

Report on Efforts to Protect Ukraine's Cultural Heritage

By Doug Evans, ICOMOS-UK

The ICOMOS-UK wood committee, through its international network in the ICOMOS International Wood Committee (IIWC), has reached out and is in contact with conservators, academics and architects around the world and in Ukraine. Through these contacts I can report on current efforts to protect Ukraine's invaluable cultural heritage.



IIWC colleague **Eleftheria Tsakanika** is a structural engineer from Greece. She was a member of the Sept 2012 UNESCO field evaluation mission sent to assess the nomination of Wooden Tserkvas of the Carpathian Region in Poland and Ukraine for UNESCO World Heritage List inscription. During her mission she visited all the wooden Tserkvas (churches), including the 8 which are located in the western part of Ukraine. The serial nomination of 16 Tserkvas was inscribed on the WHS list in 2013.

I asked Eleftheria if anything she observed on her visit which might have been cause for concern from the point of view of disaster risk management and prevention measures. She replied:

“Actually no, the opposite. There was a well-organized protection plan of all the authorities of both countries, that included also the local communities, a continuous and a quite effective ‘monitoring and safeguarding system’, since one of the criteria that had to be evaluated is how the properties were and will be protected from factors affecting them: development pressures, environmental pressures (pollution, climate, change, desertification), biotic risks (decay, wood borers), natural disasters and risk preparedness (windstorms, floods, fires, burglary risk etc.), visitors/tourism pressure. Unfortunately, we forgot a danger. The one that they are facing now. But how can you protect these magnificent and fragile structures, from the actions during a war? From actions that are organized and executed with one scope - destruction, total disrespect of human life, and of any expression of its past, its identity, its culture?”

In her mission report, she wrote:

“Most of the properties were presenting a high, and in some cases very high, degree of authenticity and integrity for all the listed universal attributes, even though almost all architectural, structural and artistic elements are made of wood. Wood is considered a vulnerable material (fire, decay, wood borers) and timber structures not long lasting. These properties are a living example of the opposite.”

In her email to the IIWC she goes on to say: “It seems that finally human action is the biggest danger. And we are facing it.”



Prof Sergey Kravtsov of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is Ukrainian, trained as an architect in Lviv, and is an expert on Ukraine's wooden synagogues. Sergey sits with me on the IIWC's wooden places of faith working group. He has relatives and friends in Ukraine. His cousin is in Kremenchuk and her children and grandchildren are in the Poltava area. They were helping refugees from Kharkiv when Sergey emailed me on the 4th March, heaven knows where they are now.

He writes:

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"The synagogue of Kharkiv is most endangered: the Russian army is bombarding the city with 500-kilo bombs, St. Nicholas Cathedral, standing some 300m from the synagogue, has already suffered."

Sergey has told me that he is involved in the online publication of concise descriptions of the endangered heritage in Ukraine. The initiative belongs to his friend Prof. Waldemar Deluga, the editor-in-chief of *Studia Byzantina*. Sergey has prepared three essays: on the Choral Synagogue in Kharkiv and the Brody and Choral synagogues in Odesa. He is translating Ukrainian into English and has just finished a large essay on the Assumption of the Holy Virgin Cathedral in the Kyiv-Pechersky Monastery. People may read the uploaded test versions here:

http://seriesbyzantina.eu/ukrainica/?fbclid=IwAR06IbSMYaOdLZ5_6P2s9oGTL6LGigbwWHH3Er9vQ7HOI/C8ZEDt9kKM_fvQ.

Other papers are undergoing academic and linguistic editing. Prof. Waldemar Deluga will gladly accept any assistance in this task. People may visit his profile on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100012027488552>



An IIRC colleague in the USA, Yuri Yanchyshyn, put us in touch with **Myron Stachiw** who is a Ukrainian American historian and architectural consultant and was the Director of the Fulbright Program in Ukraine based out of the Institute of International Education in Kyiv. Myron is working with Yuri on a multi-year project to support and help the National University Polytechnic in Lviv to expand their architectural conservation programme. The project included the running of workshops.

<https://www.periodfurnitureconservation.com/workshop>

Myron is a member of the recently formed ICOMOS-Ukraine Heritage in Crisis Team, led by former ICOMOS-Ukraine president Mykola Yakovyn. The team is working to document damaged resources, translate those reports into English, and disseminate them widely. They are currently setting up these systems with Ukraine's Ministry of Culture and regional cultural heritage protection administrations in the various oblasts (regions). The Ministry of Culture has set up an online platform for documenting damaged heritage resources; at present this is only in Ukrainian, and they are lobbying for an English language version to be available on the site. All members of ICOMOS Ukraine have been asked to contribute detailed information to the working group about destruction and damage to cultural heritage sites and structures in the places where they reside and work with photographs, if possible.

On 12th March Myron wrote:

"Several mid-19th century wooden churches in villages in central Ukraine (Kyiv and Zhytomer regions) have suffered destruction from shelling and fighting, and numerous 18th -20th century churches in the cities in the eastern and southern sections of the country (Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Mariupol, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolayiv) have suffered damages, along with many historic buildings and entire neighbourhoods... As to the UNESCO-designated wooden tserkas of the Carpathian Mountain region, no damages or near-strikes have been reported. I am in almost daily contact with members of ICOMOS Ukraine and will communicate to them your concerns and support and provide you with information we might receive. ICOMOS Ukraine is also in very close contact with ICOMOS Poland and with the committees of its other neighbouring countries."

In Lviv, Myron tells me that the regional administration has launched the Centre to Rescue Cultural Heritage, an initiative that includes civic organizations as well as government agencies to proactively

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protect museums and their collections as well as the many wooden churches in Ukraine. The BBC has reported on this, see <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60707531>.

The Centre has a Facebook page, here is the link.

<https://www.facebook.com/%D0%A6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%80-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%8F%D1%82%D1%83%D0%BD%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%82%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%97%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%B4%D1%89%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8-105398202092888/> The National University

Polytechnic in Lviv has offered the use of their library building as a safe and temporary storage facility for collections of museums that are threatened. The Centre to Rescue Ukraine's Cultural Heritage will assist threatened museums in packing their collections safely and transporting them to the repository in Lviv. They are also sending out recommendations to all religious parishes with historic wooden churches encouraging them to post guards at those churches, make sure their fire alarm and firefighting systems are in order; churches with golden domes are encouraged to place camouflage netting over their roofs and domes so that they would be less conspicuous; and they are creating inventories of buildings that are damaged or destroyed during fighting.

The Centre is seeking donations of funds as well as supplies for packing and protecting objects, art works, books, etc. One of our UK wood committee members, Karen Dundas of Scottish Wall Painting Conservators, sent the email and Facebook link to her contacts at ICON, and they have reposted the appeal on their website. See <https://www.icon.org.uk/resource/supplies-needed-to-protect-ukraine-cultural-heritage.html>

Myron also sent me a link to this page in which ICOMOS Ukraine Secretary Vasyl Petryk talks about how to save churches during the war, <https://photo-lviv.in.ua/vasyl-petryk-rozpoviv-iak-vriatuvaty-tserkvy-pidchas-viyny-video/>

The Centre to Rescue Ukraine's Cultural Heritage has provided us with an address in Lublin, Poland, where they are asking museum supplies/packing supplies be sent and from which they can be transported to Lviv and distributed to museums throughout the region. Here it is:

Cafe Heca, Wojciech Dunin-Kozicki
20-400 Lublin,
ul. Hipoteczna 5
Polska / Poland
(tel. +48 665 604 153) (hecowo@gmail.com) (please send an email to this address before sending supplies)

Myron says the Centre is also in great need of short videos prepared by museum professional on packing procedures. If anyone has access to Ukrainian -speaking colleagues who could help with preparation of such instructional videos, please create them and send them to the Centre in Lviv.



IIRC colleague Raluca Munteanu is an architect in Romania and is a project coordinator at Fundatia Pro Patrimonio <https://www.propatrimonio.org/?lang=en> She received a link through a Ukrainian colleague to a Google Form started by the architects' union in Ukraine under the title "Restart Ukraine". See the email and link below. It's interesting to see the reconstruction services that the Ukraine architects are looking for.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfJRy99XSEyXUiNh2vh0BnATLtvhBSh2mdEa_nBrLxaHn6WQ/viewform?fbclid=IwAR3hdw49dAFBUFFcfuNAa0L5ND-IUR2zm2TiQmqitQ5MLuY3rhr69JtvDo

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As I understand it, a Google Form can be shared via email, a direct link, and on social media, or it can be embedded into a website. A Google Form can then connect the info it gathers to a spreadsheet on Google Sheets to automatically record the answers. The spreadsheet then populates with the responses from the quiz or survey in real-time. Once you click Submit on the form, the information provided (eg. changes to the form) will be recorded in the form owner's spreadsheet and in the summary of responses.