

PRESS RELEASE

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Healing Arts ↪ Ukraine

Healing Arts Takes Centre Stage in Ukraine's Response to War Trauma

Art Therapy Force, the [Jameel Arts & Health Lab](#), the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, and Kings College London launch Healing Arts Ukraine, showcasing the arts as “critical human infrastructure” in times of war.



Cultural Forces project on the frontline in Ukraine © Gera Gubanov

LVIV, UKRAINE 23 – 30 June 2026 – Ukraine is facing a mental health emergency that its healthcare system cannot meet on its own. 93% of the Ukrainian population reports symptoms of PTSD or stress, yet only one in four of those who seek support are able to get it. Healing Arts Ukraine, launched in Lviv this week, has been built

directly in response to this shortfall, treating creative health not as a comfort but as a working part of the country's health response.

Healing Arts Ukraine forms part of the Jameel Arts & Health Lab's global Healing Arts campaign, developed in collaboration with the World Health Organization. The initiative is being led locally by Art Therapy Force, with support from the European Union-funded Health Resilience in the Eastern Partnership Programme.

The 2026 programme builds on the success of Healing Arts Lviv, held in 2025. This year's edition combines a training school for practitioners, a congress exploring the integration of the arts into formal healthcare delivery, and twenty free public events across Lviv. Together, these activities aim to support the development of evidence-informed arts and health policy in Ukraine and contribute to the integration of arts-based approaches within the country's healthcare system.

The Treatment Gap

'Ukraine is home to a growing number of organisations, institutions, and practitioners working at the intersection of arts and health. These practices are becoming a powerful driver of change: the arts offer new ways of responding to crises, while creative practice opens pathways for processing traumatic experiences, rebuilding social connections, and fostering psychological resilience.'

Veronika Skliarova founder of Art Therapy Force.

As of early 2026, some 239 million people worldwide needed urgent humanitarian assistance, and Ukraine's own crisis sits within that wider picture. The country saw a twenty percent rise in attacks on healthcare infrastructure in 2025 alone, pushing conventional medical support further out of reach for the people who need it most. Arts-based care has stepped into that space, not as an alternative but as one of the few options still standing in some areas.

Iryna Holubetska from the Unbroken Foundation in Lviv commented, *"The war in Ukraine is impacting our minds, our bodies, and our social fabric every day. Arts-based approaches are allowing people to process trauma in ways that conventional approaches often cannot. Integrating the arts into health systems is not a luxury in wartime – it is an essential part of recovery and resilience."*

Christopher Bailey, Global Policy Lead at the Jameel Arts & Health Lab commented *"War doesn't just destroy infrastructure, physical safety and national security. It also impacts on the psychological welfare of soldiers and civilians experiencing danger and hardship. Addressing mental health in such contexts requires a mobilisation of ways to sustain social bonds, sooth emotional collapse, find ways of co-creating meaning, and bringing hope."*

Practitioners delivering these programmes are also pushing back on the idea that the work is supplementary. Ostap Ukrainets of Cultural Forces described culture as *"a wartime resource that offers support across frontline and homefront experiences. The programs that Cultural*

Forces delivers are not mere entertainments; they are targeted clinical interventions to reduce combat stress and prevent the onset of acute PTSD”.

From Response to Policy

Healing Arts Ukraine partly grew out of a roundtable held earlier this year at UK Parliament, where defence and cultural policymakers sat alongside WHO officials, military personnel, NGOs, clinicians and artists to discuss the arts' role in military health, veteran recovery and civilian resilience.

Healing Arts Ukraine 2026 involves a school built on the Trauma-Attuned Arts Framework, developed by clinical psychologist Angela Kennedy, trauma therapy specialist Darren Abrahams, King's College London war studies lecturer Henry Redwood and producer Veronika Skliarova, working alongside Ukrainian experts. It will train artists, psychologists and health and social workers in trauma attuned practice through lectures, workshops and group work, alongside a congress on implementing an Arts on Prescription model.

Following this, from the 27-30 of June, the Arts and Health Congress will bring together policymakers, healthcare professionals, educators, artists, and international organisations to explore arts-based approaches to health and wellbeing. Through discussions and collaboration, participants will share expertise and develop recommendations for integrating arts into healthcare and psychosocial support systems.

Art Therapy Force are bringing Ukrainian government ministries into that conversation directly, alongside doctors and arts and health professionals already involved. Healing Arts Ukraine provides the space for turning all of the existing arts and health activity into a recognised driver of recovery and policy, rather than a parallel, informal effort.

Arts and culture have played a key role in navigating adversity throughout human history, and this is now being reinforced by a growing evidence base. This research gives us key learning about the vital role the arts in times of war, which is transferable to other humanitarian settings, and traumas. Veronica Skliarova, Founder of Art Force Therapy commented, “In the wake of mass displacement and war-related trauma, the arts have become a crucial instrument for recovery, offering communities a non-verbal pathway to process experiences of loss with resilience and participatory tools.”

With participation from:

- **Christopher Bailey**, Global Policy Lead, Jameel Arts & Health Lab / WHO
- **Professor Sir Gregor Smith**, Director of Health, Scottish Government
- **Christophe Masson**, European Commission, DG NEAR
- **Andriy Sadovyi**, Mayor of Lviv
- **Lesya Khemraeva**, Ministry of Culture of Ukraine
- **Nils Fietje**, WHO Regional Office for Europe / Jameel Arts & Health Lab
- **Charlotte Osborn-Forde**, National Academy for Social Prescribing
- **Professor Angela Kennedy**, clinical psychologist and trauma specialist

- **Henry Redwood**, King's College London, Department of War Studies
- **Kornelia Kiss**, Culture Action Europe

Notes to Editors:

Art Therapy Force is a project of ArtDot, a Ukrainian non-governmental organization that develops artistic, educational, and awareness-raising initiatives to support the psycho-emotional wellbeing of society, promote civic engagement, and foster a culture of social responsibility.

www.artherapyforce.com.ua

About the Jameel Arts & Health Lab

Launched in January 2023 by the World Health Organization, New York University, Community Jameel, and CULTURUNNERS, the Jameel Arts & Health Lab is a global initiative to measurably improve health and wellbeing through the arts. With a focus on overlooked and underserved communities, the Lab leverages scientific evidence, a global Healing Arts campaign, and capacity building to drive the integration of the arts into mainstream healthcare across 193 UN member states.

For more information on Jameel Arts & Health Lab, please visit jameelartshealthlab.org.

Healing Arts is the Jameel Arts & Health Lab's global outreach campaign in collaboration with the World Health Organization. It is realised through city and country-wide activations integrating academic symposia, cultural events, artist commissions, pilot projects, roundtables, workshops, and artist-led communications campaigns. Healing Arts is produced internationally by CULTURUNNERS in collaboration with local partners, and prioritises silo breaking between academic, cultural and policy communities to drive inter-disciplinary innovation, investment and policy uptake in the field.

WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) is one of WHO's six regional offices worldwide. It serves the WHO European Region, which comprises 53 countries, covering a vast geographical area. It guides health policy and supports member states in responding to health emergencies and systemic health challenges.

www.who.int/europe

King's College London is one of the world's leading research universities. Its Department of War Studies and various health faculties are at the forefront of researching the intersection of conflict, mental health, and social recovery, providing the academic rigor behind arts-based trauma interventions.

www.kcl.ac.uk

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