OF UKRAINIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE  
PRESERVATION IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-WAR  
RECONSTRUCTION AND INTEGRATION INTO THE EU**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Cultural heritage is a set of cultural values inherited by the contemporaries from the previous generations which are the essential part of national self-respect and the appropriate representation of the country at the international level. According to international conventions, ratified or signed by Ukraine (the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society), the protection of cultural heritage is an international legal obligation of Ukraine to the world community.

The occupation of the Crimea, conflict in the East of Ukraine and the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in February 2022 have created problems related to the abduction, appropriation of cultural values, their illegal export and destruction which require an immediate solution. Legal regulation of protection and repatriation of cultural heritage is ineffective with regard to the protection of cultural values on the occupied territories; therefore the time has come to significantly improve the provisions of current legislation with regard to the existing realities and new challenges. Consequently Ukraine must take all measures to repatriate illegally exported cultural values and to demand the prosecution of those responsible for the deliberate destruction of the objects of cultural heritage.

The aim of this article is to outline peculiarities of legal regulation of cultural heritage protection during the Russian-Ukrainian War.

**1. Literature review and methodological approaches  
to cultural heritage preservation**

The issue of preserving cultural heritage has repeatedly been the subject of research attention. Scholars have discussed various aspects, focusing on important areas of heritage preservation in various ways.

The protection of architectural monuments and other religious objects was analyzed by BILASH, KARABIN & SAVCHYN<sup>1</sup>, emphasizing the relevance of international Ukrainian-Polish cooperation.

SINKEYVYCH & MOROZOVA<sup>2</sup> actualized the controversial issues of cultural property restitution that exist between Ukraine and Poland at the present stage. The issue of legal practice discussed by the researchers will require additional study.

GHILÈS<sup>3</sup> drew attention to the military challenge of the Russian-Ukrainian war for the European community as a whole but also pointed to the principles of cultural diplomacy that are relevant to contemporary political relations.

Mishra & Lourenço<sup>4</sup> studied applying computer science techniques such as artificial intelligence (AI), deep learning (DL), and computer vision (CV) on digital image data that can help monitor and preserve cultural heritage (CH) sites.

ROMANIUK, KUROK, HRYTSENKO, TKACHENKO & CHUMACHENKO<sup>5</sup> stressed the importance of cultural heritage in modern diplomatic policy, in particular, the use of soft power instruments, and the understanding of cultural heritage as a basis for building good neighborly relations. Digitalization plays an important role in cultural heritage preservation and contributes to the dissemination of information about the country around the world. Modern Ukraine is making gradual progress in all these areas; therefore, it is especially necessary to raise the issue of returning Ukrainian cultural property that is or has been stolen on Russian territory.

GORBUL & RUSAKOV<sup>6</sup> traced the experience of cooperation in the field of digitalization of cultural heritage on the examples of Ukraine and the Baltic

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<sup>1</sup> Bilash O., Karabin T., Savchyn M. Preservation and Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Religious Purposes in Ukraine. *Kościół i Prawo*, v. 10, n. 2, p. 9-30, 15 Dec 2021. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18290/kip21102.1>

<sup>2</sup> Sinkevych Y., Morozova O. The problem of restitution of cultural heritage: interaction between Ukraine and Poland. *Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi*, v. 15, n. 4, p. 535-548, 30 Dec. 2021. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.33077/uw.25448730.zbkh.2021.689>.

<sup>3</sup> Ghiles F. War in Ukraine and the gas crisis force a rethink of EU foreign policy. *Notes Internacionais CIDOB*, n. 268, p. 1-5, 7 Mar. 2022. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.24241/notesint.2022/268/en>.

<sup>4</sup> Mishra M., Lourenço P. Artificial intelligence-assisted visual inspection for cultural heritage: State-of-the-art review. *Journal of Cultural Heritage* Volume 66, March–April 2024, Pages 536-550 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2024.01.005>.

<sup>5</sup> Romaniuk L., Kurok O., Hrytsenko A., Tkachenko N., Chumachenko O. Transformation of Ukrainian cultural heritage against the background of historical and cultural changes: international aspects. *Synesis*, v. 15, n. 4, p.374-391 2023, ISSN 1984-6754.

<sup>6</sup> Gorbul T., Rusakov S. Cultural heritage in the context of digital transformation practices: experience of Ukraine and the Baltic states. *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies*, v. 8, n. 4, p. 58-69, 30 Nov. 2022. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.30525/2256-0742/2022-8-4-58-69>

countries. However, they primarily focused on the processes before 2022, i.e., before the full-scale Russian aggression, although the digitalization of cultural monuments became especially relevant after that; consequently, the researchers' conclusions will require further consideration.

AKIMOV<sup>7</sup> pointed out that counteraction to the illegal trafficking of cultural heritage was, is and remains one of the priority areas of activity of the Interpol; the effectiveness of international cooperation through Interpol channels is generally recognized and this organization's role in combating of smuggling of cultural values stolen during the armed conflicts is decisive.

The authors used a combination of various general scientific techniques and methods in the article. Among other general scientific methods analysis and synthesis, deduction, induction, forecasting and dialectical methods have been applied. For a comprehensive analysis of the topic in question, the method of systematic analysis and synthesis allowed to identify the main directions of preservation of cultural heritage. The dialectical method was used for the finding of new results, enabling the transition from the already known to the unknown. Consequently, the research involves not only the transformation of previously created theoretical knowledge, but also the formation of its new modification through the systematic addition of new theoretical provisions.

In addition, special legal methods were used, namely historical-legal, comparative-legal, formal-legal etc. Using the historical-legal method the formation and development of issues related to the protection of cultural heritage have been studied. The historical reconstruction of the legal protection of cultural heritage was carried out, serving as a context for the Ukrainian situation; to clarify it, the method of situational analysis was applied. Situations with the National and Memorial Museum of Hryhorii Skovoroda in the village of Skovorodynivka in Kharkiv oblast, Arkhip Kuindzhi Art Museum in Mariupol, Novokakhovsk Art Gallery named after Albin Havdzytskyi and the Museum of History of Nova Kakhovka unfold in time and space and focus the theoretical framework.

The formal-legal method was applied to determine the content of the main concepts and systematize the material to obtain generalizing conclusions within the issues in question. The comparative legal method helped to reveal the common and distinctive features of a number of key provisions in the context of cultural heritage protection. System-structural, complex and

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<sup>7</sup> Акімов М.О. Сучасні аспекти діяльності Міжнародної організації кримінальної поліції – Інтерпол у протидії злочинам проти культурної спадщини // Права людини в епоху цифрових трансформацій : матеріали XII Міжнародної науково-практичної конференції, м. Київ, Національний авіаційний університет, 25 лютого 2022 р. Том 1. – Тернопіль : Вектор, 2022. – С. 279-181.

holistic approaches to research were also used in the work. Formulation and substantiation of theoretical provisions, suggestions, practical recommendations and conclusions are based on the abovementioned methods and approaches.

## **2. Impact of Russian aggression on Ukrainian cultural heritage**

According to the data provided by the Prosecutor General's Office, 142 582 war crimes and crimes of aggression were registered in Ukraine as of September 14, 2024, namely violation of laws and customs of war, planning, preparation, initiation and conduct of an aggressive war, war propaganda.

The Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine is the central agency of executive power of Ukraine which activities are directed and coordinated by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and which is responsible for ensuring the country's cultural development and history preservation, functioning of state information resources, informational sovereignty of Ukraine, in particular regarding the dissemination of socially important information in Ukraine and beyond.

Analyzing the damage to cultural heritage sites in Ukraine caused by the aggression of the Russian Federation (as shown here<sup>8</sup>), it was announced that 2024 cultural heritage sites have been destroyed or damaged during the period from February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, to July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

The losses for state-owned cultural institutions amounted to 35 objects (14% of the total number of basic network institutions at the national level), while municipal-owned institutions experienced losses of 1,989 objects (6% of the total number of basic network institutions at the local level).

The largest part of affected cultural institutions constitutes clubs, which account for 48.2% of all damaged cultural infrastructure.

The total number of affected institutions is as follows:

- creative hubs: 974;
- libraries: 720;
- artistic education institutions: 157;
- museums and galleries: 117;
- theaters, cinemas, and philharmonic halls: 37;
- parks, zoos, reserves: 16;
- circuses: 3

Cultural institutions have been damaged in 290 territorial communities (19.7% of the total number of the amalgamated territorial communities) in Vinnytsia (3.2%), Dnipropetrovsk (20.9%), Donetsk (87%), Zhytomyr (17%),

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<sup>8</sup> The Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communication of Ukraine. URL: <https://mcip.gov.ua/en/news/2024-cultural-infrastructure-objects-have-been-damaged-or-destroyed-due-to-russian-aggression/> Accessed at: Sept 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Zakarpattia (2%), Zaporizhzhya (37.3%), Kyiv (27.1%), Luhansk (46.2%), Lviv (5.5%), Mykolaiv (44.2%), Odesa (9.9%), Poltava (2%), Sumy (58.8%), Kharkiv (57.1%), Kherson (43%), Khmelnytskyi (17%), Cherkasy (6.1%), Chernihiv (47.4%), Kirovohrad (2%) regions and Kyiv city.

As of the middle of September 2024, almost the entire territory of Luhansk and significant parts of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions remain under temporary occupation, which prevents an accurate assessment of the number of cultural institutions affected by the hostilities and occupation.

To sum up: it is necessary to take urgent measures aimed at proper care of our cultural heritage. The following aspects could be highlighted:

A. Preservation. An experimental unit tasked with the preservation of cultural heritage and the natural environment, which consists of military and civilian personnel, has been created in Ukraine as a pilot project of “cultural” voluntary formation of the territorial community. Being the part of the Territorial Defense Forces Command of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, it will act in the compliance with the Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and in accordance with the NATO Doctrine<sup>9</sup>.

B. Protection. Ukrainians cover monuments with sandbags, protecting cultural heritage sites from enemy shelling and bombing. The work is carried out by both the authorities and volunteers.

C. Digitalization. Digitization in the field of culture is used, firstly, in the processes of studying, preserving, creating, distributing and consuming cultural objects and values. Secondly, the application of digital technologies can be effectively used to improve organizational-economic and financial-economic processes in the activities of cultural organizations. Thirdly, specialized information systems are being created that allow keeping state records of cultural objects and values. Digital technologies offer tremendous opportunities for researchers to study cultural heritage: from digitization and archiving to 3D-scanning, modeling and visualization, as well as surface remote sensing. As an example we can address to the first virtual Museum of Stolen Art<sup>10</sup>.

Photo and video recording are also important. The video “The exhibition “Archaeologist’s Day: Rescued Treasures”<sup>11</sup> is dedicated to the display at the

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<sup>9</sup> У Силах ТрО залучатимуть цивільних фахівців для збереження культурної спадщини. URL: <https://tro.mil.gov.ua/u-sylah-tro-zaluchatymut-czyvilnyh-fahivcziv-dlya-zberezhennya-kulturmoyi-spadshhyny>. Accessed at: Sept 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Museum of Stolen Art. URL: <https://www.museumofstolen.art/en/?fbclid=IwAR1su6UQq1YbsnN4X8MZp5FgoImJPzx89ljzKxRulDmdCrF0fQmGSVbEltY>. Accessed at: Sept 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> The exhibition “Archaeologist’s Day: Rescued Treasures”. URL: <https://youtu.be/WEanFmqOcqA>. Accessed at: Sept 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

National Museum of History of Ukraine featuring world-class archaeological finds obtained by the museum over the past four years<sup>12</sup>.

In June 2022, State Bureau of Investigations officials in cooperation with the National Police of Ukraine's Strategic Investigations Department exposed Valeriy Gorbatov, former MP and former Head of the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as a financier of the DNR terrorist organisation. He continued to carry out his business activities in the occupied territories of Ukraine and paid taxes to the occupiers. He also misappropriated Ukraine's cultural heritage, which according to preliminary information was stolen from museums in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and purchased from "black archaeologists". Then the State Bureau of Investigations conducted six simultaneous searches. More than 6,000 items of historical and cultural property were found in one of Valeriy Gorbatov's offices in Kyiv. In particular, the searches uncovered Scythian Akinak swords, spears, axes, arrows, coins, 12th century chainmail, Hellenistic helmets and Trypillian culture pottery.

During new searches in early May another cache belonging to the abovementioned MP and members of his criminal group was discovered with a large collection of antiquities in it that could also have been illegally removed from the Museum Fund of Ukraine or illegally excavated. More than a thousand artifacts dating from the Bronze Age to the late Middle Ages were found. Among them there are: Hun sword decorated with gold and almandine which resembles the famous Hun diadem from the Melitopol Museum (stolen by the Russian occupiers); armor including helmets (Polish hussars', Morions, Iranians); coins from the periods from antiquity to the late Middle Ages. Law enforcement officers also found a Byzantine gold enamel icon depicting the Archangel Michael from the XI–XII centuries, ancient and Scythian antiquities, icons, cold steel (from the XIV–XIX centuries as well as from the First and Second World Wars), swords from the Migration Period, etc. Both collections are estimated to be worth millions of dollars.

Therefore the abovementioned video underscores the importance of utilizing the video format as a means of preserving cultural heritage in times of war. Modern video recording technologies can play a crucial role in documenting and exposing crimes related to the preservation of historical and cultural treasures during conflicts. The depiction of confiscated artifacts serves as a powerful tool to draw the attention of the public and the international community to the issue of preserving cultural values in the context of armed conflict. Additionally, the video can serve as a means to raise

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<sup>12</sup> Archaeological treasures to be exhibited for the first time at the National Museum of History of Ukraine. URL: <https://dbr.gov.ua/en/news/znajdeni-dbr-arheologichni-skarbi-vpershe-pokazhut-u-nacionalnomu-muzei-istorii-ukraini>. Accessed at: Sept 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

awareness about the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage during conflicts and to garner support for initiatives aimed at its restoration and preservation. Furthermore, the video can act as a tool to increase awareness of the significance of protecting cultural heritage in times of conflict and to support efforts directed towards its restoration and conservation. This approach enables the engagement of the public in addressing the issue and lays the foundation for collective efforts in saving cultural heritage in the midst of military conflicts.

Another video is dedicated to the “Ukraine – Crucifixion” (“Україна – розп’яття”) exhibition at the Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War<sup>13</sup>. Exhibition organizers are stating that “Ukraine – Crucifixion” is the first-ever exhibition in Ukraine and around the world about the ongoing war and in the time of the ongoing war<sup>14</sup>. It contains 1776 authentic exhibits, collected by the Museum’s team in the areas of hostilities (immediately after their cessation) and at the liberated territories of Kyiv and Chernihiv regions from April 3 to May 6, 2022. Exhibition’s total area is approximately 900 m<sup>2</sup>. The video illustrates the importance of applying such format as an effective mean of preserving cultural heritage in times of war. The exhibition aims to convey information about the ongoing war and events taking place during its period. Through video recording viewers can immerse themselves in the atmosphere of wartime events and assess the scale of the destruction occurring at present. Video fragments can evoke emotional reactions and raise awareness among the public about the importance of preserving cultural values during times of armed conflict. The video serves not only as an information source but also as a real tool for archiving history by showcasing unique artifacts collected directly from the areas of conflict and newly liberated settlements. Utilizing the video format, the exhibition can preserve evidence of significant events and help uncover the depth of the war’s impact on cultural heritage.

Therefore, the video acts as a key instrument in supporting efforts to preserve and popularize cultural heritage in wartime, providing not only a documentation of events but also mobilizing the public to contribute to the preservation of valuable artifacts and history.

D. Registration. The system of cultural heritage objects recording is imperfect, as confirmed by the inadequately slowness of the formation of the State Register of Immovable Monuments of Ukraine and the insufficiency of

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<sup>13</sup> “Україна – розп’яття”: перша в світі виставка про російсько-українську війну. URL: [https://youtu.be/zecS\\_jmvExQ](https://youtu.be/zecS_jmvExQ) (дата звернення: 14.09.2024).

<sup>14</sup> Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War. URL: [https://warmuseum.kyiv.ua/eng/expositions/current\\_exhibitions](https://warmuseum.kyiv.ua/eng/expositions/current_exhibitions). Accessed at: Sept 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

the information it contains. It is also obvious that without an effective, modern registration system there will be no effective preservation. The lack of efficient registration of cultural heritage objects prevents their presentation in international information bases and popularization abroad.

E. Recovery and repatriation. In addition to the preservation it is extremely important to return the cultural values. In this aspect, it is worth mentioning the effectiveness of international interaction through the Interpol channels. The UN Security Council in its resolutions 2199 (2015) and 2347 (2017) calling on the countries of the world to take appropriate measures to stop the circulation of cultural values stolen during the armed conflicts in Iraq and Syria, states the decisive coordinating role of the Interpol in this and also indicates that the smuggling of cultural and archaeological heritage from the states on the territory of which hostilities are taking place is directly related to the financing of terrorism. Accordingly the UN General Assembly in the resolution 73/130 (2018) emphasized the need to create (with the support of the Interpol) specialized units of law enforcement agencies for the protection of cultural heritage in all participating states. In the Interpol General Secretariat, with the aim of assisting the law enforcement agencies of the member states, a specialized unit has already been created to counteract the illegal circulation of stolen works of art.

International standards for the description of stolen works of art, developed by the International Council of Museums and approved by the UNESCO, are used by the Interpol for prompt and error-free identification of stolen items (<http://icom.museum/object-id>), which has been translated into 17 languages including Ukrainian. In addition, the Interpol operates a database of stolen works of art, which currently contains information on more than 52,000 objects. Verification can be carried out both by entering the object's specific characteristics (type, category, performance technique, name, authorship, country of origin) and by comparing its photo with the data available in the database. Any person can get access to this database by filling out the request form (<https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Cultural-Heritage-crime>) or by downloading the application (ID-Art Mobile App), which enables checking in a real time regime.

As for Ukraine, the National Police (via International Police Cooperation Department) performs the representation and ensures the fulfillment of obligations of Ukraine in the Interpol, organizing the use of the International Criminal police Organization – Interpol information system in the field of combating the illegal circulation of cultural values. Namely, for the purpose of establishing the location of stolen works of art or other objects of cultural value, or for the identification of such objects, a request can be sent for the publication of the Notice on Stolen Cultural Values by the Interpol General



Secretariat (on the basis of a received request or within the framework of criminal proceedings or operative investigation case).<sup>15</sup>

### **3. Harmonization of Ukrainian legislation with EU standards in the sphere of cultural heritage protection**

In relation to legal standards for the preservation of Ukrainian cultural heritage in the context of post-war reconstruction and integration into the EU, it should be noted that the European Union pays a great deal to the preservation of its member states' cultural heritage and adopts appropriate legal norms and standards for the protection of cultural property. This approach is the basis for the harmonization of national legislation of the Member States in the field of cultural heritage protection, which is especially relevant for Ukraine in the context of our country's European integration aspirations. Therefore let's analyze the provisions of Directive 2014/60/EU of May 15, 2014 on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012. This document is aimed at returning cultural objects that have been illegally exported from the territory of the Member States; certain mechanisms for administrative cooperation between the EU Member States are established by it and rules for the procedure for the return of cultural property are defined. As for the harmonization of the provisions on the illegal export and return of cultural property, Directive 2014/60/EU stipulates basic provisions on cultural property that can be recognized as national property and subject to return in case of its illegal export. Pursuant to Article 2 of Directive 2014/60/EU, "cultural object" means an object which is classified or defined by a Member State, before or after its unlawful removal from the territory of that Member State, as being among the 'national treasures possessing artistic, historic or archaeological value' under national legislation or administrative procedures within the meaning of Article 36 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Consequently, illegal exportation violates the protection of national rules or the non-return of items after temporary exportation. In Ukrainian legislation, these issues are regulated by the provisions of the Law of Ukraine "On the Export, Import and Return of Cultural Property" and the Law of Ukraine "On the Protection of Cultural Heritage". Therefore, in order to bring Ukrainian legislation in line with the provisions of EU legislation, it is necessary to amend the definition of cultural property and provide for

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<sup>15</sup> Акімов М.О. Сучасні аспекти діяльності Міжнародної організації кримінальної поліції – Інтерпол у протидії злочинам проти культурної спадщини // Права людини в епоху цифрових трансформацій : матеріали XII Міжнародної науково-практичної конференції, м. Київ, Національний авіаційний університет, 25 лютого 2022 р. – Том 1. – Тернопіль: Вектор, 2022. – С. 279-181.

specific categories of European objects subject to legal protection in accordance with European standards. This includes a clear definition of illicit export and improvement of the procedure for its return. Referring to the latter, Directive 2014/60/EU provides for the mandatory return of cultural property that has been illegally exported, as stated in Articles 3 and 6, where the Member State from which the cultural object was illegally exported has the right to initiate legal proceedings for its return. So it is necessary to stipulate special judicial procedures to consider the return of cultural property. Such changes can be introduced in the Civil Procedure Code of Ukraine, as well as to the Law of Ukraine “On Private International Law”. This approach could create legal grounds for the effective return of cultural objects with the involvement of international cooperation.

Administrative cooperation and interaction between states is also important. In accordance with the provisions of Articles 4 and 5 of Directive 2014/60/EU, EU Member States must cooperate through established central bodies responsible for the search, monitoring and return of illegally exported cultural property. An important role in this process is played by the Internal Market Information System (IMIS), through which the exchange of messages is created. To ensure the effective implementation of these provisions in Ukraine, the powers of the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine or another relevant agency should be expanded by giving it the competence for international cooperation in the field of return of cultural property. This can be envisaged in the Law of Ukraine “On Central Executive Bodies of Power” by adding provisions on Ukraine’s participation in international information systems for the exchange of data on cultural objects.

Article 8 of Directive 2014/60/EU stipulates that Member States shall set in their legislation the time limit for initiating a return procedure which may not exceed three years after the requesting Member State has become aware of the location of the cultural object and the identity of its owner or holder. In any case, the time limit for initiating such a procedure may not exceed thirty years after the illegal export of the object from the territory of the requesting Member State. In order to harmonize the statute of limitations in Ukrainian legislation, the Civil Code of Ukraine should be amended accordingly.

In addition, Directive 2014/60/EU obliges to ensure the preservation of physical cultural objects until their return. This is an important aspect of control that requires the involvement of public or private entities to ensure the safety of cultural property. It is advisable therefore to provide for the relevant provisions in the Law of Ukraine “On the Protection of Cultural Heritage” by expanding the provisions on the physical protection of cultural objects during their return.

Thus, the harmonization of the provisions of Directive 2014/60/EU with Ukrainian legislation will significantly strengthen the mechanisms for the protection of cultural heritage. Updating legislation, in particular the Laws of Ukraine “On Export, Import and Return of Cultural Property”, “On Protection of Cultural Heritage” etc., will help to harmonize national norms with European standards and increase the effectiveness of international cooperation in the field of cultural property return.

## CONCLUSIONS

The article highlights the critical issue of preserving Ukrainian cultural heritage during the Russian-Ukrainian War, stressing upon the challenges posed by the occupation of Crimea and the armed aggression by the Russian Federation as well as studying European experience in this field.

The research employs a combination of scientific methods, including dialectical, historical-legal, and comparative-legal approaches, to analyze the impact on cultural heritage and propose potential solutions.

The study reviews relevant international conventions, emphasizing Ukraine’s legal obligation to protect its cultural heritage. It provides a comprehensive examination of the destruction caused by the war, citing statistics from the Prosecutor General’s Office and the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine. The data reveals the alarming extent of damage to cultural heritage sites, including architectural, historical, and archaeological sites, as well as museums and galleries.

The literature review incorporates insights from various scholars, emphasizing the importance of cultural heritage in diplomatic policy and the role of international cooperation, particularly through organizations like Interpol. The article acknowledges the complexities of restitution and the challenges posed by the illegal trafficking of cultural heritage.

The main points.

**Preservation:** The article suggests the creation of an experimental unit dedicated to preserving cultural heritage, incorporating military and civilian personnel. This unit, aligned with international conventions, aims to protect cultural property during armed conflicts and operate in accordance with the NATO Doctrine.

**Protection:** The efforts to protect cultural heritage involve covering monuments with sandbags to shield them from enemy shelling and bombing. Both governmental authorities and volunteers are actively engaged in this protective measure.

**Digitalization:** The integration of digital technologies is proposed for studying, preserving, creating, and distributing cultural objects. Digital tools offer opportunities for archiving, 3D-scanning, modeling, and visualization.

The article highlights the significance of the first virtual Museum of Stolen Art and the role of photo and video recording.

**Registration:** The article criticizes the imperfect system of recording cultural heritage objects, emphasizing the slow formation of the State Register of Immovable Monuments of Ukraine. Efficient registration is deemed essential for effective preservation and international presentation.

**Recovery and repatriation:** Beyond preservation, these two aspects are underscored as critical ones. International collaboration through ICPO-Interpol channels is emphasized for the recovery and return of cultural values. The UN Security Council resolutions and the creation of specialized law enforcement units are considered crucial in combating the illegal circulation of stolen cultural items.

Moreover, in the context of Ukraine's integration into the EU, it is important to harmonize Ukrainian legislation with the EU legal standards for the preservation and return of cultural property. Directive 2014/60/EU establishes rules for the return of illegally exported cultural objects and provides mechanisms for cooperation between the EU Member States. Ukrainian legislation needs to be adjusted accordingly, in particular, with regard to the definition of cultural property, the procedure for its return and international cooperation. Administrative interaction and the timeframe for return procedures initiating should be harmonized with European standards. Such changes will contribute to the protection of cultural heritage and Ukraine's European integration.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive measures to safeguard Ukrainian cultural heritage in the face of the Russian-Ukrainian War. The proposed strategies encompass legal, technological, and collaborative approaches, reflecting the gravity of the situation and the importance of preserving cultural identity amid conflict. The article underscores the role of international cooperation and the need for innovative solutions to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the destruction and theft of cultural heritage.

## **SUMMARY**

This article is concerning on certain issues of Ukrainian cultural heritage preservation in the context of post-war reconstruction and integration into the EU. The relevant institutions' statistics on the scales of destruction in general and cultural heritage objects in particular have been examined during the study of this topic. Certain ways to overcome this problem (related to the legal standards) have been suggested, namely preservation, protection, digitalization, registration, recovery and repatriation. Research methods: the application of comparative method enabled to identify certain provisions of

the EU legislative acts to be implemented in Ukrainian legislation; the use of dialectical method allowed concentrating accumulated scientific knowledge and practice of application of the legislation on Ukrainian cultural heritage protection. Results: based on domestic and foreign experience, the main ways of cultural preservation activity have been outlined and suggested.

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