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COMMEMORATION AND REMEMBRANCE IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINE. ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATION AND COMMUNITY PRACTICES

GREEN BOOK ON THE POLITICS OF MEMORY



Commemoration and Remembrance in Contemporary Ukraine. Analysis of Legislation and Community Practices. Green Book on the Politics of Memory. – M. Leligulashvili, D. Bielinska; ed. O. Lunova – Kyiv, 2025. – 44 p.

This document was prepared to identify key issues and challenges facing the state in the field of national politics of memory, analysing the evolution of legislation and existing practices of commemoration at the community level. The development of a comprehensive and coordinated politics of memory is an urgent need in the context of war in order to ensure inclusive commemoration of all victims, prevent the political instrumentalisation of the past, promote social cohesion and establish guarantees that such tragedies will not be repeated as an important element of transitional justice.

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The Human Rights Centre ZMINA is a Ukrainian human rights organisation working to protect freedom of speech, combat discrimination, prevent torture and cruel treatment, support human rights defenders and civil society activists, document international crimes, and protect the rights of victims of war.

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This publication was compiled with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation. Its content is the exclusive responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the International Renaissance Foundation.

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, which has been ongoing since 2014, memorialisation and national politics of memory are taking on new significance in Ukraine. This fight for independence, which is a continuation of much earlier liberation efforts, requires a profound rethinking of the past and the formation of a shared vision for the future. Today, as the Ukrainian nation goes through its most difficult challenges, the creation of a unified narrative of memory becomes a platform for uniting society, healing collective traumas, and constructing a new social contract.

When the researchers began analysing the politics of memory with a focus exclusively on Russian armed aggression, they encountered significant fragmentation in the functioning of executive authorities and local self-government bodies. The actual inclusion of certain measures or instruments, depending on the sphere, region or the level of the community, was the responsibility of very different structural units, or was replaced by public organisations or groups of individuals. That is why an attempt was made to comprehensively study the history of the development of the politics of memory and the relevant infrastructure.

In this context, memorialisation is not only a way of honouring the dead, but also an important tool of transitional justice. Memorialisation performs a therapeutic function, allowing grief to be experienced, ensures the right to truth and "symbolic justice" in situations where the prosecution of war criminals is impeded, and provides guarantees of non-repetition through critical analysis of the causes of the war and the circumstances that led to its outbreak.

One of the instruments for preparing proposals and measures for state policy is to conduct an analysis of the relevant field and prepare a Green Book as a basis for a comprehensive review of existing approaches to the politics of memory. The research project "Commemoration and Remembrance in Contemporary Ukraine: Analysis of Legislation and Community Practices" aims to initiate a discussion on the content and forms of memorialisation in Ukraine as one of the components of transitional justice.

The analytical note consists of two key sections.

The first section offers a comprehensive analysis of Ukrainian legislation in the field of politics of memory, tracing its evolution from the restoration of independence to the present day.

The second section examines actual commemoration practices at the community level, analysing their forms, instruments, and target audiences based on data obtained from local authorities.

By analysing challenges, achievements and gaps, we seek to bring together the positions of different parties and sectors to propose approaches to developing a comprehensive, inclusive and democratic national politics of memory that meets the needs of contemporary Ukrainian society and takes into account the demands of victims and society for justice and guarantees of non-repetition.

METHODOLOGY

To write the Green Book, the research team developed a comprehensive research methodology. It combined an analysis of practices for commemorating people who died as a result of Russia's armed aggression with general memorialisation policy. The methodology includes both desk and practical research approaches.

We have deliberately expanded the traditional approach to the analysis of the politics of memory. The latest definition of this sphere, provided by the legislator, narrowed the state policy of national memory to a direction of state policy aimed at creating legal, organisational, and economic conditions and guarantees for the restoration and preservation of the national memory of the Ukrainian people, as well as research and popularisation of the history of Ukraine¹. Similarly, the glossary developed by the professional community did not allow for an analysis of the entire range of actions and measures taken by the Ukrainian state and society to respond appropriately to the Soviet legacy and Russian armed aggression. This is because the proposed definition of the “politics of memory” as both a component of the culture of memory and the cultural policy of a particular community, which functionally represents a set of ideas, actions, normative documents and practices aimed at changing or, conversely, preserving the existing culture of memory, did not cover both the created infrastructure and the demand². Accordingly, the research team proposed to focus primarily on certain groups of individuals who, from the state's point of view, needed to be provided with proper documentation, the right to truth, compensation, and guarantees of non-repetition. In fact, these are the four main components of transitional justice. Subsequently, having agreed upon the vision of the dynamics, the established system of authorities, and the list of tasks and measures, the research was able to comprehensively analyse this area and see the gaps or achievements that need to be scaled up.

The desk research approach included:

- The collection and analysis of research, analytics, and monitoring conducted between 2014 and 2025;
- The analysis of regulatory and legal acts governing memorialisation policy, adopted at the level of Parliament, Government, President and central authorities, which directly or indirectly regulated the components of the policy analysed in this document, which was developed at the national level and was also reflected in state strategies and programmes;
- The preparation of information requests to local self-government bodies regarding local approaches and practices of memorialisation and analysis of responses.

1 Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of State Policy on National Memory of the Ukrainian People” dated 18 December 2024 No. 4579-IX: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4579-20#Text>

2 Politics of memory / Past/Future/Art: https://pastfutureart.org/glossary/#Politics_of_Memory

It is important to note that the researchers have combined in this document systematised and summarised data, collected both within the framework of the project “Promoting the development of public policies to overcome the negative consequences of the Russian Federation’s armed aggression in Ukraine, taking into account transitional justice approaches” and other initiatives in which they were involved.

To analyse legislative and subordinate acts that directly or indirectly regulate the sphere of politics of memory, a search was conducted using the keywords “memory”, “commemoration”, and “memorialisation” on the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine website³. As a result, roughly 5,000 documents became available from various institutions and levels. Consequently, a “snowball” approach was used, which allowed us to formulate the main blocks of regulatory governance in this area. The general list included approximately 860 normative legal acts, which can be conditionally divided into:

- Regulatory acts that directly regulate issues of national politics of memory. These include laws, resolutions, decrees, orders and strategies that directly regulated the relevant policy area, established the relevant body, or defined the strategy and relevant action plans;
- Regulatory acts governing related areas, but which are critically important for national politics of memory. For example, the Law of Ukraine “On the Protection of Cultural Heritage”⁴, the Law of Ukraine “On Burial and Funeral Services”⁵, and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “On Approval of the Procedure for Conducting a Competition to Select Programmes, Projects, and Measures Developed by Civil Society Institutions”⁶, do not directly concern the politics of memory, but regulate an important component of it, or are a proven tool for implementing this policy, either directly or through the same delegation to civil society;
- Regulations that do not directly or indirectly relate to the politics of memory, but embody changes that have taken place in this area. For example, the Law of Ukraine “On the De-Sovietisation of Ukrainian Legislation”⁷ and others.

To analyse regulatory documents, local programmes and practices, 161 (2024) and 178 (2025) information requests were prepared and sent to local self-government bodies in all regions of Ukraine, asking them to provide information on existing memorialisation practices. The criterion of population size was used to select the recipients of the requests. At the level of each region, based on data posted on the websites of regional administrations, two territorial communities with the largest, average and smallest populations were selected in addition to the regional centre.

3 available at: zakon.rada.gov.ua

4 Law of Ukraine “On the Protection of Cultural Heritage” dated 08.06.2000 No. 1805-III: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1805-14#Text>

5 Law of Ukraine “On Burial and Funeral Services” dated 10 July 2003 No. 1102-IV: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1102-15#Text>

6 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1049 of 12 October 2011 “On Approval of the Procedure for Conducting a Competition to Select Programmes, Projects, and Measures Developed by Civil Society Institutions”: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1049-2011-%D0%BF#Text>

7 Law of Ukraine “On the De-Sovietisation of Ukrainian Legislation” dated 21 April 2022 No. 2215-IX: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2215-20#Text>

The practical research approach includes:

- Ten in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in July 2025 with key experts in the field of memorialisation, business, artists and the military at the national level;
- Three regional research workshops were held in July and August 2025 in Lviv, Kharkiv, and Kyiv, with representatives of the expert community in the field of memorialisation, military personnel and veterans affected by the consequences of war and their family members, representatives of local self-government bodies responsible for memorialisation at the community level, representatives of central government bodies, artists, and others.

Accordingly, this document combines national regulations on the politics of memory and typical measures to ensure its implementation, as well as practices developed by authorities at the community level in all regions and types.

SUMMARY

This Green Book is a comprehensive analysis of the state policy of national memory in Ukraine, its legislative evolution and practices of commemoration at the community level. Its importance stems from the need to develop a comprehensive, democratic and inclusive strategy for memorialisation in the context of full-scale war, which is a key element of transitional justice and social consolidation.

The first section of the document is devoted to an analysis of Ukrainian legislation in the field of memory. For this purpose, four conditional periods were identified, reflecting key changes in the political and social contexts that influenced the formation of state policy:

- 1. 1991–2004:** After independence was restored, the politics of memory focused on the right to truth and compensation for victims of totalitarian regimes (Soviet repression, the Holodomor, Nazi persecution). At that time, the basic infrastructure (archives, museums) was established, but it remained fragmented.
- 2. 2004–2014:** This stage is characterised by the political instrumentalisation of memory to mobilise the electorate. At the same time, a key achievement was the final consolidation of the Holodomor as a national component of the politics of memory and the creation of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM) in 2006.
- 3. 2014–2022:** The start of Russia's armed aggression accelerated the transformation processes. The state strengthened the role of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory and adopted a package of laws on decommunisation, condemnation of totalitarian regimes, and synchronisation of the commemoration of World War II events with European practices.
- 4. Since 2022:** The policy of memory has finally acquired the status of a security component. Laws on de-imperialisation and derussification have been passed, and the UINM has been transformed into a central executive body with special status to coordinate all policy in this area.

The second section contains an analysis of existing practices of commemoration at the local level. This field research is based on information requests sent to 178 local self-government bodies (LSGBs) throughout Ukraine, with a response rate of over 84%.

Key findings of the research:

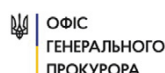
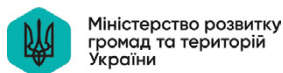
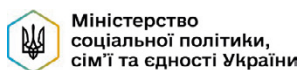
- 1.** The most common forms of commemoration are memorial plaques (69.6% of communities) and street renaming (66.4%). Their number has grown rapidly since 2022.
- 2.** There is a clear monopolisation of memory: the vast majority of programmes and memorials are dedicated to soldiers and their families, while civilian victims of war are almost completely excluded from the official space of commemoration.

3. Public involvement in memorialisation processes is mostly formal and does not have a real impact on decision-making. At the same time, a characteristic feature of policy development and implementation in the field of memory is the high level of involvement and influence of civil society (within the country and representatives of the diaspora) and the expert community.
4. The politics of memory in Ukraine has potential for development thanks to accumulated practices and infrastructure, but its effectiveness is limited by political dependence, weak institutions, and a lack of readiness to discuss complex issues.
5. The sector continues to face recurring challenges, including avoidance of problematic and complex issues (spontaneous memorialisation), high dependence on the political context and instrumentalisation for mobilising the electorate, and insufficient inter-agency cooperation and institutional capacity.
6. At the level of society, groups affected by the Russian Federation's armed aggression show a high level of demand for commemoration, not only of death and loss, but also of life. Not only sadness, but also resistance, mutual support, solidarity and resilience of society.
7. In cases of prolonged disregard for requests for commemorative events or, conversely, attempts to make quick/simulated decisions without involving the key target groups (victims and their families, experts, etc.), significant conflicts may arise. There is an extremely high demand on authorities/local self-government bodies for accountability and participation, rather than silence and disregard.
8. For the first time, we can observe the emergence of conditions for the formation of a kind of market, where there is a high level of demand for adequate memorialisation tools, various sources of funding (national and local budgets, donor support, business resources and one-off payments to the families of the deceased), types and models of funding distribution at the state level in general (competitions for civil society institutions, the establishment of institutions that provide a kind of procurement (UCF, UMF, UVF, etc.), experimental mechanisms within the framework of Cabinet of Ministers resolutions).
9. Developing a national consensus on issues directly or indirectly related to the politics of memory that previously divided society (World War II, European and Euro-Atlantic integration, certain historical figures, attitudes towards independence and the Soviet period, etc.).

I. ANALYSIS OF UKRAINIAN LEGISLATION IN THE FIELD OF COMMEMORATION: FROM THE RESTORATION OF INDEPENDENCE TO 2025

Honouring the memory of those who died in the war, victims of wars and repression, as well as recognising the contribution of Ukraine's defenders, are important elements of the state's politics of memory. An analysis of existing regulatory frameworks indicates a sustained and fairly high level of interest on the part of the authorities. Thus, about 860 normative legal acts (NLA) can be directly or indirectly attributed to measures of memorialisation, commemoration or support for those categories that, from the state's point of view, required attention. The leader in terms of the number of documents adopted is the President of Ukraine – 47%, followed by the Cabinet of Ministers – 25%, and the Verkhovna Rada – 21%. In addition, individual, targeted documents addressing specific aspects of the politics of memory were adopted by the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. It should not be forgotten that, alongside the State Archival Service, law enforcement agencies are becoming key “archives” in the context of war crimes.

Existing Infrastructure



Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine
 Ministry of Defence of Ukraine
 Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
 Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine
 Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine
 Ukrainian Institute of National Memory
 Office of the Prosecutor General
 Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine

Parliament

Cabinet of Ministers
 President
 Ministry of Defence
 Ministry of Veterans Affairs
 Ministry of Culture
 Ministry of Education and Science
 Ministry of Youth
 Ministry of Internal Affairs

It is important to note that within the scope of this research, we proceeded from a broad interpretation of the politics of memory, which primarily focuses on the formation of policies regarding target groups that, from the state's point of view, require the application of at least one of the four components of transitional justice. This led to the development of policies and measures regarding:

- 1) The recognition and visibility of the contribution and suffering of specific population groups or individuals;
- 2) Actions aimed at supporting participants in certain events through the provision of benefits, services, and compensation for them or their relatives;
- 3) Emphasising the importance of accountability and recording actions, appeals or steps taken to ensure guarantees of non-repetition through non-judicial mechanisms, including through culture, education, sport, etc.

Accordingly, a fairly broad list of documents of various types was analysed, allowing us to identify the main approaches and instruments for ensuring memorialisation in Ukraine. It is critical to consider these instruments in their continuity, within specific periods, which allows us to identify the main stages and emphases that shape the overall architecture of Ukraine's politics of memory. Based on an analysis of Ukrainian legislation, changes and transformations that have taken place since the restoration of independence, we can identify several key tasks that were set for the politics of memory in Ukraine even before its independence.

An important feature of the development of the politics of memory in Ukraine is that the first legislative acts adopted in this area were supported by the then Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR) six months before Ukraine declared independence. Thus, in response to the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and growing pressure from national-democratic forces, on 28 February 1991, the Ukrainian SSR adopted the Law "On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chernobyl Disaster"⁸, and on 17 April 1991, the Law of the Ukrainian SSR "On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression in Ukraine" was adopted⁹. This marked the beginning of two main tasks that determined the priority steps in the field of national politics of memory for years to come.

The first is the guarantee of the right to truth concerning the events that occurred and their assessment. Thus, the repressions were condemned, condolences were expressed to the victims of the repressions and their relatives, and an intention was declared to persistently strive for the restoration of justice for the victims of political repressions since 1917. At the same time, the issue of compensation was also included, but it was treated as supplementary and auxiliary.

The second is to provide compensation and support, but to avoid issues of responsibility and ensure justice. The Law "On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chernobyl Disaster"¹⁰ is a vivid embodiment of this tradition, where the state assumes responsibility for damage to health and loss of working capacity, loss of breadwinner, material damage and even the timeliness of medical examinations. However, even in the title

8 Law of the Ukrainian SSR "On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chernobyl Disaster" dated 28 February 1991 No. 796-XII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/796-12#Text>

9 Law of the Ukrainian SSR "On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression in Ukraine" dated 17 April 1991 No. 962-XII

10 Law of Ukraine "On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chernobyl Disaster" dated 28 February 1991 No. 796-XII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/796-12#Text>

of this law, the word “disaster” is used to describe the event as a marker of a certain tragic accident, rather than the result of actions and the sphere of responsibility of a specific political and administrative leadership.

These two approaches formed the basis of state policy in the field of memory and outlined the key instruments of the state in this area after Ukraine declared independence. Although the Law “On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression in Ukraine” declared the basis for the processes of lustration and the return of property “nationalised” by the Soviet regime, it remained just a declaration.

A detailed analysis of the normative and legal acts adopted in Ukraine since 1991 in the field of memorialisation, as well as the changes that have been made to them, also allows us to highlight several important aspects.

Firstly, the politics of memory is hostage to socio-political processes and elections in the country. Very quickly, the issue of memory becomes a means of political mobilisation and an obligatory component of electoral processes¹¹. Secondly, as a result of the political instrumentalisation of memory, an established political approach is forming, whereby the adoption of certain decisions at the highest level does not mean that they will be properly implemented: declarations are often followed by a lack of or disregard for the need to develop appropriate lower-level normative and legal regulations, to provide an adequate budget, personnel or institutional support.

In fact, the development of the architecture and infrastructure of memorialisation was initially aimed at ensuring the right to truth and compensation for victims. However, the instrumentalisation of memory and the prevalence of declarative statements over real substance have become a characteristic feature of the construction of the politics of memory in Ukraine.

Having made certain generalisations about the political decisions that were taken, we have grouped them into several key periods in the development of national politics of memory and commemoration practices.

1991 – 2004

During this period, the state is actively expanding the list of categories, individuals and phenomena which, under the influence of partner states and civil society, require, first and foremost, the right to truth, as well as certain social support for specific categories. Socially oriented approaches to compensation (benefits and services) inherited from the Soviet era often become a key means of supporting victims. An important feature is that the categories that received more attention in the context of ensuring the right to truth and justice received more symbolic attention and recognition that a crime had been committed against them. Instead, more detailed “social” packages and support, as well as the devel-

¹¹ Political advertising. Political party “Opposition Bloc”. Experienced leaders will protect your interests. / Ukrainian TV, 22 October 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wNwbOXeytw>

opment of a system of various benefits and payments by the state, led to the minimisation of work on issues of justice and accountability. In particular, the “Chernobyl victims”¹², “Afghans”¹³, and “children of war”¹⁴ gave rise to the emergence of certain social groups around the developing support system, which lacked a definition of crime and used euphemisms such as “tragedy” or “catastrophe”, “international obligations”, etc.

The list of those whose right to the truth must be ensured as a priority includes, in particular:

- Victims of Soviet repression for whom the rehabilitation process is being initiated – persons who, for political reasons, were unjustifiably convicted by courts or subjected to repression by extrajudicial bodies, including “NKVD dvoika”, “NKVD troika”¹⁵, special councils and any other extrajudicial procedure, for committing acts on the territory of Ukraine that were classified as counter-revolutionary crimes (anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda; dissemination of knowingly false fabrications that discredit the Soviet state and social order; violation of laws on the separation of church and state and school and church);
- Victims of the Holodomors¹⁶;
- Victims of Nazi persecution – persons who, during the Great Patriotic War and World War II, suffered from Nazi persecution on political, national and religious grounds, or because of their hostility towards National Socialism;

Although these decisions also contain a certain “mandatory” package of social support, it remains largely to be further detailed at the level of government resolutions, local government programmes, etc. The texts of the laws themselves mostly detail the categories of affected persons, issues of guarantees of non-repetition, etc., rather than specifying the mechanisms and means of compensation.

Despite the emergence in the public sphere of various categories of victims, emphasis on the fact that they are victims of the repressive machinery of the USSR, the state’s obligations to investigate these criminal acts, to ensure the right to truth for victims of political repression and the Holodomors, at the national level, the commemoration of the events of World War II takes place in accordance with the Soviet legacy. Accordingly, along with the above-mentioned processes, in 2000 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law “On

12 “Chernobyl victims” are people who suffered as a result of the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and were granted the status of “victims of the Chernobyl disaster”. Law of Ukraine “On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chernobyl Disaster” dated 28 February 1991 No. 796-XII, Article 9: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/796-12#Text>

13 “Afghans” are people who have been granted combatant status for their participation in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection”² dated 22 October 1993 No. 3551-XII, Clause 1 of Part 1 of Article 6. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12>

14 A “child of war” is a person who is a citizen of Ukraine and who was under the age of 18 at the end of World War II (2 September 1945). Law of Ukraine “On Social Protection of Children of War” dated 18 November 2004 No. 2195-IV, Article 1. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text>

15 extra-judicial sentencing bodies in the USSR, which existed in 1937–1938 during the Great Purge.

16 Decree of the President of Ukraine “On Establishing a Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Holodomor” dated 26 November 1998 No. 1310/98: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1310/98#Text>

the Commemoration of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945”¹⁷, which effectively enshrines naming, approaches to commemoration and the exclusion of the 1939-1941 period from memorialisation policy.

Alongside the categories in which the priority was defined as ensuring the right to truth, and in continuation of the established “social state” approach, initiatives were also developed that prioritised compensation and payments as a means of both recognition and support. Thus, in addition to the aforementioned Law on the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chernobyl Catastrophe, several other laws were adopted, in particular:

- “On the Fundamentals of Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine”¹⁸ and “On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Their Families”¹⁹ (1991);
- “On Pension Provision for Persons Discharged from Military Service and Certain Other Persons”²⁰ (1992);
- “On the Status of Veterans of Military Service, Veterans of Internal Affairs Agencies, Veterans of the National Police and Certain Other Persons and Their Social Protection”²¹ (1998);
- “On Pensions for Special Merits to Ukraine”²² and “On the Victims of Nazi Persecution”²³ (2000);
- “On Social Protection for Children of War”²⁴ (2004).

Separately, infrastructure was developed to deal with issues of memory preservation—not memorialisation as such, but rather its individual elements. Thus, in 1993, the Law of Ukraine “On the National Archival Fund and Archival Institutions”²⁵, was adopted, which established a prohibition on the creation of secret archives and other means of concealing information about the locations of document storage, and granted citizens of Ukraine the right to access the documents of the National Archival Fund or their copies. In 1995,

17 Law of Ukraine “On the Commemoration of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945” dated 20 April 2000 No. 1684-III: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1684-14#Text>

18 Law of Ukraine “On the Fundamentals of Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” dated 21 March 1991 No. 875-XII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/875-12#Text>

19 Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Their Families” dated 20 December 1991 No. 2011-XII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2011-12#Text>

20 Law of Ukraine “On Pension Provision for Persons Discharged from Military Service and Certain Other Persons” dated 9 April 1992 No. 2262-XII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2262-12#Text>

21 Law of Ukraine “On the Status of Veterans of Military Service, Veterans of Internal Affairs Agencies, Veterans of the National Police and Certain Other Persons and Their Social Protection” dated 24 March 1998 No. 203/98-VR: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/203/98-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

22 Law of Ukraine “On Pensions for Special Merits to Ukraine” dated 1 June 2000 No. 1767-III: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1767-14#Text>

23 Law of Ukraine “On the Victims of Nazi Persecution” dated 23 March 2000 No. 1584-III: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1584-14#Text>

24 Law of Ukraine “On Social Protection for Children of War” dated 18 November 2004 No. 2195-IV: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2195-15#Text>

25 Law of Ukraine “On the National Archival Fund and Archival Institutions” dated 24 December 1993 No. 3814-XII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3814-12#Text>

the Laws of Ukraine “On Museums and Museum Affairs”²⁶ and “On Libraries and Library Affairs” were adopted²⁷. Additionally, in 2000, the Law of Ukraine “On the Protection of Cultural Heritage”²⁸ singled out “burial sites and necropolises, places of mass burials of the dead and deceased (fallen) military personnel (including foreigners) who died in wars, as a result of deportation and political repression on the territory of Ukraine, places of military operations, places of destruction of warships, sea and river vessels, including the remains of military equipment, weapons, ammunition, etc., significant places associated with important historical events, the lives and activities of famous people, and the culture and everyday life of peoples.

Attempts were also made to establish appropriate authorities that would focus on complex issues of memory or provide targeted compensation. Thus, the Law of Ukraine “On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Repression by the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917-1991”²⁹ established **the National Commission for Rehabilitation**, a special permanent body formed under the central executive authority that implemented state policy in the field of restoring and preserving the national memory of the Ukrainian people, with corresponding regional branches. By a Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers in 1996, **the State Interdepartmental Commission on the Commemoration of the Victims of War and Political Repressions**³⁰ was established, which began to coordinate the work of central and local executive authorities and local self-government bodies concerning the search, registration, arrangement, preservation, and maintenance of military burials of victims of war and political repressions in the territory of Ukraine and other states. In 2000, the Law of Ukraine “On Victims of Nazi Persecution”³¹ established a specially authorised body for compensation payments and humanitarian aid to victims of Nazi persecution - **the Ukrainian National Fund “Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation”** under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. **The Commission on the Affairs of Former Partisans of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945**³² under the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, continued its activities (it would only be dissolved in 2017).

26 Law of Ukraine “On Museums and Museum Affairs” dated 29 June 1995 No. 249/95-VR: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/249/95-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

27 Law of Ukraine “On Libraries and Library Affairs” dated 27 January 1995 No. 32/95-VR: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/32/95-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

28 Law of Ukraine “On the Protection of Cultural Heritage” dated 8 June 2000 No. 1805-III: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1805-14#Text>

29 Law of Ukraine “On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Repression by the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917-1991” dated 17 April 1991 No. 962-XII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/962-12#Text>

30 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 2 August 1996 No. 897 “On the State Interdepartmental Commission on the Commemoration of the Victims of War and Political Repressions”: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/897-96-%D0%BF/ed19960802#Text>

31 Law of Ukraine “On Victims of Nazi Persecution” dated 23 March 2000 No. 1584-III: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1584-14#Text>

32 The Commission on the Affairs of Former Partisans of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 under the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine was a veterans’ organisation that operated from 1948 to 2017. It was originally established on 8 June 1948 under the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR after the disbandment of the Ukrainian Partisan Movement Headquarters. It was liquidated in accordance with Resolution of the Supreme Council “On the Commission on the Affairs of Former Partisans of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 under the Supreme Council of Ukraine” No. 2064-VIII.: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2064-VIII#Text>

An important component of this period is the establishment of a consistent practice of high-level influence and involvement of civil society organisations in the processes of ensuring both the right to truth and the advocacy of various forms of compensation. From the very beginning of the development of the politics of memory, this influence has been significant and crucial in shaping this policy.

2004 – 2014

A key feature of this period is the significant instrumentalisation of memory issues to mobilise the electorate in national elections. In fact, all election campaigns during this period, starting with the 2004 presidential campaign and the Orange Revolution³³, include issues of memory, primarily those related to the events of World War II. This had a significant impact on the activation (action – counteraction) at the level of key national institutions of civil society and the population as a whole.

The main focus of the first part of this period, primarily linked to the initiatives of President Viktor Yushchenko, was the institutionalisation of the memory of the Holodomor. In 2006, parliament passed the Law of Ukraine “On the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine”³⁴, and 2008 was declared the Year of Holodomor Remembrance Day³⁵. The same year, the Concept of the State National Cultural Programme for Research into the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine and the Commemoration of its Victims for the period up to 2012 was approved³⁶. In 2009, the State Museum “Memorial to the Victims of the Holodomor in Ukraine”³⁷, was established, which, through the accumulation and dissemination of knowledge about the Holodomor in Ukraine, is intended to warn society about the crime of genocide.

Another feature of this period is the intensification of attempts to develop policies and, accordingly, political debates, partly speculations around the topics of equalising social guarantees for World War II veterans, as well as improving the situation with support for former political prisoners and repressed persons and their families. Ultimately, the main payments and benefits were directed to persons whose veteran status was linked to their support for or participation in World War II on the side of the USSR or in the reconstruction of the economy. Accordingly, the obligations and mechanisms of social support declared by the state back in 1991 did not receive equal treatment for people who suffered from repres-

33 a campaign of protests, rallies, pickets, strikes and other acts of civil disobedience in Ukraine, organised and carried out by supporters of Viktor Yushchenko, the main opposition candidate in the presidential elections in November–December 2004, in response to widespread electoral fraud

34 Law of Ukraine “On the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine” dated 28 November 2006 No. 376-V: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/376-16#Text>

35 Presidential Decree “On measures in connection with the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Holodomor” dated 25 September 2008 No. 856/2008: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/8562008-7960>

36 Order of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 27 February 2008 No. 364-r: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/364-2008-%D1%80#Text>

37 Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers “On the Establishment of the State Museum “Memorial to the Victims of the Holodomor in Ukraine” dated 22 April 2009 No. 435-r: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/435-2009-%D1%80#Text>

sion or fought for the country's independence outside the Soviet armed forces. In 2005, the Presidential Decree "On Measures to Strengthen State Support for Former Political Prisoners, Repressed Persons and Their Public Organisations"³⁸ and the Order of the Ministry of Health "On Measures to Improve Medical Care for Former Political Prisoners and Repressed Persons"³⁹, were adopted, and the following year, the Government of Ukraine adopted a resolution "On the Approval of a Plan of Measures to Strengthen Social Protection for Former Political Prisoners and Repressed Persons and Their Families for 2006-2011"⁴⁰.

At the national level, attempts were being made to discuss issues of responsibility for the deportation of Crimean Tatars. However, this was not yet recognised as genocide of the Crimean Tatar people, but rather as an anniversary. Thus, in April 2009, the President of Ukraine issued a decree on measures in connection with the 65th anniversary of the deportation of Crimean Tatars and other persons from Crimea on ethnic grounds⁴¹. A key achievement of this period is the start of the development of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM) – the central executive body responsible for issues relating to a comprehensive approach to memorialisation⁴². Thus, the UINM was supposed to ensure:

- Raising awareness among Ukrainian society about its own history, disseminating objective information about it in Ukraine and around the world;
- Implementation of state policy and coordination of activities in the field of restoration and preservation of the national memory of the Ukrainian people;
- Ensuring a comprehensive study of the stages of the struggle for the restoration of Ukrainian statehood in the 20th century, the historical past of the Ukrainian people, including all forms of repression;
- Implementation of a set of measures to commemorate the victims of Holodomors and political repression, as well as participants in the national liberation fight.

However, the institution's activities became effectively hostage to political competition, and in 2011, the mandate of the UINM was narrowed to research and expert activities, and its status was limited to that of a research institution under the administration of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (without the status of a central executive body), with the following areas of responsibility⁴³:

38 Presidential Decree "On Measures to Strengthen State Support for Former Political Prisoners, Repressed Persons and Their Public Organisations" dated 11 July 2005 No. 1088/2005: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1088/2005#Text>

39 Order of the Ministry of Health "On Measures to Improve Medical Care for Former Political Prisoners and Repressed Persons" dated 22 December 2005 No. 746 <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/v0746282-05#Text>

40 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On the Approval of a Plan of Measures to Strengthen Social Protection for Former Political Prisoners and Repressed Persons and Their Families for 2006-2011" dated 24 June 2006 No. 350-r: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/350-2006-%D1%80#Text>

41 Presidential Decree "On Measures in Connection with the 65th Anniversary of the Deportation of Crimean Tatars and Other Persons from Crimea on Ethnic Grounds" dated 30 April 2009 No. 281/2009: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/281/2009#Text>

42 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On the Establishment of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory" No. 764 of 2006: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/764-2006-%D0%BF#Text>

43 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers "On the Establishment of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory" dated 12 January 2011 No. 8: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/8-2011-%D0%BF#Text>

- Scientific and analytical support for the formation of state policy on issues of national memory;
- Developing, within the scope of its powers, scientifically sound recommendations to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in the field of humanitarian policy implementation;
- Implementation of state programmes for fundamental and scientific-practical research into issues of national memory of the Ukrainian people, its influence on the formation of civil society and the Ukrainian nation;
- Conducting scientific and scientific-practical research into the state-building traditions of the Ukrainian people, their fight for freedom and the unity of Ukraine;
- Studying tragic events in the history of the peoples of Ukraine and participating in events to commemorate their victims;
- Participation in scientific and educational work, educational activities related to issues of national memory of the Ukrainian people.

Attempts to achieve progress in applying the instrument of lustration both to representatives of the Soviet regime and to individuals accused of manipulating the results of the 2004 presidential elections remained unrealised. At the same time, there is a real discussion and attempts to define this mechanism, not only as a safeguard against the distant past, but also as a means of preventing political risks in the country's democratisation processes.

At the same time, at the national level, the need to commemorate International Roma Holocaust⁴⁴ and Genocide Remembrance Day was noted⁴⁵.

2014 – 2022

A key achievement of this period was the restoration of the UINM's status as the central authority and a significant increase in its proactive role in the memorialisation process. For the first time, the policy objectives were not only to respond to the crimes and tragedies of the past, to raise discussion and ensure prevention and guarantees of non-repetition through the introduction of lustration mechanisms, but also to respond to the international armed conflict that began with the Russian Federation's aggression in February 2014.

Given the high level of instrumentalisation of World War II issues in the Russian Federation's aggression and attempts to destabilise society through increased falsification and polarising rhetoric, the main focus of attention is shifting to ensuring the right to truth.

44 Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada "On the observance of International Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day" dated 08 October 2004 No. 2085-IV: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2085-IV#Text>

45 Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada "On the 70th anniversary of the Babyn Yar tragedy" dated 05 July 2011 No. 3560-VI: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3560-17#Text>

However, with the cessation of practices of evasion/silencing, and with the fixation at the level of national legislation of topics that were previously considered provocative/controversial. The dilemma of the Great Patriotic War and World War II was finally resolved by synchronising the politics of memory with the pan-European approach (not Victory Day, but Remembrance Day, 9–8 May, etc.). The main focus is also on actualising the theme of memory as a component of national security, so far at the level of certain declarations, but also counteracting the instrumentalisation of World War II events for political manipulation and Russian influence. This initiates the process of decommunisation and declares the need for consolidated counteraction to falsifications surrounding issues of World War II.

The actual response of the state to armed aggression and certain changes in the political landscape in connection with the events of the Revolution of Dignity and the war started by the Russian Federation is a package of laws (three new laws with the simultaneous repeal of 16 laws) adopted on 9 April 2015.

Accordingly, the Law of Ukraine “On the Legal Status and Honouring the Memory of Fighters for Ukraine’s Independence in the 20th Century”⁴⁶ effectively puts an end to the long-standing debate about the affiliation of various groups and formations to the cohort of those who defended Ukraine’s independence. The legislator defines an extremely broad list of organisations and institutions, membership of which throughout almost the entire 20th century allows one to obtain the status of a fighter for independence. Separately, agreements issued by these organisations and institutions are recognised, and the need for authorities and local self-government bodies, non-governmental organisations to study and promote them is noted. It is important to recognise as unlawful the actions of those who publicly express contempt for those who fought for Ukraine’s independence, as well as those who publicly deny the legitimacy of the fight for Ukraine’s independence in the 20th century, as well as the presence in the public space of toponymic names/monuments dedicated to persons associated with the persecution of participants in the fight for Ukraine’s independence in the 20th century. Such actions are considered an insult to the memory of those who fought for Ukraine’s independence in the 20th century and a humiliation of the dignity of the Ukrainian people. This approach is a continuation of the practice initiated by the Law of Ukraine “On the Holodomor of 1932-33 in Ukraine”.

The Law of Ukraine “On Perpetuation of the Victory over Nazism in World War II 1939-1945”⁴⁷ definitively aligned national policy with the approach existing in European countries to marking the Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939–1945, observed annually on 8 May. Sites of memory of the events of the Second World War were separately identified, extending to all events starting from 1939 rather than from 1941. As in the previous law, a prohibition was stipulated regarding Soviet and communist symbols, as well as the St. George’s ribbon, on monuments, memorial signs, and other objects at Second World War sites of memory.

46 Law of Ukraine “On the Legal Status and Honouring the Memory of Fighters for Ukraine’s Independence in the 20th Century” dated 9 April 2015 No. 314-VIII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/314-19#Text>

47 Law of Ukraine “On Perpetuation of the Victory over Nazism in World War II 1939-1945” dated 09 April 2015 No. 315-VIII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/315-19#Text>

The Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation of Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols”⁴⁸ not only defines the list of what belongs to communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes. The Law provides for official condemnation and prohibition of their propaganda and glorification. A separate important component of the Law is the responsibility of legal entities, political parties, and other associations of citizens, as well as the media, for violating the provisions of the Law—it provides for the possibility of terminating their state registration in court at the request of the central executive body that implements state policy. A separate ban was introduced on the use and promotion of symbols of communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes, and Article 436-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine was amended (“Manufacture, distribution of communist and Nazi symbols and propaganda of communist and National Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes”). Another critically important component was not only the consolidation of the state’s obligations to investigate and disclose information about crimes committed by representatives of communist and National Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes. The result was the final removal of restricted access status from documents containing information about the crimes of these regimes, preserved in state archives. To comply with this requirement of the law, the government adopted a corresponding resolution⁴⁹, and parliament amended the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences – from now on, the manufacture and promotion of St. George’s ribbons is an administrative offence (Article 173-3 of the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences)⁵⁰, etc. Consequently, specific procedures are introduced to ensure the restrictions declared at the legislative level.

A process was also initiated for the renaming of geographical objects, settlements, districts in cities, squares, boulevards, streets, lanes, alleys, driveways, avenues, public squares, embankments, bridges, and other toponymic objects whose names contain symbols of communist or national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes. Subsequently, the UINM developed and disseminated relevant recommendations on this process⁵¹, and a mass information campaign on decommunisation was launched.

Alongside the adoption of these three laws, another symbolic act by parliament in April 2015 was the repeal of the Law “On the Commemoration of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945”⁵², which was effectively the embodiment of the Soviet tradition of commemoration.

48 Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation of Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols” dated 09 April 2015 No. 317-VIII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/317-19#Text>

49 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 354 dated 27 May 2015 “On the Procedure for Making Decisions on the Non-Compliance of the Activities, Name and/or Symbols of a Legal Entity, Political Party, Its Regional, City, District Organisation or Other Structural Unit” : <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/354-2015-%D0%BF#Text>

50 Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences Regarding the Prohibition of the Manufacture and Promotion of St. George’s Ribbon” dated 16 May 2017 No. 2031-VIII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2031-19#n5>

51 Typical gravestone / Ukrainian Institute of National Memory: <https://old.uinp.gov.ua/page/tipovii-nadgrobok>

52 Law of Ukraine “On the Commemoration of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945” dated 20 April 2000 No. 1684-III: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1684-14#Text>

An important step was the adoption of the Law “On Access to the Archives of the Repressive Bodies of the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917-1991”⁵³, which effectively opened up broad opportunities for researching and establishing the truth about the crimes committed by the repressive apparatus of the USSR.

A separate component of the commemoration was the political instrumentalisation of the recognition and increased visibility of the crimes of deportation, primarily those carried out in Crimea. Thus, in April 2014, parliament passed a law “On the Restoration of the Rights of Persons Deported on National Grounds”⁵⁴. Also, in May 2014, a Presidential Decree was issued “On the Day of Struggle for the Rights of the Crimean Tatar People”⁵⁵.

At the same time, the practice of avoiding legal certainty continued, particularly in matters that were contentious for society. Despite the persistence at the national and regional levels of the use of Soviet resentment in public and political processes, the practice of terminating the registration of legal entities was hardly ever applied. Separately, in 2015, the Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation of Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols”⁵⁶ was reviewed by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission), which, while recognising the legitimacy of its objectives, found the precision of the formulations and requirements to be insufficient⁵⁷. Amendments to the Law were prepared and registered in Parliament in 2016, but were never considered⁵⁸.

At the same time, existing legislation gradually protected the authorities from the influence of political forces that had long played a significant role in supporting the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine. For example, the Central Election Commission refused to register the electoral list and presidential candidate of the Communist Party of Ukraine during the relevant campaigns in 2019. Parliament passed the Law of Ukraine “On Government Cleansing”⁵⁹, which for the first time introduced the procedure and initiated the formation of practice, but did not actually become an instrument of memorialisation.

During this period, the institutional capacity of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory was strengthened. It was increasingly present in public communication and

53 Law of Ukraine “On Access to the Archives of the Repressive Bodies of the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917-1991” dated 09 April 2015 No. 316-VIII <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/316-19>

54 Law of Ukraine “On the Restoration of the Rights of Persons Deported on National Grounds” dated 17 April 2014 No. 1223-VII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1223-18>

55 Presidential Decree “On the Day of Struggle for the Rights of the Crimean Tatar People” dated 16 May 2014 No. 472/2014: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/4722014-17238>

56 Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation of Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols” dated 09.04.2015 No. 317-VIII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/317-19#Text>

57 Joint interim conclusion “on the Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation of Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols” dated 21 December 2015 No. CDL-AD(2015)041: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2015\)041-ukr](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2015)041-ukr)

58 Draft Law “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine in the Field of Condemning Totalitarian Regimes to Bring Them into Line with the Requirements of Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms” (Reg. No. 4701 of 20 May 2016): http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=59178

59 Law of Ukraine “On Government Cleansing” dated 16 September 2014 No. 1682-VII: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1682-18#Text>

explanations of the specifics of the decommunisation processes and approaches to the arrangement of burial sites for defenders of Ukraine who died during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Separate institutions are being created, such as the state institution “Memorial Complex of the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred - Museum of the Revolution of Dignity” (2015) and the Sectoral State Archive of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (2016) – which became part of the state infrastructure in response to the threat of the instrumentalisation of memory by Russian armed aggression, as a means of supporting the victims and their families who died during the Revolution of Dignity.

A separate issue became the search for words and means to honour the memory of those who died as a result of the Russian Federation’s armed aggression. In fact, for the first time since independence, the country faced the urgent and acute problem of finding forms and tools to honour not past events, but to ensure that they are honoured here and now. Accordingly, the President’s Decree introduced the “Day of Remembrance of the Defenders of Ukraine Who Died in the Fight for the Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine”⁶⁰, the Parliament adopted a Resolution “On Commemorating Ukrainians Who Rescued Jews During the Second World War”⁶¹, and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine issued an Order “On Measures to Commemorate the Defenders of Ukraine for the Period up to 2025”⁶².

2022 TO THE PRESENT

This period was marked not only by a full-scale invasion and a rapid increase in the number of military personnel and civilians killed as a result of Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine, but also by the final transformation of the politics of memory as a security component of national policy. Decommunisation policies are complemented by aspects of de-imperialisation and derussification; certain aspects of glorification of the past are being criminalised, and practices and procedures for changing place names and developing relevant sectors and memorial complexes are being scaled up. There is a transition from the somewhat fragmented mandate of the UINM in the field of politics of memory to its transformation into a central executive body with special status, which ensures the formation and implementation of state policy in the field of national memory of the Ukrainian people. In addition, there is a significant change in public consciousness, where the dilemmas of memory associated with World War II and individual historical figures are being replaced by a clear national consensus, which is stimulating the current political leadership of Ukraine to take quite active steps in this area. An important feature of this period is the

60 Presidential Decree “On the Day of Remembrance of the Defenders of Ukraine Who Died in the Fight for the Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine” dated 23 August 2019 No. 621/2019: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/6212019-29269>

61 Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine “On Commemorating Ukrainians Who Rescued Jews During the Second World War” dated 02 February 2021 No. 1178-IX: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1178-IX#Text>

62 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “On Measures to Commemorate the Defenders of Ukraine for the Period up to 2025” dated 20 January 2021 No. 37-r: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/37-2021-%D1%80#Text>

scaling up of decisions made in previous periods, as well as the synchronisation of existing laws into a single system for regulating issues of national memory protection.

In response to the full-scale invasion, a package of laws was adopted, finally transforming the politics of memory into a component of national security. This is evident not only in the list of thematic laws in the field of memory, but also in the changes being made in related areas – the regulation of the media, civil society organisations, political parties and even the protection of rights to trademarks for goods and services.

After the liberation of the Kyiv and Chernihiv regions from Russian occupation, when massive violations of international law, human rights, and war crimes were discovered, the Ukrainian parliament began to pass laws to definitively distance itself from the Russian context and ban pro-Russian propaganda in the country. Consequently, in May 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law “On the Prohibition of Propaganda of the Russian Nazi Totalitarian Regime, Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation as a Terrorist State against Ukraine, and Symbols of the Military Invasion of the Russian Nazi Totalitarian Regime in Ukraine”⁶³. This law equates the practices of the Nazi regime with the current policies of the Russian Federation, defines the term “terrorist state” and the structure of its authorities, and records the genocidal goals of Russian policy towards Ukrainians. The law repeats the approaches developed in previous periods regarding the prohibition of the use of relevant symbols for promotional purposes, but with a significantly expanded list of areas of sanctions.

The next step was to scale up the approaches and algorithms for decommunisation developed and implemented in the previous period. In March 2023, the Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and the Decolonisation of Toponymy” was adopted⁶⁴. A significant feature of the law was not only the already familiar practice of condemning Russian imperial policy in Ukraine and banning the propaganda of its symbols, but also the procedure for eliminating the symbols of Russian imperial policy. In addition, the previous thematic focus on crimes against Ukrainians and Ukrainian statehood was expanded. In previous periods, the main focus was primarily on the Soviet regime. However, now it also covers the repressive measures of Russian imperial policy against the Ukrainian people, starting with the Tsardom of Russia. Accordingly, the list of objects and symbols subject to review is significantly expanding. The role of the UINM in this process was also strengthened from collecting, summarising and disseminating information about crimes (repressive measures) committed by the Russian imperial policy against the Ukrainian people to providing professional recommendations to be taken into account by the authorities when making decisions on the decolonisation of toponyms. An Expert Commission was established for this purpose. As of September 2025, the Expert Commission had provided 34 professional conclusions, which were forwarded

63 Law of Ukraine “On the Prohibition of Propaganda of the Russian Nazi Totalitarian Regime, Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation as a Terrorist State against Ukraine, and Symbols of the Military Invasion of the Russian Nazi Totalitarian Regime in Ukraine” dated 22 May 2022 No. 2265-IX: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2265-20#Text>

64 Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and the Decolonisation of Toponymy” dated 21 March 2023 No. 3005-IX <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3005-20#Text>

to the relevant authorities and published on the institution's website⁶⁵. According to data published by UINM, between 27 July 2023 and 27 July 2024, local authorities renamed 25,194 toponymic objects and dismantled 1,066 monuments and memorials⁶⁶.

In response to lengthy discussions and problems arising from the fragmentation of state policy in the field of memory, and the need to systematise existing approaches and coordination mechanisms, in August 2025, parliament adopted the Law "On the Principles of State Policy on National Memory of the Ukrainian People"⁶⁷. Its adoption initiates several fundamental changes. First, it defines the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict since 2014 as the War for Ukraine's Independence. Second, it defines key terms ("state policy of national memory of the Ukrainian people", "crimes against the Ukrainian people", "historical anti-Ukrainian propaganda", etc.). Third, the status of the UINM is changing to that of a central executive body with special status, which ensures the formation and implementation of state policy in the field of national memory of the Ukrainian people, whose activities are directed and coordinated by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Fourth, the need to develop an appropriate State Strategy for the Restoration and Preservation of the National Memory of the Ukrainian People and an Action Plan is declared. Finally, the powers of the relevant policy actors and the role of the UINM in coordinating its development and implementation are defined. In addition, the new law significantly expands the organisational and financial opportunities for the state policy of national memory of the Ukrainian people. It provides not only for competitive principles, but also for a significantly expanded list of funding sources, and provides for the possibility of combining, on a contractual basis, the financial resources of national politics of memory actors, state and private partners on the principles of public-private partnership, and international institutions; attracting funds that come to the State Budget of Ukraine and local budgets within the framework of aid programmes and grants from the EU, foreign governments, international organisations and donors; attracting funds from other sources not prohibited by law, in particular through voluntary contributions from individuals and legal entities.

CONCLUSIONS

Summarising the existing regulations and established practices, we can conclude that for a long time, the regulation of the politics of memory in Ukraine has been characterised by significant fragmentation of powers between different authorities, parallelism and the coexistence of contradictory approaches (for example, regarding World War II, the approaches of the "Great Patriotic War" (conventionally "Soviet") and the Second World War (global and European practice), the widespread practice of legal uncertainty and the insuf-

65 Professional conclusions of the Expert Commission / Ukrainian Institute of National Memory: <https://uinp.gov.ua/dekomunizaciya-ta-reabilitaciya/ekspertna-komisiya-uinp/fahovi-vysnovky-ekspertnoyi-komisiyi>

66 Over 25,000 toponymic objects renamed – first official data on the implementation of the decolonisation law / Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, 27 November 2024: <https://uinp.gov.ua/press-centr/novyny/ponad-25-tysyach-obyektiv-toponimiyi-pereymenovano-pershi-oficiyni-dani-shchodo-realizaciyi-dekolonizacijnogo-zakonu>

67 Law of Ukraine "On the Principles of State Policy on National Memory of the Ukrainian People" dated 21 August 2025 No. 4579-IX: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4579-20#Text>

ficient development of accompanying, subordinate regulation. There was insufficient coordination and distribution of responsibilities, which significantly complicated the implementation of comprehensive and consistent politics of memory. There is hope that the Law “On the Principles of State Policy on National Memory of the Ukrainian People”, adopted in August 2025, will be reinforced by both relevant subordinate legislation and institutional support from the UINM (budget and human resources). To fulfil the powers and tasks defined by law, the body will need to significantly expand and develop its relevant capacity.

Despite the adoption of a comprehensive approach, functions related to commemorating the memory of victims are currently distributed among different ministries. They remain fragmented and insufficiently coordinated. Additionally, synchronisation of efforts are needed not only at the level of central authorities, but also with clear and effective tools for interaction with executive bodies and local self-government.

Having outlined the above features of the formation of the politics of memory in Ukraine, we cannot ignore the distribution and layering of functions that occur between the relevant authorities. These authorities, while not directly responsible for comprehensive policy in this area, can provide important components for the politics of memory or regulate their implementation. For example, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine (MCIP) deals with issues of cultural heritage protection, including burials and memorial sites that may be recognised as cultural heritage objects. At the same time, responsibility for their maintenance is largely entrusted to local authorities without adequate resources or methodological support. The Ministry for Veterans Affairs of Ukraine focuses on the social rights of veterans and their families, ensuring, in particular, the organisation of commemorative events, but the legislation does not establish a clear mechanism for interdepartmental coordination in this area. The Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine assists the families of the deceased, but does not have a mandate to develop or implement remembrance policies, which leads to gaps in commemorating civilian victims of war. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine implements patriotic education measures, which partly include elements of memorialisation, but these measures are mostly formal in nature and are not linked to a nationwide memorialisation policy. The Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine promotes the “Roadmap for Implementing a Moment of Silence”⁶⁸ developed by the NGO Vshanui and the corresponding remembrance routes.

This dispersion of powers and the absence of a single coordinating body create a situation in which responsibility for the formation, implementation and evaluation of the politics of memory remains unclear. This provokes inconsistencies, conflicts and gaps in what is currently a critical area. This creates the conditions for a repeat of the mistakes and risks of previous periods, when memory was quickly instrumentalised for political mobilisation, turning from a unifying force into a tool of polarisation.

68 A roadmap for implementing a Moment of silence has been created for communities / Ministry for Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine: <https://mindev.gov.ua/news/dlia-hromad-stvoreno-dorozhniu-kartu-vprovadzhennia-khvylyny-movchannia>

II.

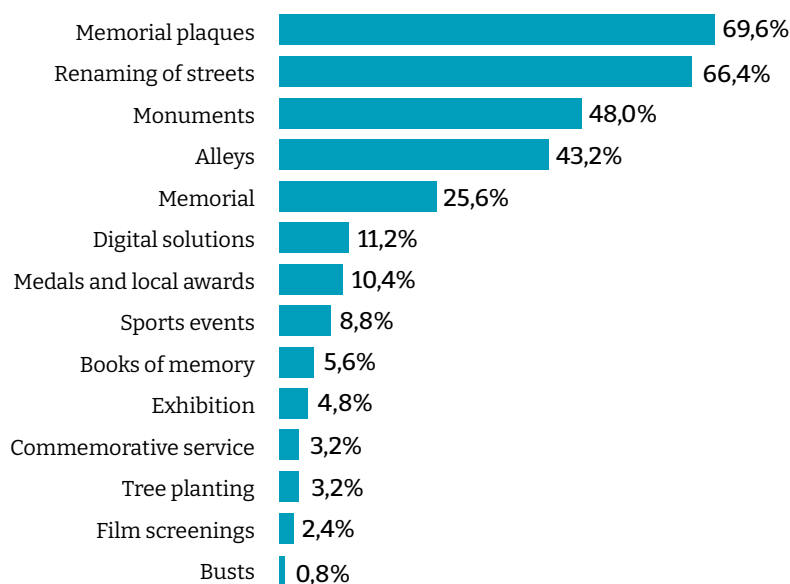
ANALYSIS OF EXISTING PRACTICES OF COMMEMORATION AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

This section presents an analysis of existing practices for commemorating individuals and events related to the Russian-Ukrainian war, based on data obtained from local self-government bodies. Given the specific nature of the information gathering process, the results presented should be considered a minimum assessment of the practices declared by communities, taking into account possible limitations in the completeness and detail of the responses provided. The detailed methodology for this part of the research is presented in Annex 1.

THE MOST WIDESPREAD FORMS OF COMMEMORATION

One of the important aspects of the research is the analysis of how practices of commemorating memory are enshrined in official decisions of local self-government bodies. In total, the responses recorded 163 instruments related to the institutionalisation of such practices. Of these, 155 are targeted programmes adopted by communities, and 8 are separate action plans. These documents record the intention or implementation of actions to commemorate individuals and events related to the Russian-Ukrainian war and allow us to trace how memory is incorporated into local policies.

Table 1. Prevalence of forms of memory practices (by type)⁶⁹



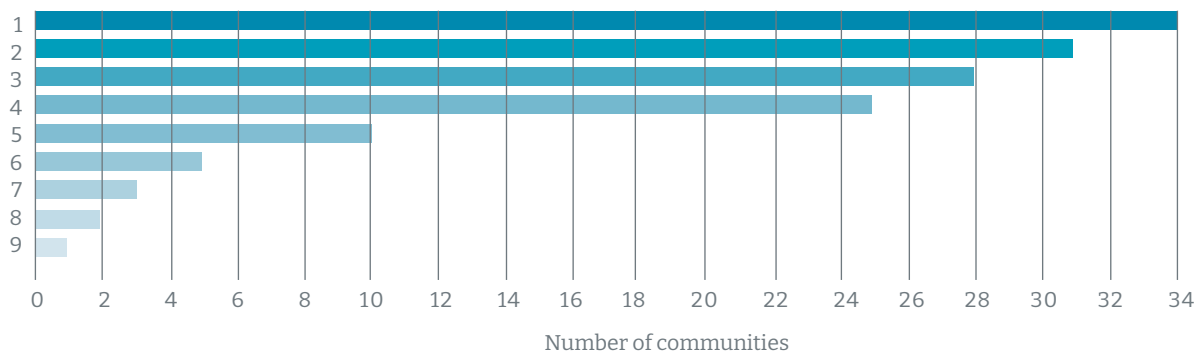
⁶⁹ Table 1 shows the percentage of Ukrainian communities that have implemented various forms of commemoration related to the Russian-Ukrainian war. The calculation is based on official responses from local self-government bodies (LSGBs) collected during 2024–2025. The table shows the percentage of communities that have implemented each individual practice, without taking into account the number of elements implemented within the practice. The column “Mass events” is not included in the main prevalence table due to the lack of detail in a significant portion of the responses. In most cases, communities only mentioned the fact that events were held on national or commemorative dates without describing specific actions or forms of commemoration. As a result, the analysis covers only those practices that were clearly identified as forms of memorialisation.

The most common forms of commemoration were the installation of memorial plaques (69.6% of communities), renaming streets (66.4%), erecting monuments (48%) and creating avenues (43.2%). This indicates the dominance of physical forms of memorialisation, which are visually noticeable and most often have symbolic, officially recognised significance in the community space.

Less common are practices related to digital, software or ceremonial approaches to memory, including digital solutions (11.2%), local honours and awards (10.4%) and sporting events of remembrance (8.8%). Even less frequently, communities implemented exhibitions (4.8%), tree planting (3.2%), film screenings (2.4%) or busts (0.8%).

These results suggest that Ukrainian communities tend to favour a materialised logic of memorialisation, focused on the establishment of physical objects, while more procedural, reflective or artistic forms remain less common. The reasons for this may be both limited resources and a lack of regulatory support, or examples of the integration of such approaches into local policy.

Table 2. Diversity of commemoration practices per community⁷⁰



The results show significant variation in the level of community involvement in the implementation of memorialisation practices. The largest share of communities (34 of all those that provided data) implemented two forms of memory practices, while another 28 communities implemented only one. At the same time, 31 communities did not indicate any implemented practices, which may be a sign of the absence of relevant measures or a consequence of the limited scope or unstructured nature of the responses provided.

The data suggests that communities mostly focus on one or two forms of commemoration (such as memorial plaques, renaming, laying flowers) or provide partial information about already familiar official forms, without recording alternative or less established practices. The responses sometimes convey the impression that the establishment of a memorial object or participation in a state ritual (e.g., laying flowers on specific dates) automatically exhausts the topic of commemoration. At the same time, thematic events that

⁷⁰ Table 2 shows the distribution of communities by the number of different forms of commemoration practices implemented in connection with the Russian-Ukrainian war. The data is based on predefined practices (memorial plaques, street renaming, monuments, symbolic events, etc.), which were coded as binary variables. For each community, the total number of different types of practices implemented was calculated, after which a grouped calculation of the number of communities with the corresponding level of activity was performed.

are not tied to the official calendar, or interactive, locally initiated forms (e.g., art events, exhibitions, memorial services outside of formal dates) are often overlooked or not considered practices of memory.

According to the responses, 11 communities implemented five or more forms of practice, and only one community implemented eight. This indicates that most communities limit themselves to a few forms, while multi-form approaches to commemoration remain less common. This distribution may be related to resource constraints, lack of methodological support, or limited political will to develop a systematic, multi-layered politics of memory at the local level.

Based on the compiled data (Table 1), the most common forms of memorialisation implemented by communities are memorial plaques (mentioned in 69.6% of communities), renaming streets in honour of military personnel (66.4%), monuments and memorials (48.2%), alleys of glory (43%), and other memorials (23%). These figures give the impression of a widespread presence of public practices of commemoration and their considerable diversity.

At first glance, the predominance of memorial plaques as a form of commemoration may indicate a high level of personalisation of public memory, as they are usually dedicated to specific deceased individuals. The renaming of streets also partly supports this trend when it comes to names honouring individuals. Some communities also mentioned sporting or cultural events dedicated to specific military personnel, which also form a field of individual commemoration.

At the same time, it is important to take into account the methodological features of the calculation, which affect the perception of the scale of personalisation. In particular, each memorial plaque was counted as a separate unit, while an alley of glory with dozens of portraits could be counted as a single form. Similarly, a renamed street, regardless of whether it bears the name of a specific deceased person or has a generalised name such as “Heroiv Street”, was counted as a single case. As a result, the quantitative dominance of personalised practices is partly a function of the logic of accounting, and not only their objective prevalence in the community space.

This gives rise to an important clarification: generalised forms of commemoration – such as memorials, steles, and avenues, which often include the names of dozens of people – may have greater visibility and symbolic weight, even though they are represented in statistics as separate units. Thus, when answering the question of whether personalised or generalised forms of memorialisation are preferable, one should consider not only the frequency of practices but also their spatial embodiment, scale, and symbolic capacity. Therefore, the question of the predominant nature of memorialisation (personalised or generalised) cannot be definitively resolved without taking into account the qualitative characteristics of each format, in particular its scale, context of placement and mode of perception within the community.

MEMORIAL PLAQUES AND RENAMING AS DOMINANT INSTRUMENTS OF MEMORY

To calculate the dynamics of renaming for the periods 2014–2022 and 2022–2025, researchers used data provided by communities in their responses. In cases where the responses indicated the years of renaming, this data was distributed across the corresponding periods. However, this was not always possible: some communities provided only generalised quantitative indicators or lists of names without chronological details. In addition, some communities only indicated renaming related to the theme of war, while others provided a complete list of renamed streets. This caused a certain imbalance in the data structure, particularly concerning “neutral” (conditionally designated as “floral”) or historical names, which could appear both in the period 2014–2022 and after 2022. Some communities also wrote that they planned to engage in renaming after the end of hostilities, and these were not only communities under occupation.

Despite these limitations, overall calculations revealed a clear dynamic shift. A total of 1,233 renamings were recorded in the period 2014–2022, and 2,608 renamings in the period 2022–2025 (Graph T). Thus, less than three years after the start of full-scale aggression, the number of renamings more than doubled compared to the previous eight years. This confirms the general trend observed during data processing: activity in the field of renaming increased after 2022, which is associated with an intensified demand for the derussification of public space and its symbolic reprogramming.

In addition to quantitative analysis, thematic analysis of names was also carried out. A significant part of the renaming has military semantics – both personalised (in honour of individual military personnel) and generalised (for example, “Heroes”, “Defenders”). At the same time, some communities deliberately chose “neutral” options – such as Sadova, Kvitkova, Soniachna, etc. – to avoid political connotations or to preserve symbolic neutrality. In the table, these names were conditionally marked as “floral”. The ratio of such names to military ones (both personal and generalised) indicates a significant predominance of the latter.

Thus, although the chronological structure of the data has certain gaps, a general content analysis allows us to conclude that since 2022, the military framework of memory has prevailed in renaming practices at the local level. This indicates not only a growing political sensitivity to symbolic space, but also a desire on the part of communities to capture the experience of war in the everyday landscape.

At the same time, despite this general trend, regional analysis of the visualised data reveals unique local strategies and priorities.

- The Central region leads in terms of both the total number of changes and the emphasis on honouring military figures.
- The East takes a more balanced approach, where patriotic commemoration is offset by a significant proportion of “neutral” names.
- The West is distinguished by a more structured selection, where specific thematic categories predominate.
- The South most vividly captures the experience of war through names honouring hero cities.

Table 3. Types of renaming

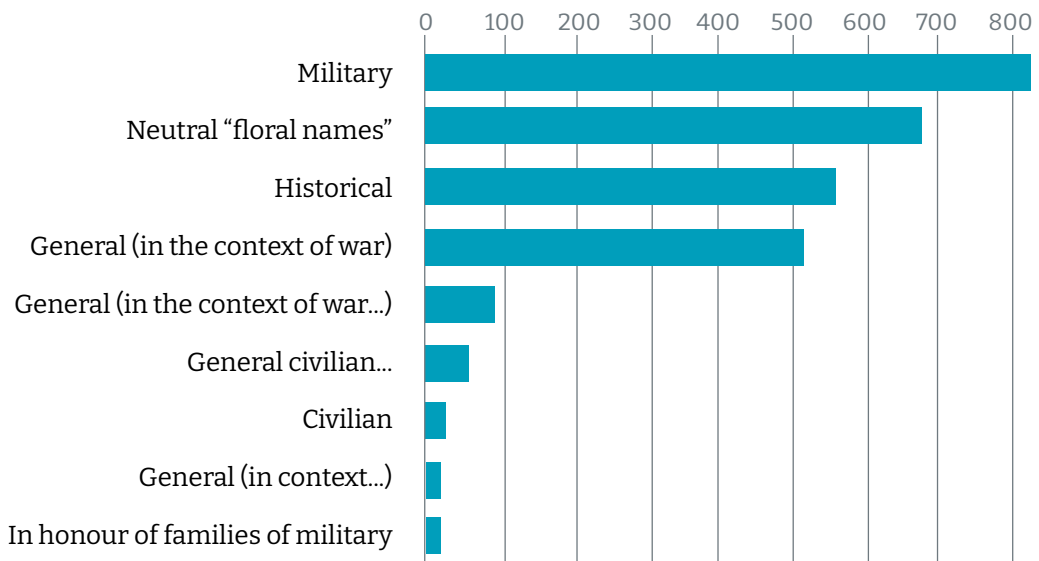
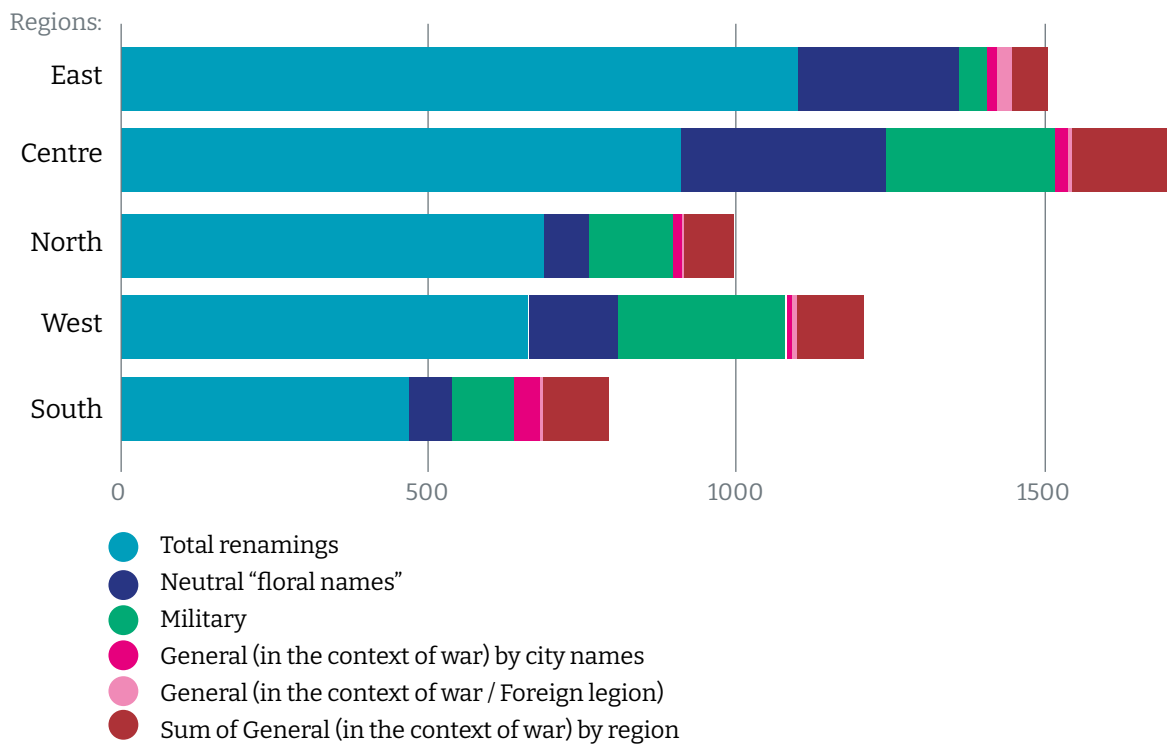
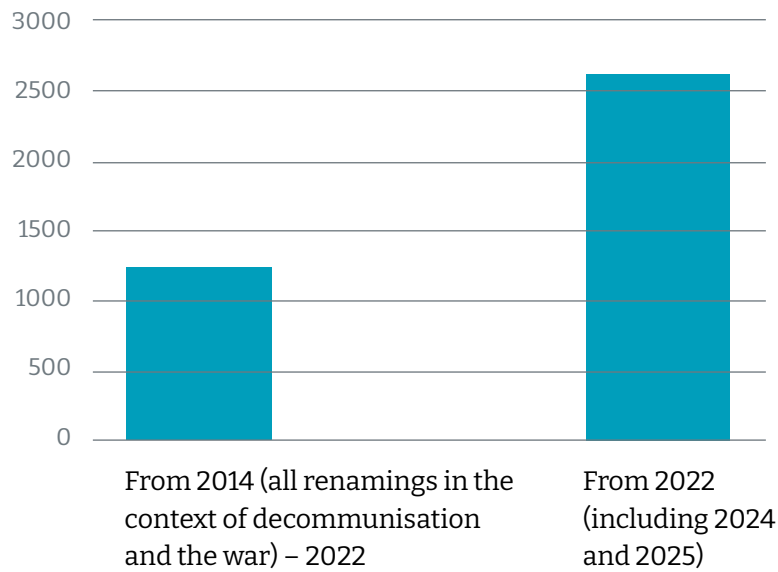
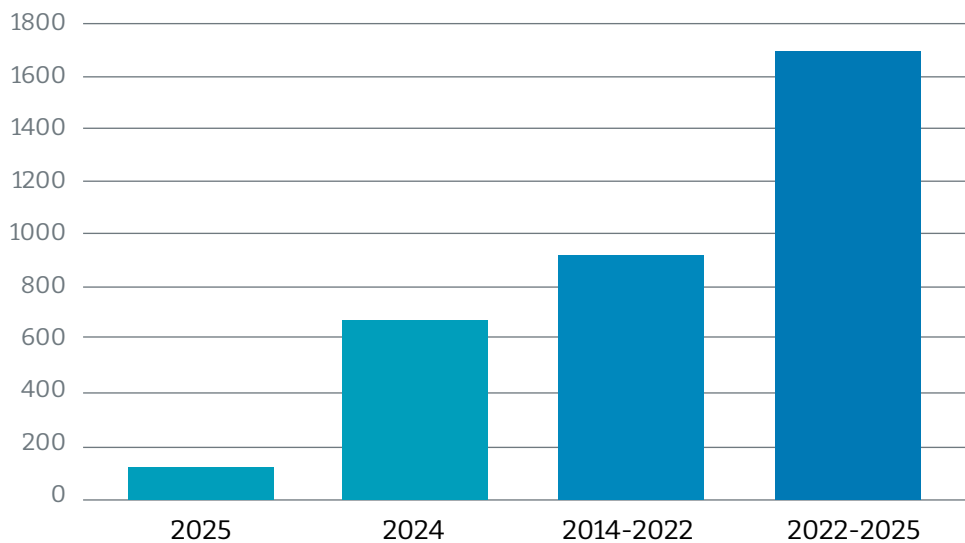


Table 4. Distribution of renamings by region



Key to further research is the fact that more than half of all renamings do not fall into the main defined categories (military, neutral, cities), forming a large group of “other” names. This category, which probably includes figures from culture, science and the dissident movement, is a marker of the deep-rooted values of Ukrainian society in the process of its self-determination.

Table 5. Dynamics of renaming**Table 6.** Dynamics of memorial plaques (2014–2022 vs. 2022–2025)

After analysing the dynamics of renaming, it is worth considering another mass tool for commemorating memory – the installation of memorial plaques. This form is widespread in Ukrainian communities and has a high level of personalisation, as it is mostly dedicated to specific individuals. The graph below illustrates the change in the number of memorial plaques installed in two time periods: before and after 2022, with data for 2024 and 2025 highlighted, if available. This allows us to see not only the scale of this practice, but also the dynamics of its intensification in connection with the full-scale war.

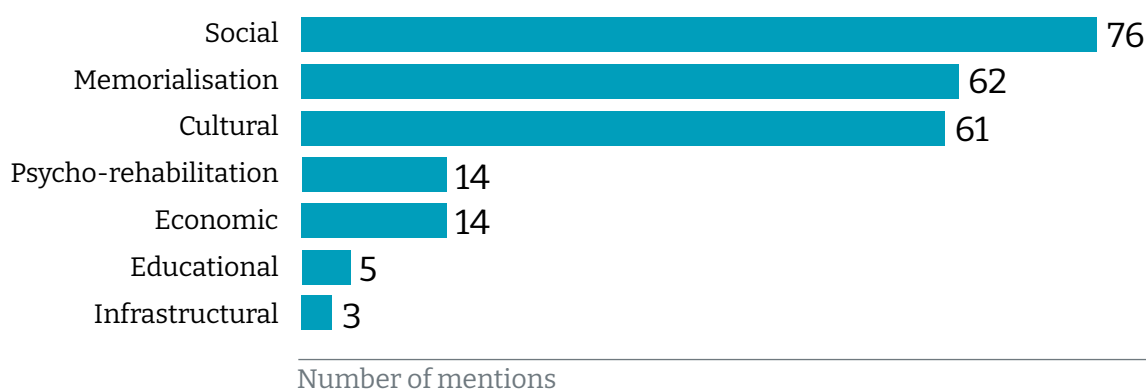
Data on the installation of memorial plaques in communities show a clear increase in this practice after 2022. While 911 memorial plaques were registered between 2014 and 2022, there were already 1,710 between 2022 and 2025 alone, which is almost twice as many. The highest annual figure recorded is for 2024 – 684 plaques, which indicates the intensity of the practice during this period. In 2025 (as of the time of data collection), 73 plaques have already been installed, which may also indicate a continuation of the trend, taking into account the incomplete calendar year.

This data confirms that after the full-scale invasion in 2022, the practice of individually honouring soldiers with memorial plaques became more widespread. Their growth can be linked to the intensification of hostilities, the increase in the number of casualties, and, at the same time, the desire of communities to respond to losses through public commemoration. Thus, memorial plaques have become the leading personalised format for commemorating the dead in physical space.

It can be concluded that renaming and memorial plaques function as two complementary levels of memory. Renaming performs the function of collective and symbolic reprogramming of public space, taking into account regional priorities. Memorial plaques, on the other hand, satisfy the need for personal and memorial commemoration by preserving the memory of specific individuals. Together, they create a multi-layered landscape of memory that reflects the experience of war in Ukraine.

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF COMMEMORATION

Table 7. Distribution of programmes by thematic areas

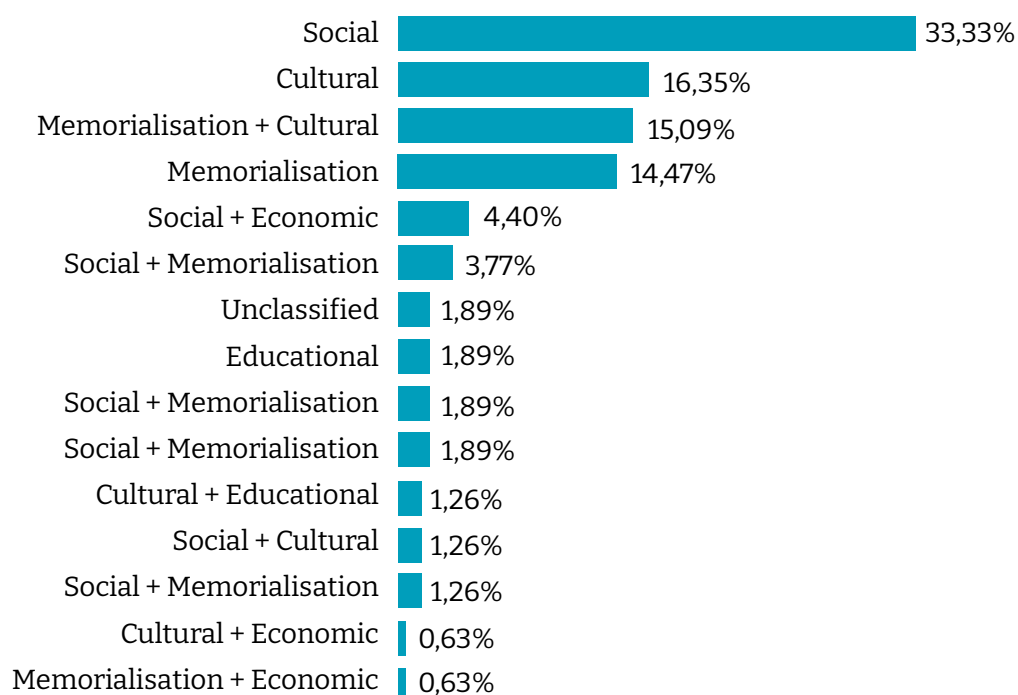


To analyse the programmes submitted by communities in response to information requests, thematic coding was carried out in seven main areas: social, memorialisation, cultural, psychological rehabilitation, economic, educational and infrastructure. A single entry could receive several marks at the same time if its description included the relevant components. On the basis of this analysis, **Table 7** was constructed, reflecting the total number of references to each area within the set of programmes.

Social issues are most frequently mentioned in the programmes – over 70 references, indicating the predominance of forms of care: cash payments, material assistance, support for military families. Memorialisation (about 65) and cultural (also about 65) aspects are almost equally common – often implemented as related practices through the organisation of events related to remembrance.

Next is psychological rehabilitation, with 14 mentions. It includes measures to support the mental health of defenders and families of the deceased, or the creation of rehabilitation centres. Its presence indicates a growing awareness of the need for long-term support after loss or participation in combat. Economic, educational and infrastructure issues are represented to a lesser extent. Economic references (about 13) are mainly related to the financing of reconstruction or the arrangement of places of remembrance, professional retraining of veterans, and the financing of celebrations. Education is mentioned only a few times and is usually not associated with memorialisation, but rather has a patriotic connotation. Infrastructural themes (the least mentioned) relate to the construction or reconstruction of memorial spaces – squares, memorial parks.

Table 8. Thematic composition of commemoration programmes (single and combined areas)

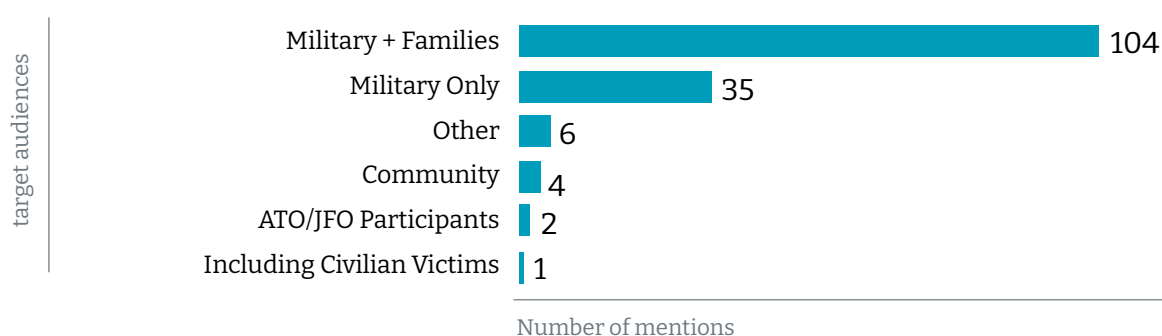


This table shows how topics are combined within a single programme. More than a third of all programmes have a single social focus (33.5%). Another 16.5% are exclusively cultural, and 14.6% are exclusively memorialisation-oriented. Among the combined approaches, the most common is the combination of “memorialisation + culture” (15.2%). Other combinations, such as “social + economic”, “social + memorialisation”, and “educational + cultural”, are less common, each accounting for less than 5%. Roughly 2% of entries could not be clearly classified by theme due to vague or technical forms of presentation.

Despite the relative predominance of single-theme programmes, the results show that communities are flexible in designing programmes, combining familiar and resource-realistic elements – social assistance, cultural events, and the installation of memorials. The small number of “pure” programmes focusing exclusively on memorialisation indicates not so much its neglect as its integration into broader local policies. This trend should be viewed positively, as it demonstrates the everyday recognition of memory as part of social care and cultural participation.

At the same time, there’s the question of how deep and complete these programmes are, considering the needs of the target audiences – especially the military, their families, and affected civilians. Given the considerable variation in approaches to structuring commemoration programmes and the absence of a unified framework for targeting groups, forms and directions, it is appropriate to develop a recommended checklist. Such a tool could serve as a guideline for communities when planning programmes, without limiting their flexibility, but rather ensuring high-quality and meaningful content for commemorative initiatives, taking into account the needs of different audiences.

Table 9. Monopolisation of memory (by target audiences of programmes)



The data in the table demonstrates a clear concentration of programmes honouring military personnel and their families. In total, more than two-thirds of all programmes are addressed either exclusively to military personnel or to both military personnel and their families. This indicates a clearly defined local framework of memory, within which commemoration is associated primarily with military service and death on the front lines.

At the same time, civilian victims (in particular, families of deceased civilians, missing persons, deportees, and people who lost their homes as a result of hostilities) are almost absent from the programme documents of communities, which they classified as those related to commemoration and memorialisation. This institutional exclusion of civilian experience from public memory creates risks of asymmetrical recognition that does not cover the full spectrum of losses caused by the war.

Furthermore, the existence of a separate category of “ATO/JFO participants” indicates the persistence of administrative and political inertia, as a number of programmes continue to use pre-war terminology without updating the framework to reflect changes after 2022.

It should also be noted that some communities did not specify the target audience of the programmes at all, limiting themselves to references to “community residents” or “victims”, which makes it difficult to clearly distinguish the beneficiaries of commemorative policies. This indicates a lack of a unified approach to defining audiences in the politics of memory.

Overall, the analysis points to the need to rethink the scope of commemoration: institutional decisions in communities should create space for the inclusion of all forms of loss – both military and civilian – so that public memory is not only heroic, but also representative and inclusive.

COMMEMORATION OF CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF WAR

The data collected in the research indicates that the space of memory in Ukrainian communities is largely focused on the military, both in formal memorialisation practices and in social or cultural programmes.

In the vast majority of cases recorded in the tables and graphs, memorial plaques, street renaming, monuments and programmes were dedicated to military personnel, fallen defenders and their families. For example, almost 70% of communities reported the presence of memorial plaques, most of which are personalised and dedicated to military personnel. The programme analysis shows that social assistance for veterans and families of fallen soldiers predominates. Programmes that directly or indirectly include civilians are rare or limited to broad formulations (e.g., “community residents”).

Civilian victims, such as those missing, killed during shelling, and displaced persons, are practically not represented separately in the memorial space. In tables and calculations, references to them were sporadic and unsystematic. The authors of the research emphasise that they did not find a single programme directly dedicated to the memory of civilian victims; at best, they are mentioned in passing by combatants as “victims”. This can indicate an institutional lack of a recognised public format of remembrance for this category of victims.

Thus, based on the data obtained, it can be concluded that a separate and recognisable space for commemorating civilian victims of war in Ukrainian communities has not yet been established. This does not exclude the existence of isolated cases (for example, in Vinnytsia⁷¹ and Kremenchuk⁷²) This does not exclude the existence of isolated cases (for example, in Vinnytsia and Kremenchuk) or informal initiatives, but such examples are practically not found in the structured responses of local self-government bodies. Accordingly, the memory space is military-centric, focusing on the heroic and sacrificial representation of defenders, leaving out vulnerable civilian groups who also suffered irreparable losses.

71 A memorial to those killed in the Russian missile strike on 14 July was opened in Vinnytsia / Vezha, 14 July 2023: <https://vezha.ua/u-vinnytsi-vidkryly-pam-yatnyj-znak-zagyblym-vnaslidok-rosijskogo-raketnogo-udaru-14-lypnya-2022-roku-foto/>

72 A memorial square has been created in Kremenchuk to commemorate those who died in the shopping centre that was hit by a Russian missile / Suspilne Poltava: <https://suspilne.media/poltava/280381-u-kremencuci-stvorili-skver-pamati-pro-zagiblih-u-torgovomu-centri-kudi-vlucila-rosijska-raketa/>

ENGAGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC AND FAMILIES OF THE DECEASED IN MEMORIALISATION PROCESSES

A separate issue is the involvement of communities in memorialisation processes through public consultations, hearings and surveys. In total, 69 communities reported that they had conducted various forms of consultation with citizens on commemorating events and individuals associated with the Russian-Ukrainian war. Some communities also reported holding competitions for designs of monuments and memorial complexes, which they present as examples of public involvement. However, the responses rarely mention whether residents had any real influence on the choice of project, such as voting or participating in a jury. This may indicate superficial or even imitative involvement, limited to information or formal procedures without any real influence or inclusion of stakeholders.

Table 10. Community engagement

Communities responded “yes”	73
Public hearings	45
Consultations/Discussions	19
Surveys	6
Round Table	1

Based on the responses from communities, 73 out of 137 reported involving residents in discussions related to memorialisation. Most often, these were public hearings (45 cases), consultations or discussions (19), surveys (6) and round tables (1). The topics of these discussions mainly concerned the renaming of streets and, much less frequently, the installation of memorial signs or banners.

By comparison, in Chile, during the creation of the Peace Memorial in Santiago, the key principle was to create a platform for public discussion – including online consultations, public debates, and the involvement of victims’ families and local organisations (Collins, 2013). This experience demonstrates that memorialisation can be not only an object but also a process of collective reflection.

The formats for public engagement varied, and the research does not allow for an assessment of their depth, inclusiveness or duration. At the same time, the absence of conflicts or disputes, according to the responses provided, may be due to several factors:

- Limited space for alternatives, particularly when choosing locations for memorials or naming streets;
- Presence of obvious candidates for personalised commemoration – for example, those who died with high honours or the first to die in the community;
- Desire of the local self-government bodies to demonstrate unity and avoid representing internal tensions in public communication.

It is noteworthy that 136 communities indicated that none of the decisions regarding commemoration had been met with resistance or rejected by the community or council. This may indicate both internal consensus and a lack of transparency in the processes, where disagreement may not have been formally articulated.

Therefore, although community involvement occurs in most cases, it is mainly limited in scope and does not always allow for the full spectrum of positions within communities to be seen. Nevertheless, in most cases, this does not prevent communities from reaching consensus on memorialisation issues, which is probably due to the nature of the decisions themselves and the local context of the losses.

SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF COMMEMORATION

The communities' responses revealed a variety of social support formats as forms of commemoration. Of the 137 responses from communities, 158 programmes were mentioned, with some communities indicating more than one programme. Among them, 74 programmes (i.e. half) are either entirely social in nature or contain individual elements of social support within broader commemoration programmes. This indicates that communities perceive social protection not only as an integral part of commemoration practices, but also as a priority component. In particular, this includes monetary payments to military personnel and their families, financial support for the families of those killed in action, and compensation for travel expenses, including excursions within Ukraine.

In global practice, such integration of social policy into the politics of memory has parallels. Mahnoush H. Arsanjani and V. Michael Reisman analyse the corresponding parallel between South Africa and Germany⁷³. In South Africa, as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the state, while establishing the truth about apartheid crimes, implemented financial programmes for victims as a form of "reparative honouring". In Germany, payments to former concentration camp prisoners became not only a legal responsibility, but also an expression of collective memory of the crimes of Nazism.

Thus, in Ukrainian communities, social assistance is perceived not only as a tool for protection, but also as a means of preserving memory – a way of consolidating recognition of merits and losses in the material space of care. This requires the conscious inclusion of social practices in state and local memorialisation policies, with a clear articulation of the value basis for such assistance. An important feature of these programmes is that they are established forms of ensuring the localisation of relevant national programmes.

73 (Accountability for Human Rights Violations: A Comparison of Transitional Justice in East Germany and South Africa), *Proceedings of the ASIL Annual Meeting 95* (2001): 228. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/296151304_Accountability_for_Human_Rights_Violations_A_Comparison_of_Transitional_Justice_in_East_Germany_and_South_Africa

VISUAL PRACTICES AND MEMORIALISATION

The community pays considerable attention to visual forms of remembrance: banners with photos of the deceased, memorial plaques and stands. It is noteworthy that banners are positioned as full-fledged memorial sites, but according to memory theory, not all of them perform a true memorial function^{74,75}. Banners perform a memorial function when they become a place for rituals and collective experiences of loss (for example, regular flower laying or the organisation of moments of commemoration). Otherwise, they remain simply a visual reminder.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS OF REMEMBRANCE

The practice of laying flowers at memorial sites is the most common and consistent form of commemoration in communities. This tradition is widespread, and all communities mention it as a regular and systematic activity during national and local holidays. It is important to note that two names are used for memorial sites – “alley of glory” and “alley of memory” – which indicate different emphases in the perception of the heroic past or tragic memory.

A relevant case is the city of Sumy, where communication about commemoration is provided through a specialised communication programme. This approach ensures greater detail and transparency regarding events, and also demonstrates the integration of memory into the broader communication context of the city.

It is worth noting separately the practices that have developed around the nationwide minute of silence. This practice is taking on new forms: in large cities, such as Kyiv and Bucha, traffic on central streets is now being blocked. However, as evidenced by responses to information requests, local authorities mention the minute of silence only in passing in their reports, focusing much more often on the laying of flowers. This does not necessarily mean that the practice is being ignored, but rather that it is not yet fully recognised by local authorities as a separate commemorative event that requires formal reporting.

Public initiatives are also developing options for national rituals, which are gradually being institutionalised or adopted by businesses in certain sectors, such as the Table of Remembrance⁷⁶ or advocacy for observing a daily Moment of Silence⁷⁷. However, they mostly remain community/business activities rather than being appropriated by the local government. In the communities' view, the local ritual is reduced to a clear algorithm: a commemorative date, laying flowers, a rally or public event that takes place once a year.

74 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, *Representations*, no. 26 (Spring 1989): 15. https://is.muni.cz/el/fss/podzim2016/SOC571/Nora_105.pdf

75 James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 10

76 On the Day of Remembrance for the Defenders of Ukraine, 29 August, establishments, organisations and institutions across the country will reserve tables to honour fallen soldiers./ Facebook-page Memorial of Heroes: <https://surl.li/ibszck>

77 A roadmap for the implementation of a Moment of silence has been created for communities / Ministry for the Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, 17 April 2025: <https://mindev.gov.ua/news/dlia-hromad-stvoreno-dorozhniu-kartu-vprovadzhennia-khvylyny-movchannia>

PATRIOTIC EDUCATION AS A FORM OF COMMEMORATION

In several communities, such as Kovel, patriotic education is actively used as a way to remember the deeds of heroes. This is mainly achieved through sporting events and tournaments dedicated to the memory of the fallen, which highlights the link between military remembrance and the educational function of sport.

However, generally, only a relatively small proportion of communities – in their responses to our request – mentioned local youth or educational programmes for patriotic education as an element of commemoration. This indicates insufficient institutionalisation of this area in the politics of memory at the community level.

At the same time, patriotic education has the potential to be an important tool for transmitting the values of memory to future generations – provided that it is not reduced to rhetoric or formal events. This refers to the need to develop educational practices that will promote critical reflection on the events of the war, recognition of losses and heroism, and the development of empathy for war participants and their families.

In some countries, such as Poland⁷⁸ and Lithuania⁷⁹ – patriotic education has become one of the areas of focus for long-term state remembrance programmes. It includes working with local history, organising educational projects in collaboration with museums, families of the deceased, and documentarians. Similar approaches can be adapted for Ukraine.

Thus, patriotic education as a tool for commemoration needs to be conceptualised within the framework of the state's memorialisation policy, taking into account age characteristics, ethical standards and principles of inclusiveness, as well as to prevent the instrumentalisation of memory. This means developing approaches that do not reduce patriotism to propaganda or heroisation without reflection on losses, but rather ensure a deep understanding of historical experience, openness to critical thinking, and respect for the dignity of all participants and victims of war.

GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN LOCAL COMMEMORATION PROGRAMMES

It is also worth noting the existence of special programmes in which the titles explicitly use the wording “Defenders and Women Defenders” or simply “Women Defenders” – as recognition of women's contribution to the defence of the state. Such programmes are important for enhancing the visibility of women's wartime experiences and embedding them

78 Act of 18 December 1998 on the Institute of National Memory – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, Article 1 (Art. 1. – Ustawa o Instytucie Pamięci Narodowej – Komisji Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu) <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19981551016/U/D19981016Lj.pdf>

79 **The Recommendations on Civic Education of Youth** (*JAUNIMO PILIETIŠKUMO UGDYMO REKOMENDACIJOS*) developed and published by the **Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania** (Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos Jaunimo reikalų departamentas) Recommended initiatives (e.g., „*Misija Sibiras*“ and „*Neužmirštuolė*“), which are directly related to working with historical memory and fostering patriotism, and demonstrates mechanisms for cooperation with the public <https://jra.lt/uploads/jaunimo-pilietiskumo-ugdymo-rekomendacijos.pdf>

into public memory, which has traditionally focused on male heroism. These initiatives promote equal representation in the politics of memory and reflect contemporary understandings of inclusiveness in the field of defence.

Interestingly, most of these initiatives are implemented precisely within social programmes – for example, programmes supporting the families of women service members, medical or psychological assistance, or educational activities for female veterans. This indicates a trend towards integrating gender inclusiveness not only into the symbolic but also into the practical dimension of commemoration policies. In this respect, Ukraine is beginning to converge with international approaches, such as those in Canada or Norway, where state politics of memory have a distinct gender component and highlight the role of women in conflicts not only as victims but also as active participants.

SYMBOLIC GRATITUDE THROUGH TOPONYMY

Among the new practices of public commemoration, renaming streets in honour of hero cities (e.g., Mariupol, Kherson, Kharkiv) and partner countries (e.g., Lithuanian, Estonian, Danish in Mykolaiv) stands out. Similar examples can be seen in Lviv, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kropyvnytskyi, and other cities. This allows solidarity and international support to be integrated into the everyday lives of citizens.

Such renaming has a dual symbolic function: firstly, it is a form of public gratitude, recorded in the city space; secondly, it is a transformation of the urban landscape, creating new “places of memory” – although not related to the past, they record the present historical moment of solidarity.

It is important that these renamings are accompanied not only by technical decisions, but often by a public declaration of the values that connect Ukraine with its partner countries: democracy, support for freedom, and solidarity in war. Such names can be seen as a form of projective memory – one that not only records the past but also shapes the future perception of the present. They demonstrate how elements of urban space can serve as a means of memory diplomacy, weaving international relations into the fabric of everyday life.

CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the reports provided by communities allows us to identify several key trends and make appropriate recommendations for the development of memorialisation policy in Ukraine:

- Social assistance (payments, services, compensation) is increasingly seen as a form of commemoration, pointing to the deep intertwining of the politics of memory and social protection. This approach is in line with international practices of reparative commemoration.

- Visual forms of memory (banners, boards, stands) have the potential to serve as memorials only if they become spaces for ritual and emotional interaction between the community and its experience of loss. Without this, they remain superficial markers of memory.
- Engaging communities through competitions, consultations, and hearings has significant potential for democratising memory, but is currently being implemented in a fragmented manner and mostly formally or imitatively. It is important to implement models of real participation based on international experience (e.g., Chilean).
- Patriotic education can be an effective means of transmitting the values of memory, but it requires a clear ethical framework and methodological basis that would prevent the instrumentalisation of history and promote critical reflection on the events of the war.
- Gender-inclusive approaches, including the use of feminine forms in programme names and recognition of the role of women in war, are increasingly being integrated into social initiatives. This trend should be enshrined as a standard in state politics of memory.
- The practice of renaming streets demonstrates the power of toponymy as a tool of memory diplomacy and collective recording of contemporary history. These examples testify to the possibility of shaping projective memory through spatial policy.

In general, the politics of memory should go beyond symbolic gestures and include community participation, social responsibility, inclusiveness, and ethical sensitivity. This will enable the development of sustainable, socially rooted, and democratic approaches to commemoration at both the local and national levels.

ANNEX 1.

Methodological aspects of the conclusions reached in Section II. Analysis of existing practices of commemoration at the community level

Information was collected in two waves. The analysis is based on generalised and most relevant data collected mainly during the second wave (winter–spring 2025), during which, 178 requests were sent to various types of LSGBs.

The response rate was over 84%, which ensured broad geographical coverage and allowed us to form a sufficient empirical basis for identifying nationwide trends.

The typology of the surveyed communities included:

- **Small communities** – 32,
- **Medium-sized communities** – 37,
- **Large communities** – 44,
- **Regional centres** – 24.

As of April 2025, 14 communities from the sample provided were under occupation (in particular, in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions), which could have affected the completeness of the information provided or the nature of the practices that these communities implement or document.

The information requests covered the following topics:

- Renaming of streets related to the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the period from 2014 to 2024;
- Installation of memorial objects (memorial plaques, monuments, steles, alleys of glory, etc.);
- Organisation of commemorative events;
- Implementation of programmes that include or specialise in memorialisation;
- Ways of involving the public in these processes.

Requests were made in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On Access to Public Information”, and the information provided by communities was based on their available resources, internal documentation and subjective interpretation of practices.

Information gathering was carried out in two stages:

- **First stage:** (Spring–Summer 2024) covered the period from 2014 to May 2024. In this round, 114 responses were received from 161 requests.

- **Second stage:** (Winter–Spring 2025) focused on updates for the period May–December 2024 and collected 113 responses from 178 requests.
- At the same time:
- Some communities provided information only for the new period, some communities resubmitted a complete set of data for the entire period;
- Some did not respond a second time, so data from the first stage was used for such cases.

To avoid duplication of information, all responses were manually verified by community name and region.

Further data processing included:

- Structuring into a database divided into thematic categories (renaming, physical objects, events, programmes, involvement);
- Quantitative analysis (counting units of practices, number of events, types of objects, categories of programmes, etc.);
- Qualitative analysis (typology of programme and event content, degree of personalisation, logic of symbolic design);
- Marking restrictions in information (absence of specificity, generalisation, fragmentation);
- Recording the structure by years, where possible, to identify changes in dynamics after 2022.

Thus, the research allows us to describe not only the geography but also the depth of institutionalised practices of remembrance, taking into account both the substantive priorities of communities and existing systemic gaps.

Methodological limitations and caveats regarding data interpretation

The research is based on data obtained through information requests to local self-government bodies (LSGBs) regarding practices of commemorating individuals and events related to the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The following limitations should be taken into account when analysing the collected information:

1. **Self-assessment by LSGBs regarding the themes of renamings and commemoration objects.** The assessment of whether streets were renamed or memorials were created in connection with the Russian-Ukrainian war was carried out independently by the communities. This creates a risk of incomplete data, as some of the renaming within the framework of decommunisation could also have been related to the war, but was not identified as such.

- 2. Fragmentation and unevenness of data on physical commemoration objects.** Data on the installation of memorial plaques, commemorative signs, steles and other objects of commemoration were also provided by communities on a selective basis. In some cases, only general information was provided without details or with incomplete information.
- 3. Limitations in collecting data on commemoration practices.** The vast majority of communities limited their responses to general statements about holding events on public holidays and commemorative dates. Specific forms of commemoration (e.g., running events, tree planting, symbolic actions) were rarely mentioned. As a result, the data obtained may not fully reflect the actual diversity of commemoration practices that take place locally.
- 4. Existence of replies and notifications stating that it is impossible to provide detailed information.** Some LSGBs, especially in large cities, noted that separate statistics on commemorative events are not kept due to limited resources or the absence of relevant records. In these cases, either a general response about the events was provided or a response stating that it was impossible to provide information.
- 5. Absence of record-keeping and standardised reporting.** The absence of uniform standards for recording commemorative events and practices in communities makes it difficult to compare data between regions and to determine the full picture of memorialisation processes.
- 6. Uneven coverage across types of communities.** The data cover both small communities and large cities, but due to differences in administrative capacity the level of detail in the information provided varied, which may have affected the quality and completeness of responses. Because of the unevenness of replies (updated data, partial updates, or lack of new responses), the completeness of information may vary between communities.

The collected data should be considered as a minimum basis for analysing the main trends in memorialisation and commemoration practices at the local level. Despite its limitations, the information gathered allows us to identify key directions in the development of memorialisation processes and public memory practices in response to the Russian-Ukrainian war.



The Human Rights Centre ZMINA is a Ukrainian human rights organisation working to protect freedom of speech, combat discrimination, prevent torture and cruel treatment, support human rights defenders and civil society activists, document international crimes, and protect the rights of victims of war.