

Annual Review



2024

2024

IN NUMBERS

69

GRANTS

37

PARTNERS

£149,337

TOTAL GRANTED IN 2024

250

CSO SURVEY
RESPONDENTS

300

EVENT
ATTENDEES

The BEARR Trust in 2024



For over thirty years, The BEARR Trust has supported community-based organisations working to improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In the context of Russia's continued war against Ukraine and challenging political and economic conditions across many of the countries in which we operate, grassroots groups making a practical difference in their communities are more important than ever.

In 2024, we continued to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to displaced people and others in need in Ukraine and Moldova. From the start of our Ukraine Emergency Appeal in 2022 to the end of 2024, we sent over £550,000 in small grants to community organisations – many of which were working close to the frontline and were often able to reach vulnerable people more quickly than larger aid agencies. Increasingly, our funds have been used for mental health support, as war has continued. Building on the Ukraine Emergency Appeal, we also concluded a project funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which provided grants to community groups delivering therapeutic support in Ukraine as well as support for the resilience and wellbeing of their volunteers and staff.

Our annual Small Grants Scheme in 2024 focused on the integration of displaced people across the ten countries in which we operate. Beyond grant support, we continued to provide a source of information on civil society, through our website, newsletter and social media channels. Our annual conference focused on innovation in health and social welfare at a time of crisis, sharing the experience and knowledge of our partners with a wider audience, and we were delighted to host lectures by Olesya Khromeychuk and Sir Lawrence Freedman.

As The BEARR Trust continued to grow, we invested in 2024 in our own policies and systems. We welcomed a new trustee to our board, and we embarked on the development of a new five-year strategy, which we will conclude in 2025. We also thanked Nicola Ramsden for her leadership and support over six years as chair of The BEARR Trust. Alongside this, we maintained our cost-effective, volunteer-led model which keeps us focused on the community groups and the people we seek to support.

All our work is made possible by the generosity of charitable trusts and many individual donors, friends and volunteers. We are very grateful: thanks to all those who support us, we will continue to help those making a difference in their communities.

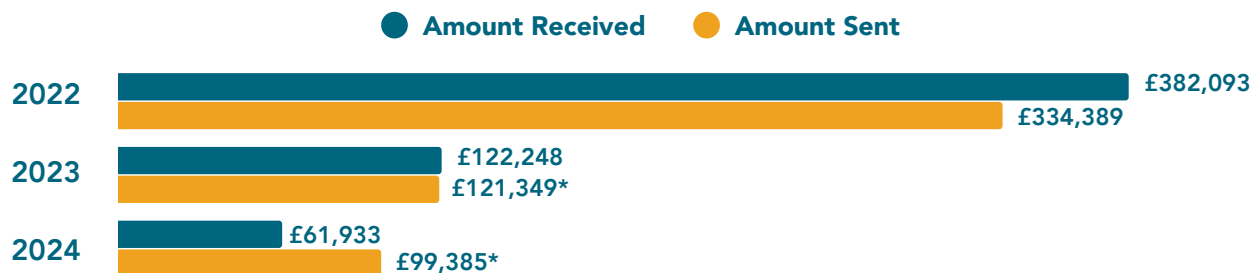
Ross Gill, Chair of The BEARR Trust

Ukraine Emergency Appeal

In 2024 we sent £99k in grants to 25 partners

In 2024, BEARR supported **25 community-based organisations** in Ukraine and Moldova through **53 small emergency grants**, enabling them to deliver urgent humanitarian aid to people living under the pressures of war. Our partners provided food parcels, medicines, hygiene supplies and vital psychological support to vulnerable groups, including older people, people with disabilities and displaced families.

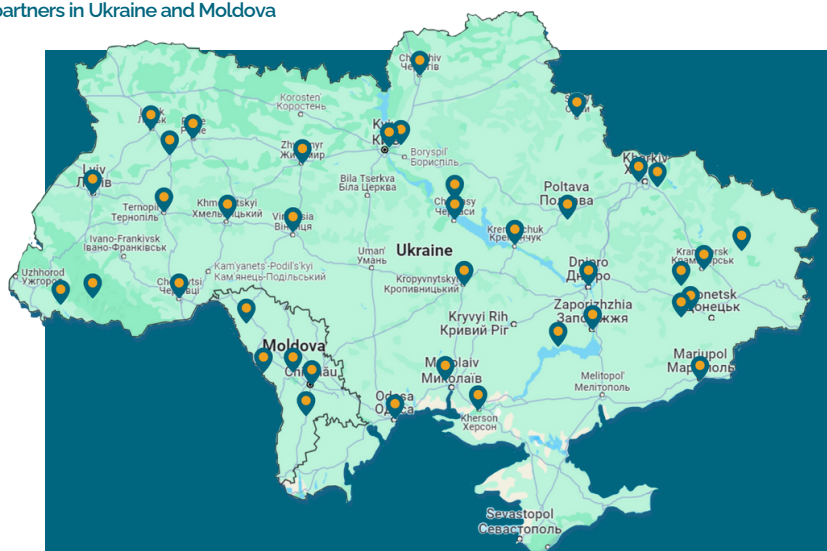
During the year, we distributed £94,885, bringing total Appeal expenditure since February 2022 to **£555,123** – all of it passed directly to partners on the ground. The average grant was just under £1,800, a modest sum that allowed local organisations to act swiftly and effectively in their communities.



*Amounts include Ukraine appeal funds spent on SGS Strand B for partners in Ukraine and Moldova

Most grants went to partners in Ukraine, with a growing emphasis on the east, where communities are closest to the front line and furthest from other sources of aid. Several of our long-term partners continued to deliver relief to remote and newly de-occupied villages, making repeated trips to reach people otherwise cut off from assistance.

As the war has continued, **mental health and therapeutic support** has become an increasingly important part of the Appeal. Partners organised counselling sessions, art therapy for children and adults and group activities that helped displaced people connect with host communities. These projects not only offered respite from daily pressures but also helped foster resilience and social cohesion.



Where BEARR's Emergency Appeal funds have reached since February 2022

The Appeal has demonstrated once again that small, flexible grants can achieve big impact. By supporting grassroots organisations rooted in their communities, BEARR has enabled hundreds of vulnerable people to access food, care and emotional support during another year of conflict.

Highlighting our Ukraine Appeal partners

In **Zaporizhzhia**, where families live under constant threat of shelling and disruption, our partner has created safe and creative spaces for children to cope with the pressures of war. With BEARR's small grants, they have been able to run regular art therapy classes, creative workshops and even a photography studio that brings children and parents together in moments of joy and connection.



New equipment and a dedicated stress-relief space have made these activities even more welcoming. Children not only discover talents and build confidence but also form friendships that help counter isolation and fear. For many families in Zaporizhzhia, this work has become a lifeline, offering comfort, resilience and a chance for children to experience normality despite the ongoing war.



Kharkiv, in northeastern Ukraine, lies close to the front line and faces constant shelling and aerial attack. The region now hosts around half a million displaced people, creating pressing needs for food, hygiene supplies and safe spaces for children. Since 2022, BEARR has supported a local partner, among others, with regular small grants. They have been able to respond quickly to urgent requests, reaching vulnerable families in both the city and nearby villages.



BEARR was one of the first donors to back this organisation and our flexible grants have proved vital. They enable the delivery of food parcels and hygiene kits, but also give the charity credibility with other funders. By showing they already have BEARR support, they are better able to secure co-funding for salaries, fuel and other essential costs, which are otherwise hard to cover. This has allowed them to expand their work into mental health support, small-scale home repairs, and sports and holiday activities for children.



Small Grants Scheme

In 2024 we sent £41k in grants for 16 projects

Our annual Small Grants Scheme is a major part of our activity, enabling us to provide direct support to projects that are delivered by grassroots organisations in the region, encourage partnership development and contribute to wider knowledge exchange.

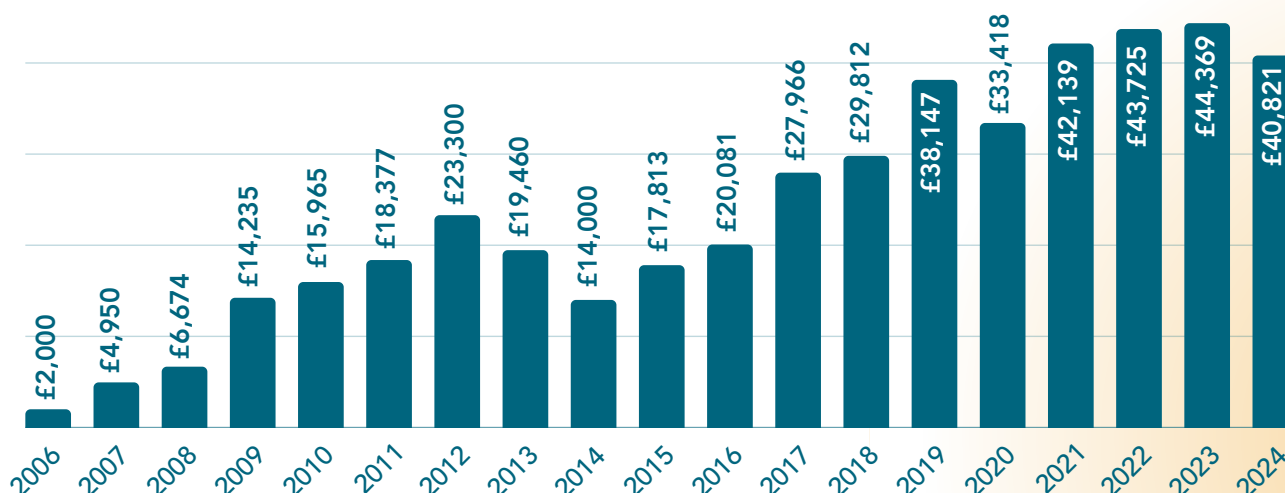
In 2024, Strand A projects focused on the **integration of displaced people**, helping them rebuild their lives and strengthen connections in new communities. Activities included counselling, art therapy, vocational training and support in accessing crisis facilities.

In Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, these projects directly reached at least **1,520 people**, with many more benefiting indirectly through family and community networks.

Strand B grants, awarded in Ukraine, provided practical support for the **resilience and wellbeing of staff and volunteers**, giving those working under the pressures of war space to manage stress and avoid burnout. This balance of support ensured that both displaced people and the organisations serving them were better equipped to face the challenges of 2024.

Strand A	Strand B
11 projects, £36,321 in grants	5 projects, £4,500 in grants
We provided grants of up to £4,000 for joint projects that supported the community integration of displaced people. Eligible applicants were CSOs from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.	We offered grants of up to £1,000 to our existing grantees in Ukraine. These funds were dedicated to enhancing the welfare of staff and volunteers, as well as bolstering the resilience of these organisations.

Total Grant Amount per Year



Highlighting our Small Grants Scheme partners

In western **Georgia**, a small community organisation empowered 92 displaced people from Abkhazia to understand their rights, speak up at community meetings and propose ideas to improve life in their settlements. Information sessions covered housing, healthcare, education and jobs, while a round-table brought displaced people together with local representatives, opening much-needed dialogue.



A key part of the project was nurturing leadership. Fifteen women and young people were trained in advocacy, gaining the confidence and skills to support others and shape decisions that affect their lives. Staff and volunteers also strengthened their ability to design and run projects, giving the organisation the tools to carry its mission forward.



In **Kyrgyzstan**, training brought together 60 social workers and psychologists, equipping them to identify victims of violence and provide urgent support to refugees, vulnerable migrants and survivors of exploitation. For many participants, it was the first time their work had been recognised, giving them confidence to collaborate and share difficult cases.



The project also created lasting change at a national level. More than 300 people received direct assistance, from psychological care and legal advice to humanitarian aid. Social workers trained through the project are now engaged in shaping Kyrgyzstan's national child protection policies for 2025–2028, ensuring victims of violence and exploitation will have stronger protection in years to come.



Events

In 2024 close to 300 people attended our events

March

Relaunch of the Ukraine Appeal

On 4 March, we relaunched the Ukraine Appeal with an online talk by **Dr Olesya Khromeychuk**, director of the Ukrainian Institute in London and author of *The Death of a Soldier Told by his Sister*. Entitled 'Loss, defiance and the fight for justice', the talk marked two years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the launch of the Appeal. The talk focused on the powerful stories of three women in Ukraine and their experiences of the war.



October

Annual Lecture

The 2024 Annual Lecture was given on 23 October by **Sir Lawrence Freedman**, Emeritus Professor of War Studies at King's College London, on the subject of *Ukraine: What next?*, with the Q&A moderated by the former British ambassador in Moscow, Sir Roderic Lyne. Once again, we are grateful to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which hosted us at their headquarters in Canary Wharf.



November

Annual Conference

BEARR's Annual Conference on 29 November focused on **civil society innovation in health and social welfare at times of crisis**. Held in London and online, with sessions in English, Ukrainian and Russian, it brought together over 60 participants from the UK and across Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Discussions highlighted how grassroots organisations are adapting to challenges such as war, displacement, restrictive legislation and economic hardship, while continuing to support vulnerable groups. Participants also reflected on the importance of coordination, peer support and long-term sustainability, with several current BEARR partners sharing their experiences directly.

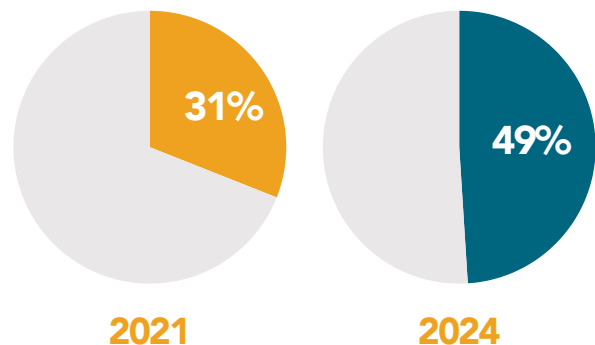


Civil Society Survey

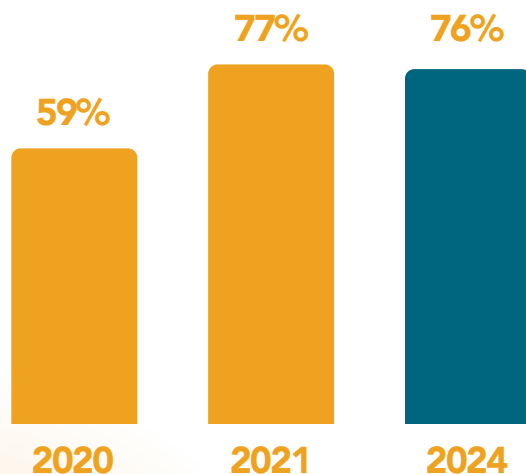
In 2024 250 CSOs responded to our survey

In 2024, BEARR ran its fourth survey of civil society organisations across Eastern Europe and Central Asia, following previous surveys in 2020, 2021 and 2022. With **250 organisations** responding, the survey provides a valuable snapshot of how grassroots groups are coping with the combined pressures of war, displacement, economic instability and social need.

Share of CSOs reporting burnout among staff and volunteers



Share of CSOs reporting increased demand for their services



Demand for CSO services has grown sharply since 2020: three-quarters of respondents reported an increase in demand for their services over the past two years, with a similar number noting more people seeking psychological support. While 68% felt their organisations had medium or high capacity to respond to trauma, almost half also reported burnout among staff and volunteers, a striking rise compared with 2021.

The survey showed that most organisations remain heavily reliant on international funding (71%), with limited support from governments, local donors or businesses. Yet despite financial challenges, CSOs continue to demonstrate resilience. Over 80% valued partnerships with other CSOs, and most organisations reported either maintaining or increasing their size since 2022. Recruiting volunteers remains difficult, however, with nearly half saying it has become harder to attract new people.

Encouragingly, more than half of respondents believe that attitudes towards CSOs in society have improved, even though relations with state authorities remain mixed. These findings underline both the central role of civil society in meeting urgent needs and the importance of strengthening their sustainability through collaboration, funding diversification and support for staff wellbeing.

Outreach

Website

The **BEARR.org** website is the main hub of our work, offering articles, reports and stories from partners across the region.

In 2024 we introduced a **Ukrainian-language version**, so visitors can now explore content in three languages: English, Russian and Ukrainian.

Newsletter

Our bi-monthly newsletter has become an important way of keeping our network informed and connected. In 2024, we reached nearly **1,400 subscribers**. Each issue provides updates on BEARR's work, news from our partners, and developments affecting civil society across the region.

Social media

BEARR shares updates through **Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Bluesky**. Facebook remains the most widely used platform in our region, while the others help us connect with international supporters. We also use **YouTube** to share recordings of our lectures, webinars and conferences.



@BearrTrust



@thebearrtrust



thebearrtrust



@thebearrtrust.bsky.social

How we're funded and how we spend our money

In 2024, our income was **£147,292**. Although this was lower than in 2022 and 2023, it remained substantially higher than in the years before the Ukraine Appeal was launched. Of this, £61,993 was raised for the Ukraine Appeal through grants, individual donations and fundraising events. We are especially grateful to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, whose staff fundraising was match-funded to raise £12,226. The remainder of our income supported the Small Grants Scheme, our programme of events and information exchange, and core running costs.

Our total expenditure in 2024 was **£183,477**. Of this, £99,395 was spent on the Ukraine Appeal, all passed directly to community-based organisations in Ukraine and Moldova delivering humanitarian support. A further £36,501 supported projects through the Small Grants Scheme, while £13,441 was spent on the final stage of our FCDO-funded project "From Group Therapy to Community Cohesion" in Ukraine. The balance covered our information and outreach activities and essential administration.

Support BEARR and get involved

There are many ways to support BEARR's work – through time, expertise, or financial contributions – and we are always delighted to hear from those who would like to get involved.

Volunteer your time

With minimal staffing, BEARR relies on volunteers to help with translation, interpretation, events and administration. If you have relevant skills and would like to contribute, we would be very glad to hear from you.

Share your expertise

We welcome contributions from experts, academics and practitioners working on health, social welfare and civil society in the region. Sharing insights through articles or events helps strengthen knowledge exchange and support grassroots organisations.

Become a Friend

We value enormously the help we receive from our network of Friends. Friends' donations are BEARR's most reliable source of funding. Friends make a minimum donation of £30 per year, which BEARR can usually enhance by claiming back Gift Aid.

Donate or fundraise

Donations, whether one-off or regular, make a vital difference. Larger gifts can help fund a Small Grants Scheme project, a conference speaker, or other key activity. Fundraising events and sponsored challenges on our behalf are also greatly appreciated.

Find out more on how to get involved at BEARR.org

Support the BEARR Trust and our network of partner organisations by donating through the QR code.



