Mapping of cooperation, key trends, and prospects

Prepared by experts of the Belarusian Council for Culture together with the Danish Cultural Institute, 2026

Belarus–Ukraine: Cultural Dialogue 2022–2026

DANSK KULTURINSTITUT
DANISH CULTURAL INSTITUTE

BELARUSIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

Introduction 3
A brief background 3
Literature 4
Media projects and campaigns 12
Visual arts 14
Festivals and spaces for dialogue 17
Music 23
Theatre 26
Conclusions and recommendations 28

Introduction

This document offers a mapping of Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural cooperation in 2022–2026. It covers projects in literature, theatre, film, visual art, media, festival programs, and international networks. The examples gathered here show not only the scale and diversity of this cooperation, but also how the very character of Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural dialogue has changed since 2022.

A significant share of these initiatives was made possible through volunteer work, the personal resources of the authors and organisers, crowdfunding, or small-scale donor support. At the same time, Belarusian-Ukrainian cooperation was often developed within broader programmes supporting independent culture and intercultural cooperation, rather than as a standalone priority.

The mapping does not claim to be exhaustive: it records more than sixty projects, but the real scale of cooperation is likely greater. Even so, the existing sample demonstrates its resilience: dozens of joint initiatives were carried out in under four years amid war, emigration, limited resources, and the near-total absence of systemic interstate dialogue.

The aim of this document is not only to record what has already been accomplished, but also to identify what the accumulated experience tells us about the state of Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural dialogue and its potential for further development. The examples identified demonstrate that there is a much broader foundation for cooperation than current resources and institutional mechanisms allow for.

This leads to one of the document's key recommendations: to establish a dedicated long-term programme to support Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural cooperation, with its own funding, sustainable partnerships, and support not only for individual projects, but also for the infrastructure of dialogue.

A brief background

Before 2020, Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural relations developed along two parallel channels. The first was tied to interstate and official contacts: participation in international book fairs and exhibitions, culture days, embassy programs, and state cultural institutions. The second took shape in the independent cultural field — through festivals, artistic initiatives, independent venues, and joint projects that emerged directly between professional communities.

After the events of 2020, these relations began to change substantially. The Ukrainian intellectual and cultural community openly expressed solidarity with Belarusian society, and Belarusian culture became more visible within the independent Ukrainian cultural space. Evidence of this includes, in particular, the publication of Iya Kiva's book "We Will Wake Up Different...", dedicated to the Belarusian experience of transformation and resistance, and the exhibition of Belarusian resistance "Every Day" at the Mystetskyi Arsenal complex in Kyiv, which brought together the work of more than 50 Belarusian and Ukrainian artists.

At the same time, Ukraine became one of the key countries of relocation for Belarusian cultural figures. This changed the very nature of contacts: geographic proximity and the direct presence of Belarusian artists and managers within the Ukrainian cultural environment encouraged new professional and personal ties. These ties took shape at several levels: individual working relationships between authors, translators, and curators who began collaborating directly; informal circles of mutual support among relocated Belarusian cultural workers and their Ukrainian colleagues; and, in some cases, the first joint initiatives — residencies, cultural centers, and civic organizations — that these personal contacts later grew into.This is how a network of contacts was formed, which later became one of the foundations of Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural cooperation amid the full-scale war.

Following the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine in 2022, the intergovernmental channel of cultural cooperation effectively came to a halt. However, the networks formed within the independent cultural field did not disappear. On the contrary, under wartime conditions they took on new significance — as channels of solidarity, mutual understanding, and shared reflection on the experience of Belarus and Ukraine.

These channels of Ukrainian-Belaurusian cooperation have resulted in a range of projects gathered below and grouped into **six main areas:** literature, media, visual arts, festivals and spaces for dialogue, music, and theatre. This grouping makes it possible not only to see the diversity of initiatives, but also to identify the most sustainable forms of Belarusian-Ukrainian interaction.

Literature

Literary exchange between Belarus and Ukraine has been developing in both directions in recent years: Belarusian authors are entering the Ukrainian literary space, while Ukrainian works are being translated and published in Belarusian. At the same time, translation increasingly reaches beyond literary practice as such. It becomes a tool of cultural communication, of transmitting the experience of war and repression, of mutual recognition, and of shaping a shared space of memory.

This is especially visible in the works connected to war, political violence, memory, and the experience of resistance. The Ukrainian experience becomes part of the contemporary Belarusian cultural context, while through translation Belarusian authors gain the chance to be present in the Ukrainian cultural space as independent voices with their own historical and contemporary experience.

The examples below illustrate several interrelated trends: the translation of Ukrainian literature into Belarusian as a form of solidarity and cultural rapprochement; the presence of Belarusian literature in the Ukrainian space; the shaping of a shared narrative about war and repression; and a gradual rethinking of Belarusian-Ukrainian history as an interconnected experience.

Publication of "The Dictionary of War" by Ostap Slyvynsky, translated from Ukrainian into Belarusian by Iryna Herasimovich (Haliyafy, 2023, as part of the "33 books for another Belarus" project)

A documentary-literary project by Ukrainian poet, translator, and essayist Ostap Slyvynsky, launched in the first months following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Slyvynsky volunteered in Lviv, listening to the stories of people fleeing the war; he later began recording these testimonies and organising them around individual words whose meanings had been radically transformed by the war.

The Belarusian translation makes the Ukrainian experience of war part of a direct cultural dialogue between Belarusians and Ukrainians. It is especially significant that the book explores how war changes the meaning of ordinary words: in Belarusian, they begin to resonate with the country's own experience of fear, loss, exile, solidarity, and life in instability.

A free PDF of the book can be downloaded here.

Publication of the novel "Sweet Darusya: A Tale of Two Villages" by Maria Matios, translated from Ukrainian into Belarusian (Pflaumbaum, 2023)

This tragic family saga unfolds in the 1930s–1970s in Bukovyna, a region on the Ukrainian-Romanian border where, over several decades, the ruling powers and state borders repeatedly changed. At the center of the story are ordinary people whose lives are broken by war, repression, and the actions of the state system. The author emphasizes that "the hand of authority" reaches even into the most remote corners of the region and leaves irreparable damage.

For Belarusian readers, the plot takes on additional relevance: the experience of Bukovyna shows how grand politics and changing regimes penetrate the lives of the most ordinary people. The translation thus creates an opportunity to relate Ukrainian historical experience to the Belarusian one.

The publication was initiated by the Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich; the translator remains anonymous.

Publication of the novel "Alindarka's Children" by Alhierd Bacharevic, translated into Ukrainian ("Stylos", 2025, translated by Lesyk Panasiuk and Daryna Gladun)

This is the first translation of a Bacharevic novel into Ukrainian and an important step in introducing one of the leading contemporary Belarusian prose writers to the Ukrainian literary space.

The significance of the publication is reinforced by its reception: the book received wide acclaim and was included in the Ukrainian PEN's list of the best

books of the year in Ukraine. This shows that Belarusian literature can be of interest in Ukraine not only in the context of political solidarity, but as a literary phenomenon in its own right.

The translation also gives Ukrainian readers a chance to get to know Belarus through contemporary literature rather than solely through political discourse.

The Carlos Sherman Prize, awarded to Belarusian poet Andrei Khadanovich for his translation of Ukrainian poetry

The prize for the best translated book, established in honor of the outstanding literary translator Carlos Sherman, has been awarded in Belarus since 2016. It is organized by the "Viartannie" charitable initiative, the International Union of Belarusian Writers, and PEN Belarus.

For the Belarusian literary space, this award signifies not only recognition of a translator's skill, but also the importance of translation as a means of building connections between literatures and cultures. It is therefore symbolic that the leading foreign-language poetry books of 2023 for Belarusians were *"Another Name for Love"* and *"Mesopotamia"* by Serhiy Zhadan.

Belarusians can read Ukrainian literature without translation. Yet recasting a work in Belarusian — especially poetry — brings it into a different linguistic and cultural system. The very fact that such translations are recognized by a Belarusian professional literary prize demonstrates the significance of Ukrainian literature for the contemporary Belarusian literary scene.

The Natallia Arsenneva Prize (2025), awarded to Siarhei Prylutski, a Belarusian poet and citizen of Ukraine, for his book of war poetry "Nothing Unfrightening"

Siarhei Prylutski met the full-scale invasion in Bucha. He lived there with his family near Hostomel airport and spent about two weeks under Russian occupation before his family managed to evacuate.

Therefore, the poet writes about the war not as an outside observer: he describes a reality of which he himself has become a part. It is particularly significant that this experience is articulated in Belarusian. Here, the Belarusian language becomes a language of testimony about Russia's war against Ukraine, as well as a language of empathy and solidarity.

For Belarusian culture, this is an important way of incorporating the Ukrainian experience into its own cultural space, while at the same time demonstrating the distinction between Belarusian culture and the regime's policies. In 2025 the jury of the Natallia Arsenneva Prize — one of the leading awards for Belarusian-language poetry — awarded the prize to Prylutsky for *"Nothing Unfrightening"*, with the citation "for the voice of human love in a time of war and inhumanity."

In this way, the Ukrainian experience of war enters contemporary Belarusian poetry not as an external subject, but as part of the current Belarusian literary experience.

A selection of Ukrainian poetry translated into Belarusian, Make Poetry, not War, published in the Taubin online magazine to mark the anniversary of the start of the full-scale war

The project brings together translations of contemporary Ukrainian poetry into Belarusian. The selection features texts by Maksym Kryvtsov, Ostap Slyvynsky, Artur Dron, and other authors, translated by Belarusian poets including Andrei Khadanovich.

Unlike a standalone book publication, this project highlights the role of independent literary media in supporting Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural dialogue. Poetry here functions as a form of solidarity, resistance, and preservation of human connection during wartime.

Ihar Alinevich's book "On the Way to Magadan", translated into Ukrainian by Ira Stasiuk (2023)

This is prison nonfiction written by Alinevich during his first period of imprisonment from 2010 to 2015. In the book, he describes the Belarusian penal and penitentiary system, everyday prison life, mechanisms of pressure, and his own experience as a political prisoner. The book was first published in 2013 and, in the same year, received the first Frantsishak Alyakhnovich Prize for the best work written in confinement.

The Ukrainian translation and print in 2023 were organized by the Belarusian volunteer and anarchist Yauhen Zhuravski ("Salam"), who was then fighting in Ukraine; the translation was done by Ira Stasiuk and edited by Aliaksei Salianik.

Here, literary translation performs a clear informational and educational function: it helps Ukrainian society better understand the Belarusian repressive system and its mechanisms.

Ihar Alinevich's fate is emblematic of Belarus's recent history: he was first convicted in 2011 to 8 years in prison, was released on pardon in 2015, and was detained again in 2020. In December 2021 he was sentenced to 20 years in a high-security colony in the "anarcho-partisans" case.

Documentary book by Belarusian journalists Katsiaryna Andreyeva and Ihar Ilyash, "The Belarusian Donbas" (Kharkiv, Folio, 2020 — Russian-language edition; 2021 — Ukrainian-language edition)

The book is the result of years-long journalistic investigation into Belarusians' participation in the war in Donbas. The authors interviewed Belarusians who found themselves on different sides of the front and examined the role of Belarusian security services, state institutions, and Lukashenka himself in the context of the war in eastern Ukraine.

Long before the full-scale invasion, the book showed that the war in Ukraine was not a distant or foreign happening for Belarus: Belarusians participated in

it on both sides of the front, while Belarus itself was involved in the political and security processes surrounding the conflict.

In Belarus the book was labeled "extremist" and banned. Katsiaryna Andreyeva is one of the well-known Belarusian journalist political prisoners. After five years of imprisonment she was forcibly expelled from Belarus; her husband and colleague Ihar Ilyash was sentenced to 4 years in a penal colony for "discrediting the Republic of Belarus" and "facilitating extremist activity" and remains imprisoned in Belarus.

A book of poems by Dzmitry Strotsau, "Ukrainian Icon Painting: A Poetic Reportage, 2014–2025", translated into Ukrainian (Kyiv, Dukh i Litera, 2025). Translators: Natalia Belchenko, Viktoria Vakulenko, and Serhiy Zhadan

This is the second Ukrainian-language book by the Belarusian poet Dzmitry Strotsau; the first, *"Dust That Dances"*, was published in 2020. The new book brings together poems written over more than a decade — from the Maidan and the beginning of the war in 2014 through to 2025.

Strotsau himself calls this form "poetic reportage": here poetry functions as a direct record of events, of the human voice, and state of being.

The book is notable for its extended time frame: it is a poetic chronicle of a Belarusian author's relationship with Ukraine over 2014–2025. In this sense, *"Ukrainian Icon Painting"* shows the reverse direction of cultural exchange: the Ukrainian reader gets to see Ukraine through the eyes of a Belarusian poet, who becomes not only the subject of representation but also an interpreter of Ukrainian experience.

A poetic photo album by Ales Plotka, Ales Piletski, and Stanislav Krupazh, Bloodlands 20/22 Belarus/Ukraine (London, Skaryna Press, 2023) and its Ukrainian version, "Sozh" (Drohobych, Kolo, 2025, translated by Viacheslav Levytskyi)

The project combines poetry and photography. At its center are the "bloodlands" of Belarus and Ukraine, their differing historical trajectories, and their contemporary paths toward decolonization. Alongside the authors' own works, the Belarusian edition includes translations of Ukrainian writers: Ivan Semesiuk, Tania Rodionova, Viacheslav Levytskyi, Lesyk Panasiuk, and Angie Siveria.

The Ukrainian version was titled *"Sozh"* — after the river that connects Belarus and Ukraine, and which simultaneously serves as a metaphor for a border, a crossing, and a "grey zone" between the two spaces.

The project's importance lies in the fact that it goes beyond purely literary exchange and creates a shared Belarusian-Ukrainian visual-literary space. *"Sozh"* is not simply a translation but a re-creation and rethinking of the project for a different audience: Viacheslav Levytskyi worked with the text

as living literary material, at times proposing his own interpretive solutions, which the author agreed to.

Translations of Ukrainian Poetry Published by hochroth Minsk

The independent Belarusian publishing house hochroth Minsk, founded in Berlin by poet and publisher Dzmitry Strotsau, is systematically introducing Belarusian-speaking readers to contemporary Ukrainian poetry. Four books came out in 2023–2026: "Another Name of Love" by Serhiy Zhadan (2023, translated by Andrei Khadanovich), "Human Right" by Yuriy Izdryk (2025, translated by Ales Plotka and Natallia Rusetskaya), "Scream from the Terricone" by Maksym Kryvtsov (2026, translated by Volha Yermalayeva Franco), and "Things to Hold On To" by Iryna Shuvalova (2026, translated by Andrei Khadanovich). These authors belong to different generations and artistic movements within contemporary Ukrainian literature, but their work is united by its attention to human dignity, freedom, love, memory, loss, and the search for something to hold on to in times of historical upheaval. For Belarusian readers, the resonance between the Ukrainian experience of war and resistance and the Belarusian experience of repression, exile, and the struggle to preserve their own identity may be especially meaningful.

#FreeAllWords

An international literary and translation project established under the auspices of the European Writers' Council (EWC) on the initiative of the International Union of Belarusian Writers, the Swiss association of authors and translators A*dS, and the Norwegian Writers' Union Forfatterforbundet. The initiative supports Belarusian and Ukrainian authors working under conditions of war, forced emigration, political repression, and censorship. The project pays fees to writers and translators, funds translations of literary works into foreign languages, and distributes them to international audiences.

As of 2025, the project had collected and translated 212 texts by 46 Belarusian and Ukrainian authors into 50 languages, with the participation of 51 translators from 21 countries. The project contributes to the preservation and development of Belarusian and Ukrainian literature and their international visibility, to the professional support of authors and translators, and to cultural solidarity between Belarus, Ukraine, and the European literary community.

Translation Workshop: Ukrainian Literature of the 1920s–1930s and Today

A themed session of the Belarusian PEN Translation Workshop, led by poet and translator Andrei Khadanovich, devoted to Ukrainian literature — from the "Executed Renaissance" of the 1920s–1930s to contemporary war poetry.

The invited expert, Ukrainian literary scholar Yaryna Tsymbal, presented the international project to reconstruct the lost novel "Jugurtha" by the repressed Ukrainian writer Maik Yohansen. Belarusian translator Andrei Khadanovich also joined the work on reconstructing the novel and translating it into various

languages. During the workshop, participants also analysed Belarusian translations of works by the Ukrainian futurist Geo Shkurupiy, including the novella "Death Headquarters" translated by Miron Vitushka, as well as poetry by contemporary Ukrainian authors – Maksym Kryvtsov, a poet and soldier who was killed in the war, and Valeriy Puzik, a writer, artist, and soldier.

The Work of Translator Volha Yermalayeva Franco

Belarusian translator Volha Yermalayeva Franco (Volia Franco) promotes Ukrainian literature and culture in Brazil. Together with Paterson Franco Costa, she has translated three books by Ukrainian writers into Portuguese: "Poems from the Loophole" by Maksym Kryvtsov (2025), "Hemingway Knows Nothing" by Artur Dron (2026), and "Medusa's Gaze" by Lyubko Deresh (2026). All three were published by Editora Rua do Sabão with support from the Translate Ukraine programme. She also co-organised and interpreted for the Ukrainian Film Days (2026), held in eight Brazilian cities, and for multimedia exhibitions devoted to the work of Maksym Kryvtsov (2025–2026). Her work advances the international promotion of Ukrainian literature and culture, as well as Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural cooperation.

"Chernobyl Generation / Pakalennie Charnobylia / Pokolinnia Chornobylia": A Belarusian-Ukrainian Literary Anthology (Pflaumbaum, 2026)

A Belarusian-Ukrainian literary project by the independent women's publishing house Pflaumbaum, marking the 40th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The anthology was compiled by Belarusian writer Volha Kastsiuk and Ukrainian cultural researcher, curator, and writer Kateryna Botanova. It brings together 20 literary and non-fiction texts by Belarusian and Ukrainian women authors, including Volha Hapeyeva, Tania Artsimovich, Volha Bubich, Volha Yermalayeva Franco, Yaryna Grusha, Tamara Hundorova, Svitlana Matviyenko, and others. The Belarusian texts were selected through an open call that received 42 submissions. The anthology was published in Vilnius in 2026, with the texts in their original languages, Belarusian and Ukrainian. What sets the project apart is its shared reflection on the Chernobyl disaster from two national perspectives: Belarusian and Ukrainian authors address a common historical trauma, exploring ecological catastrophe, collective memory, the loss of home, forced migration, and political resistance.

"Antares: An Anthology of the Ukrainian Executed Renaissance"

A Belarusian-Ukrainian literary project dedicated to preserving and popularising the legacy of Ukrainian writers of the 1920s–1930s who fell victim to Stalinist repression. The anthology was compiled by Belarusian poet and translator Ales Plotka and published by the Purple Workshop (Purpurnaja majsternia) initiative. For the first time in Belarusian, the book brings together under one cover works by 26 Ukrainian authors, including Mykola Zerov, Mykhail Semenko, Maik Yohansen, Geo Shkurupiy, and Mykola Khvylovy. The poetry is presented bilingually, with the Ukrainian originals alongside the Belarusian

translations. The translators include Eva Arlova, Hanna Yankuta, Mikola Hreshny, Viktar Zhybul, Artur Kamarouski, and others. A particular highlight is the inclusion of a historical translation by Belarusian poet Ales Dudar, who was executed in 1937 — evidence of the long-standing literary ties between the two countries.

In collaboration with the Ukrainian studio Audiostories Production (Lviv), a Belarusian-language audio version of Antares was also produced, in which Ales Plotka reads his own translations. The audio album was released on 15 October 2026 and is available on Bandcamp. The project brings to light the shared Belarusian and Ukrainian experience of the Soviet regime's destruction of national cultural elites, restores the historical continuity of literary contacts, and develops contemporary Belarusian-Ukrainian cooperation in translation, publishing, and audio literature.

Ukrainian Literature Published by the Belarusian Publisher Skaryna Press (London, 2022–2026)

The Belarusian publishing house Skaryna Press, founded in London, has given preference to translating Ukrainian literature into Belarusian since it began operating. The publisher's first book, in 2022, was "Beirut Stories" by Ahatanhel Krymsky — a classic of Ukrainian literature, a distinguished orientalist, and one of the founders of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, who also had Belarusian roots. First published in 1906, the work introduces readers to the multicultural and multilingual world of the Middle East, touching on questions of national identity, cultural diversity, and colonialism. The Belarusian translation by Uladzislau Harbatski was nominated for the Ukrainian Drahomán Prize for translation.

In 2023, Skaryna Press reissued Serhiy Zhadan's "Anarchy in the UKR" in an updated Belarusian translation by Aleh Zhlutka (the first Belarusian edition was published in Minsk in 2012). It is autobiographical prose about late-Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine, the coming of age of a new generation, the search for freedom, and the rethinking of one's own past.

In 2026, the publisher released "Hemingway Knows Nothing" by Artur Dron — one of the most notable Ukrainian books about the current war, awarded the Yuriy Shevelov Prize for the best book of essays of 2025. The author, who joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 2022 and was wounded at the front, writes about the war from personal experience, depicting life at the front, fear, death, friendship, faith, and love without heroic pathos. The book became a bestseller in Ukraine and in 2026 is being translated into a number of foreign languages, including Belarusian.

These publications present Ukrainian literature from different eras — from early 20th-century classics to contemporary war prose. They help Belarusian readers get to know Ukrainian history, culture, and social experience more deeply, and to reflect on questions close to both countries: national identity, decolonisation, historical memory, and the struggle for freedom.

Media projects and campaigns

Rethinking mutual perceptions and creating space for direct conversation are important aspects of cooperation in media. Some initiatives address how Belarus and Belarusians are represented in the Ukrainian information space, while others deal with shared history, language, memory, Russification, and the current experience of war and emigration. Here, media serve not merely as a channel for distributing information, but as a tool that helps correct simplified images and reveal a more complex picture of the relationship between the two communities.

It is worth noting that this section brings together different levels of communication: from broad information campaigns to long interviews, podcasts, and regular publications. This makes it possible to work with both a mass audience and more complex topics that require time and nuanced discussion. A particular role is played by formats in which Belarusian and Ukrainian voices are present on equal footing, where the conversation is conducted in the national languages, and where differences of opinion are openly acknowledged.

As a result, media projects form an important layer of the relationship — a space of mutual explanation. They help make Belarusian topics part of the Ukrainian public sphere, and the Ukrainian experience part of Belarusian cultural and intellectual conversation. Especially noticeable here is the shift from one-sided information delivery to a more complex format, in which the sides not only talk about themselves but also learn to listen, to clarify, and to compare their own experiences.

Information campaign #BelaruswithUkraine

A campaign aimed at shaping a negative attitude among Belarusians toward Russian military aggression against Ukraine, initiated by a number of independent Belarusian organizations and coordinated by the Belarusian Council for Culture. From early March 2022, the project team systematically documented stories of help, support, and cooperation between Belarusians and Ukrainians under conditions of war.

Within the campaign, infographics under the title “Belarusians Are Not the Regime” were created, along with videos, animations, and interviews with well-known Belarusians and Ukrainians. Together, these materials showed the scale of Belarusian-Ukrainian solidarity and countered the simplified perception of Belarusian society as complicit in Russian aggression. The total reach of materials about Belarusians helping Ukrainians across Ukrainian media and social media channels exceeded 3.2 million users.

The campaign thus became one of the first systemic media responses to the problem of how Belarusians were perceived in the Ukrainian information space after the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Media project "Tryzub and Pahonia" by the cultural and educational portal "Budzma Belarusami!"

Through a popular historical format, the project tells the story of the shared past of Belarusians and Ukrainians without a Russian imperial lens. The videos show both common elements of history and the differences in how Belarusian and Ukrainian national narratives took shape, helping audiences see Belarus and Ukraine as two independent but historically close cultures.

The host Katsiaryna Vadanosava and concept author Ales Kirkevich translate complex topics — statehood, national revival, symbols, and historical memory — into language accessible to a broad audience. This allows Belarusian-Ukrainian historical topics to move beyond academic discussion and become part of popular cultural content.

An important feature of the project is its accessible media format. In today's context, "Tryzub and Pahonia" functions as a tool for mutual understanding and for de-imperializing the historical perspective — without mediation by the Russian historical narrative.

An extensive interview with Ales Plotka on the Ukrainer YouTube channel

This is one example of Belarusian cultural topics reaching a major Ukrainian media format. The nearly two-hour conversation took place as part of the "Language Question" project, which pays special attention to languages under threat of disappearance in Ukraine, including Belarusian.

In this episode, the conversation is held in Ukrainian and is built around Belarusian experience: repression, Russification, and cultural loss, the current challenges of emigration and political pressure, and changes in the language situation. Particular attention is given to translation as a means of cultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Belarusian-Ukrainian podcast Rakamakafo

A podcast running since 2024, structured as a conversation between two people from different countries who met in emigration and discovered much in common in their experience. The idea grew out of a feeling shared by many Belarusians — a lack of content that could unite, explain, and offer space for reflection and listening. The co-hosts are Iryna Domnenko, a Ukrainian specialist in strategic communications, education, and cultural decolonization, and Siarhei Kastrama, a Belarusian civic activist and project manager based in Prague. A key feature of the project is that the hosts speak in Ukrainian and Belarusian. The topics, too, sit at the intersection of the two experiences.The authors discuss complex, and at times painful, differences in historical experience, politics, and mutual perceptions. Some episodes, for example, are devoted to how Belarusian and Ukrainian memory of Chernobyl differ, how the war has changed Ukrainian culture, how to develop content in the national languages, and how to view Russian cultural heritage from a decolonial perspective.

Thus, Rakamakafo creates not simply media content about Belarus and Ukraine, but a space for dialogue on an equal footing, where two languages, two societies, and two historical experiences can meet directly and discuss both what they have in common and what sets them apart.

Newspaper "Visnyk"

"Visnyk" is a volunteer-run, Ukrainian-language newspaper about Belarus and Belarusians, published regularly in Ukraine. It serves as the information platform of the Center for Cooperation between Belarusians and Ukrainians, covering topics such as Belarusian civil society, political prisoners and repression, Belarusian history, volunteer initiatives, the activities of Belarusian volunteers in Ukraine, and contacts between the two communities.

As of July 2026, 53 issues had been published. The newspaper exists in both print and electronic form, with the print run funded by donations. Its main online platform is its Telegram channel.

The newspaper regularly brings Belarusian topics into the Ukrainian information space and builds a coherent picture of Belarus through people's stories, civic initiatives, cultural memory, and current events. It is especially important that this is a Ukrainian-language publication: Belarusian topics become part of everyday Ukrainian media reading, rather than remaining confined within the Belarusian community.

Visual arts

Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural dialogue in the visual arts is developing not in one but in several formats at once. Some projects function as testimony and a form of solidarity – for example, the photographic project by Yauhen Zhuravski or Rufina Bazlova's *vyzhyvanka* embroidery. Others build infrastructure for long-term cooperation – such as Antiwarcoalition.art or the Mochnarte residencies. Another important direction is the participation of Belarusian artists in major international and Ukrainian projects, where the Belarusian experience becomes part of a broader conversation about war, memory, empire, migration, and decolonization.

These examples reflect a gradual shift from one-off gestures of support toward more sustainable professional connections. Importantly, this cooperation happens not only through the display of finished works, but also through joint work, residencies, curatorial networks, archives, and interdisciplinary projects. In this way, visual art becomes not only a means of expression, but also a space where new connections between cultural communities take shape.

International art movement Antiwarcoalition.art

Antiwarcoalition.art functions simultaneously as an open archive of anti-war art and a solidarity network. An important part of its work has been offline projects, including the exhibition "Sense of Safety" in Kharkiv – a city that has become one of the symbols of Ukrainian resistance. Holding the exhibition

directly under wartime conditions gave the project additional significance as a form of cultural presence and support. “Sense of Safety” received international recognition and was nominated for Ukraine’s National Taras Shevchenko Prize, one of the country’s most prestigious cultural awards.

Belarusian artists at the 2025 Kyiv Biennal

Among the participants are Marina Naprushkina, Volha Sasnouskaya, and Ala Savashevich — artists who today work in an international context and beyond Belarus’s borders.

Within the project, Belarus is not represented as a state or a distinct cultural scene, but exists through independent artists as part of a broader Eastern European and post-Soviet experience. In this format, Belarusian voice is included in the wider conversation about war, empire, memory, and decolonization — together with Ukrainian and other European authors, rather than in isolation. This is a valuable example of a model where Belarusian art is not confined to a separate “Belarusian theme,” but becomes part of a shared conversation about the experience of Eastern Europe.

The 2025 Kyiv Biennial itself was also built not as a single central exhibition, but as a networked project across various cities and countries, combining artistic events with discussions and political thinking. In this context, the participation of Belarusian artists became a form of incorporating Belarusian experience into the region’s transnational cultural dialogue.

Exhibition “Dom Możliwy / A Possible Home” (Poznań, 2025)

A Belarusian-Ukrainian-Polish exhibition held in Poznań in December 2025, bringing together artists from Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland whose personal and professional experience is tied to the city. At the heart of the project was the theme of home — as a place a person chooses for themselves, or is forced to seek anew, through war, relocation, emigration, and the loss of a previous life. At the same time, the exhibition addressed questions of adaptation, coexistence, and building of new communities.

Poznań holds a special place in the life of the Belarusian artistic community: it has become home to creative circles that bring together artists from different generations, while the Belarusian art scene actively engages with its Polish counterparts. This makes the city a natural meeting place for Ukrainian artists as well. In this sense, *A Possible Home* can be seen as an example of cultural dialogue born from the shared experience of displacement and life in emigration. Here, art becomes a language for discussing loss and belonging, solidarity, and the ability to build a new community beyond the borders of one’s former home.

Mochnarte art residencies with the participation of Belarusian and Ukrainian artists

The Mochnarte art residencies are an independent initiative in the Podlasie region, founded in 2022 as a space for contemporary artists, curators, and

cultural figures from Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, and other countries. Special attention is given to authors in emigration and to those whose work has been constrained by war or political repression. Over the past several years, more than 50 participants have been guests of Mochnarte, and the residency has become a place for work, rest, exchange of experience, and birth of new projects.

Ukrainian and Belarusian artists here have worked together on themes of borderlands, war, loss, migration, and memory. One telling episode was the simultaneous residency of Belarusian artist Zmitser Zhaunou and Ukrainian artist Terra Neidorf: they spoke in their own languages — Belarusian and Ukrainian — yet understood each other easily. It was from this experience that Mochnarte developed the idea of building the residency as a platform for dialogue between Belarusian and Ukrainian artists.

Exhibition by Yauhen Zhuravski, "Through Film. The Everyday Life of Warriors" (Warsaw, Museum of the Free Belarus, 2025 — "Karma" space, 2026)

A photo project by Yauhen Zhuravski, a soldier of the Kalinouski Regiment with the call sign "Salam." Since spring 2023, he has been documenting on film the everyday lives of Belarusian volunteers in Ukraine—their training, waiting, daily routines, brief moments of rest, and life between combat missions. The author deliberately avoids glorifying or romanticising the war, instead portraying it through ordinary human experience.

The significance of the project lies in it documenting Belarusian presence in Ukraine from within and in the first person. It tells the story of Belarusians directly involved in the defence of Ukraine. Photography thus becomes a form of testimony and remembrance that preserves the human dimension of the war while also making visible a different Belarusian experience—one fundamentally distinct from the role of the Belarusian regime in Russia's aggression.

"Vyshyvanka / Vyzhyvanka" by Rufina Bazlova for Volodymyr Zelenskyy

In August 2022, ahead of Ukraine's Independence Day, Volodymyr Zelenskyy appeared in an embroidered *vyshyvanka* shirt featuring a pattern created by Belarusian artist Rufina Bazlova. The design combined the traditional language of embroidery with images of contemporary war: tanks, wheat sheaves, and people holding hands.

In this way, a traditional decorative art form was transformed into a means of contemporary narrative about war, resistance, and unity. For Bazlova, this became a continuation of her artistic practice, *The History of Belarusian Vyzhyvanka*, in which she uses embroidery to record the events and images of the 2020 Belarusian protests.

This example is especially telling for the Belarusian-Ukrainian context: a Belarusian artist uses a form tied to national tradition to express solidarity with

Ukrainian society, carrying the experience of contemporary political and military reality into the language of folk art.

Photo exhibition "Kalinouski Regiment: The Long Journey Home"

The Kalinoŭtsy community and the press service of the Kastus Kalinouski Regiment put together a travelling exhibition called "Kalinouski Regiment: The Long Journey Home." It opened at the Zaporizhzhia Centre for Contemporary Art in August 2026. From 8 to 21 September it was shown in the Great Lavra Bell Tower of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. In November it moved to the Warrior's House (Budynok Voina) in Lviv, where it continues to introduce Ukrainian audiences to the experience of Belarusian volunteers.

The exhibition shows the combat path and daily life of Belarusian volunteers: training, living conditions, life on the front line and the memory of those who were killed. The cardboard boxes that went with the soldiers every time they moved became a key part of the design. They stand for the loss of home, forced mobility and the hope of returning to Belarus. In Zaporizhzhia, visitors left patches and badges and signed the boxes, and these became part of the next exhibition.

The exhibition presents Belarusian volunteers through their personal stories and experiences. In this way, documentary photography becomes a means of preserving memory and of talking with Ukrainian audiences about the Belarusian presence in the shared struggle for freedom.

Festivals and spaces for dialogue

In this section it becomes especially visible that Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural dialogue extends beyond individual works and events. It takes shape through work with historical memory, education, language initiatives, urban presence, and the creation of physical meeting places. It is significant that in these cases Belarusian culture becomes embedded within a broader Ukrainian civic and cultural context.

Another notable trend is a gradual shift from symbolic gestures and one-off actions toward more lasting forms of cooperation. Initiatives are emerging that combine culture with education, media, residencies, the preservation of memory, and practical solidarity. Spaces that allow for open discussion of difficult issues are particularly important, including questions of trust, responsibility, differing historical experiences, and the future of relations between the two societies.

Commemorations in honor of the Battle of Orsha and Prince Konstanty Ostrogski in Kyiv

From 2023 to 2025, a series of events commemorating the Battle of Orsha and the legacy of Grand Hetman Konstanty Ostrogski took place at the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. In 2023, marking the 509th anniversary, a memorial

bas-relief was unveiled in his honor; in 2024, for the 510th anniversary, official commemorations took place with the participation of Metropolitan Epiphanius; and in 2025, for the 511th anniversary, the emphasis was placed on the symbolic and historical significance of the commemoration, with memorial prayers, tributes, and the presentation of restored military banners of Ostrogski's army.

On 8 September 2026, the tradition of commemorating the Battle of Orsha continued at the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. Soldiers of the Kalinouski Regiment, members of the Kalinoŭtsy community and volunteers marked the 512th anniversary of the battle. The commemoration began with a memorial service for the Belarusians killed in Russia's war against Ukraine. Next came an awards ceremony of the International Legion of the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine (HUR), held by the memorial bas-relief of Konstanty Ostrogski on the wall of the Dormition Cathedral. Afterwards, the photo exhibition "Kalinouski Regiment: The Long Journey Home" opened. In this way, the memory of the 1514 victory was linked to today's experience of Belarusian-Ukrainian solidarity.

The continuity of these events shows that the memory of the Battle of Orsha and the figure of Ostrogski are gradually becoming embedded in Ukraine's cultural and memorial space, and are increasingly viewed as part of a shared Ukrainian and Belarusian history.

Cultural panel at the Ostrogski Forum in Lviv (2025)

The Belarusian-Ukrainian Ostrogski Forum took place for the fourth time in 2025, but for the first time its program included a dedicated cultural panel. The forum brings together more than 100 participants from Belarus, Ukraine, and other European countries to discuss security, democratic development, and the future of Belarusian-Ukrainian relations.

The discussion, "Cooperation between Ukraine and Belarus in Culture: A Decolonial Perspective," organised by the Belarusian Council for Culture, brought questions of language, memory, identity, shared history, and cultural cooperation into the dialogue.

Importantly, the discussion made it possible not only to record mutual interest and readiness for cooperation, but also to openly address problems: broken connections, mistrust, a lack of systemic dialogue, and the absence of a shared strategy. The very fact that such a conversation took place at a major Belarusian-Ukrainian intellectual venue reflects the gradual expansion of the cultural dimension of bilateral relations.

Karatkevich Street in Kyiv

A street named after Uladzimir Karatkievich was established in Kyiv as part of the broader process of decommunisation and rethinking the city's toponymy, which intensified particularly after the full-scale war began in 2022. Kyiv authorities undertook extensive renaming of streets, removing Soviet and

Russian names while also turning to figures associated with Ukrainian and neighbouring cultures.

Against this backdrop, in 2022, a street in the Pecherskyi District of the Ukrainian capital, previously named after Russian literary critic Nikolai Dobrolyubov, was renamed after Belarusian writer Uladzimir Karatkievich. This serves as a tribute to the writer's work, a recognition of shared chapters of history – Karatkievich lived in Kyiv and studied at the philology faculty of Kyiv University – and an expression of cultural solidarity with the Belarusian people. It also reflects an effort to incorporate Belarusian cultural heritage into a broader Eastern European space of memory.

Evenings and commemorative events marking the Night of Poets, in Lviv, Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Odesa

After the events of 2020, Night of Poets – a symbolic commemoration of the victims of Stalinist repression in the 1930s – became for Belarusians one of the symbols of national unity and a shared, inclusive act. Since 2021, events dedicated to Night of Poets have also been held in Ukraine.

Memory of the destroyed intelligentsia, of the "Executed Renaissance," of the mass graves in Belarus's Kurapaty and Ukraine's Bykivnia graves, reminds us that imperial violence does not disappear on its own, and that memory becomes a form of resistance and of strengthening national identity. For Belarusians and Ukrainians, this is a shared experience: it teaches us to recognise the value of human life and freedom, identify the threats posed by authoritarianism, resist attempts to erase the truth, and stand together in defence of culture and language.

DZEYA Cultural Initiative in Ukraine

DZEYA is a Belarusian cultural and civic initiative in Ukraine that brings Belarusians and Ukrainians together through poetry evenings, language meetups, lectures, film screenings, commemorations, and participation in city festivals. Its work creates a space for face-to-face encounters, for getting to know Belarusian culture, and for joint reflection on the historical experience of the two countries.

One strand of this work is the Night of Poets, dedicated to the memory of Belarusian writers killed during the Stalinist repressions. In 2026, Night of Poets events took place in three Ukrainian cities: Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Lviv. The Kyiv programme included a conversation about the murdered writers and the parallels between Belarusian and Ukrainian history, as well as an open mic with readings of poetry and prose to musical accompaniment. Such gatherings bring the Belarusian memory of the executed poets closer to the Ukrainian memory of the "Executed Renaissance," making it possible to speak about the shared experience of the destruction of national cultures and the preservation of their heritage.

Another regular format is the meetups held for International Mother Language Day. For example, on 21 February 2026, DZEYA and the Kalinoŭtsy community

hosted a meetup at the Tryptykh Art gallery in Kyiv. The programme combined a lecture on the formation and distinctive features of modern Belarusian, a group dictation, and a quiz.

An important place in the initiative's work belongs to the march in memory of Belarusian volunteers, held on 26 January, the birthday of Mikhas Zhyzneuski, Hero of the Heavenly Hundred. Zhyzneuski took part in the Revolution of Dignity and is the only Belarusian citizen to have been awarded the title Hero of Ukraine, which was conferred on him posthumously in 2017. The march in Kyiv honours him and other Belarusians who gave their lives for Ukraine, and unites the Belarusian and Ukrainian communities around memory and solidarity.

A more informal way for the cultures to meet was the Belarusian "Kropka Ŭ" stall at the Deruny Festival in 2023, 2024, and 2025. DZEYA initiated the Belarusian presence at the festival, where "Kropka Ŭ" served Belarusian draniki (potato pancakes). The festival also had a charitable purpose: part of the proceeds from every stall went to ongoing fundraisers for the Ukrainian army.

Cultural and Educational Activities of the Kalinoŭtsy Community

The Kalinoŭtsy community, which brings together veterans of the Kalinouski Regiment, their families, and supporters of the Belarusian civic movement in Ukraine, also carries out cultural and educational activities. Its events introduce Ukrainian audiences to Belarusian literature and history, creating a space for conversation about the ties between the two countries.

On 23 April 2026, the Kalinoŭtsy community and the DZEYA initiative organised an event dedicated to Zmitrok Biadulia at the Zaporizhzhia Centre for Contemporary Art. A conversation about his life and literary path was combined with a discussion of the national revival of the 1920s. In addition to Belarusian volunteers, the event drew local residents, for many of whom it was their first encounter with the writer.

Another example is a lecture by Ukrainian historian Vladyslav Starodubtsev, organised by the community. It focused on the intersections between the Belarusian and Ukrainian revolutionary movements, the ties between the Belarusian People's Republic (BNR) and the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR), the formation of national armies, and cooperation in the diaspora. Events like these help to view Belarusian and Ukrainian history as interconnected and to discuss its significance for relations today.

"House of Free Belarus" in Lviv

A venue that began operating in Lviv in September 2024 on the initiative of the Belarusian community and Aliaksei Frantskevich, head of the "Free Belarus" charitable foundation. Frantskevich has spent many years engaged in Belarusian civic activism in Ukraine: in 2020 he was among the founders of the Belarusian Crisis Center in Lviv, and after the start of the full-scale war, of the "Vilna Belarus" foundation. He assists Belarusian volunteers serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, supports Belarusians who remained in Ukraine, and

works to promote the Belarusian language and Belarusian presence within Ukraine's public space.

"House of Free Belarus" combines civic, cultural, and memorial functions. It hosts cultural and civic events and houses the museum exhibition "Free Belarus with Ukraine in Its Heart," dedicated, in particular, to Belarusians who died defending Ukraine.

The significance of this venue lies in the fact that it creates a physical space for ongoing contact between Belarusians and Ukrainians. It not only preserves the memory of Belarusian involvement in the defence of Ukraine, but also makes the Belarusian presence visible in Lviv's urban space.

Belarusian language courses in Lviv

A project launched back in 2021 as an initiative of the Belarusian Crisis Center in Lviv, with support from the Ukrainian scouting organization "Plast." Initially created primarily for Belarusians who, after the 2020 repression, found themselves in Ukraine and wished to reconnect with their native language, but the classes were also attended by Ukrainians. After the start of the full-scale war, the courses were suspended, and in 2024 they resumed at the House of Free Belarus. They are now held free of charge on Sundays, taught by human rights defender, philologist, and journalist Andrei Miadzvedzeu.

There is another important dimension to this. In Ukraine, Belarusian is not only the language of an émigré community, but also the language of a national minority with the right to preserve and develop it. Moreover, Ukraine has officially included Belarusian among the languages of national minorities covered by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. In 2024, the Ukrainian government separately added Belarusian to the list of languages of national minorities and indigenous peoples at risk of extinction. This means that the issue is not simply one of cultural affinity for the Belarusian language, but also of the need to ensure its preservation, teaching, and transmission to future generations.

Fem.Cultural Network and its projects

Fem.Cultural Network is a Belarusian-Ukrainian feminist cultural initiative that grew out of years of cooperation in media, education, and culture.

One of its early joint projects was MediaLabFem / "Her Business" (2021), in which young journalists from Belarus and Ukraine created portrait stories of civically active women. In 2022, the work continued through the Female Freedom Film Festival in Berlin, Tbilisi, and Chernivtsi. In 2024, Fem*HUB Bridging Cultures opened in Berlin – a cultural and working space for women and queer people from Belarus and Ukraine – along with HerLibrary, a library holding more than 400 books by female authors from both countries and other cultural contexts. In 2025–2026, a literary laboratory and residency were added to this line of work for young female authors from Belarus and Ukraine engaging with the experience of war, exile, and the loss of home.

Unlike individual one-off cultural events, Fem.Cultural Network builds long-term infrastructure for Belarusian-Ukrainian interaction. Its distinguishing feature is the combination of culture, education, a feminist perspective, and work with the experience of migration and war.

Documentary film festival "1084. On the Border" (2022 and 2023)

A documentary film festival about Belarus and Ukraine, launched after the start of the full-scale war in response to the region's new reality (organized by "Zviano/Lanka"). 1084 km is the length of the border between Belarus and Ukraine – the number in the title serves as a symbol of both rupture and connection. The festival took place in Ukraine: screenings and discussions were held in Kyiv, Bucha, Odesa, Ternopil, and Lutsk. All events were free, and donations went toward purchasing supplies for VAC wound therapy in Ukrainian military and civilian hospitals.

The importance of "1084. On the Border" lies in combining a cultural program with direct, practical solidarity. The festival used film as a way of talking about Belarus and Ukraine in wartime, while also creating a real mechanism of support.

Forum of Belarusian Cultural Resistance in Lutsk (2023)

The discussion programme was initially conceived as a side-event of the "1084. On the Border" festival, but ultimately grew into a major happening in its own right. It gave Belarusian and Ukrainian participants an opportunity not only to watch and discuss documentary films, but also to speak openly about the war, responsibility, trauma, and the future of relations between the two societies.

The significance of the forum lies in creating a space for direct dialogue at a time when relations between Belarus and Ukraine had become severely strained at the interstate level. In this context, culture served not simply as a subject of discussion, but as a mechanism for rebuilding horizontal connections, fostering mutual understanding, and overcoming distrust.

"For Our Freedom and Yours": An Exhibition of Belarusian National Symbols, Military Uniforms, and Awards of the Belarusian Liberation Movement

The exhibition opened on 19 September 2026 at the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War in Kyiv. It was organised jointly with the Belarusian Heraldic Council "Pahonia" to mark the 35th anniversary of the adoption of the white-red-white flag and the Pahonia coat of arms as the state symbols of Belarus. The exhibition presents the history of Belarusian statehood and the national liberation movement through its symbols – from the Principality of Polatsk and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Belarusian People's Republic, and the Slutsk Uprising to today's Belarusian volunteers defending Ukraine. The exhibits include historical and contemporary flags, military uniforms, state awards, and designs for the national symbols, passport, and military insignia of a future democratic Belarus. The exhibition highlights

Belarusian-Ukrainian solidarity and the role of Belarusian volunteers in the defence of Ukraine, using national symbols as a language of historical memory, identity, and the shared struggle for freedom.

The Belarusian-Ukrainian Work of the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum in London (2022–2026)

The Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum in London is building cooperation with Ukrainian cultural and academic institutions to preserve and promote the literary and historical heritage of both countries. In April 2026, together with the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Library and Archive, it organised the international symposium "A Song Never-Waning," dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the birth of Vera Rich (1936–2009), a British poet and translator of Belarusian and Ukrainian literature into English. The symposium provided a forum for reflecting on her contribution to presenting the two literatures internationally and to developing Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural ties. Symposium programme and video recordings of the talks.

Another strand of work is the library's participation in the international project "Belarusian Politics and Society," together with the Ivy Plus Libraries Confederation of American university libraries, including the libraries of Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Chicago. The project involves systematically archiving Belarusian websites, Telegram channels, and other digital sources, including material on Belarusian society's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Belarusian solidarity with Ukrainians, and Belarus's role in the war. The initiative makes it possible to preserve vulnerable digital evidence for future research and for documenting contemporary history. Both strands of the library's work help preserve a shared cultural memory and make the Belarusian and Ukrainian experience more accessible to the international research community.

Music

The music sector demonstrates one of the most vibrant forms of Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural interaction. It encompasses not only performances by Belarusian musicians in Ukraine and works created in support of Ukraine, but also shared repertoires, Belarusian-Ukrainian ensembles, the involvement of Belarusian professionals in Ukrainian cultural institutions, and the expansion of Belarusian musical traditions in an international context.

The "Unija" Choir

After the 2020 repression, the men's choir "Unija" transformed from a Belarusian ensemble into an international musical community. Alongside Belarusians, its members include Lithuanians, Poles, and Ukrainians. One of the choir's first responses to the start of the full-scale war was performing the Ukrainian song "Oi u luzi chervona kalyna." The choir's current repertoire also includes Belarusian, Polish, and Ukrainian carols. In this way, the choir has become an example of the natural blending of Belarusian and Ukrainian musical traditions within a single ensemble.

Marharyta Liauchuk: Musical and Cultural Work

The opera singer Marharyta Liauchuk has become one of the best-known Belarusian musicians in the context of Belarusian-Ukrainian solidarity. She has performed Ukrainian songs, including "Cheremshyna," taken part in joint music projects with Ukrainian artists, and performed for Belarusian volunteers and Ukrainian soldiers as part of the "Cultural Landing" (Kulturny Desant) initiative. Marharyta now lives in Ukraine, where she continues her artistic and civic work. She recently started a series of videos about life as a Belarusian woman in Ukraine. In them she shares her own observations and the joys and difficulties of everyday life, adapting, and engaging with Ukrainian society. The video project is supported by the ArtPower Belarus programme. In this way, Liauchuk's work goes beyond musical solidarity and becomes a form of cultural dialogue that shows audiences what Belarusian life in today's Ukraine is really like.

Song and music video by Lavon Volski, "Glory to the Heroes!"

This song was recorded in the first weeks after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The recording featured, alongside Lavon Volski, Belarusian musicians Yury Stylski and Aliaksandr Pamidorau, Polish musician Tomasz Organek, and the Warsaw Freedom Orchestra. Volski wrote the music and the original lyrics; the Ukrainian-language version of the lyrics was prepared by Viacheslav Levytskyi. The authors themselves described this recording as their musical contribution to supporting Ukraine and its fight against Russian aggression.

This was a direct public statement by Belarusian musicians to Ukraine, delivered in Ukrainian. The song clearly connects Belarusian cultural presence with support for Ukrainian resistance, while also highlighting the international dimension of this solidarity through the participation of Polish musicians. It became one of the early musical expressions following 24 February 2022 in which Belarusian artists openly took Ukraine's side.

Irena Katvitskaya

In 2022, Belarusian singer and composer Irena Katvitskaya won the Ukrainian-British competition Golden Time Talent, receiving two first-degree diplomas – in the "Folk Vocal" and "Composer: Vocal Music" categories. For the competition she chose authentic Belarusian material: the ballad "Siliazenka" from the Paazerre region, and her own composition "Spring," based on Belarusian folk material. This example shows Belarusian traditional music not only as a means of solidarity, but as an independent artistic value in its own right, presented within the Ukrainian cultural field.

Vitali Aliakseenok and KharkivMusicFest

Belarusian conductor Vitali Aliakseenok was the artistic director of KharkivMusicFest-2022. After the start of the full-scale invasion, the festival faced the threat of cancellation, but the organizers decided to hold it – under wartime conditions. On 26 March 2022, the opening took place at the "Istorychnyi Muzei"

station of the Kharkiv metro, which was being used as a shelter, under the title "Concert Between Explosions." The program featured works by Bach, Schubert, Dvořák, and Skoryk, as well as arrangements of Ukrainian folk songs.

Aliakseenok emphasized that, for him, the festival was not only about concerts, but also an expression of the determination to sustain and develop culture and civil society. As a result, the Belarusian conductor became not simply a participant in Ukraine's cultural life, but one of those who helped preserve Kharkiv's cultural presence during its most difficult period.

The Belarusian connection behind "Hey Hey Rise Up"

A distinct transnational example is the Pink Floyd song "Hey Hey Rise Up," featuring Andriy Khlyvnyuk, recorded in 2022 in support of Ukraine. Its creation was indirectly aided by the founders of the Belarus Free Theatre, Natalia Kaliada and Nicolai Khalezin: back in 2015, as part of the *Staging a Revolution* music festival, they brought David Gilmour together with musicians from Boombox. This long-standing network of contacts later became one of the factors that helped bring about this new international collaboration. As a result, Khlyvnyuk's Ukrainian-language vocals, based on "Oi u luzi chervona kalyna," became the central element of the Pink Floyd composition.

SPIEVY z-pad mosta

A women's choir formed in Warsaw in 2023, whose members include émigrés from both Belarus and Ukraine. The choir researches and performs traditional Belarusian women's songs as well as repertoire from the cultural borderlands, including songs from Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania. Its activity extends beyond the concert format: the choir holds open singing sessions and educational events, takes part in ritual and performative projects, and works with contemporary musicians and artists.

Overall, music demonstrates the most direct form of Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural rapprochement. It functions simultaneously as a tool of solidarity, a space of joint creativity, and a channel for presenting Belarusian culture in Ukraine. At the same time, individual examples – from "Unija" to Aliakseyonak's involvement in KharkivMusicFest – testify to a gradual shift from one-off acts of support toward more lasting professional and human connections between the Belarusian and Ukrainian musical communities.

"Kolyskova" ("Lullaby"), a song by Ukrainian musician Dmytro Mytusov performed with the Belarusian band Dzieciuki (2026)

This Belarusian-Ukrainian music project was made on a voluntary basis, out of friendship. Ales Dzianisau, the frontman of the Belarusian band Dzieciuki, and Dmytro Mytusov, a Ukrainian musician from Kyiv, recorded a joint version of the song. They presented it at the Graj Belarusian music festival in Warsaw in September 2026. The project is an example of Belarusian and Ukrainian musicians working together directly, out of personal ties, mutual support and cultural solidarity.

Siarhei Bashlykevich's charity concert in Kyiv, 2026

On 18 September 2026, Siarhei Bashlykevich, the frontman of the band Leibonik, gave a charity concert in Kyiv. It was the first concert by a Belarusian musician in Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion began. The concert raised enough to complete a fundraiser for the Kalinouski Regiment.

The event combined live Belarusian music with practical support for Ukraine's defence. By coming to Kyiv, the musician made a personal gesture of solidarity, and the concert gave him a chance to meet his audience in person.

Theatre

In theatrical projects, what comes to the fore is not so much the presentation of two cultures side by side as the creation of a shared space of experience and expression. War, emigration, the loss of home, repression, and memory become themes that Belarusian and Ukrainian participants work through together. This is precisely what makes theatre such an important format: it allows not merely narrating different experiences, but juxtaposing them, living through them collectively, and turning them into shared artistic material.

Another important feature of this section is multilingualism and the blending of cultural codes. Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, and English coexist within a single stage space, often without a rigid divide between "one's own" and "foreign." This accurately reflects the reality of emigration and life spread across several countries, and shows the cultural community as complex, mobile, and multi-voiced.

At the same time, some projects already extend beyond individual productions and are beginning to build more lasting connections and communities. It is especially important that this process includes not only professional performers, but also children, teenagers, refugees, and people with personal experience of war and repression. In such cases, the stage becomes not only a place of performance, but also a space of adaptation, mutual support, and the creation of new connections.

"King Stakh's Wild Hunt": a Belarusian-Ukrainian theatrical collaboration

The opera "King Stakh's Wild Hunt" by the Belarus Free Theatre became a vivid example of living Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural cooperation under conditions of war and exile. Alongside Belarusian actors, Ukrainian opera singers took the stage (the lead roles were performed by Ukrainians Andrei Bondarenko and Tamara Kalinkina), and the conductor was Vitali Aliakseenok – a Belarusian with prior experience working with the Kharkiv Opera House. The production was nominated for the leading British theatre award, the Olivier Awards.

The play "Why Are You Going, Wolf?" – a theatrical production based on the novella by Belarusian author Yeva Vezhnavets

The project brought together Belarusian actresses Sviatlana Zelenkouskaya and Yauheniya Kulbachnaya, Ukrainian actress Olha Hryhorash, and Polish actress Monika Dawidziuk, with Polish director Monika Dobrowlańska building the piece as a multilingual project about borderlands and shared regional experience. The idea arose in the InexKult creative laboratory "Multilingualism on Stage"; after readings in Warsaw and Berlin, the premiere took place in Białystok, and the play was also shown in Warsaw and at the theatre festival in Avignon. Five languages are heard on stage (Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, English, and Russian); notably, the languages are not divided "by role" and are not tied to a particular character but are interwoven. This reflects the region's mixed identity, the experience of migration and exile, and communication across different cultural codes.

"Mothers. A Song for a Time of War": a shared women's voice of Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland

A production created by director Marta Górnicka together with a choir of 21 women from Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland. It is based on the real-life stories of mothers and children affected by war: women who fled Mariupol, Kyiv, Irpin, and Kharkiv, as well as women who helped them. The performance is structured as a collective choir, with the women singing, chanting, and delivering texts in different languages, combining folk songs, personal testimonies, and contemporary statements. It is also a political statement about war from a female perspective, addressing violence, fear, responsibility, and ways of surviving.

"How Are You": a Belarusian-Ukrainian theatre of war testimonies

The play *"How Are You"* was created in Warsaw by **Team Theatre** – a group of refugee artists from Belarus and Ukraine. It premiered in May 2022, and in February 2023 was staged at TR Warszawa. The production is based on the personal memories and testimonies of people who experienced the war, including those from Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Bucha, and Mariupol. The performance is in Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Russian. In this way, Belarusian and Ukrainian experiences of forced migration and war were brought together for the first time in a shared documentary theatre space.

"Postchildhood. Postescape": the Belarusian-Ukrainian experience through the eyes of teenagers

The Belarus Free Theatre in Warsaw created the production *"Postchildhood. Postescape"* with students of the Free Artist theatre school – teenagers from Belarus and Ukraine who found themselves in emigration. The play was built on their personal stories. Some of the participants became "twice refugees": they first left Belarus because of repression, and later found themselves in Ukraine, where their families had sought refuge, only to be forced to flee again following

Russia's invasion. In this way, the theatre became a space where Belarusian and Ukrainian young people could come together to reflect on experiences of displacement, war, and family relationships.

"Kupalinka": a Belarusian-Ukrainian theatrical community in Warsaw

The "Kupalinka" theatre and school emerged in Warsaw as a Belarusian initiative, but following the outbreak of the full-scale war, Ukrainian children and adults also joined. Today, its groups bring together Belarusians and Ukrainians of different ages, while its performances use Belarusian and Ukrainian, as well as gestures and movement, as means of mutual understanding. In this way, *Kupalinka* has grown beyond the format of an individual theatre project to become a permanent piece of Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural infrastructure in exile.

Conclusions and recommendations

The mapping shows that after 2022, Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural cooperation did not disappear along with the effective halt of interstate contacts. On the contrary, it shifted towards a horizontal and decentralized model based on the professional and personal connections of authors, translators, curators, journalists, activists, and independent organizations.Roughly fifty identified projects in literature, media, visual art, theatre, music, education, and memorial practice demonstrate that this is no longer a collection of isolated gestures of solidarity, but a real and diverse field of cultural cooperation.

At the same time, the nature of this interaction has also changed. Many projects are centred not simply on bringing the two cultures closer together, but on jointly reflecting on war, repression, exile, loss, memory, language, and responsibility. Translation plays a particularly important role: Ukrainian literature enters the Belarusian cultural space, Belarusian literature enters the Ukrainian one, and along with the texts come ways of describing and making sense of one's own experience. In parallel, more sustainable forms of cooperation are emerging — residencies, archives, libraries, media, educational courses, communities, and physical cultural venues. In this way, cooperation is producing not only individual cultural outputs, but also new connections between people and institutions.

The central problem, however, is the gap between the scale of what has been achieved and the level of systemic support behind it. A large share of these projects arose thanks to volunteer work, personal resources, crowdfunding, or small grants, often within programs that did not have Belarusian-Ukrainian cooperation as their primary focus. This model has proven its viability, but it remains vulnerable: too much depends on individuals, their personal resources, and their capacity to keep working under conditions of war, repression, and emigration. The next step should therefore be not simply to increase the number of joint events, but to move from a project-by-project approach towards a long-term programme supporting translations and publications, residencies, mobility, joint research, media and educational projects, the archiving of existing work, and long-term audience engagement. A separate strand should be dedicated

to supporting new Belarusian-Ukrainian professional networks and communities that emerge not only around individual projects, but also as sustainable forms of cooperation.

Another significant gap is the lack of established spaces for discussing the broader framework of Belarusian-Ukrainian relations themselves. What is needed is not only shared cultural output, but also regular platforms for discussing difficult questions of historical memory, language, mutual perception, and the future of the relationship between the two cultural communities. Some examples already exist (the Forum of Belarusian Cultural Resistance in Lutsk, the cultural panel of the Ostrogski Forum, and other initiatives), but for now they remain more isolated instances than a lasting infrastructure for dialogue.

Such dialogue is needed at several levels: among researchers, curators, authors, journalists, and cultural institutions; among professional communities; and in the wider public sphere. It is particularly important that the decolonial approach not remain confined to the language of a narrow expert circle. It should be translated into formats accessible to a broad audience: media, podcasts, educational programs, open discussions, joint research, and literary and artistic projects. This would make it possible to move from reacting to individual crises toward a more deliberate, long-term shaping of a culture of mutual understanding.

In situations where direct communication is complicated by accumulated mistrust, differing political contexts, or the absence of a safe, neutral space, European cultural institutions can act as facilitators and intermediaries. Their role can be to provide a platform, resources, expertise, and the conditions for sustained professional communication. It is important that such mediation not replace Belarusian and Ukrainian voices, but rather support direct dialogue and help make it more sustainable and balanced.

Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural cooperation, then, does not need to be built from scratch, because its foundation already exists. It has taken shape through individual initiatives, professional ties, communities, and institutional practices that have emerged in recent years. The mapping makes it possible to see these not as a collection of isolated cases, but as elements of an ecosystem of cultural interaction that is taking shape before our eyes.

The next task is to create the conditions this ecosystem needs in order to develop: long-term resources, mechanisms of support, professional networks, spaces for regular dialogue, and a strategic framework. At the same time, cooperation should not be institutionalised from the top down; rather, the horizontal connections and initiatives that have already demonstrated their viability should be strengthened. These can form the basis of a new model of Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural relations—more equal, decolonial, grounded in the agency of both communities, and oriented not only towards responding to crises but also towards jointly shaping the future.

In this sense, the mapping is not only a record of what has already been accomplished, but a starting point for the next stage. It shows that the necessary human and professional potential already exists. The question now is not whether Belarusian-Ukrainian cultural cooperation is possible, but how to create the

conditions for it to become a sustainable, long-term part of the relationship between the two cultural communities.

The report was prepared by experts from the Belarusian Council for Culture in cooperation with the Danish Cultural Institute, 2026.

Questions, ideas, or comments?

We would be glad to hear your feedback and suggestions for the further development of the research.

Contact: info@byculture.org