



Hearing Response to “Strategic Framework: Denmark’s Partnership with Ukraine July 2025-June 2028”

Danish Cultural Institute

The Danish Cultural Institute (DCI) welcomes the new strategy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DMoFA) regarding support for Ukraine. We appreciate the significant assistance Denmark is offering, which is both well-founded and vital. However, we would like to draw attention to several points of concern:

Lacking Focus on Cultural Activities: Over the past five years, Ukraine has faced unprecedented challenges, including a global pandemic and a full-scale military invasion by Russia. These dramatic events have led to a high level of isolation, particularly affecting young people and resulting in fragile social skills and increased alienation. Consequently, their social, educational, psychological, and personal development trajectories have been put on hold. The impact of such developments on the fabric of society cannot be underestimated.

Participation in a vibrant and meaningful cultural life—characterized by human exchange and expression—is essential for cultivating democratically aware citizens who respect one another’s rights and recognize the importance of their active participation in societal development and growth. DCI has repeatedly observed that active engagement in cultural life is a prerequisite for democratization and the establishment of human rights-based societies. This perspective is supported by a recent European Commission report titled “Culture and Democracy: The Evidence. How citizens’ participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion: lessons from international research,” which highlights that participation in cultural activities leads to:

- An increased likelihood of voting, volunteering, and participating in community activities, projects, and organizations;
- The development of positive social attitudes associated with civic and democratic values, such as community belonging, tolerance, trust, and empathy for diverse backgrounds;



- The enhancement of personal and social skills essential for functioning democracies, enabling individuals to express themselves, listen to others, understand different perspectives, and facilitate conflict resolution.

Therefore, the crucial role that culture plays in rebuilding societies and strengthening societal cohesion must not be overlooked.

The implementation of the New Democracy Fund and the Ukrainian Danish Youth House over the past four years has demonstrated a significant need for cultural activities and platforms for co-creation, idea development, and community building, especially among young Ukrainians. Bridging connections among citizens and between citizens and their environments will be vital for Ukraine's successful integration into NATO and the EU. We believe that cultural initiatives can provide the tools necessary to reshape mindsets and foster a collaborative societal framework. Thus, we firmly advocate for investments in systemic cultural initiatives—such as youth centers, cultural hubs, and community engagement projects—crucial for nurturing societal cohesion, democratization, and robust social infrastructures. While the DMOFA's strategy discusses rebuilding social infrastructure in detail, its effectiveness can be further enhanced by focusing on systemic cultural initiatives and programs that promote dialogue, social cohesion, and socio-psychological rehabilitation—critical aspects of the recovery process. Therefore, DCI recommends incorporating a systemic focus on cultural programs under Strategic Goals 1 and 3. DCI is prepared to assist in formulating specific programmatic frameworks and identifying relevant Ukrainian partners.

Broader Involvement of Civil Society and Strengthened Coordination: While the strategy's emphasis on partnering with local authorities and intergovernmental agencies is important, enhancing the involvement of Danish and Ukrainian civil society organizations (CSOs) is equally crucial. Their established networks and on-the-ground expertise can significantly improve program implementation and ensure that initiatives are well-rooted in both Danish know-how and local Ukrainian contexts.

Danish CSOs possess long-term experience working in Ukraine, allowing them to translate their expertise, tools, and concepts into the Ukrainian context effectively. In parallel, their Ukrainian counterparts possess first-hand knowledge of the immediate needs of citizens, identifying gaps and opportunities within the recovery process. Furthermore, increased



participation of civil society in recovery programs will undoubtedly foster grassroots trust and mitigate risks associated with potential turnover among local authorities.

In addition to enhancing the involvement of both Danish and Ukrainian CSOs in DMoFA's program, we advocate for the development of more advanced coordination mechanisms that integrate civil society actors alongside existing private and state structures. This approach will amplify the contributions of civil society.

Thank you for considering these points in your strategic planning.