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CONDUCTING CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: INDONESIAN LANGUAGE STUDY IN UKRAINE

As a country with a rich cultural heritage, where 1,340 tribes and 718 local languages exist, spread across more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia sees a pivotal role in cultural diplomacy. It serves as a powerful tool in fostering understanding, respect, and collaboration between nations as it touches an area within the human heart that can hardly be done through political means.

Since the start of the diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Ukraine in 1992, precisely on 11 June, Indonesia has been actively engaging in cultural diplomacy through various avenues. A number of activities have been conducted over 32 years, aiming to promote Indonesia and its vision. One of the major activities is the Indonesian Literature and Language Study Programme in the Educational and Scientific Institute of Philology at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The study programme was launched in 2012 and further supported by the establishment of the Centre for Indonesian Literature and Language Study in 2015. This initiative not only promotes the Indonesian language but also facilitates deeper connections between Indonesia and Ukraine, transcending geographical boundaries.

Throughout its existence, this programme has provided teaching not only about language but also about the long history of Indonesian culture, customs, traditions, and values of Indonesian society. This programme is led by the Director, Dr Prabowo Himawan, who is also part of the Indonesian Embassy in Kyiv. Within the programme, the students get the chance to communicate fully in the Indonesian language, as well as watch movies, read, and write. They are also sometimes taught about the current situation in Indonesia. For example, the students in this 2023/2024 year had a chance to learn about Indonesia's general election that took place in February 2024.

Up until now, the programme has successfully produced 23 bachelor-level graduates and 18 master's graduates. Those graduates now work in various international companies affiliated with Indonesia in Ukraine and abroad. Some of them have even succeeded in becoming influencers, promoting both Indonesian and Ukrainian cultures through social media such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, etc.



Студенти програми з вивчення індонезійської мови та літератури в традиційному індонезійському вбранні

Students of the Indonesian Literature and Language Study Programme in the Indonesian traditional clothes

Establishing the Indonesian language study programme in Ukraine has marked a significant effort to strengthen Indonesia's cultural diplomacy. Language, as a fundamental aspect of culture, serves as a bridge for communication and exchanging ideas. Through language, people can gain insights into the values, traditions, and way of life of a particular culture, fostering empathy and respect. Throughout its existence, the study programme has left traces of 'Indonesia-ness' to the students, who will someday become agents that support the bilateral relations between the countries. This kind of cultural diplomacy effort can be a seed that produces fruitful results for relations between Indonesia and Ukraine. By conducting cultural diplomacy, Indonesia not only showcases its cultural richness but also builds enduring relationships with nations around the world, particularly Ukraine.