



# An uneasy reality

## Donor support for IDPs in Ukraine

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## 1. Abstract

According to international organizations, since the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the war in Donbas, internal migrations might have affected from two to three million people. From Crimea and Donbas alone, 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens had to change their place of residence. Concerns that these internally displaced persons (IDPs) will become “Ukraine’s lost generation” have been voiced. A considerable number of Ukrainian citizens affected by the war in eastern Ukraine have started to look for either international protection on the territory of the EU or possible ways to pursue economic migration. Taking into account the unresolved refugee crisis in Europe, the international community has a particular interest in making sure the situation in Ukraine does not get out of hand. In this regard, the effectiveness of the assistance to the Ukrainian state and its civil society provided by international donors is of paramount importance.

Whereas the migration crisis has revealed new challenges faced by the Ukrainian state as it is undergoing the process of reform, it has also contributed to an increase in the public activity of Ukrainian citizens. Some of the most active IDPs have managed to find their place in the new reality (within the country or outside Ukraine), however, many have failed to cope with the displacement and are still struggling with huge economic and social problems.

In some places, basic humanitarian aid is still required, yet IDPs today generally face other problems, most frequently difficulties in finding a job and the lack of proper housing. There are several reasons for IDPs’ critical situation on the labor market: the unfavorable condition of the Ukrainian economy, skills that do not fit the Ukrainian economy (a consequence of the fact that Donbas was dominated by heavy industry and the mining industry, in particular), and sometimes the inactivity of the displaced people themselves (an effect of living many years under non-democratic rule in the region).

This paper aims at analyzing the socio-economic reality of IDPs in Ukraine as well as the state’s response to their challenges from the perspective of the IDP community. In addition, it presents how Ukrainian NGOs assess donor support for IDPs and what Ukrainian civil society expects from the international community in those areas where assistance is needed most.

## 2. Introduction. Some facts and figures

The annexation of Crimea by Russia and the war in eastern Ukraine have had a direct influence on the millions of citizens of the country. Those events caused a massive migration of Ukrainians from the Crimean Peninsula and the Donbas region. In May 2016, Ukraine had approximately 1.7 million<sup>1</sup> internally displaced persons, or IDPs<sup>2</sup> (i.e., people who had to move but decided to stay within the borders of Ukraine). Moreover, according to a UN assessment in 2016, there were 3.1 million citizens “in need” in Ukraine, i.e., affected by the ongoing armed conflict. In 2017, one could observe a gradual decrease in the number of IDPs (1,627,738 in February).<sup>3</sup> As of April 2017, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine had registered approximately 1,583,000 million IDPs.<sup>4</sup> According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, the number of IDPs in Ukraine has decreased by more than 200,000, compared with the figures in July 2016 (the time when our first field study in Ukraine took place). The official explanation of this development relies on two arguments: (1) the return of citizens to territories that are temporarily outside Ukraine's control; and (2) the cancellation of the registration certificates of IDPs who were not living at their registration addresses after the departments of social protection conducted a wide-scale control.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the absence of a procedure providing access to social payments and pensions for citizens living in the temporarily occupied territories has also had a direct impact on the numbers of registered IDPs.<sup>6</sup>

As of December 2017, the IDP community in Ukraine amounted to 1,492,125 people, or 1,224,238 families, coming from the separate territories of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, as well as from the Crimean Peninsula.<sup>7</sup> The return migration of these people to the temporarily occupied territories is an important element of the general assessment of the described situation. According to a study by IOM Ukraine, the availability of accommodations (free of charge) is the main reason for the increase in return migration to the temporarily occupied regions.<sup>8</sup> Family difficulties (personal reasons) came out as the second most significant factor that forces IDPs to return to where they resided before the war began. Other reasons, such as the inability to find employment, are not so frequent among the IDPs, according to IOM. The same data produced by the organization suggest that personal safety remains a major challenge for those who decide to return. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Social Policy (as of December 2017),

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<sup>1</sup> <http://unhcr.org.ua/en/2011-08-26-06-58-56/news-archive/1605-after-two-years-of-displacement-hosting-communities-in-ukraine-remain-supportive-towards-idps-unhcr-study> (accessed 14.10.2016).

<sup>2</sup> For the UN's definition and characteristics of this group of citizens, cf. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47a7078e1.html> (accessed 14.10.2016).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.foundation101.org/en/news/20170301> (accessed 06.09.2017).

<sup>4</sup> <http://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/national-monitoring-system-report-situation-internally-displaced-persons-april-2017> (accessed 06.09.2017).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.msp.gov.ua/news/13260.html> (accessed 06.09.2017).

<sup>6</sup> Citizens who reside in the temporarily occupied territories have to register as IDPs on territory controlled by Ukraine to be granted access to social services and pensions.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.msp.gov.ua/news/14554.html> (accessed 18.12.2017).

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/nms\\_round\\_7\\_september\\_2017\\_ukr\\_0.pdf](http://www.iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/nms_round_7_september_2017_ukr_0.pdf) (accessed 29.11.2017).

pensioners constitute 771,800 people, or 52% of the total IDP population in Ukraine. In addition, the ministry has identified 49,800 people with disabilities and 227,400 children among the registered IDPs.<sup>9</sup> Thus, over one million IDPs are not part of the active labor force (these proportions have been observed since the start of the conflict).

The mere facts show that there is urgent need for more and better-targeted assistance to answer the needs of IDPs in general in terms of social support. Activities involving IDPs are conducted simultaneously by the Ukrainian state, civil society (NGOs and voluntary groups, in particular) and international donors. All of these groups have their own policies with regard to IDPs, but their activities interlock on a regular basis. This report concentrates on one of the above-mentioned entities, namely on the international donors and their engagement in the process of supporting IDPs in Ukraine.

The following chapter explains our research set-up, after which we present the main donors supporting IDPs in Ukraine. We then describe the main obstacles and issues that IDPs now face and could be facing in the near future. Next, we discuss the current policy of the Ukrainian state toward IDPs and explain how the government response to the needs of displaced persons can affect donors' presence and activities in Ukraine. In the next chapter, we discuss how to make IDPs more active as citizens. Finally, we propose a set of recommendations to donors with regard to their assistance to IDPs in Ukraine.

### 3. Research set-up

#### Rationale:

The Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Institute of Public Affairs decided to analyze international donor support and its potential for IDPs in Ukraine for three main reasons.

Firstly, despite the experience of internal migration on the territory of the former Soviet Union (e.g., Georgia, Azerbaijan), in the case of Ukraine, we have seen internal migration flows on an unprecedented scale in contemporary Europe. The country, which since the Euromaidan has been facing an armed conflict on its own territory together with the urgent need to implement reforms, has also quickly had to tackle the problem of relocating almost two million citizens within its borders.<sup>10</sup> In this situation, assessing the effectiveness of international assistance and identifying the areas in need of support are relevant study objectives for the research community.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/ua/news/socialna-sfera-reformi-v-diyi> (accessed 28.12.2017).

<sup>10</sup> In 2016, the UN and EU statistics provided the general number of 3.1 million people affected by the armed conflict and, therefore, in need. The data of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of 2016 give the figure of 1,714,000 internally displaced persons in Ukraine <http://www.internal-displacement.org/database/country/?iso3=UKR>, (accessed 14.10.2016).



Secondly, given the sudden and unpredictable nature of the events in the east of Ukraine, the actions undertaken by the Ukrainian<sup>11</sup> state as well as by international donors require an in-depth analysis and a comprehensive understanding.<sup>12</sup> Experts and decision-makers are still looking for the most effective solutions, among others, through the engagement of the international community in assistance activities addressed to IDPs.

Thirdly, international organizations have been supporting the development of democratic institutions in Ukraine for many years. The Euromaidan has been universally recognized as a turning point in the development of civil society in Ukraine, whereas the international community has been credited for playing a role in supporting civil society in Ukraine in terms of education and funding. For the reform process to progress successfully, not only should donors provide material support to IDPs, but IDPs have to be permanently involved in the democratization efforts taking place in their country.

This publication was not intended to provide an evaluative analysis of donors' work in Ukraine; thus, we did not apply a specifically prepared set of criteria during the field research. On the contrary, we focused on the receiving end of international support. Ukrainian civil society organizations are a great source of knowledge about IDPs; at the same time, many of them cooperate with donors and use donors' funds to implement projects for IDPs. We considered listening to the opinions of the people who work on the ground and have permanent contact with IDPs, as they are a valid source of information for an assessment of the donors' support.

<sup>11</sup> However, some attempts to examine the impact of internal migration on the shaping of the identity of IDPs can be invoked here - Trofimova, A. (2015). "Internally displaced persons in search for meaning. Experiences of Ukrainian IDPs at their new places of residence as a symbolic space for re-shaping identities and life strategies," an analysis presented during the conference "Ukraine's historical and contemporary interlockings: A transnational perspective on transformations" 5-6 November 2015, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder). Apart from that, the Ukrainian academic community has also made attempts to present the international experience in this field - Войналович І.А. Вимушені переселенці: зарубіжний досвід, стан і реалізація їх прав в Україні [Електронний ресурс] / І.А. Войналович, М.О. Кримова, Л.В. Щетініна // Інституційний репозитарій КНЕУ. – Режим доступу: <http://www.ir.kneu.kiev.ua:8080/bitstream/2010/5981/1/250-258.pdf> (accessed 14.10.2016).

<sup>12</sup> Examples of relevant international research: L. Van Metre, S. E. Steiner, M. Haring (2017), Ukraine's Internally Displaced Persons Hold a Key to Peace, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/issue-briefs/ukraine-s-internally-displaced-persons-hold-a-key-to-peace> (accessed 22.12.2017);

(2016) Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development. Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Their Hosts, World Bank Group, <http://www.unhcr.org/5975a93e7.pdf> (accessed 22.12.2017);

Centre for Eastern Studies – Jarosiewicz, M. (2014). „Problem uchodźczy na Ukrainie: ocena sytuacji” [Refugee problem in Ukraine: assessment of the situation] <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2014-09-18/problem-uchodzczy-na-ukrainie-ocena-sytuacji> (accessed 14.10.2016);

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights – Szczepanik, M. (2015). „Sytuacja osób wewnątrznie przesiedlonych (IDPs) na Ukrainie” [Situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine] [http://www.academia.edu/18331485/Sytuacja\\_os%C3%B3b\\_wewn%C4%99trnie\\_przesiedlonych\\_IDPs\\_na\\_Ukrainie\\_2015](http://www.academia.edu/18331485/Sytuacja_os%C3%B3b_wewn%C4%99trnie_przesiedlonych_IDPs_na_Ukrainie_2015) (accessed, 14.10.2016);

A. Pikulicka-Wilczewska (Editor), G. Uehling (Editor) (2017). Migration and the Ukraine Crisis: A Two-Country Perspective. E-International Relations;

G. Ianova (2017). Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine: in Law and Practice. Lund University. <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=8899102&fileId=8899111> (accessed, 20.01.2018);

Norwegian Refugee Council (2016). Housing, land and property rights of displaced and conflict-affected communities in Eastern Ukraine. [https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/nrc\\_housing-land-and-property-ukraine\\_full.pdf](https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/nrc_housing-land-and-property-ukraine_full.pdf) (accessed, 20.01.2018).

## Methodology and sampling

To collect the data, we made use of qualitative methods of analysis – desk research and partly structured in-depth interviews consisting of a general part common for all respondents and a number of specific questions adapted to the nature of the area in which individual experts (some of them IDPs themselves) were involved.

Given the qualitative nature of the research, we did not conduct an in-depth exploration of the demographic composition of IDPs in Ukraine, nor did we work with a representative sample of respondents. The analysis was focused predominantly on the civil society environment in the country and its representatives in several regions. We are aware of the regional peculiarities and the dynamic changes that the IDP community underwent in 2017. The aim of the research, however, was not to map out the socio-demographic composition of IDPs; we believe that quantitative research is better adapted to meet such goals. The principal idea behind our study was to indicate problematic areas in the support for IDPs in the context of international donors and to get a better look at the receiving end of assistance.

The main goal of the interviews was to reconstruct the social reality of IDPs. Hence, we focused on five issues:

- 1) What are the day-to-day living conditions of IDPs?
- 2) How do IDPs perceive the policy of the Ukrainian state – both central and local structures – and the role of international support on both these levels?
- 3) What are the key needs of the IDP community, as expressed by their representatives and the organizations assisting them?
- 4) Have, in the view of IDPs and the organizations supporting them, the international donors been effectively addressing their needs?
- 5) And finally, how can donors support IDPs more effectively in the short- to medium-term perspective?

In order to present the diversity of the assistance measures addressed to the IDPs and to prepare more comprehensive national recommendations, we visited eight cities in Ukraine<sup>13</sup> and conducted altogether about 45 interviews.<sup>14</sup> As the opinions of Ukrainian NGOs constituted the foundation of the report, we interviewed their representatives most frequently. We reached both representatives of the most recognizable NGOs, which have wider contacts with international donors and the Ukrainian authorities, as well as the representatives of smaller NGOs, which have only recently emerged and are slowly gaining recognition in the field. We conducted additional

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<sup>13</sup> Kharkiv, Dnipro, Lutsk, Lviv, Kyiv, Kramatorsk, Sloviansk and Vinnytsia. In addition, we conducted one interview in Warsaw with a respondent who normally lives in Severodonetsk.

<sup>14</sup> In most cases, we coded interviews with representatives of one organization/entity as one interview. Thus the exact number of interviewed experts is higher. The collected data allowed researchers to present general observations about internal migration in Ukraine and identify certain trends in addressing the challenges Ukrainian society faces as a result of the phenomenon. It is important to note that the obtained data does not derive from a representative sample of respondents.



interviews with the central and local administrations and individuals representing donors. We also approached the victims of military aggression who had to leave Crimea and Donbas in 2014.<sup>15</sup> In our interviews, we focused on the observations of formally organized entities that provide support on specifically set terms (usually projects with a specified budget, humanitarian aid, and, more rarely, assistance in a form of donation) and follow a specific strategy and objectives (e.g., to change the housing conditions, to activate vulnerable groups, to fight exclusion, to support children and single mothers). We focused on these NGOs on the assumption that a long-term strategy in those organizations significantly increases the chances that the recommendations prepared as a result of this study will be taken into consideration.

We conducted the field research in three stages:

1. July 17 - August 4, 2016: First visit to Ukraine. We chose potential respondents based on desk research on the assistance provided to IDPs in Ukraine.<sup>16</sup> In addition, we were actively using their network of contacts in Ukraine.
2. August 15-19, 2016: With the assistance of some of the respondents (“snowball sampling method”), we prepared a list of experts meeting the criteria of the research project.<sup>17</sup>
3. December 15, 2017 – January 4, 2018: Instead of immediate publication of our findings, we decided to take the dynamic legislative developments in Ukraine and the ongoing changes in government response into account in order to make any recommendations somewhat more sustainable. We specifically wanted to see how the newly established Ministry of the Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons would become operational and how a newly established database would be managed by the government. For that purpose, we commissioned a local expert/researcher (1) to conduct an additional series of interviews with experts who are familiar with the situation of IDPs in Ukraine; (2) to validate the results of the 2016 study; and (3) to point out areas that might require a change. Hence, with the publication being based predominantly on 2016 field research and secondary sources analyses, we made an additional probe in December 2017 and January 2018 to see how our observations and experts’ comments stood the test of time. In such a quickly developing and changing environment as today’s Ukraine, this has, hopefully, led to making recommendations that are still of relevance for the future.

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<sup>15</sup> We granted all interviewees absolute anonymity in the report. Otherwise, many of them might not have consented to be as open as they were. We ask for readers’ understanding when, in the following pages, we summarily refer to “the experts,” “the interviewees,” etc.

<sup>16</sup> In the study, we used, e.g., an interactive map describing the activities of organizations/initiatives supporting IDPs, created as part of the project VPO-SOS available at [www.vpo-sos.org/help-service/provided\\_help](http://www.vpo-sos.org/help-service/provided_help) (accessed, 14.10.2016).

<sup>17</sup> The most important criterion to select the respondents was the effectiveness of their activities addressed to the people in need and their practical experience in providing assistance. In the case of more experienced organizations, we considered their experience in implementing international assistance projects.

## 4. Main donors and the nature of assistance provided

There are many international donors willing to support IDPs in Ukraine, ranging from UN agencies to non-governmental organizations representing individual states from different parts of the world.

The biggest country-donors are presented in Diagram 1. Furthermore, UN data<sup>18</sup> indicates that, at the moment, those focusing on alleviating the effects of internal migrations in Ukraine include 125 Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, 33 international non-governmental organizations, 10 UN agencies, six international organizations and seven other entities.<sup>19</sup>

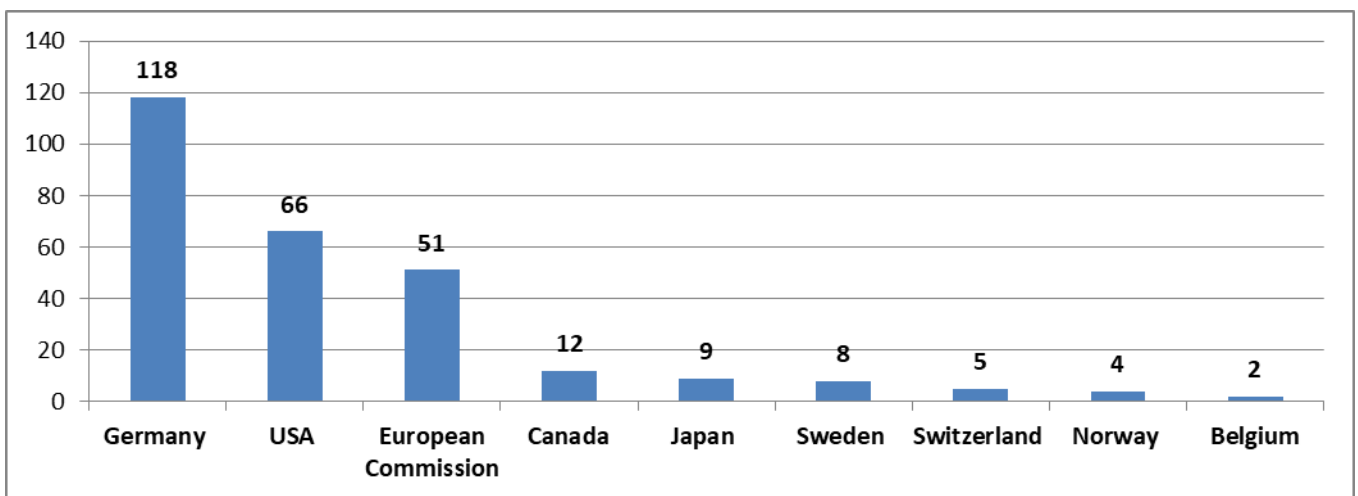


Diagram 1 – The biggest donor countries based on USAID<sup>20</sup> data as of September 2017. Humanitarian assistance counted in millions of dollars.

In addition, individuals, businesses (companies, corporations) and, in general, civic initiatives and committees (e.g., founded by representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora) provide assistance. However, the irregular and spontaneous nature of such assistance make a systemic in-depth analysis of its effectiveness from the point of view of the needs of IDPs impossible.

We can distinguish different types and forms of donor assistance:

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/ukraine\\_humanitarian\\_response\\_plan\\_2\\_018\\_en\\_20171204.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/ukraine_humanitarian_response_plan_2_018_en_20171204.pdf) (p.11, accessed 19.01.2018).

<sup>19</sup> According to the adopted classification, in this study the Institute of Public Affairs has reached at least two UN agencies, four international organizations and 25 Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, as well as a number of entities that do not fall into any of the above categories (e.g., representatives of the authorities, religious organizations, universities, etc.). Not all international donors who are actively working with IDPs were analyzed in this report. We decided to describe the organizations most frequently mentioned by the representatives of Ukrainian NGOs during interviews and those donors who NGOs pointed out as major actors in Ukraine in the field of internal migration. Interviewees were usually able to list a number of organizations and shortly describe some activities implemented, or support provided, by one or more organizations.

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/ukraine\\_ce\\_fs08\\_09-30-2016.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/ukraine_ce_fs08_09-30-2016.pdf) (accessed, 14.10.2016).

- Transnational/international institutions (e.g., EU, UN and its agencies) and governments of individual states or organizations representing a given state;
- **Assistance provided to Ukraine directly** (e.g., to the state budget and then implemented by the central or local government bodies) **and indirectly** (e.g., project assistance that may be provided in a specific region with the support of the [central/local] government);
- By **target group** – analyzing the support provided for the entire society/IDPs or assistance addressed to a specific group of people (children, single mothers, senior citizens, etc.);
- By the **type of provided assistance** – broadly understood humanitarian aid, but also more concrete financial support in the form of cash grants, subsidizing soft projects developing the competencies of individuals and their ability to cope with the new situation, technical support for central and local government bodies, transfer of knowledge and best practices in the field of internal migration.

During the interviews, respondents predominantly focused on two types of organizations assisting IDPs in Ukraine: organizations under the UN umbrella and other international donors. Among the UN agencies operating in Ukraine, our respondents devoted the most attention to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). For many entities and initiatives, institutions within the structure of the UN are the most important partners and the main donors in their activities. In its operations, the UN tries to adhere to the so-called cluster system of cooperation<sup>21</sup> between Ukrainian civil society, the authorities and other donors. Other international donors frequently mentioned were the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Caritas Ukraine, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Save the Children, EU member states' governments and the European Commission. The nature of the presence of these institutions (the available funding, projects) varied depending on the regions.

According to our contacts in the expert community in Ukraine, in 2017 many donors decided to move even closer to the conflict zone. Some of the donors were considering or had made a decision to move their (field) offices from such cities as Dnipro to Sloviansk, Severodonetsk, etc. Already during the interviews in 2016, many expressed concerns that there was not enough capacity building for NGOs in the cities close to the contact line<sup>22</sup> with the occupied territories.

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed description of the cluster system: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/about-clusters/what-is-the-cluster-approach> (accessed 13.10.2016)

<sup>22</sup> The contact line is a 500 km line of separation between the non-Ukraine-controlled and the Ukraine-controlled territories, i.e., a factual border between the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts and the rest of the territories of Ukraine. The contact line, however, does not represent any official border.

The experts interviewed in 2017 concluded that international donors had gradually decreased the amounts of humanitarian assistance provided to the population affected by the conflict, including support specifically for IDPs. While the decrease in the quantity of distributed basic products, such as food, baby products, items of personal hygiene and medicine, may suggest that the situation with internal migration is in a phase of relative stability, donors are now shifting their focus to sustainable long-term solutions pertaining to the livelihood of the IDPs. The scale of the support for emergency and primary assistance provided to those displaced has also decreased. The experts confirmed this by noting that the selection criteria for beneficiaries of international projects have become more rigid, and that the focus has shifted to identifying the most vulnerable groups in Ukrainian society. The experts approached in 2017 also generally support placing an emphasis on long-term sustainable solutions for IDPs. The establishment of appropriate systemic solutions for vulnerable groups is emerging as one of the priority areas of the Ukrainian government. However, a number of experts pointed out that a total reduction of humanitarian assistance to IDPs living near the contact line would be a premature decision. Socio-economic challenges that continue to be important for IDPs living near the contact line of the armed conflict are lack of jobs, a social infrastructure in need of restoration/renovation, high prices for basic goods, and a high number of elderly people in the demographic structure of the remaining population. At the same time, a number of IDPs living further away in government-controlled areas also require humanitarian assistance.

Both the experts approached in 2016 and those contacted in 2017 pointed to the urgent need to have a long-term solution to the housing problem. International donors are seen as important contributors to the process. In 2017, discussions about accommodation became more animated, partially due to the government's activity in building or co-funding housing for IDPs. The expert community sees international donors as actors who can have a tangible impact on implementing realistic solutions when it comes to accommodations for IDPs. They could demonstrate such assistance through the financing or co-funding of housing programs.

In the future, donors definitely ought to give more attention to maintaining relations with the people residing in the occupied regions. The expert community sees communication between citizens residing in government-controlled areas (GCAs) and the inhabitants of non-government-controlled areas (NGCAs) as an integral part of the reintegration process of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. IDPs are an important element of the aforementioned process because they maintain active family ties with inhabitants of the NGCAs. Therefore, the experts propose that international donors play an active role in establishing and maintaining relations between the civic populations on both sides of the demarcation line.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Additional field research could shed more light on the situation. In general, experts from donor organizations and CSOs agree on these points because of the nature of their work - they are mobile and work in Kyiv, in the east or the west of the country - they operate where needed. Internal displacement is not characteristic for only one region, although clearly Eastern Ukraine faces the biggest burden. Some organizations like Caritas have several regional

## 5. Key areas requiring support

Housing and employment are the two most serious problems for IDPs in Ukraine.<sup>24</sup> Compared to these basic matters, other needs, such as legal, psychological or financial support, are essentially secondary needs, according to the respondents. Without the comfort of having a place to live (at least a rented one) and regular work, it is impossible to start one's life "anew." And for many, displacement is a dramatic change that in fact splits their lives into two parts: their life "before" and their life "now."

### Contributing to solving the problem of housing

Both Ukrainian and international organizations have analyzed the housing problem for IDPs. UNHCR reports, for example, contain both descriptions of current housing problems and recommendations for Ukrainian state institutions.<sup>25</sup>

The basic housing needs are satisfied – people do not have to sleep in the streets or in makeshift campgrounds. The displacement wave mobilized ordinary citizens, who simply took up IDPs into their homes, while social activists, international organizations and government structures invested time and money in adapting public facilities (usually old, sometimes abandoned, buildings) so that displaced persons could stay in them. In addition, GIZ funded so-called "modular towns," consisting of micro-flats of simple construction.<sup>26</sup>

More than three years since the start of the conflict, the state has not been able to come up with a long-term strategy for a housing policy for IDPs. Experts listed a number of reasons: First, the very low level of financial support – 884 hryvnias (approx. 27 euro) for people unable to work (with disabilities) and 442 hryvnias (approx. 14 euro) for others. These amounts are out of line with the reality of the Ukrainian housing market.<sup>27</sup> In June 2017, the average rent for a one-room apartment in Ukraine ranged from 1,200 hryvnias (approx. 38 euro) in the Sumy oblast in northeast Ukraine to 7,000 hryvnias (approx. 219 euro)<sup>28</sup> in the Kyiv oblast.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, some legal provisions concerning the displaced are actually harmful to those who are looking for a flat to rent.

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offices. These experts are able to see the bigger picture. With the members of the IDP community interviewed, there might be a slight difference in terms of the perception of needs. Those who are closer to the frontline might view humanitarian assistance as more urgent.

<sup>24</sup> Obviously, we are here discussing the situation of people who have been displaced for a considerable amount of time (medium to long-term perspective). In the first days/weeks after displacement, humanitarian aid plays a vital role.

<sup>25</sup> [http://unhcr.org.ua/attachments/article/1231/2016\\_02\\_Key%20Protection%20Concerns%20and%20UNHCR%20Recommendation%20-%20UKRAINE.pdf](http://unhcr.org.ua/attachments/article/1231/2016_02_Key%20Protection%20Concerns%20and%20UNHCR%20Recommendation%20-%20UKRAINE.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.giz.de/en/mediacenter/28837.html>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://uman-rda.gov.ua/news/09-59-13-16-11-2017/>. These amounts are not just the housing allowance, but the entire amounts that the state is prepared to allocate for all the expenses of a displaced person.

<sup>28</sup> All prices in euros according to the exchange rate from December 2017.

<sup>29</sup> <http://domik.ua/novosti/appleNewsPage-252264.html>.

The complicated procedure for applying for state-funded financial assistance forces displaced people to give their current residence address. Moreover, it requires them to be ready at all times for inspection from the relevant state institutions (special commissions have been set up on a legal basis of Regulation 365.<sup>30</sup> Their absence from the place declared as their place of residence can result in losing benefits to which they are entitled.

Such a requirement is controversial for three reasons. Firstly, it constitutes a real limitation to IDPs' mobility (inspections can take place unexpectedly). An interviewee states, "The controlling team comes without any prior notification, checks if those people live there. If someone is accidentally not at home – whatever the reason – even if someone is at work [it can cause a cancellation of financial support – *authors' note*]." Secondly, it opens the door for corruption. The same person emphasizes, "The members of the controlling teams have very poor salaries – perfect conditions for corruption. If the commission team comes and something is wrong, then there is a huge risk that only a bribe can help." Thirdly, it leads to the discrimination of displaced people on the housing market. It is a wide-spread practice of landlords to avoid entering civil-law contracts with tenants that would require them to pay tax on the rental. The requirement to obtain an official consent to register a displaced person for residence means coming out of the grey economy and forces them to pay taxes on the rental or be subjected to financial penalties in the case of a failure to do so. In consequence, many flat owners refuse to rent a flat to such tenants. Even though the practice of tax avoidance should be condemned, one must remember that a wrongly designed law leads to the discrimination of IDPs who are in too weak a position to enforce anti-corruption behavior.

The vast majority of people who have left the occupied territory of Donbas have settled in the area immediately bordering the conflict zone, especially the non-occupied parts of the Lugansk and Donetsk oblasts. The accumulation of displaced persons in the east of the country has led to an increased demand on the housing market which the supply is not able to satisfy. This has, in turn, resulted in increases in rental prices which absorb a large part of the income of many displaced families.

Despite these problems, there seems to be serious progress being made in 2017, at least in legal terms. The "Strategy of Integration of Internally Displaced Persons and Implementation of Long-Term Solutions to Internal Displacement until 2020," adopted in October 2017, finally addresses the need to respect the right of IDPs to accommodations. It adopted a legally binding priority scheme for obtaining social or temporary housing, as well as the use of financial mechanisms to provide IDPs with permanent housing. At the same time, the strategy foresees the

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<sup>30</sup> Resolution 365 of the Council of Ministers of Ukraine from 8 June 2016 introduced declarations on the IDP status for an indefinite time. However, special commissions take the decisions granting such a status. What seems to be a very discriminating measure is tying old-age pensions with other social benefits payments in the case of IDPs. In consequence, a displaced old-age pensioner will receive payment [to which he/she is entitled by law as it is his/her property right – *authors' note*] only after undergoing a process of verification of his/her status in the new place of residence. <http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/cardnpd?docid=249110200>.

reduction of credit fees or an exemption from taxation for those individuals who rent their accommodation to IDPs.

Another achievement is seen in a law adopted by the parliament introducing a support scheme for IDPs who are willing to buy accommodations or to do construction work to build their own homes.<sup>31</sup> When we finalized our research, IDPs indeed had a right to submit an application to participate in a state-run support program for purchasing accommodations (preferential terms of credit or co-financing from the government). However, the procedures for providing accommodations to individual citizens have not been finalized.

In theory, the state is finally ready to provide meaningful support for IDPs in terms of housing. Given that Ukraine has a tradition of lacking the implementation of what might be good regulations on paper, the state now has to follow through and demonstrate what this support will look like in practical terms.

At this stage, it is not easy to offer concrete solutions as to how donors could help in providing housing. One solution would obviously be direct financial support, which would further ease the burden of buying and constructing a new house. Another interesting instrument worth considering is a fund designated to buy flats left behind in the occupied parts of the territories of Donetsk, Lugansk and Crimea from displaced people. With the money received for such flats, the displaced people could purchase flats elsewhere. The only condition would be that the newly purchased flats would have to be located in Ukraine in order to prevent the outflow of capital from the country. Such a fund should be national in character (the state as the majority shareholder) but could be substantially supported by donors. This would guarantee that after regaining control over the occupied territories, decisions about the future of the recovered flats would be in the hands of the state. The inclusion of funds from donors could mitigate the financial costs of this program and simultaneously at least partially ensure that in the event of the occupied territories being regained, the state would not mismanage the ownership of properties there. However, all such solutions would have to deal with the fact that in many cases, new residents have taken over the old homes of IDPs in the occupied territories, which might ultimately require compensation schemes.

### **Contributing to solving the problem of (un)employment**

Adequate employment, i.e., work remunerated with wages enabling the worker to obtain middle-class status, is still a scarce commodity in Ukraine. The poor governance of the country, corruption and war have brought the country to the brink of economic collapse. IDPs, therefore, compete for work on a very difficult and limited market which is unable to ensure a decent salary not only to IDPs, but also to most of the residents of Ukraine, even those not affected by the problem of forced migration. "It may happen that the entire salary is being spent solely on renting

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<sup>31</sup> Law No. 1954-VIII of 16 March 2017 "On amendments to Article 4 of the Law of Ukraine on the Prevention of Influence of the Global Financial Crisis on the Development of the Construction Industry and House Building, <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1954-19> (accessed 19.01.2018)



the apartment. On the other hand, in small cities, job opportunities are rare, although life there is much cheaper,” one respondent said. Given the accumulation of IDPs in the areas closest to the demarcation line, the situation there is even worse, as demand for work exceeds the supply, similarly as in the case of the situation on the housing market.

Yet there are other factors aggravating the difficult situation of displaced persons. An important factor is the internal migrants’ skills and education. Before the war, the areas of Ukraine currently held by the separatists were characterized by a strong concentration of heavy industry, with the mining sector holding a special position. Hosts of both qualified and unqualified workers found jobs in the mines and heavy industry plants. Since heavy industry plays a much smaller role in the remaining parts of Ukraine, the migrants cannot find work in their previous occupations. A solution might be to take a job as an unqualified worker or to be willing to take a course in a new skill to find a new occupation.

In the meantime, the readiness to change or, rather, the lack of it remains a huge obstacle. People who work supporting IDPs emphasize that the forced migrants are characterized by a high level of inactivity, which can be best described by the following words, “I can’t, I don’t want to, I am afraid.” According to our respondents, even within the IDP community, many forced migrants are reluctant or even afraid to take any kind of initiative. One person recalls the history of a family who “received an offer of financial support from a donor to start something on their own. But they refused to take the money because they were simply terrified by the money and didn’t want to take responsibility for anything.” Therefore, much attention ought to be given to a comprehensive and properly planned program for the social and political activation of this group of people – the process of creating conscious citizens. In the last chapter, we present our own concept of such an activation process, where leaders and active displaced persons play an important role.

International organizations can and should get involved in fighting unemployment among IDPs. A broad spectrum of initiatives to find employment for displaced persons is available.

One of the most frequently mentioned measures in the expert community is to encourage IDPs to start their own economic activity (e.g., a micro-business). Thanks to cooperation mainly with international grant giving organizations, such as the Danish Refugee Council, IOM and UNHCR, such initiatives are already up and running. Migrants participate in competitions for the most interesting business plan, and if a competition board approves the plan, applicants receive a financial award to start the business. Support in the form of small grants for business has many advocates. Yet there are also people who emphasize that the potential of such an instrument is overestimated because “not everybody is predisposed to be a businessman.” Given the sensitivities and fears of potential recipients, whether they are reasonable or not, instruments addressed both to potential business people and to ordinary workers must be considered.

Therefore, courses to improve skills, occupational activation courses and programs enabling a change of occupation will be of key importance. The concept of cooperation between international organizations and Ukrainian vocational schools and universities to create a free-of-charge program for training IDPs may also be worth considering. Donors could cover the costs of studies (lecturers' wages, learning materials for students), but at the same time they could ensure that the curriculum would include subjects related to human rights. Universities and vocational schools would provide access to classrooms and partially cover the cost of remuneration for research workers.

Given the scale of internal displacement and the inactivity of a large part of the migrants, it would definitely not be possible to provide everyone with skills improvement programs and business competitions. These efforts should be complemented with creating new jobs for the displaced, with particular consideration for people with low skills. International organizations could support the creation of new jobs in the repairs and construction sector. Many buildings in the non-occupied territories that were areas of military activities over the last two years require post-war reconstruction, which again, requires work. International organizations could initiate related activities, thus engaging local small and medium-sized businesses as well as the local governments. The organizations' contribution could include, e.g., the purchase of construction materials and equipment or partial coverage of wages for IDPs employed in those companies.

## **6. The Ukrainian state: friend or foe to donor support for IDPs?**

If they are to prepare an adequate response to suit the needs of IDPs, donors cannot work in an insulated environment devoid of any relations with government officials and Ukrainian civil society. The previous experience of the reform process in Ukraine has shown that any sustainable changes will only be possible through the establishment of an effective dialogue between civil society and government. At the same time, one has to address the relations between donors and the Ukrainian state.

Firstly, analyzing the state response to the migration crisis – that is, the policies and support provided by the state and their relevance and effectiveness – can help donors adjust their assistance and better understand the local context. Ultimately, donors and civil society organizations have to navigate around the complex legal-institutional framework of a state that is still in the process of transition. Secondly, donors can successfully take on the role of facilitator/moderator, thus helping different stakeholders (government and civil society in particular) reach a compromise and prepare a set of solutions adapted to the local needs of the displaced persons. Thirdly, the previous democratization efforts in Ukraine have shown that in many areas donors, with their range of soft-power instruments, can exert leverage that can help reform the country's ineffective state policies. The following part of the chapter focuses on the main positive

and negative solutions developed by the Ukrainian government with regard to displaced persons, constituting a mapping exercise of the IDPs' needs viewed from a broader perspective.

### **Positive developments in the functioning of the state**

Representatives of Ukrainian civil society organizations are often critical about the policy of the Ukrainian state towards the IDPs and the way the state institutions try to deal with this problem. However, among our respondents, we have also encountered views that, considering the scale of the needs and the nature of the internal migration processes, Ukraine is coping quite well with meeting the needs of IDPs compared to other countries with similar experience (e.g., Georgia or Bosnia and Herzegovina). Moreover, although the Ukrainian state might be considered a slow learner by many experts, it has also, beyond any doubt, produced solutions for IDPs that are worthy of praise.

#### IDP Database

Positive actions undertaken by the Ukrainian state include launching an IDP database. Although the availability of the database only improved after October 3, 2016 (i.e., two years after the crisis broke out, when a uniform register operating throughout the entire country was launched at the Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy), the very fact that such a database has been established should be recognized as a success of Ukraine.<sup>32</sup>

The IDP database includes an extensive record of personal data. In addition to general information, it includes information about the education of IDPs, their children (minors) and their place of study, as well as a description of the housing, medical and social needs of the displaced persons. This vast amount of data was collected for statistical purposes, with the goal of identifying the practical needs of IDPs and in order to be able to effectively provide relevant assistance. The Ministry of Social Policy is the sole administrator of the database. A number of other government institutions have access to the data, including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons, the Pension Fund and other government institutions and agencies. Ukrainian legislature grants civil society organizations (CSOs) access to the publicly available information from the database in order to identify relevant target groups for humanitarian assistance.

The lack of the database in the summer of 2016<sup>33</sup> was one of the omissions of the state most frequently criticized by respondents. The originators of the idea assumed that an electronic database would make issuing social benefits to IDPs more efficient and improve communication between the ministry and the beneficiaries of its assistance. In the opinion of the respondents, a factor relevant for the effectiveness of the database would be whether the appropriate

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<sup>32</sup><http://ukranews.com/ua/news/453068-minsopolityky-zapustylo-yedynu-informaciynu-bazu-danykh-pereselenciv> (accessed 13.10.2016).

<sup>33</sup> The database was created one month after we completed the first stage of our field research.

infrastructure (e.g., computer equipment) exists, as well as whether there will be adequate protection of the personal data of the people covered by the register. Since the register of IDPs only became operational in 2017, it is still too early to assess its effectiveness. One of the first areas for improvement identified since the launch of the register is co-operation between the Ministry of Social Policy and the Ministry of the Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons. The first ministry administers the database, while the second has little influence on the process, being the specialized body for dealing with IDP related issues. One could assume that effective cooperation is a *sine qua non* requirement for the database to be fully operational.

The fears about the potential unlawful use of personal data mentioned to us by experts in 2016 turned out to be justified to a certain extent, if one looks at the developments of 2017. For example, the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine has already been convicted of violation of the provisions of the law on the protection of personal data. In 2016, the Ministry unlawfully distributed the personal data of 150,000 individuals to a private company responsible for debt collection with the aim of conducting a telephone verification process among people receiving social payments. The Podil District Court in Kyiv has documented this transfer of personal data to a private company by the Ministry of Finance, which had received the information from the Ministry of Social Policy. According to Ukrainian law, only the entities of the state or communal form of ownership, which are subject to the authority (supervision) of the state body in question, can process personal data obtained by a government body. The Office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and members of the IDP community initiated the litigation in this case.

#### Legislation corresponding to international standards

Another positive instrument of support for IDPs provided by the government is the adoption of legislation that may lead to reducing unemployment among IDPs. The Act of March 5, 2015 “On amendments to certain acts for the purpose of strengthening the social protection of internally displaced persons”<sup>34</sup> provides for the reimbursement of the actually incurred costs if an unemployed person (IDP) moves to a new workplace. Additionally, the costs (up to six months) incurred by an employer in connection with employing an IDP with unemployed status and the costs of training such a person (for up to one year) are refunded under the act.

In 2015, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the “Law of Ukraine on Making Amendments to Some Laws of Ukraine Concerning the State Assistance to Combatants and Their Children, Children Whose Parents Died on the Territory of Anti-Terrorist Operations, in Hostilities or Armed Conflicts, or During Mass Civil Protest Actions, as well as Children, who are Registered as Internally Displaced Persons, for Obtaining Professional and Technical, or Higher Education.” According to its provision, children who are registered as IDPs are entitled to targeted state

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<sup>34</sup> <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/245-19> (accessed, 13.10.2016).

assistance in the following forms: studying expenses covered by state and local budget funds (in part or completely), preferential long-term education loans, social grants, free textbooks, free access to Internet and databases in state and communal educational institutions, free hostels, other supportive measures. According to the law, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine shall propose a procedure for acquiring this targeted assistance. In 2015-2016, the program was not properly functioning because the government had failed to adopt the necessary implementing procedures. This was finally done in November 2016, and it entered into force in early 2017.

Another positive decision is a ban on fines and penalties under credit or loan contracts with IDPs that has been in force since April 14, 2014. This provision is valid for both IDPs and residents of the temporarily occupied territories. According to the “Law of Ukraine on the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons,” the government shall also assist this category of citizens in receiving long-term credit for the purchase of land and construction of homes. In March 2017, the Ukrainian Parliament included IDPs in the list of groups who are eligible to participate in state-run programs for purchasing accommodations on preferential terms.

#### A specialized ministry

Since the first wave of internal migrations, the question of the division of powers between ministries in order to develop an effective policy of assistance has been a relevant one. Although many activists and experts have appealed to the authorities from the very beginning to create a separate ministry responsible for the affairs of the so-called occupied territories, the government made an official decision on the matter no sooner than in April 2016.

A long-awaited positive development was the establishment of the Ministry of the Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons, by way of decision No. 1097-VIII of the Council of Ministers of Ukraine, as a specialized body for IDPs. The bureaucratic side of the process has not improved as much as had been hoped, though, after the Ministry became operational. For example, although the decision on establishing the Ministry was made on April 20, 2016, according to the annual report of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the staff of this body was hired only in October 2016.

Until the new ministry was created, most of the burden of supporting IDPs had, in practice, been placed on the Ministry of Social Policy, which had to organize the system of social support for the people who changed their place of residence due to the armed conflict. However, the ministry did not have enough human and infrastructure resources to coordinate and implement the required measures with good effect. One of the interviewees stated, “Most of the tasks were taken on by the Ministry of Social Policy. Cooperating with them is a tough job. The procedures they introduce serve mainly the purpose of improving the condition of the state budget.” In practice, the lack of an effective division of responsibilities between ministries significantly extended administrative

procedures and prevented the coordination of efforts and exchange of information, which are the key elements of an effective system of support provided by the state.

Despite these organizational drawbacks, the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons proved to be a valuable ally in the government's efforts to improve the situation of IDPs. The Ministry developed and promoted the Concept of the State target program *Restoration and building peace in the eastern regions of Ukraine*, proposed an Action Plan regarding certain areas of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and created a multi-trust fund for restoring these territories. On October 15, 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved a "Strategy of Integration of Internally Displaced Persons and Implementation of Long-Term Solutions to Internal Displacement until 2020,"<sup>35</sup> a document prepared by the Ministry of the Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons. This strategy addresses the need to respect the right of IDPs to proper housing. Although there have been certain successes of support measures for IDPs, overall the strategy still lacks a concrete well-defined action plan. It is now the task of the Ministry of the Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons to prepare such a plan.<sup>36</sup>

In its efforts to support IDPs, the ministry is actively cooperating with international donors and diplomatic missions.

## **Negative developments**

### Negligence of the Ukrainian state

In many areas, Ukrainian state institutions currently have problems with meeting their obligations. The greatest negligence of the Ukrainian state which influences the nature of policies towards IDPs in a very deep and systemic way has been succinctly described by one of our experts: "[...] the state treats them [IDPs – *authors' note*] not as an asset but as a problem." A comment by another respondent confirms this claim, at the same time pointing to the issue of the state's information policy described later in this chapter: "[...] I do not understand the attitude of our state [Ukraine – *authors' note*] to displaced people [...] people do not know what is going on and what the state's approach is." Whereas the state institutions may not deserve an unequivocally negative assessment with regard to implementing reactive policies, given the unpredictable nature of acts of war, the speed of implementing individual measures may be fairly criticized.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2015/2015-2020-IDMC-strategic-plan.pdf> (accessed, 18.01.2018).

<sup>36</sup> Our assessments of the Ministry's activity in 2017 are solely based on our analysis of the available secondary sources. We are aware that a more in-depth analysis is necessary to assess the effectiveness of this governmental body. The experts interviewed during the field study were not able to comment on the long-term success of the ministry's activities as the body de facto had not yet become fully operational at that time, while in 2017, it was still too early to make any definitive conclusions.

The experts mentioned that during the period of 2014-2017, the inconsistency of normative acts in the sphere of internal displacement posed a major challenge. This inconsistency could be seen through contradictions in laws and regulations (primary and secondary laws) regulating the situation of IDPs in society. Experts concluded that the lack of cohesive legislature allowed public officials to behave in an unlawful or discriminatory manner regarding IDPs and led to numerous instances of violations of their basic human rights.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, respondents stated that many of the adopted normative acts were declaratory in nature, without being backed by sufficient funding and lacking practical measures for implementation. A comprehensive program of support from the government, including support for the social adaptation and reintegration of citizens who moved from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, was adopted in 2015, but it has not received even minimal financial support to become operational.

The respondents also believed that in many cases public officials misinterpret the existing socio-economic reality (the status and actual place of residence of the IDPs in particular). They emphasize the temporary character of the IDPs' situation and thus think the state's main responsibility is to be prepared for their return after the Ukrainian state's reclamation of the temporarily occupied territories. The emphasis on what they see as the temporary state of IDPs has allowed many officials to refrain from proposing long-term systemic solutions and to avoid public criticism and/or the danger of voter backlash for such behavior. Some of the interviewed experts pointed out that questions of social assistance and the integration of IDPs often end up being part of populist and/or politicized discussions, which hinders the process of preparing long-term solutions.

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<sup>37</sup> To illustrate (some legislation has been amended since): (1) Resolution of the National Bank of Ukraine No. 699[48] of 3 November 2014, by force of which people from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea were considered to be non-residents, i.e., they were deprived of the possibility to use the financial services to the same extent as the citizens of Ukraine. Then, soon after that, by resolution No. 810[49] of the National Bank of Ukraine, people coming from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea were recognized as residents, yet the validity of their status depended on holding the relevant confirmation of registration with the National Migration Service. (2) Resolution No. 365[51] of the Council of Ministers, which, according to one of the respondents, "has turned the world upside down and wiped out all the prior achievements." The Resolution introduced declarations on IDP status for an indefinite time. However, special commissions take the decisions granting such status. Furthermore, tying old-age pensions with other social benefits payments in the case of IDPs seems rather discriminatory. A displaced old-age pensioner would receive payment [to which such a person is entitled by law as it is his or her property right – authors' note] only after undergoing a process of verification of his or her status in the new place of residence. Such action on the part of the government, according to an expert on IDP rights was "... a path leading straight to the European Court of Human Rights," since with this measure, the Ukrainian government is depriving a large part of the society of their only source of income. (3) Resolution No. 79 of the Council of Ministers "On certain aspects of registration of people moving away from temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine as well as the regions where counter-terrorist operations are taking place" [47]. This act limited the freedom of IDPs to move and provided that the IDP status is valid only if someone is registered for residence (a stamp of the National Migration Service). Moreover, the relevant authorities have an obligation to verify the place of residence within two months. If absent (e.g., performing work at the seat of the employer, annual leave, business trip), IDPs have only ten days to report to the National Migration Service and explain the reasons of their absence.



Ultimately, CSOs often take over functions of the state; effectiveness often depends on the availability of support provided by international donors. One of the civil society representatives noted, “First of all, we are doing things that in fact the state should be doing.” To confirm this claim, another expert recalls a situation in the Kharkiv Oblast: “In 2014, when there were so many people around who were hungry, wearing tattered clothes, who needed help, the authorities would send them to us [the local NGO – *authors’ note*].”

### Controversies over legal framework

Donors have to be aware of the legal environment in the country in which they want to operate. The proper understanding of the existing laws helps the international community to prepare support that not only looks effective on paper, but more importantly, can also reach the target group despite any legal loopholes. Appropriate legislation is a *sine qua non* condition for delivering policies at the central and local levels. Adopting the relevant statutes makes it possible to provide effective help to people in need, to ensure that they get the appropriate level of social protection and to help prevent their exclusion and marginalization. Donor assistance loses considerable value if there is no legislation to support it by ensuring that the needs of vulnerable groups will be met in the long-term perspective.

The shortcomings of the Ukrainian state with regard to the legal framework may be summarized by two observations: the introduction of discriminatory legal provisions into the legal system and the failure to adapt the secondary legislation (e.g., resolutions of the Council of Ministers) to the binding acts of general law (statutes). Civil society experts and international organizations alike describe the legislative process in the area of internal migration as an endless struggle on the part of Ukrainian civil society for the rights of IDPs. They criticize that the adopted legislation limits the IDPs’ freedom by tying individuals to a place of residence and creating obstacles for them to use financial services (such as banking) or to receive the required social benefits. Those advocating for the protection of human rights were especially outspoken in pointing out the loopholes in the government’s assistance. The Annual report of the Ukrainian Commissioner for Human Rights in 2016<sup>38</sup> pointed out that, overall, the legal framework developed by the government addresses many of the challenges faced by IDPs, although an effective action plan or roadmap was mentioned as an area for improvement (it was finally adopted in October 2017). Moreover, the report drew attention to the importance of ensuring a prompt decision-making process which would be able to respond to the dynamically changing circumstances on the ground. Many of the NGO experts have also assessed the Ukrainian Parliament as a body that reacts slowly with appropriate legislature to address the changing needs of IDPs. The United Nations

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/en/all-news/pr/31316-hi-schorichnu-dopovid-upovnovazhenogo-z-prav-lyudini-napravleno-do-verxov/> (accessed 06.09.2017).

High Commissioner for Human Rights, in his report of 2017,<sup>39</sup> drew attention to the need to secure pensions and social payments to people who still reside in the temporarily occupied territories. The report mentions mandatory bank identification procedures for pensioners-IDPs on the territory of Ukraine, the involvement of the Ukrainian Secret Service (SBU) in the verification procedure pertaining to IDP status, and the restriction of electoral rights of IDPs as examples of areas where proper legislation needs to be amended or adopted. At the same time, the access of individuals residing in the temporarily occupied territories to their rights (most notably, social assistance and pensions) remains an area where legislative solutions have favored isolation as opposed to inclusiveness. The expert community is predominantly in favor of changing this approach.

### Problems with information policy

Beyond any doubt, effective long-term policies targeted at IDPs have to include activities involving other representatives of the local community. The image of internal migration in Ukraine, as transmitted by official communication, has an impact on the relations between IDPs and other representatives of Ukrainian society in different regions of the country. Thus, the state's information policy (e.g., campaigns to raise awareness) emerges as an integral element of government support.

Many of the IDPs (although one should refrain from overgeneralizing here because of the non-representative nature of the study) have already earned a good reputation in their new local communities.

Yet, according to our respondents, in the public discourse (especially in its political dimension), the prevailing trend is to prejudice the public against internally displaced people. One of the respondents described the situation: "Among the highly ranked officials, negative rhetoric prevails against the people who travel back and forth. They say that those people collect their pensions twice, one here, the other there." The activists emphasized that the Ukrainian state, at least in the context of the communicated message, attempts, to some extent, to "distance itself" from the events in the east of Ukraine. Moreover, the impression of the people directly affected by the war is that some Ukrainian politicians hold the view that Eastern Ukraine has only itself to blame for the current situation. The negative narrative about the internal displacement in this case fits the lack of a carefully considered policy of the state addressed to the community in the east of the country. One of the experts gravely concludes with distress, "[...] there is a serious shortage of information. People who live on the front line do not know what is going on there. What this war is about, who with [...]."

Introducing this negative narrative of an IDP as a problem into the public discourse, combined with the lack of effective support for IDPs, leads to a situation where more and more people lose confidence in their own state and even decide to go back to their former place of

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<sup>39</sup> [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/UAReport18th\\_UKR.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/UAReport18th_UKR.pdf) (accessed, 06.09.2017).

residence. These people even consciously resign themselves to discrimination, as upon their return the separatists and some representatives of the local community often label them as “traitors.”

All interviewees point out the need for a shift in the information policy about IDPs. A positive discourse challenging the stereotype of an IDP as someone living off benefits and treating the IDPs as an asset for the country would not only strengthen the sense of identity among this group but would also help them to adapt to local communities everywhere in the country. In addition, a positive attitude of the state towards IDPs provides another instrument to raise the awareness of a national identity among people living in the territories controlled by the separatists who very often are in regular contact with their families.

Moreover, public opinion does not always correspond with the official message coming from the authorities. The media and politicians have had a tangible impact on the image of IDPs in society, but this does not mean that politicians’ perspectives are being directly transferred from them to the recipients (the general public). Thus, we ought to differentiate when talking about the public image of IDPs because this notion is much more nuanced than it might seem at first glance. Surveys of public opinion are an indication of this observation. According to a survey conducted by UNHCR in April 2016,<sup>40</sup> (1) media are the most important source of information about IDPs for the respondents; (2) the general attitude toward IDPs is positive or neutral; (3) awareness about the system of support for IDPs among respondents is relatively low; (4) IDPs are predominantly viewed as a vulnerable group in need of assistance; (5) some respondents believed that IDPs abuse the system of support (a possible obstacle to their integration), although this is not the opinion shared by the majority of respondents; and finally, (6) more than 50% of the respondents were ready to employ IDPs or offer them accommodations for rent. These data indicate that the negative image of IDPs is not something deeply engrained in Ukrainian society. On the contrary, there is a great potential in exploring internal migration as a source of positive change and a reservoir of human capital. However, the authors are well aware that additional research is needed on this specific topic because many public opinion surveys in the past have shown that individuals are not always ready to openly admit a negative opinion towards a specific group or phenomenon due to certain social pressures. Thus, their private opinion might differ from the one stated in the survey. The IDPs’ employment or housing problems may also confirm that the rather positive picture painted by some surveys might not be so positive, after all.

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<sup>40</sup> [http://unhcr.org.ua/attachments/article/1605/Public%20Survey\\_36\\_ENG\\_www.pdf](http://unhcr.org.ua/attachments/article/1605/Public%20Survey_36_ENG_www.pdf).

### The issue of voting rights

Legislation pertaining to the national elections provides for the possibility of citizens to change their place of voting without changing their registration address, which is determined by the registered place of residence (for the IDPs, the registered place for voting is their address in the temporarily occupied territories). In Ukraine, parliamentary elections are held using a parallel electoral system: 50% of the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian parliament, are elected by proportionate voting from party lists, the other 50% in single-mandate districts by majority voting, so the change of place of voting concerns only the national constituency and does not apply to voting for candidates in single-mandate electoral districts.

In Ukraine, we observe an overall decline in voter participation of a number of Ukrainian citizens. There may be different reasons for this: the annexation of Crimea, the war in Donbas, the massive internal displacement of a part of the population and the imperfections of national electoral law, to name a few.

To illustrate this, we can look at the snap presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014, held soon after Viktor Yanukovich had been ousted from his presidential post. According to the data provided by the State Electoral Committee, during the elections in 2014, only 23% of voters (counted from the general number of all voters) were included in the electoral lists in the Donetsk region and a mere 12% in Lugansk. During the snap elections, voter lists in the controlled territories of the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts covered 42% and 26% of the total number of voters in these oblasts. The above statistics, taking into account the resettlement of the majority of IDPs around the demarcation line and the correspondingly insignificant number of voters who changed their voting place, confirms the non-participation of the absolute majority of IDPs in the last parliamentary and presidential elections. Despite the facilitated procedure for changing the place of voting without changing the registered address, the number of citizens who made use of this procedure in the national elections of 2014 was relatively insignificant (200,000 people overall – not only IDPs).

In local elections, the voter cannot change the place of voting him- or herself. Hence, the voting address depends on the registered place of residence. Thus, the overwhelming majority of IDPs did not participate in the nation-wide local elections of 2015 and were, therefore, unable to influence the political landscape in those communities in which they resided after displacement. Some interviewed experts believe that the non-participation of IDPs in local elections and, to a lesser extent, national elections, has already led to the marginalization of the interests of these citizens on the political level and contributed to the low interest of politicians to help resolve their problems. The majority of experts interviewed in 2017 argued that the lack of legal mechanisms for the participation of IDPs in local and national elections (here: for parliamentary elections in the

single-member districts) is a serious problem hindering the successful integration of these groups of citizens into new communities.

## 7. Activating internally displaced persons

### **IDPs as a microcosm of Ukrainian society**

IDPs, or more widely, people from Eastern Ukraine, are not the only ones who face a set of idiosyncratic issues that emerged during the displacement of the Donbas population. There are numerous examples where one person embraced several identities, such as being an IDP but also serving in the military, having a disability or being an elderly person. Hence, we need a broader and a more holistic look at Ukrainian society.

With due reservation, the IDP community can to some extent be seen as a microcosm of Ukrainian society as a whole.<sup>41</sup> We observe similar challenges and opportunities when we look at the IDPs from the perspective of Ukrainian society as a whole (such as those pertaining to civic activity, mentality change, identity, etc.). The Euromaidan and the war in Donbas uncovered the potential for increased civic activity on the part of Ukrainian citizens, a potential which also concerns specific groups of citizens such as IDPs. Over the years, the bulk of literature has described the positive impact of regular civic activity on the successful and sustainable democratic transformation of post-Soviet countries. Similarly, increased civic activity has positive effects on the ability of vulnerable groups of society to act in their own interests. Hence, we argue for increased donor attention to civic activism among individual IDPs (leaders of the community, in particular) and their organizations.

While it is important to be aware of the specific challenges faced by IDPs that are characteristic to their situation, we should not forget that IDPs also share many problems with society as a whole. According to our interviewees, the so-called (re)integration of IDPs will be possible and most effective only if specific activities target the local community as a whole and not only specific parts of it (e.g., IDPs, people with disabilities, war veterans).

### **Rationale behind the analysis of the civic activity of IDPs**

Internal displacement has put a huge burden on Ukrainian society amidst the continued armed conflict and the need to continue with democratic reforms. The forced migration of thousands of people certainly is an undesirable situation from the social, political and economic perspective. It has shown the need for more flexibility and activity among large parts of the population (and the state). However, if the actors involved in the resolution of the situation manage

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<sup>41</sup> Overview in the National Monitoring System (NMS, September 2017)  
[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/nms\\_round\\_7\\_september\\_2017\\_eng.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/nms_round_7_september_2017_eng.pdf).

to activate the (hidden) potential of the IDP population, displacement may even to a certain extent benefit society. The experience donors acquire during this exercise may help them devise better solutions for increasing civic activity among the Ukrainian population overall and positively influence the democratization of the country.

During the interviews, we heard many times that “the east [Crimea, Donetsk – were used interchangeably in various comments – *authors’ note*] is made by people” and not by the borders of the administrative-territorial division of the country. Following this reasoning, Ukraine may have temporarily lost control over a part of its territory, but through a well-elaborated policy, it has a chance to regain the identity of the region and its human resources. Even though they account for a relatively small proportion of the IDP community, activists are able to play a vital role in the development of the country.<sup>42</sup> (“In my [modular – *authors’ note*] town there are 350 residents, of whom five to seven are active,” an activist explains.) On average, there is a small number of activists in any community (society). Currently, Ukrainian society as a whole faces the need to find a way to promote regular civic activity among its members.

The increased activity of representatives of the IDP community might also have an impact on dispelling the myths and stereotypes surrounding the eastern regions of Ukraine in the eyes of the country’s other citizens. Up to the beginning of the Euromaidan protest movement, the eastern region of the country had been identified by many Ukrainians as the so-called “Russian world” [русский мир/russkij mir – *authors’ note*], which was often associated with marginalization and discrimination by a significant part of the society.<sup>43</sup>

The active inclusion of vulnerable individuals into the process of preparing appropriate assistance for the members of their group may help improve the situation of such communities. Local activists and researchers would potentially have a better knowledge of the needs of the vulnerable community and the ability to reach a bigger group of recipients of future activities.

IDPs are, or can be, an important asset, and all actors in society would do well to consider how to turn challenges into opportunities and make the most of the IDP community and their potential for the benefit of the entire country. Active representatives of the IDP community can play an important role in dealing with the challenges faced by the Ukrainian state in the context of migration policy. Moreover, they constitute a vital asset for boosting the effectiveness of assistance transferred by donors to internally displaced people. Finally, it is important to look at which support from the state, civil society and donors can help overcome the passive attitudes among members of the IDP community and have a positive impact on the local community.

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<sup>42</sup> Our respondents realized that, too. They said that activists account for only 2-3% of the entire group. Nevertheless, in their view, this is typical – it is much more important to provide appropriate support for such people.

<sup>43</sup> An example of a situation described in the west of Ukraine by a representative of the IDP community: “The locals perceive our people according to the stereotypes going back to the 1990s (uneducated, etc.) – they know nothing about us and our region.”

Events in Ukraine (the Euromaidan, the war, economic problems, the process of reform) have led to an unprecedented activity among its citizens. A large number of new initiatives have appeared, including some within the community of IDPs. “We formed an organization with the displaced people in February–May 2014. Nobody knew anything, we had no idea what civil society was. The Maidan [Euromaidan – *authors’ note*] became a stimulus for action, for people to become active,” an IDP community activist from the east of Ukraine describes his experience.

The success of activity among representatives of the IDPs varies depending on the region and the personal aptitude (skills, experience, contacts) of the leaders of individual initiatives. Since the Euromaidan, citizens (including IDPs) have started to be more actively involved in civic activity. However, the success of their efforts depends on whether conditions of the political framework in the country benefit the process of institutionalizing such initiatives and including them in the dynamically operating civil society.

### **“Ukraine is its people”: Who are the most active among IDPs?**

As in Ukrainian society as a whole, highly skilled individuals constitute one of the groups of IDPs.<sup>44</sup> It is widely understood that educated and skilled individuals possess a high potential for mobility. At the onset of the military activity in the east, talented and educated people, professionals and business people were among the first to abandon the region. They simply found continuing their normal life impossible in a region no longer under the control of the Ukrainian government. They also had the resources (financial, personal) to make a relatively quick transition. Thus, Ukraine has received an unexpected influx of mobile human capital, although it has not yet managed to tap into it for the development of the country (because of the lack of an awareness of the IDP potential at the central level). The interviewed experts suggested that the presence of active leaders (particularly from big cities such as Donetsk) among the IDPs could contribute to the revitalization of poorly developing regions (especially smaller towns and villages) in the east of Ukraine.

The first groups of “active IDPs” generally needed humanitarian aid only to a limited extent (e.g., after suddenly fleeing from their homes), while in most cases, they can be described as people who could manage in the new environment. The most effective donor assistance in their case was support for running their own businesses and initiatives or projects helping them acquire new skills. Two years from the outbreak of the war, many “active” IDPs have found their place in the new reality. In the interviews, these people drew attention primarily to the need to overcome the stereotype of a displaced person as someone who relies only on state aid. Their business activity was meant to show that IDPs can make an important contribution to the development of their local community.

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<sup>44</sup>As mentioned earlier in the research, the available data confirms that the majority of the IDP population is composed of people who do not constitute part of the active labor force (the elderly, children, etc.). Hence skilled IDPs constitute a minority group.



Among the people with skills and experience in civil activity, very often we found leaders who had been successful in raising funds for the operations of new or old organizations after the outbreak of the war. Their presence in a new place (region and local community), the different mentality of the people in the new environment, and noticeable cultural differences – all that united many IDPs around joint initiatives for their own community. Yet, even people without any experience in civic activity, people of different ages and with different educational backgrounds also joined such initiatives. Both for ordinary Ukrainians and for many IDPs, the war has become a factor motivating them to joint action.

Active IDPs do not only join existing organizations<sup>45</sup> but also try to establish new ones. Factors that have an impact on the success of those ventures are:

- the number of IDPs in a given place/region (“They do not allocate money to this region because there are not many displaced people here.”);
- experience in applying for funding;
- openness of the authorities and the civil society to cooperation in a given town/region (“We needed support and training, but this region [Volyn Oblast – *authors’ note*] has not received any fund allocation.”); and
- the possibility of receiving regular support from donors (“All projects are one-off initiatives – short-term – there are no long-term projects.”).

In the Ukrainian reality, the size of an IDP group seems to translate into the number of initiatives and successful activities of the displaced persons’ communities. In terms of support and the availability of resources (mainly financial resources), the east of Ukraine and the Kyiv region are places which are more conducive to the development of civic activity by socially engaged people. This is, above all, due to the number and activity of the displaced persons’ communities in these locations. The proximity of actors and donors is also beneficial for such activities. In the regions where IDP groups are less numerous, the possibility of cooperation is more limited. People re-settled to the west of Ukraine pointed out that they are not sufficiently noticed by the authorities (“The city authorities [in Lutsk – *authors*] do not want to help!”), whereas other non-governmental organizations often treat them instrumentally (as a channel to reach the group of project beneficiaries). Interviewees in the east of Ukraine and in Kyiv made a similar charge. This means that at the time we conducted the interviews, even municipalities offering better conditions for the IDPs were still far from solving all the pressing challenges. In consequence, donors should not focus their attention solely on the “usual suspects” or completely refocus their attention to new regions, but rather maintain a geographically holistic approach.

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<sup>45</sup> There were often situations when an organization intentionally employed such people to help other displaced persons, creating, in a way, a win-win situation.

### **In the shadow of *Homo Sovieticus***

The process of transformation in the post-communist countries has been inseparable from analyses of the phenomenon of their citizens' inactivity and keeping a distance from state and public life. Researchers studying democratic changes in the region have described this phenomenon as the mentality of *Homo Sovieticus* ("Soviet man"), whereas nowadays, the slightly modified concept of "*Homo Post-Sovieticus*" is taking an important place in the academic community. This phenomenon is applicable to Ukrainian society as well.

Inactivity and even the fear of getting involved with other citizens pose a big obstacle on the road to the development of civil society in Ukraine and have a negative impact on the process of transformation in the country. Some people from the IDP community (particularly those who began to leave their homes in the later stages of the conflict, after the hostilities intensified) spent all their lives in the most industrialized region of Ukraine, in a strongly hierarchical system of authority (both in the workplace and in public life). That system ensured that they had an income sufficient to meet their basic needs, while at the same time, it did not require them to undertake any initiative in the domain of social life. "For a man who had worked in a factory all his life and only had to follow blindly someone else's orders, it was a terrible thing to take responsibility and initiative in his own hands," one of the respondents concludes. This phenomenon is not new for those who study the democratic developments in Ukraine and try to understand the challenges its society is facing.

Awakening these groups of people from their "[post]communist" lethargy is an extremely difficult task, since developing an appropriate approach requires time and one must take into consideration the psychological aspect when offering assistance. Donor support consisting of granting humanitarian aid or cash payments without any activating measures only aggravates the situation in the long term. Many people get only "a fish instead of a fishing rod," sometimes becoming permanently dependent on support from donors or the state. Moreover, with time, people can even lose the ability to act independently in the public sphere (to look for a job, to use medical services, to continue education, etc.).

Instruments and efforts to activate IDPs often fail to change their passive behavior because certain attitudes are too deeply rooted in the minds of some people. Yet a process as important as building up social capital from scratch requires time, patience and regular interaction between the members of a community. Although donor support is usually in the form of short- or medium-term assistance, it is impossible to expect the project activities of international organizations to immediately change the mindset of their beneficiaries.

### **The role of active individuals in the process of the integration of IDPs at the local level**

The active minority among IDPs have a vital role to play, mainly as people who are able to demonstrate to others that it is possible to succeed despite displacement. Activists should be aware that they are opinion leaders among the displaced and can be role models for others to

follow. Their main task is to convince as many of the inactive displaced people as possible to trust their own strength. It may be the most sustainable scenario if these active individuals become leaders of their new local communities and/or establish organizations. The population in some cities has doubled or tripled due to internal migration since the start of the armed conflict, and it is important to see this group as an integral part of society. Developing leadership, the promotion of civic activity and access to institutions of culture and cultural events are not only beneficial to IDPs, but very much needed for Ukraine to complete its democratic transition.

## **Recommendations for international donors**

### **Responding to the policies of the Ukrainian state**

International donors still play a key role in providing assistance to IDPs, particularly in the areas systematically neglected by the Ukrainian state. An activist from a non-governmental organization confirms this observation: “Today it is difficult to influence our [Ukrainian – *authors’ note*] authorities from inside, external influence is needed.” The international community should focus primarily on support for Ukrainian civil society and continued dialogue with the Ukrainian authorities, which will eventually result in reforms in the field of fundamental human rights. Donors possess a number of “soft” instruments, the application of which could generate a better response from the Ukrainian government in the area of support for IDPs. In order to make full use of their potential, donors might want to observe the following guiding principles.

#### Rely on first-hand experience in the local context and include it in your strategy

It may be a truism, yet developments in Ukraine and elsewhere have shown that only rarely will it be possible to develop and apply universal rules of humanitarian aid without a first-hand understanding of the local environment. International organizations often bring their own, frequently rather inflexible, agenda. Apart from some very good actions that really contribute to improving the situation of migrants, they also carry out operations that clearly do not fit the Ukrainian context. International organizations all over the world may often be too easily tempted to transpose their own experience without considering the local social or even geographical conditions. A local activist gave an extreme example of a failure to adjust the activities of an international donor to the local context: “We had a case where a representative of an international organization came and taught us the fundamental rules of hygiene. All is good ... only we do not have a situation here like in Africa.”

To avoid such misunderstandings, international donors ought to make use of their own experience and impressions, as well as that of others, keeping in mind the perspective of the local context, which, together with options for further modification, they then ought to include in the strategic documents governing their operations in Ukraine.

### Take decision-making processes on the local/regional level into account

Donors need to recognize the potential value they bring, but at the same time, be aware of the limitations and even dangers external support generates in particular regions of Ukraine. “The local administration works efficiently compared to the central government administration,” remarks one of the respondents. However, the effectiveness of cooperation with the representatives of the authorities differs depending on the region and the needs of the local community. Respondents from the IDP community commented positively on the instruments supporting IDPs in the city of Ivano-Frankivsk in western Ukraine. However, this is not due to the national systemic reforms, but rather to the character and experience of activists who have managed to establish good cooperation with the local government.

“In the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, it works very well. There is a special advisor to the governor there for those particular issues and they are very open. In Zaporizhia the situation is not bad, either; in the Lugansk Oblast – we have good cooperation with the authorities there,” one of the respondents shared his experience. For the east of Ukraine, experts have mixed perceptions of the cooperation with representatives of different levels of authorities. Here, respondents were very positive about cooperation with the representatives of the central government administration in the region. Yet, at the same time, they frequently emphasized dissatisfaction with their cooperation with the authorities of their city given its, as they see it, political instability. Different decision-making levels in Ukraine may take individual and varying approaches to the implementation of policies. Donors ought to try to neutralize potential negative effects in their dealings with local/regional governments if they want to make sure that their activities remain effective.

### Adjust the terms of the provision of financial aid

Donors ought to re-examine the nature and terms of their provision of financial aid. Transferring assistance funds directly to the state budget (whereafter the state bodies distribute the funds) is not yet an effective solution in today’s Ukrainian reality.<sup>46</sup> A more desirable instrument of support is transferring the financial aid to specific regions and for specific purposes (projects, initiatives) with entities representing the local civil society playing an active role.

### Use financial support as an instrument for an effective dialogue

Since financial support, such as loans to the government, still is one of the most effective instruments and has the most impact, donors should, at least partly, make their financial aid dependent on the decision-makers’ meeting certain obligations, e.g., withdrawing discriminatory legislation from the legal regime, putting certain solutions in practice, etc. An interesting solution

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<sup>46</sup> Bekeshkina I., Kaźmierkiewicz P. (2012). Making Ukrainian Civil Society Matter: Enabling Ukrainian NGOs to absorb international assistance. A review of capacity gaps and needs for institutional support. Institute of Public Affairs; Kaca, E., Kaźmierkiewicz, P. (2010). Eastern Promises: Supporting Civil Society in the Eastern Partnership Countries. ISP policy papers.

may be the universal application of the “more for more” principle which, since 2013, has been the key element of the EU Neighbourhood Policy with regard to countries such as Ukraine, Moldova or Georgia.

#### Promote partnership between the central/local administration bodies and representatives of civil society

Given the important role of Ukrainian civil society in supporting some of the functions/policies of the state, donors ought to make sure that the measures addressed to IDPs are implemented in partnership with the central/local administration bodies and representatives of civil society. Donors should pay particular attention to activating civil initiatives on the part of IDPs, for instance, by imposing an obligation in grant-making to include non-governmental organizations from the IDP community in the planning and implementation of the activities.

#### Exchange expertise and good practices on a larger scale

Exchanges of information and experience with experts from other countries in the area of internal migration are not regular and most of them take place at the central level. The availability of information regarding good practices from all over the world to smaller towns and villages in Ukraine, as well as study visits for Ukrainian activists to learn the assistance strategies of international organizations are important elements of support for increasing the activity of Ukrainian IDPs. “This is very important [best practice exchange – *authors’ note*]. Because there are people who worked in similar conditions in their own countries and their experience is vital for us,” a respondent concludes.

## **8. Recommendations for donors’ internal evaluation**

The activities of international organizations also raise controversy. Representatives of civil society appreciate donor help, but at the same time, they criticize them for poorly planned actions that lead to the unnecessary waste of funds and, in some cases, bring even more harm than benefit to the displaced. We can address the following recommendations to donors to increase their efficiency in Ukraine:

#### Be more “flexible”

Donors should stay maximally open to whom they support and avoid “flexibility deficits,” i.e., limitations imposed intentionally or inadvertently by their own members or leaders. With manifold examples for such limitation at hand, we suggest:

1. Do not define in advance and support only certain groups among the displaced people. A typical example quoted by the respondents is the “privileged” position of single mothers and disabled people. “It is easier to get support for a mother who, in the light of the law, is rearing a

child on her own, but is, in fact, in an informal relationship, whereas it is much more difficult for a mother who has been abandoned by her husband, e.g., who left her in order to join the separatists and fight on their side, who does not support the family financially, however, *de jure* they are still married.” The “privilege” thus has mainly a legalistic dimension – assistance is granted to people in “a particularly difficult situation” within the meaning of the rules of a given organization, and not to people who, at a given moment, may really need this help. This leads to a situation where some people get disproportionately higher support even though their actual financial situation is better.

2. Stay open to initiatives and activities proposed by non-governmental organizations supporting IDPs. One of the activists emphasizes, “International organizations are very slow to respond to the needs we report. Every organization has its specific character, its own headquarters, etc. [...] We know how to solve certain problems and that is why we are prepared to give advice to different institutions and organizations. Whereas, frankly speaking, the big donors very rarely listen to what local experts have to say.”

3. Avoid overcautiousness and be open to new local partners. “Donors like to work with those they already know,” one of the activists emphasizes. Organizations with a long record of non-governmental activity and strong representation in Kyiv are in a privileged position. It may be worth considering an initiative by which a donor would require its regular partners to invite new organizations founded/operated by displaced persons for cooperation with the main goal to provide aid to internal migrants already at the stage of application submission. Donors should propose solutions that help smaller organizations to get an opportunity to be a part of a coalition with a bigger partner as equals and not just as sub-contractors.

#### Tailor expectations to existing capacities

One of the respondents explained: “Over the years, donors in Ukraine were complaining about the problem of ‘grant-devouring’ organizations [so-called grantoyidy/грантоїди in Ukrainian – *authors’ note*], but at the same time, they decided that they had to support those organizations because they did not have a lot of room for manoeuvre. Now there are new organizations, and the donors are not open to them because they cannot write project proposals properly.” Donors unrealistically expect newly established organizations to be able to submit professionally prepared applications, budgets and financial reports, and have the competences to construct budgets based on various funding sources and a very good knowledge of the English language. Organizations established by IDPs to help other displaced people are often not able to meet these requirements, and as a result, they are at a disadvantage when applying for funding. Therefore, donors should not only avoid imposing conditions too stringent or difficult to meet, but should also ensure that new initiatives can count on proper capacity building. Learning how to raise funds, prepare applications and budgets and deal with public relations will make the entire NGO market more

competent, but also more competitive, which will, in consequence, translate into better projects and reduce the amount of improperly used funds.

#### Secure a “holistic” long-sighted planning strategy

International donors should not concentrate their activities solely in the close proximity of the conflict zone, although, unfortunately, donor organizations direct the vast majority of funds there. On the one hand, this is understandable, as the funds reach the biggest communities of migrants, i.e., frequently the largest number of people in need. On the other hand, this leads to a “freezing” of the status quo. People remain in those areas (where housing and employment are hard to find), not only because they can regularly check on their property left on the occupied side, but also because in the areas bordering the conflict line it is the easiest to get assistance from donors. Such a stream of support (e.g., in the form of humanitarian aid) in the long term has a rather demotivating effect, as many people treat collecting donors’ aid as a way to make a living. At the same time, such activities make it impossible to assimilate the displaced people and make them part of the local community in the long term. International donors ought to make sure that support is not only concentrated on the two borderline oblasts but, rather, distributed in a more holistic manner throughout the territory of Ukraine. If such a decision was additionally supported with appropriate stimuli, e.g., facilitating access to housing or jobs, some people might decide to move permanently to other parts of Ukraine. That would take some burden off the borderline territories by removing the excess labor supply and reducing the pressure on the housing market. However, more importantly, it could lead to the dispersal of IDPs among the mass of other citizens, making them a part of the local communities, and as a result, also helping them become independent of donor aid.

#### **Recommendations for donors’ direct actions with IDPs**

When donors end their activities, their work should be taken over by activists (leaders) representing the given community who have sufficient knowledge and skills to continue the activating initiatives in the everyday life of the local community. Equipping activists with a set of tools and skills that would enable them to work effectively in the IDP environment should become a key element of support for Ukraine from the international community.

Donors should neither focus their attention solely on the “usual suspects” nor completely re-focus their attention to new regions. A geographically holistic approach needs to be maintained. Many actors in the regions are not yet capable of carrying out activities without external support from donors.



### Create special training courses for IDP leaders

A “school of leaders” would prepare the most active individuals among the IDPs to become trainers/multipliers, whose professional role would be to conduct classes for groups of those IDPs unable or unwilling to overcome their passive attitudes in looking for a job or reskilling. As one of the activists mentions, “Subsidies are spent on different types of entertainment; this is also needed but it is of secondary importance.” The school should prepare a professional program for such trainers in cooperation with psychologists, business schools and public administration schools. After graduating from such a school, the trainers would know how to support other IDPs both psychologically and in passing specific knowledge to them. Graduates of the courses must understand how to motivate others effectively based on their own experience and the experiences of other displaced persons. Such a school is an excellent opportunity for individuals to network and join efforts in fundraising initiatives to sustain their future activities.

At the same time, knowledge about planning activities, constructing business plans, designing changes in career, etc., is no less important. It is of key importance for trainers to know how to begin working with people who are afraid to take any initiative and to know how to encourage them to continue after they have managed to overcome their fear and make their first steps towards planning further action in their personal development.

The role of international donors may be vital in establishing such a leadership program. Thanks to their recognition and financial capabilities, such organizations could establish cooperation with researchers from university MBA/MPA programs and renowned personal trainers who could conduct classes for the participants. In addition, the program could be implemented in cooperation with the so-called displaced universities, that is, research and academic staff from the universities that had to be evacuated from Crimea and Donbas to Vynnytsia and other places after the occupation of these areas by Russia and the separatists.

### Engage active IDPs in the civic education of other displaced persons

One of the activists described an example of such activities conducted by his organization: “We run free seminars on business activity, what form of taxation to choose, how to write a business plan. We cooperate with local organizations, we ask their experts to conduct training free of charge.” Many forced migrants (similarly to average citizens) know little about their rights and obligations; they have not read any legal documents that have a direct impact on their lives and they are not prepared to defend their rights. A “civic education” program organized by international donors, particularly those who provide humanitarian aid, would consist of additional (and perhaps obligatory) meetings with trainers-educators who would help people realize how important it is for them to understand their rights as citizens and encourage them to be actively involved in protecting those rights. Such meetings could take place in locations with high concentrations of IDPs, e.g., in

modular towns or in the offices of the organizations where aid is distributed. IDPs themselves would conduct the classes.

### Ensure free-of-charge access to cultural institutions and events for IDPs

The difficult financial situation of many migrants should not lead to their exclusion from public life. On the contrary, international organizations and activists should do their best to make sure that those who are most vulnerable do not feel that they are less worthy than the rest of society. As one of the respondents emphasized, organizing discussion clubs where books or films are presented makes people become more open and willing to exchange their views and talk about not only their problems but also their interests. All of this is also a form of activation. For some, such meetings will only be a brief escape from their problems; for others, such discussion clubs may become a stimulus to change. “We organize meetings that are free to attend – presentations of books, shows of films describing social issues – these meetings motivate people to become active, they later engage in their own activities,” one of our respondents asserted.

Meetings of different formats aimed at engaging IDPs have another common feature. During such meetings, people can share information about themselves and create a network of contacts. It would be useful if active displaced people combined such meetings with job fairs – this may encourage others to participate; all the more so, as active IDPs are often successful people who either create jobs themselves or know how to look for them and are often prepared to offer such help.

## **9. Conclusions**

Assistance for IDPs in Ukraine is based on three main pillars: state institutions, non-governmental organizations and international donor support. The state, which should treat its own citizens with particular care, has not yet proven to be effective in its actions and sometimes has even made the lives of internal migrants more difficult. Despite some important positive developments, such as appropriate legislature in several areas of assistance, the establishment of a new ministry for IDPs and a specific database of IDPs, there is still much work to do in helping this group fully benefit from being part of Ukrainian society and helping society benefit from them. The presence of faulty and even discriminatory legislation vis-à-vis IDPs, as well as an inappropriate information policy of the Ukrainian state addressed to the public and to internal migrants, still pose a big challenge.

Therefore, a special role falls on the local organizations of Ukrainian civil society. Their activity in the process of supporting IDPs is crucial. Over the last few years, informal initiatives, as well as formally structured non-governmental organizations, have often taken over the role of state institutions and assisted the migrants – from the process of evacuation from the conflict zone, through providing humanitarian aid and shelter, to offering specialist training and courses for

people ready to start their own business. The informal nature of many initiatives focused on helping displaced people and the lack of effective cooperation between representatives of civil society and the Ukrainian authorities (central, regional, local), however, impede civil society support. Moreover, on various levels of authority, the value added of initiatives that originate in the IDP communities is still not properly recognized.

International donors also play a vital role in supporting internal migrants. Some of them provide direct support, while others implement their tasks by transferring financial and technical assistance to Ukrainian NGOs. After the initial burst of social activity and the readiness to help within the entire society, it is the activity of international organizations that ensures the continuity and long-term character of assistance for internal migrants.

Despite the obvious limitations donors face when providing assistance to a foreign country, the Ukrainian case, as well as the general experience of the transformations in Central and Eastern Europe, confirm donors' significant impact on the success of the reform process in countries undergoing transition. Donors in Ukraine need to become even more adaptive and flexible for their assistance to reach those in need. The possibility of universal support or a focus on the most important target group is misleading as long as donors do not at least partially understand the local context. The situation in different Ukrainian communities varies in terms of the socio-cultural environment, the availability of resources, but also in terms of the political developments (success of decentralization reforms, degree of experience in relations between civil society and local government).

In consequence, donors will have to deal with a number of paradoxes in their everyday work. While there are groups of IDPs that no longer require humanitarian aid, it would be an oversimplification to conclude that there is no longer a need for this type of assistance. The promotion of entrepreneurship (development of soft skills) among migrants has proved to be quite successful, yet many IDPs will never want such assistance. While the presence of donors in the east of Ukraine may be seen as creating an overconcentration of external support in one region by some observers, others feel that without any further assistance, the support schemes in these regions will simply crumble. The ineffectiveness of the Ukrainian state and the *Homo Sovieticus* mentality among a large number of citizens clearly have an impact on the effectiveness of donor assistance, but the nature of international support makes it almost impossible for them to influence these developments.

Housing and employment will remain very important for Ukraine to be able to meet the internal migration challenge, however, donors can improve the situation in these areas only to a certain extent. The same goes for such areas as the public image of IDPs.

Ultimately, responsibility (or a sense of ownership) has to be gradually shifted from donors to local activists and organizations (civil society in the broader meaning, i.e., also among IDPs),

whilst, at the same time, the international community should continue promoting the reform process in Ukraine by utilizing available soft-power instruments (financial resources and expertise).

Local leaders among the IDPs know the local context and the specific needs of other displaced persons. With proper support from donors, they can develop the necessary skills to organize and help their local community. Support for the civic activity of IDPs is therefore an area that deserves special attention in the long-term perspective.

If properly harvested, the human potential of the IDPs can become an asset for Ukraine. By recognizing the potentials and limitations of a given local community, as well as by investing in the people and their activities, donors have not only a chance to promote sustainable changes when it comes to internal migration policy, but also to induce changes in the society as a whole. With our findings, we hope to encourage the international community to support smaller initiatives and local leaders who can become key actors in relations of the IDP community with the government in the future. The window of opportunity will not be open forever.

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