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CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAM AS THE “SOFT POWER” OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION⁴

The EU's soft power is not only a factor of the Community's attraction but also a driver of change in the candidate countries. Culture remains one of the most “visible” and influential components of soft power. Culture and cultural heritage, reflecting cultural diversity and a shared history, are the cement that shapes and contributes to a common European sense of belonging; to the EU's social cohesion and democratic values, as well as to the sustainability, attractiveness and viability of its economy. Through the Creative Europe program, the European Commission invests in culture in the candidate countries as it is convinced that culture contributes to EU integration. Investment in culture is seen as a means of showing the candidate country that it is culturally part of Europe and deserves a role in the joint construction of European culture and identity. The European Commission's strategies, i.e., introducing new forms of multi-level governance, channelling investment into culture, and creating European partnerships in the distribution of funding, contribute

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to “governance through culture”. By joining the Creative Europe program in 2016 and receiving candidate country status in 2022, Ukraine enhanced the international visibility of Ukrainian culture, which is an important factor in shaping the country’s positive image on the international stage. Ukraine’s participation in Creative Europe also contributes to the formation of a common cultural narrative based on mutual respect, dialogue and solidarity – the principles that underpin European identity. The program also stimulates the development of creative industries, which has a positive impact on the economy, employment and social cohesion as it helps Ukrainian organizations adapt to European standards, increases their competitiveness and promotes the sustainable development of the cultural sector.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy, cultural policy, cultural management, cultural projects, EU, Ukraine.

Програма «Креативна Європа» – м’яка сила європейської інтеграції

М’яка сила ЄС є не лише чинником атракції Спільноти, а й драйвером змін у країнах-кандидатах. Культура залишається одним з найбільш «видимих» та впливових компонентів м’якої сили. Культура та культурна спадщина, відображаючи культурне розмаїття й спільну історію, – це цемент, який формує та сприяє спільному європейському відчуттю приналежності; соціальній згуртованості ЄС та його демократичним цінностям, а також стійкості, привабливості та життєздатності його економіки. Через програму «Креативна Європа» Європейська комісія інвестує в культуру в державах-кандидатах, оскільки переконана, що культура сприяє інтеграції до ЄС. Інвестиції в культуру розглядаються як засіб показати державі-кандидату, що вона культурно є частиною Європи та заслуговує на роль у спільному будівництві європейської культури та ідентичності. Стратегії ЄК – запровадження нових форм багаторівневого управління, спрямування інвестицій у культуру, створення європейських партнерств у розподілі фінансування – сприяють «управлінню через культуру». Долучившись до програми «Креативна Європа» у 2016 р. і отримавши статус країни-кандидата в 2022 р., Україна отримала можливість посилити міжнародну видимість української культури, що є важливим чинником у формуванні позитивного іміджу країни на міжнародній арені. Участь України в «Креативній Європі» також сприяє формуванню спільногого культурного наративу, що базується

на взаємоповазі, діалозі та солідарності, – принципах, які лежать в основі європейської ідентичності. Програма також стимулює розвиток креативних індустрій, що має позитивний вплив на економіку, зайнятість та соціальну згуртованість, бо допомагає українським організаціям адаптуватися до європейських стандартів, підвищуючи їхню конкурентоспроможність і сприяє сталому розвитку сектору культури.

Ключові слова: культурна дипломатія, культурна політика, управління культурою, проекти у сфері культури, ЄС, Україна.

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Problem Statement. Towards the end of the Cold War, during which the USA and the USSR, as the centres of the bipolar system, constantly competed in terms of their military power, an alternative concept of state power, i.e., “soft power”, was formed. Its author, J. Nye, suggested that in the modern era, soft power became the most effective way to ensure world leadership because, unlike hard power, it was not perceived as an external force action. Three main sources form soft power: 1) culture (when it is attractive to others), 2) political values (when the state lives by these values and is guided by them in relations with other countries), 3) foreign policy (when others consider it to be legitimate and moral) (Nye, 2011, 149–150). Soft power consists in the ability to obtain the desired through attraction or inducement, rather than through coercion, and through reward, without economic or military pressure. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, its ideals, and policies, and involves the ability to create an environment conducive to initiatives and activities (Nye, 2005). It should be stressed that culture is one of the most “visible” and influential components of soft power.

Review of Current Research. A 2024 study commissioned by the British Council identified the following current trends in soft power (MacDonald & Murray, 2024):

- soft power policies and programmes are more explicitly related to national foreign policy priorities and national interests than in the past;
- soft power is increasingly linked to economic policy and goals;
- there is an increase in activity designed to appeal to domestic audiences: delivering benefits at home and making the case for international engagement;
- soft power is increasingly being mobilised to promote national identities, sometimes assertively or controversially;

- these shifts are reflected in moves towards greater national policy and strategy co-ordination.

The issue of soft power, in particular its cultural component, was researched by J.T. Lee, N. Haneş and A. Andrei, A. Vuving, H.W. Ohnesorge, G.M. Gallarotti, S.B. Rothman, Y. Fan, etc. Among Ukrainian scientists, the concept of “soft power” was the focus of attention of Yu. Korniychuk, O. Tkach and A. Tkach, O. Semenchenko, I. Hladkiy, V. Gorbatenko, N. Bielousova, O. Fesyk, etc.

The European Union uses soft power as a key foreign policy tool, focusing on attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. This, in turn, involves promoting shared values, offering economic assistance and facilitating cultural exchange to influence other countries and achieve its goals. In particular, key aspects of the EU’s soft power include:

- enlargement: the promise of economic prosperity and the image of the EU as a “peace project” have been powerful pull factors that have contributed to the enlargement of the Union;
- shared values: the EU’s emphasis on democracy, human rights and the rule of law serves as a model for other countries and promotes alignment with EU values;
- economic cooperation: providing economic assistance and facilitating trade relations can create interdependence and encourage cooperation with the EU;
- cultural exchange: promoting European culture, arts, and education contributes to understanding and a positive perception of the EU.

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Our research aim is to analyze how such a component of the EU cultural diplomacy as the Creative Europe program contributes to maintaining the attractiveness of European integration and modernization processes in candidate countries, in particular in Ukraine. The research tasks include the following: to emphasize the role of culture in the European integration process, to consider the European Commission strategies for shaping the cultural “agenda”, to outline the main priorities of the Creative Europe program and, in this context, to examine Ukraine’s participation in grant projects for further integration into the EU cultural space. The novelty of this research lies in the analysis of the potential of the Creative Europe program for Ukraine’s European integration progress.

Presentation of the Research Outcomes. In times of geopolitical uncertainty, it is crucial to shape a vision for the future of the European Union. If the EU is to continue to play a significant role in the future and to be

a reference point for people in the world, it will need the support of its citizens. Building this support must focus on what unites people. This is where culture and cultural heritage come in. For centuries, culture and heritage have played a key role in shaping a common identity among Europeans, and today they are vital in fostering a sense of unity and belonging to the wider European community. They are also essential for protecting and promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights, which form Europe's shared values, and therefore for combating the backsliding from democracy combined with the rise of anti-European sentiment fuelled by populist and extremist groups (The Unifying Role of Culture, 2025).

The accelerated integration and enlargement of the EU after the Cold War reinforced the formulation of the “Union of Values” in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, through which “culture” became the focus of the “third wave” of European integration to strengthen European identity and enhance the legitimacy of EU institutions by promoting “common values” and a common heritage as the foundations of the Union (Lahdesmaki, 2016).

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— The EU's fundamental values, as defined in Article 2 of the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon, include “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities [...], pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men”. By promoting these values, which the Treaty calls “EU values”, in Article 1, the EU aims to achieve “an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe” (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). Both treaties demonstrate that the EU is in the process of shaping its ongoing economic and political integration within a cultural narrative that shapes identity and focuses on upholding common values (Akaliyski, Welzel & Hien, 2020).

Enlargement is a permanent item on the agenda of the European Union. The European Commission, local authorities and affiliated organizations have developed initiatives to facilitate the accession processes of new countries (e.g. Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkiye, Ukraine and Moldova). These are not limited to the areas of law, economy and politics but increasingly include the field of culture (Vos, 2017).

Europeanization, i.e., changes, transformations, reforms taking place in all spheres of life under the influence of European integration processes (Клим, 2021), is viewed in two dimensions: 1) as the implementation of European rules and norms “from the top down”, that is, the implementa-

tion of large-scale institutional reforms by candidate countries; 2) as a two-way process when the national and supranational levels interact where the EU has introduced new forms of governance in areas in which Member States hesitate to transfer sovereignty, in particular, in culture, education, the environment and social issues. Instead of using the traditional method of binding legislation, in these areas, the EU has resorted to instruments based on “voluntarism, subsidiarity, flexibility, participation, policy integration and multi-level integration” (Borrás & Jacobsson, 2004, 189).

Culture is one of the “softer” areas the Commission invests in to complement its tougher conditionality policy. Although culture is part of the *Acquis Communautaire* and thus part of the EU’s conditionality policy, according to Article 151 of the EU Treaty, participation in cultural initiatives is voluntary and based on the principle of subsidiarity (European Commission, 2016). This is also applied to EU-funded cultural projects in the context of enlargement. The European Commission invests in culture in candidate countries because it is convinced that culture contributes to EU integration. Politically, investment in culture is seen as a means to show the candidate country that it is culturally part of Europe and deserves a role in the co-construction of European culture and identity. Socio-economically, investment in culture can stimulate development, which is relevant to the wider accession process and conditionality policies. Culture is a means to achieve the EU’s wider objectives (European Commission, 2016).

The EU invests in culture in the context of enlargement because of its perceived added value for European integration. EU investment in culture is a means of legitimizing the wider EU policy sphere. Banu Karaca (a cultural anthropologist working at the intersection of political anthropology, art history, aesthetics, nationalism, cultural policy, museum practices and feminist memory studies) argues that we are witnessing not only the governance of culture and art (the “traditional” focus of cultural policy) but also an attempt to govern through culture (Karaca, 2009). Such governance through culture is by no means self-evident. While the Commission has clear ideas about its investments, it depends on the actions of the Member States and their willingness to integrate EU objectives into their own frameworks. In order to influence the course of its investments without resorting to coercion, the EU uses a number of strategies. In this way, the Commission hopes to steer EU-funded cultural initiatives towards European integration (Vos, 2017).

The first strategy is aimed at introducing new forms of multi-level governance. EU-funded cultural initiatives require participants to co-operate at different levels – national, regional and supranational. This creates interdependencies between national actors, such as local authorities, and supranational actors, such as the Commission, who jointly develop EU-funded initiatives. Shared management means that the Commission delegates responsibility, management and control of funded initiatives to eligible countries. To make this work, countries are asked to set up management and control systems that meet the requirements of the funding instruments of DG-NEAR (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement)⁵ and DG-REGIO (Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy) (European Parliament and the Council, 2012, 35). The Commission plays only a supervisory role and requires regular reporting in the form of strategy papers, strategic frameworks and operational programs (European Parliament and the Council, 2014a; 2014b). These reports set out the conditions, priorities and objectives of the financial assistance for each relevant funding period. On the basis of these reports, the Commission reviews progress towards achieving the expected results (Vos, 2017).

Strict adherence to funding criteria is a second strategy used by the Commission to guide its investments in culture. The European Commission acts as a “gatekeeper”, trying to steer project proposals towards its broader policy objectives. For example, in the case of DG-NEAR and DG-REGIO, the conditions, priorities and objectives of financial assistance were defined in strategic documents and operational programs (Vos, 2017).

The third strategy used by the Commission to manage cultural initiatives is to create European partnerships in the distribution of funding. “Participating in the programs is an exercise. At the beginning, countries are partners. After several years, they have seen the best practices in the field, have matured, and start to act as project leaders” (Vos, 2017).

European integration has its laws that cannot be circumvented; without fulfilling formalized requirements, it is impossible to join the European Union. However, the mechanism to deepen European integration inevitably encounters contradictions that constantly hinder the further develop-

⁵ This DG operated until February 1, 2025. Its responsibilities were then divided between the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf and the Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood.

ment of the project in its modern format: 1) balancing between national interests and supranational problems, which constantly accompanies all processes in the EU; 2) the constant expansion of the project creates conditions for the emergence of informal political unions among EU members, and lobbying for common national interests in a pan-European Union is its basis. Culture provides opportunities to reduce these negative manifestations. Culture and cultural heritage, reflecting cultural diversity and common history, are the cement that forms and contributes to a common European sense of belonging; the social cohesion of the EU and its democratic values, as well as the stability, attractiveness and viability of its economy. Therefore, culture and cultural heritage must be supported as key assets of the European project.

Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty defines the EU's objectives in relation to the wider world (Aims and Values, 2025): to uphold and promote its values and interests; to contribute to peace, security and sustainable development of the Earth; to promote solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, the eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights; and to strictly observe international law. Culture contributes to the harmonization of relations, the promotion and observance of European values, and the maintenance of peace and security. In particular, cultural diplomacy often becomes the very tool that allows for the restoration/establishment of interstate relations that have deteriorated.

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To preserve, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage, as well as to increase the competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the audiovisual sector, the EC has been implementing the Creative Europe program since 2014. For 2021-2027, its budget is €2.44 billion compared to €1.47 billion for the previous program (2014-2020) (About Creative Europe Programme, 2025). The program has three strands:

1. The Culture Strand encourages cooperation and exchange between cultural organizations and artists in Europe and beyond. It aims to foster artistic creativity and innovation; support the promotion and dissemination of European content in Europe and beyond; help artists find opportunities for creativity and performance across borders; and stimulate the digital and green transition of the European cultural and creative sectors (Creative Europe CULTURE strand, 2025).

2. The Media Strand supports the European film and audiovisual industry to develop, distribute and promote European works, taking into ac-

count the modern digital environment; encourages cooperation across the audiovisual value chain at EU level to scale up businesses and European content worldwide; nurtures talent and promotes knowledge exchange; supports innovative solutions to meet market demands and trends; and engages audiences of all ages, especially young people (Creative Europe MEDIA strand, 2025).

3. The Cross-Sectoral Strand aims to strengthen cooperation between different cultural and creative sectors (CCS) to help them address common challenges and find innovative solutions. Its main priorities are: to support cross-sectoral transnational policy cooperation, promoting the visibility of the programme and supporting the transferability of results; to encourage innovative approaches to content creation, access, distribution and promotion in CCS and other sectors; to support adaptation to structural and technological changes faced by the media; to encourage the establishment and operation of Creative Europe Units (CROSS-SECTORAL Strand, 2025).

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— The European Union is co-financing 37 pan-European networks of cultural and creative organizations under the Creative Europe programme, 2021-2027. These networks support cultural organizations of all sizes, representing thousands of members, from individuals to national and regional organizations working in the cultural and creative sectors. The European Commission consults these networks on the development and implementation of EU cultural policy. Through them, Creative Europe aims to strengthen the cultural and creative sectors by offering opportunities for learning and development. It provides a platform for the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of information on projects and good practices. Co-financing is provided for the following sectors: architecture, books and publishing, cross-sectoral projects, cultural heritage, music, performing arts (European networks, 2025).

Ukraine joined the Creative Europe Programme in 2016, and in December 2021, a new Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine on Ukraine's participation in the Creative Europe Program (2021-2027) was signed. In response to Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, the European Commission has taken several measures, including: 1) in the Creative Europe Work Plan for 2023 and 2024, assistance to Ukraine is identified as a cross-cutting priority for all projects of the Program, i.e., during the competitive selection, preference is given to projects involving Ukrainian artists or those aimed at assisting Ukraine; 2) in autumn 2022,

a Special Competition “Support to Ukrainian IDPs (internally displaced persons) and the Cultural and Creative Sectors of Ukraine” was held with a total budget of €5 million. The projects will be implemented during 2023-2025, three selected winning project-consortiums with the participation of Ukraine provide sub-grants to support Ukrainian art projects (Співробітництво у сфері культури, 2025):

- “CHANGE: RENEWAL” by “IZOLYATSIA.Platform of Cultural Initiatives” («ЗМИНА: ВІДНОВЛЕННЯ» by «ІЗОЛЯЦІЯ.Платформа культурних ініціатив»). The project aims to support Ukrainian artists and cultural organizations in creating and showcasing works in Ukraine and at least in 12 other Creative Europe participating countries. The project will provide €1.4 million in sub-grants to support at least 40 artistic projects related to the theme of renewal, as well as aimed at increasing the visibility of Ukrainian artistic works in Ukraine and abroad. TRANS EUROPE HALLES (TEH) (Spain) and MALY BERLIN (Germany) are Consortium partners;

- “Culture Helps” by “Insha Osvita” («Культура допомагає» by «Інша Освіта»). The project aims to help Ukrainians, especially families with children displaced by the war, integrate into new communities. The initiative will provide sub-grants to support mental health, organize online and offline workshops and meetings for displaced cultural workers both in Ukraine and abroad. MitOst e.V. (Germany) is a Consortium partner;

- “Architects for Heritage in Ukraine: Recreating Identity and Memory” («Архітектори за спадщину в Україні: Відтворення ідентичності та пам'яті»). The project will address the issues of assessment, preservation and restoration of urban and architectural heritage in Ukraine during and after the war. Interdisciplinary teams of Ukrainian and European specialists will share their knowledge and experience to build competences in heritage protection, revitalize culturally significant plans and projects and empower local communities. 11 project participants are the following: Lithuanian Association of Architects (main coordinator), National Union of Architects of Ukraine, Urban Coalition Ro3kvit, associations of architects and artists from Germany, Denmark, Romania, Italy, Estonia (Співробітництво у сфері культури, 2025).

In June 2022, after acquiring the status of a candidate for EU membership, Ukraine received the right to participate in the annual European Capital of Culture competition within the framework of the Creative Europe Program. Since 2023, Ukrainian cities have been able to compete for this

title and, if they win, will have the opportunity to accelerate their cultural, social and economic development, renew historical centers, implement creative projects, attract tourists, thereby contributing to the formation of Ukraine's European identity (Співробітництво у сфері культури, 2025).

Thus, Creative Europe continues to play an important role in the process of Ukraine's European integration, promoting cultural dialogue, strengthening inter-institutional European ties and promoting values. The participation of Ukrainian organizations in this program enables not only to integrate into a common cultural space but also to form European partnerships with European partner institutions. Consequently, it promotes the exchange of experience, raises the professional level and implements innovative practices in the field of culture and creative industries. In addition, Creative Europe creates conditions for enhancing the international visibility of Ukrainian culture as a factor to shape the positive image of the country in the international arena. Owing to the support of joint projects, mobility of artists and translation of literature, the program encourages cultural diplomacy and the establishment of Ukraine as an active participant in the European cultural process. This, in turn, deepens integration processes not only in the cultural sphere but also in the broader field of political and social rapprochement with the EU.

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Ukraine's successful cases include: participation in the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards, where Ukrainian initiatives received recognition for preserving cultural heritage (Українські переможці, 2025). The Perform Ukraine project is also important as it has become a platform for performative art, exchange of experience and establishment of partnerships between Ukrainian and European artists (Підтримані проекти: Культура, 2025). Several factors outline the value of these projects: 1) they contribute to the internationalization of Ukrainian culture, ensuring its visibility at the European level; 2) participation in the program allows Ukrainian organizations to receive financial support, develop institutional capacity and implement innovative approaches; 3) through joint initiatives with European partners, cultural integration is deepened being an important element of the broader process of European integration of Ukraine.

In 2025, Creative Europe supports the following projects, the Ukrainian side being a participant, in the Culture Strand (Підтримані проекти: Культура, 2025):

- "Territory of Inspiration" Art residency («Територія натхнення»).

Participants include: Ukrainian partner organization NGO “Tustan”, and partners – Machaon International (Slovakia), European Wilderness Society (Austria), NGO LAG Straznicko (Austria), ANNOGALLERY (Slovakia). The main idea of the project is to encourage the mobility of artists and creative people to rural areas as a source of their inspiration while using the results of their creativity to enhance local development (tourism), nature conservation and cultural heritage through international cooperation and popularization of the beauty of wild nature and the rich folk culture of rural areas through works of art. A wild nature open-air event organized by the Austrians took place on Lake Synevyr, and in the Czech Republic, a dynamic event-journey 30 kilometers long through the meadows of South Moravia with the folklore group “Sheep for the White Carpathians”. In Estonia, there were discussions about 19th-century fine arts, sculpture, and photography, and in Slovakia, children were taught how to work with clay properly.

• Brave Kids Festival. Partners are represented by Ukrainian women’s charity organization Our Visions, and Charitable Foundation Caritas Georgia (Georgia), Fundacja Swiat na Wyciagniecie Reki (Poland), FUN-DACJA WYMIANY KULTUROWEJ TO TU TO TAM (Poland), Haliganda (Slovakia), Miniartshow SRL (Romania), Toleranti Associacion of Samtskhe-Javakheti region (Georgia). The mission of the Brave Kids festival is to help children (many of whom are war survivors) discover their talents and believe in themselves. Events will be realized in two stages: 1) master classes in different cities, conducted by the children themselves. Participants will be divided into groups and sent to different cities for workshops. They will live with local residents and will be able to get acquainted with different worldviews and cultures. Upon completion of this stage, the children will organize a concert in the cities where the master classes were held; 2) in Wrocław, participants from different countries will prepare the final performance “Brave Kids” for 10 days under the guidance of a director. The performance will combine cultures, traditions and artistic techniques from the participating children’s homelands.

• EU Youth Cinema: Green Deal project. The project aims to create a strong European community of environmentally conscious and responsible young people who are aware of climate challenges and know how to confront them. A unique educational platform with a focus on sustainable development brings the green agenda of the European Green Deal to young citizens from different backgrounds – through films and discussions

in cinemas with recognized and often famous experts, as well as through an innovative streaming platform with a powerful didactic narrative www.euyc.green.

• Molodist Film Festival. The main objective of the festival is to promote the development of young professional cinema. The competition program presents feature-length films by debutants, as well as Ukrainian short films. The main sections of the festival are student films, first short films (fiction, animation, documentary) and first feature-length films, as well as a national competition.

• Odessa International Film Festival. The development of the professional film industry in Ukraine is one of the main missions of the Odessa Film Festival. The professional section of the Film Industry Office (<https://new.oiff.com.ua/>) hosts Producer Pitching (a competition for full-length film projects of Ukrainian production or co-production with Ukraine, intended for theatrical release), presentations of films at the Work in Progress stage, as well as panel discussions and round tables dedicated to pressing issues of the industry's development. The Ukrainian Film Market (<https://new.oiff.com.ua/>) is one of the professional events of the Odessa Film Festival; it is the only professional platform in the country for communication between distributors, representatives of cinemas, film studios and companies providing rental and other services. Every year, specialized educational programs (for screenwriters, directors, producers) are also held within the framework of the Odessa IFF.

Conclusions. Thus, the implementation of the EU Creative Europe program in Ukraine has become a powerful tool of cultural diplomacy which not only opens up new opportunities for Ukrainian artists, organizations and institutions, but also actively contributes to the process of the country's European integration. Through participation in the program, Ukrainian cultural figures gain access to European grants, partnerships and platforms, which allow them to implement projects at the international level, exchange experience and ideas, and represent Ukraine as an active participant in the European cultural space. Ukraine's participation in Creative Europe also contributes to the formation of a common cultural narrative based on mutual respect, dialogue and solidarity – the principles that underlie European identity. Additionally, the program stimulates the development of creative industries, which has a positive impact on the economy, employment and social cohesion. It helps Ukrainian organizations adapt to European standards, increases their competitiveness and

promotes the sustainable development of the cultural sector. Hence, Creative Europe is not only a program to support culture but also an important factor in Ukraine's integration into the European space. It consolidates the state's place among the democratic, open and culturally rich countries of Europe.

In the future, Ukraine's participation in the Creative Europe program can become a catalyst for systemic changes in the field of cultural policy and management of cultural processes at the national level. The program creates conditions for the formation of a sustainable ecosystem of cultural and creative industries, combining state, public and private initiatives. This contributes to the decentralization of cultural development, the activation of regional cultural initiatives and the involvement of new participants in the creative process. The importance of Creative Europe is especially relevant in times of war when culture becomes not only a tool of resistance and preservation of identity, but also an important resource for the psychological stability of society and international support. Through cultural projects, Ukraine has the opportunity to convey the truth about the war, demonstrate the strength and dignity of the Ukrainian people, and empowering international solidarity and support. Therefore, Creative Europe for Ukraine is not only access to resources, but also a platform for restoration, unity and a strategic vision of the role of culture in the post-war reconstruction of the country as part of the European community.

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