



MATRA-Ukraine Newsletter – Spring/Summer 2023

About us

The MATRA-Ukraine project “Strengthening Ukraine’s Capacity to Investigate and Prosecute International Crimes” is a joint initiative of the [T.M.C. Asser Instituut](#) (Asser Institute) and [Global Rights Compliance](#) (GRC) funded by the [Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#). The project is designed to assist Ukrainian justice actors, including investigators, prosecutors, lawyers and judges, as well as civil society organisations and journalists in the process of investigating, prosecuting, adjudicating and reporting on international crimes perpetrated in Ukraine.



@Mstyslav Chernov

For further information on the project, please visit our MATRA-Ukraine website [here](#). We strongly encourage you to [sign up](#) to this Newsletter and to disseminate it among your colleagues in order to

remain informed about the MATRA-Ukraine project's upcoming activities.



@Maria Sperling - Exchanges held between Ukrainian judges and the Asser Institute MATRA project team.

Recent MATRA-Ukraine Activities

Study visit of Ukrainian judges to The Hague

In April 2023, the [Asser Institute](#) hosted jointly with [USAID](#) a study visit of ten Ukrainian judges to The Hague in an effort to foster cooperation and coordination between the Ukrainian judiciary and national and international judges, practitioners and policymakers.

During the visit, the judges met with representatives from different justice institutions located in The Hague and held crucial debates on the current Ukrainian context. These included reflections on whether both Ukrainian legal frameworks and its judicial structure are adequate to deal with international crimes, as well as discussions with a view to identify the most pertinent avenues for international assistance to the Ukrainian judiciary.

You can find more information on this study visit [here](#).

Basic Investigative Standards for Documenting International Crimes in Ukraine (BIS-Ukraine)

On 23 May 2023, [GRC](#) launched the toolkit BIS-Ukraine, aimed at supporting efforts to document international crimes by civil society organisations, human rights defenders and other practitioners in the Ukrainian territory.



@Dean Calma

The BIS-Ukraine contains a comprehensive overview of relevant theoretical and practical information necessary to effectively document international crimes in Ukraine, distributed among three different resources:

1. The BIS-Ukraine Manual, aimed at ensuring the adequate collection and preservation of evidential information by drawing on standards and best practices derived from both Ukrainian and international law.
2. The BIS-Ukraine Guides, summarising the key standards contained in the BIS-Ukraine Manual through short and easily accessible handouts.
3. A forthcoming BIS-KIT mobile app with practical investigative procedures and tips to identify international crimes.

You can find more information concerning the BIS-Ukraine [here](#). Likewise, you can find the [English](#) and [Ukrainian](#) versions of the BIS-Ukraine Guides, as well as the [English](#) and [Ukrainian](#) versions of the BIS-Ukraine Manual [here](#).

Exchange meeting on conflict-related crimes against children in Ukraine

On 7-8 June 2023, the Head of the Department for the Protection of Children's

Rights from the Ukrainian Office of the Prosecutor, Ms. Yuliia Usenko, visited The Hague within the context of the MATRA project's cooperation with the Office of the Prosecutor-General in Ukraine.

Ms. Yuliia Usenko met with representatives from the [Asser Institute](#), [GRC](#) and international and regional organisations, as well as with Dutch prosecutors and experts in children's rights. This exchange meeting provided an unrivalled opportunity for participants to share insights, experiences, and strategies to enhance the protection and well-being of children affected by armed conflict.

You can find more information on this exchange meeting [here](#).



From left to right: Ruby Axelson (GRC), Gabriela Radu (Asser Institute), Yuliia Usenko (Office of the Prosecutor-General) and Igor Furman (interpreter).



@GRC

project.

Benchbook on the Adjudication of International Crimes under Ukrainian Domestic Law ("Benchbook")

On 22 June 2023, [GRC's](#) Ruby Axelson took part in the presentation of the Benchbook. Building on a judicial needs assessment conducted by the [USAID](#) Justice for All Activity in July 2022, the Benchbook was developed in close cooperation with [USAID](#), the [Ukrainian Supreme Court](#), the [National School of Judges of Ukraine](#), [UpRights](#) and [GRC](#) supported by the MATRA

The Benchbook is designed to help promote accountability for international crimes in Ukraine by providing critical support to judicial processes at the national level, strengthening the legal framework and increasing the capacity of courts to draft high-quality and well-reasoned judgments in international crimes cases. By compiling relevant international legal sources, including international treaties, judicial decisions, and academic commentaries, and evaluating their applicability at the domestic level, the publication aims to assist judges in the interpretation and application of the relevant domestic offences.

You can find the [English](#) and [Ukrainian](#) versions of the Benchbook here.

SCL Webinar "The road to justice: Lessons for Ukraine from the USSR invasion of Afghanistan"

Also on 22 June 2023, the [Asser Institute](#) in

partnership with the [IHCL Platform](#) hosted a Supranational Criminal Law Lecture comparing the ongoing conflict in Ukraine with the USSR invasion of Afghanistan from a transitional justice perspective.

The contents of this lecture were based on the [article](#) published in the [Security and Human Rights Journal](#) by [Victoria Kerr \(Asser Institute\)](#) and [Nader Nadery \(Asser Institute\)](#).

Participants in the webinar included the aforementioned scholars, as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan [Richard Bennet](#) and [Dmytro Koval \(National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy\)](#).

You can find the recording of the SCL lecture [here](#).



@Gerda Arendt



@OSeveno

Podcast episode on the arrest warrants against Mr. Vladimir Putin and Ms. Maria Lvova-Belova issued by the International Criminal Court

On 6 July 2023, the [Asser Institute](#) launched a two-fold episode of the [Hague Courts Dialogue Series](#) podcast, hosted by [Carl Emilio Lewis \(Asser Institute\)](#). He was joined by an expert panel composed of [Julie Fraser \(Utrecht University\)](#), [Victoria Kerr \(Asser Institute\)](#), [Sergii Masol \(University of Cologne\)](#), and [Owiso Owiso](#)

(freelance international lawyer).

This episode deepened into the legal nuances of the [arrest warrants](#) issued by the [International Criminal Court](#) against Mr. Vladimir Putin and Ms. Maria Lvova-Belova for crimes committed against children during the conflict in Ukraine. As such, the expert panel discussed, among others, questions of head of state immunity, the choice of charges raised by the International Criminal Court, the relationship between the arrest warrants and the call for a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression, their potential impact on gender stereotypes during conflict, or whether we are witnessing a transformational moment for the International Criminal Court.

You can listen to [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) of the podcast episode [here](#).

Future MATRA-Ukraine Activities

SCL Webinar "Pursuing Accountability for the Crime of Aggression in Ukraine"

On 21 September 2023, the [Asser Institute](#) will host a Supranational Criminal Law Lecture exploring avenues through which those



responsible for the crime of aggression in Ukraine could be held [@Security Service of Ukraine](#) accountable in the near future. More information on this webinar will soon be available on our [webpage](#).

We encourage you to sign up for the Asser newsletter [here](#) to receive more information on this and future similar events.

Vacancies

Researcher in International Criminal Law vacancy at the Asser Institute



A vacancy for a position as a full-time Researcher in International Criminal Law within the research strand "In the public interest: accountability of the state and the prosecution of crimes" has been announced [here](#).

The position will entail the coordination and implementation of various international criminal law-related projects at the [Asser Institute](#), including the [MATRA-Ukraine project](#). Work would include strengthening domestic systems through international (human rights) law and assisting domestic authorities, criminal justice professionals, and civil society actors in pursuing accountability for international crimes.

You can find all details on this vacancy, the deadline of which is 7 August 2023 at 10:00 CEST, [here](#).

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