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Press Release

Joint press release from the Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA), Germany, and the National Museum of the History of Ukraine (NMHU)

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National Museum of the History of Ukraine and LEIZA, Germany, Strengthen Collaboration

Mainz/Kyiv. The National Museum of the History of Ukraine (NMHU) in Kyiv and the Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA) in Mainz, Germany, have signed a memorandum that strategically enhances their scientific cooperation. This agreement provides a formal framework for research projects, professional exchange, and international networking, marking a new phase in their longstanding partnership.

For around 15 years, the NMHU and LEIZA have maintained a fruitful exchange. Previously project-based, their collaboration will now be formalised into a more reliable and sustained partnership, opening doors to new initiatives. Key areas of focus will include restoration methods, digital documentation, and cultural heritage protection, as well as the joint scholarly study of collections.

Planned initiatives include comparative research on collection holdings, such as the study of unique glass finds and coins. Another significant area of research will be the history of the medieval Kyivan state (Kyivan Rus), that emerged from the interaction of Scandinavian groups with the local Slavs under Byzantine influence. A thematic focus on this is located at LEIZA in Schleswig, Germany.

Research into Byzantine history is also of particular importance. While Byzantium played a marginal role in Soviet-era academic discourse, it is now gaining significant attention – both in scholarly terms and for Ukraine’s cultural identity.

“The support of foreign institutions was crucial for the National Museum of the History of Ukraine when the full-scale invasion began in 2022. We are glad that this cooperation continues in scientific projects as well,” explains Olena Zemliana, Director General of the NMHU. “The Byzantine heritage of Ukraine is an integral part of European history. Our cooperation with LEIZA helps bring this heritage to

international prominence and reposition it in the field of academic research." Among other plans, a European funding application is being prepared to connect museums with Byzantine collections on an international scale.

The impetus for intensifying discussions about a cooperation agreement came in early 2025. "We got a rare opportunity to institutionalise long-standing scholarly ties with the most significant museum in Ukraine," emphasises Prof. Dr. Alexandra W. Busch, Director General of LEIZA. "Our expertise in restoration, digital archaeology, and cultural heritage protection complements the NMHU's vast collections perfectly - from the Viking Age and Kyivan Rus to Byzantium and the steppe cultures."

The historical connections between Mainz and Kyiv stretch back centuries: as early as 960, a first, albeit brief, spiritual bridge was established with the monk Libutius, who was consecrated bishop for Kyiv at St. Alban's Abbey in Mainz. "Today, we can jointly explore European cultural history and strengthen Ukraine's cultural heritage in a time of significant challenges," say the two directors.

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Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA)

As a Leibniz Research Institute and Museum for Archaeology, LEIZA studies humans and their development based on material remains that span three million years across time and space. The fundamental insights we gain improve our understanding of human behaviour, actions and the

development of societies. In this way, LEIZA enriches our knowledge of humans from an archaeological perspective and creates essential foundations for reflecting on the present and shaping the future. With archaeology, LEIZA views human beings in context and shares the knowledge gained in international dialogue. LEIZA is active worldwide and has successfully and comprehensively conducted research in various regions of Africa, Asia and Europe. The unique concentration of archaeological, scientific, restoration and information technology expertise, combined with important workshops, laboratories and archives, makes it possible to conduct object-oriented research into the archaeology of the ancient world (Asia, Africa, Europe) from the beginnings of human history to modern times. As one of eight research museums in the Leibniz Association, LEIZA combines excellent science with exhibitions and, with its educational mission, is also a place for dialogue with the public.

Until its renaming on 1 January 2023, LEIZA was known internationally as the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum (RGZM), which was founded in Mainz in 1852 by resolution of the German Historical and Antiquities Societies. Since 2024, LEIZA is represented at four locations in Germany: Mainz, Neuwied, Mayen, and Schleswig.

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National Museum of the History of Ukraine (NMHU)

The National Museum of the History of Ukraine illustrates Ukraine's history from ancient times till nowadays. It is one of the leading museums in Ukraine. It holds more than 800,000 items in its collection. The museum, under different names, was located in various buildings in Kyiv, starting from 1899.

The museum holds world-famous archaeological, numismatic, ethnographic and weapons collections, pieces of decorative arts, manuscripts, old prints, paintings and graphics, relics of the Ukrainian national liberation movement of the 20th century. The first jewellery of the Stone Age, including an ornamented mammoth tusk bracelet, ancient Greek utensils and jewels, silver and gold coins with trident images (a personal mark of prince Volodymyr Sviatoslavych, Baptiser of Rus) are among them.

The Treasury of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine is the branch of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine. It is located on the territory of the National Preserve "Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra." The Treasury holds more than 56,000 exhibits of gold, silver, and gemstones. Collections cover the period from the Bronze Age (III millennium BCE) to the present. The museum holds the world-famous Gold Scythian Pectoral.

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