

A Congress to Celebrate the Resilience and Dynamism of Ukrainian Sociology

Address at the opening session of the Fifth Congress of the Sociological Association of Ukraine, Kharkiv & online, November 20–21, 2025

Dear colleagues,

Please let me start by expressing, on behalf of the International Sociological Association, our profound admiration for the courage, perseverance, and intellectual commitment of Ukrainian sociologists, working both in Ukraine and abroad, who have continued their work as researchers, public sociologists and teachers in the face of extraordinary difficulties – and that alone is a profound contribution to sociology. We know that many among you have faced displacement, loss, and uncertainty and have nevertheless continued to teach, to do research, to write, and to engage in debate. In doing so, you have been reaffirming what is most vital about sociology: the willingness to understand societies precisely when they are under strain; the capacity to make sense of suffering and solidarity; and to keep the light of reason and reflection alive when darkness seems to prevail.

The fact that this Congress is hosted by the University of Kharkiv, where Russian missiles and drones have destroyed university buildings, and despite all obstacles is in itself a message to the world: that knowledge cannot be silenced. I take this opportunity to greet and thank the Dean of the Faculty of Sociology of the National University of Kharkiv, Prof. Olena S. Muradyan.

I also want to thank and congratulate the President of the Sociological Association of Ukraine, Professor Vil Bakirov, and the Sociological Association of Ukraine's delegate to the ISA, Prof. Olga Kutsenko. We are very grateful to them and to the community of Ukrainian sociologists for their extraordinary efforts in maintaining solid research in Ukraine, in remaining active in the international research networks and conferences, and for contributing actively to the European and International Sociological Associations. Ukraine has long belonged to the European and international sociological community, but its voice is now heard with renewed clarity. Across Europe and around the world, sociologists have expressed solidarity

and a deepened interest in Ukrainian society and sociology. This solidarity must translate into a genuine intellectual partnership and into mutual learning, and not only into assistance.

Since the full-scale invasion of 2022, more than 14,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed, and dozens of thousands of soldiers who defended their country. Around 5 million people are registered as internally displaced, and over 8 million have fled Ukraine to Europe and beyond. The war and its devastating impact on everyday life compel every citizen to act. “The war asks this question to everybody: How can you be useful in this or that way to your community?”¹, as Ukrainian sociologists frame it. Since the beginning of the war, Ukrainian citizens have demonstrated that there are many ways to contribute, by supporting those in need, by sustaining essential services, and by keeping society functioning amidst destruction. But what can we do as sociologists? What does sociology offer in times of war and violence?

Ukrainian scholars have offered compelling examples of the value and necessity of sociology in times of profound disruption. Sociology in Ukraine matters not only as an academic field, but as civic responsibility. It provides analytical tools for a society that must understand itself while under a process of fast transformation, remain resilient in the face of adversity, and prepare for reconstruction when the time comes.

The strength of Ukraine’s sociological tradition before the war – rigorous quantitative research, a dynamic national association, an active academy, and a broad network across universities and research institutes – provides a solid foundation for the role it is playing during the war. We also witness a renewal of the discipline that builds on these solid foundations and is emerging in response to a rapidly transforming society shaken in all its dimensions by the direct and indirect consequences of war. It is both deeply rooted in national experience and increasingly connected to European and global scholarship. New collaborations, research partnerships, and shared learning processes are flourishing. These

¹ Costas, J., Prokhorova, A., Stepanenko, V., Sudyn, D., Yermolenko, V., & Zaremba-Kosovych, H. (2024). Academic activism in time of war: Voices from Ukraine. *Organization*, 32(5), 760–771. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505084241284487>

connections will be essential to meet the enormous challenges ahead: understanding accelerated social change, supporting democratic life, and contributing to the reconstruction of society after the war.

Holding a national congress of sociology is especially significant in such times. It offers an opportunity to collectively reflect on the state of the Ukrainian society, torn by an unprovoked full-scale war, and on how sociology contributes to the self-understanding of society and social change at a time of deep and fast transformations.

This national congress is a moment to share research findings and bring them together to give an overview of Ukrainian society three and a half years after the start of the full-scale invasion. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the practical, methodological and epistemological challenges faced by sociological research in this extreme situation. It is an opportunity to reaffirm the values that define us as researchers, educators, and public intellectuals and to restate our belief that sociologically informed public debate is essential, in Ukraine and beyond. And, for sure, this national congress is a moment to celebrate. The resilience you have shown and your ability to maintain the vitality of sociology in Ukraine are a considerable achievement that deserves to be celebrated in Ukraine and among the global community of sociologists.

In a context of full-scale war, Ukrainian sociologists have shown that research can be an act of courage, and that in wartime, the pursuit of knowledge remains a form of freedom. This Fifth Ukrainian Congress of Sociology is therefore more than an academic event; it is a moment when producing knowledge and producing society become inseparable tasks.

I wish you an insightful Congress. May you keep the courage, energy and determination to continue building knowledge that helps society understand itself and move forward in these challenging times.

Geoffrey Pleyers
President of the International Sociological Association