

Concept Note

International Veterans Conference, 9–10 October 2025, Split, Republic of Croatia

As we are all deeply aware, the war in Ukraine is not only reshaping the security of Europe, but also placing extraordinary demands on the resilience of an entire society. Russia's invasion has forced millions of Ukrainians to adapt to a reality of violence and destruction. At the heart of this struggle stand the defenders of Ukraine, carrying the greatest burden on the front lines. As they begin their return from the battlefield, society is facing an equally profound challenge: ensuring their rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian life.

This is not simply a medical or social challenge. It is a matter of dignity, security, and the very future of Ukraine. Veterans return with physical wounds that demand advanced rehabilitation, with psychological scars that require long-term care, with interrupted careers that need to be rebuilt, and with families and communities that must be re-knit after years of absence. Their recovery is inseparable from the recovery of the nation.

Having endured Homeland War and the complex path of post-war recovery, Croatia stands as the only EU member state with direct, recent war experience, making its perspectives particularly relevant, while bringing lived experience and profound solidarity. With the mission of sharing knowledge and experience, **together with Ukraine, Croatia is convening the International Veterans Conference in Split, from 9–10 October 2025.**

The aim of the Conference is to reiterate strong political support to Ukraine on this important issue and to present solutions, share best practices, and discuss the challenges veterans often face when returning from the battlefield to civilian life. The conference will serve as a high-level platform for governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to create durable partnerships that ensure Ukrainian veterans are not left to face these challenges alone.

Over two days, Split will host a comprehensive program: seven expert panels on reintegration in practice, labour market opportunities, veterans in business, security and defence, recovery and EU integration, veterans' healthcare, and psychosocial support for veterans and war victims. These discussions with leading practitioners and policymakers will foster international dialogue and exchange of innovative approaches in rehabilitation and reintegration including the participation of other states and stakeholders from various countries.

The conference's content and messages will be entirely focused on affirming and reinforcing the purpose of this gathering: recognizing the sacrifices of veterans, defending their dignity, and underscoring that their reintegration is vital to building a stronger, safer, and more resilient Ukraine – and, by extension, a more stable Europe.